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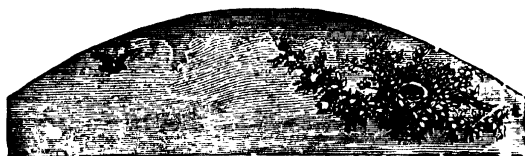
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THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
JOHN KEATS

THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
JOHN KEATS.

EDITED,
WITH A CRITICAL MEMOIR,
BY
WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI.

LONDON:
WARD, LOCK & CO., LIMITED,
WARWICK HOUSE, SALISBURY SQUARE, E.C.
NEW YORK AND MELBOURNE.

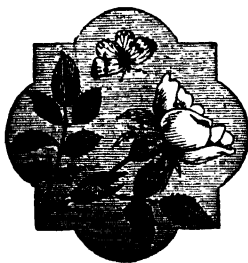


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PREFATORY NOTICE.

JOHN KEATS was born, a seven-months child, on the 29th of October 1795, in Moorfields, London, at the house of his grandfather, who kept livery-stables. I hardly know why the biographer* of the poet should call this "the upper rank of the middle class;" save as a concession to that deadly spirit of flunkeyism in the British people which, after doing its pitiful best to embitter Keats's life on the score of his unexalted origin, and after the nation had accepted him warmly at a later date as a poet of splendid and exquisite gifts, is still capable of wishing to suppose that he was more like a member of "the upper rank of the middle class" than what he really was—a member of a very middling rank in the middle class. The father of the future poet died

* Lord Houghton, to whom all lovers of Keats are greatly indebted. For myself, it would be affectation and ingratitude to pretend that my brief summary of the poet's life is much else than an abbreviated recast of the shorter form of his lordship's memoir. Not indeed that I have followed him blindly, or neglected to consult other sources of information ; but these are extremely scanty.

young in 1804, in consequence of a fall from his horse. The character of his widow is not very unambiguously defined: one statement is that she was passionately fond of amusement—another, that she was a person of saturnine demeanour. Whatever her idiosyncrasies, she had sufficient good sense and maternal solicitude to give her children a sound scholastic training.

It was at the school kept by Mr. Clarke, at Enfield, that John Keats received what have been termed “the elements of a liberal education.” This included something of Latin, as, for instance, Virgil; but Keats had no instruction whatever in Greek while at school, nor indeed at any subsequent time. Mr. Charles Cowden Clarke, so well known now as a Shakspearean scholar and industrious man of letters, was the son of the schoolmaster; and a very friendly acquaintance sprang up between him and Keats, and was maintained throughout their joint lives. Keats, as a boy, was resolute and ardent, and in equal measure placable; a temper out of which anything great could be made, from a hero to a poet. He was good at any exercises of skill or vigour. His mother died while he was yet at school; nor did he remain there beyond a very boyish age. He left in 1810, and was apprenticed for a term of five years to a surgeon of some eminence at Edmonton.

It does not appear that, up to this time, Keats had given evidence of any tendency towards poetizing: but the susceptibility which is visible in his poems to all forms of beauty and of delight, and the unexhausted inspiration and spontaneous flow which they exhibit, manifestly needed nothing but the one small impulsion, to rouse him, and start him on his course. This came

in 1812, with the reading of Spenser. His rapture knew no bounds, though it was perhaps even exceeded when soon after he passed on to the reading of Chapman's Homer, which he would pore over all night long, and shout aloud in exultation. His earliest known lines speak undisguisedly to his first love in poetry, being those which are entitled *Imitation of Spenser*.

His apprenticeship being over, Keats came to London to walk the hospitals. But soon his profession became distasteful to him. The operations which he performed were in fact successful; but an overwrought apprehension of doing mischief in this way haunted him continually. It was therefore not very long before he gave up the pursuit of surgery, after expending on it much of the small means which he had inherited from his parents. In a man whose poetic gift was so singularly rich, and his incitement towards writing consequently so extreme and exclusive, this should perhaps hardly be termed an imprudent step—it was certainly a natural one: but it proved partly unfortunate in the event, leaving him a few years later without any dependence or prospects, when the state of his health and his affections made both of these a necessity.

Not long after coming to London, Keats was introduced by Mr. C. Cowden Clarke, to Leigh Hunt, with whom he often wrote verses in competition, and who treated him with the cordial good-nature and pressing encouragement which he so well knew how to bestow upon a youth of genius. Godwin, Hazlitt, Basil Montagu, Hamilton Reynolds (author of *The Garden of Florence, &c.*), Dilke (the founder of *The Athenæum*), the celebrated painter Haydon, and the pictorial aspirant

Severn, also became friends of Keats. Connection with Hunt and his surroundings was an undoubted advantage, but also a danger, to a young writer. To enjoy the good graces of the editor of the *Examiner* was to be down in the black books of rival editors sweltering with the fiercest venoms of toryism ; not to speak of the conceits and jaunty airs of style which prevailed among Hunt and his following, and which were but too likely to affect a beginner associated with them. An impartial reader of Keats will probably admit that the traces of this influence are more than sufficiently discernible in his work. He, however, denied that he belonged to Hunt's or to any one's school ; and, being indeed immeasurably greater than Hunt himself—not to speak of his satellites—he should not be termed exactly of his school, but rather a brilliant original poet partially infected with some of Hunt's vices of style. Keats's first small volume of poetry, containing some miscellaneous products of his youth, was published in 1817. It was hardly noticed at all : adverse critics who would fain have fallen foul of *anything* emanating from Hunt's circle could not afford so much as to abuse Keats as yet—he was too obscure a phenomenon.

The health of the young poet was already but indifferent. In the spring of 1817 he went off to the Isle of Wight, and applied himself to the writing of *Endymion*—an arduous work which, it has been said, he undertook to perform in six months, competing with Shelley. The latter had met Keats at Hunt's house, and produced in this amicable rivalry the *Revolt of Islam*. Keats, however, appears to have been engaged upon his poem a good deal longer than half a year ; its im-

perfections of execution can hardly therefore be attributed to any rashness in fixing a period for the achievement. He spent at Hampstead, in intercourse with Hunt and other friends, the winter of 1817-18; and, towards the close of the composition of his poem, made a tour in Scotland with one of his chief intimates Mr. Charles Armitage Brown, a retired merchant. The prefatory notice to *Endymion*—at once ambitious in tone, and modest or almost deprecatory in statement—is dated in April 1818, and the publication ensued in due course. Like Keats's first volume, this important and dazzling poem also excited little public interest; but it was not destined to run the proper and natural course for such a work. It would have been fair that *Endymion* should remain for some while obscure and uninteresting to the mass of readers; that its beauties should be from the first fascinating to a few, and generously proclaimed, along with unstinted admission, but no ill-natured trumpeting, of its multitudinous defects and perversities; and that the sense of its astonishing poetic quality should gradually assume larger and larger proportionate importance, till its blemishes should be obscured, and the work take its due station in literature, and in the sympathies of all persons worthy to become its readers. Critical malignity formed a different estimate of how to treat *Endymion*. A scribe in the *Quarterly Review*—I believe it was the editor, Mr. Gifford—undertook to write Keats down an ass, and many a responsive bray, sounding loudest and most jubilant from *Blackwood's Magazine*, ratified the diotum at the time; but lo! after a few years had elapsed, it was found that the reviewer

had only succeeded in writing *himself* down an ass. The lash brandished against Keats's back had but recoiled, and scored the more pachydermatous loins of Gifford. It would be equally untrue and futile to deny that some of the censure awarded by the critic to the poet was deserved—abundantly deserved: but the first and imperative function of a critic who assumes to review actual or professing poets is to know the real one from the false, and, when he has found a real one, to affirm the fact with all explicitness and respect, and to deal out his acerbities to scale. It was perfectly legitimate in 1818—and I think is perfectly legitimate at the present day—to reprobate very decisively a good deal of *Endymion*, whether as regards the literary style or the narrative plan; but it never has been endurable, and least of all was it endurable in the first glow and flush of the young poet's aspiration, that a hard-natured man like Gifford should rail at Keats, with no frank acknowledgment of his marvellous powers, but simply with a wish to hurt his feelings and injure his prospects. If we surmise (what is probably correct) that Gifford was not really so altogether obtuse to Keats's excellences as his criticism seemed to show, we only add the brand of uncandour to that of spite; and, if we further assent to the patent truth that Gifford's dead set at Keats was made partly as a side-blow to Hunt and other hostile politicians, we thereby affirm his dishonest and profligate partisanship. But indeed I am wasting words upon a criticism equally ludicrous and opprobrious by this time:—

“Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.”

It is more to the purpose to say that the once very pre-

valent story that Keats had been extremely pained and dejected by the adverse reviews, even to the extent of losing in consequence of them his health and ultimately his life, was a mere romance of literature. Shelley by a noble poem, and Byron by a jeer, are greatly responsible for the diffusion and acceptance of this silly fable: Lord Houghton has, to the deep satisfaction of all who value manliness as a portion of the poetic character, dispelled it once and for ever. That Keats felt some degree of irritation and also of disappointment is probable, or rather must have been the fact; but he was more surprised than depressed, and more contemptuous than either. Such phrases as the following, which we find in Keats's letters about this time—~~some of them~~ before and some after the publication of the abusive reviews—do not look much like being “puffed out by an article.” “I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public, or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the principle of Beauty, and the memory of great men. . . . I never wrote one single line of poetry with the least shadow of public thought. . . . My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict. . . . I have written independently, without judgment. . . . I think I shall be among the English poets after my death.”

It is a fact, however, that the decline—the definite and alarming and soon fatal decline—in the health and spirits of Keats synchronized pretty nearly with the criticisms of his London and Edinburgh ~~assailants~~. Somewhere about this time he met a lady who at once took potent possession of his imagination and his :

and was shortly the devouring passion of his heart. She was a cousin of the family in which Keats first saw her, that of Mr. Armitage Brown; a lady of East Indian connections, then staying in Mr. Brown's house, to be out of the way of some domestic discomfort. "She makes the same impression as the beauty of a leopardess," said Keats in first writing about her. Hitherto he had been very shy of women; having worshiped them with all a boy's dreamy devotion while at school, but afterwards, on a nearer view, having experienced some loss of a dear ideal illusion, mixed with irritations and perturbations which had rather kept him out of the way of the sex. Now he loved with passion, almost with fury,—and although his affection was returned and his suit favoured, the fervency of his love was fated to pass soon into gloom and soon afterwards into desperation. His want of means was a bar to marriage: he had neither money, nor the expectation of making money, nor a professional position of any kind. In a nation of shopkeepers and of insular politicians his sole known function was to write splendid but partially juvenile poetry, and his prospects were naturally considered not altogether "eligible." This made him unhappy enough; increasing ill health darkened around him; and with rage eating at his heart the unhappy poet divined that he should be dead ere health and fortune would combine to fix the golden moment, and to yield his mistress to his arms. The fatal crisis and the visibly fatal symptoms delayed; but, years before the end, Coleridge, shaking hands with Keats, had whispered to Leigh Hunt "There is death in that hand."

Death was to be about Keats's path before it visite!

himself. In the autumn of 1818, his youngest and dearly loved brother Tom expired: the poet tended him affectionately, and weakened his own constitution in consequence. There was another brother George who soon afterwards emigrated to America; and a sister who eventually married a gentleman of some literary merit, Senhor Llanos. This lady is, or recently was, still living in Spain.

Keats had written his *Isabella* before the Scottish trip with Mr. Armitage Brown in 1818; the *Eve of St. Agnes* was the composition of the winter of the same year; *Lamia*, of the earlier part of 1819. *Hyperion*, which had been carried up to its present uncompleted condition by about the time when the hostile reviews of *Endymion* appeared, did not content its author—he considered it to be deformed by Miltonic inversions; and partly in this feeling, partly from other motives, the poem was set aside. According to the original design, it would have reached about the same length as *Endymion*. In conjunction with Mr. Brown, Keats also undertook the writing of the drama of *Otho the Great*. Brown supplied the subject, and the general conduct of the story; Keats put all into form and verse. The two friends worked on this joint plan, sitting *vis-à-vis*: finally Keats grew dissatisfied with its outcome, and executed the fifth act unassisted. Elliston, the theatrical manager, accepted the drama for representation, and Kean was expected to undertake the principal character: but all this project came to nothing. In these months Keats also took up the study of the Italian poets.

He had now been ailing for some while, but as yet

no positively alarming symptoms had appeared. One night he travelled to Hampstead outside a **stage-coach**, and was conscious of having **caught a chill**. **He went to bed, vomited something, lit a candle**, and looked. **he had learned enough** in surgery to affirm that it was arterial blood. "That drop," he said, "is my death-warrant: I must die." He was calm at the time. Some few weeks passed, and he was apparently recovered. In the autumn of 1819 he took a lodging in Westminster, intending to write regularly for periodicals: but he soon found that he could not bear even this small degree of separation from his beloved, and he returned to his old neighbourhood, and was for a while almost domesticated with her family. The necessity of some definite employment became more and more evident and urgent, the reluctance to take the decisive step greater and greater: he debated between emigrating to South America, and closing with an appointment as surgeon to an East Indiaman. In wearing conflicts of feeling and of resolve, but not without hope as to his prospects of health, Keats was endeavouring to reconcile himself to his lot, when a serious attack of blood-spitting came on. He saw that the only chance of saving his life lay in departure to a milder climate.

Meantime the last of his contributions to the poetry of England and of the world—the small volume entitled *Lamia, Isabella, the Eve of St. Agnes, and other Poems*,—had been published. Its prefatory note is dated in June 1820, and is to the effect that the fragment of *Hyperion* is included in the volume at the publishers' request, and contrary to the inclination of the author, who had left it unfinished in consequence of the un-

favourable reception of *Endymion*. It is fortunate that the publishers prevailed in this debate; for *Hyperion* is *par excellence* the poem by Keats which both Byron and Shelley warmly admired, and perhaps, had there been no *Hyperion* published during the author's lifetime, there would have been no *Adonais* written, to proclaim his immortality as soon as the mortal part was consigned to the grave. This *Lamia* volume was received in a fairly respectful tone; and a notice by Jeffrey shortly appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, calculated to redress the stolid injustice previously done by the *Quarterly* and by *Blackwood*. Another poetic project formed by Keats was the poem named *The Cap and Bells*, somewhat in Ariosto's vein, with which he made a beginning.

Nothing further remains to be told of his career, beyond the miseries of disease and death; disease rapid, terrible, relentless, and overwhelming at times to the mind as well as the body of the sufferer—death foreseen and inevitable, and at last welcomed with open arms. Towards the middle of September 1820 Keats embarked, accompanied by his old acquaintance Mr. Severn, who had just won the gold medal of the Royal Academy for historical painting: they went by sea to Naples. Sharp indeed were the pangs of blighted and never-to-be-appeased love with which the poet took leave of his mistress. From Naples (in which city he received from Shelley an invitation, which he did not act upon, to join him and be tended at Pisa) the two friends proceeded to Rome, where the dying man was attended by Dr. (afterwards Sir James) Clark: he soon took to his bed here, and was not destined to rise from it again. The last letter which he

wrote was dated on the 30th of November. Still he lingered awhile ; lingered, suffered, raved, and at last became resigned. At one time he said "I feel the daisies* growing over me ;" his last words were "Thank God it has come." It *did* come—the pitiless and merciful Death which comes to all came quietly to Keats—on the 27th of February 1821. Shortly before this he had had a letter from the lady of his heart which he had not courage to read. He directed that it should be buried with him, along with a purse and letter received from his sister ; and that the inscription over his bones should be "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." That is an age-long and shoreless water, which will continue flowing while generation after generation of men, his brothers and lovers, come to contemplate the sacred tomb in Rome, within the shadow of the pyramid of Caius Cestius. They have but to step aside a few paces, and stand by a still more sacred tomb which opened in the ensuing year, 1822—that of the wave-worn and world-worn Shelley, divinest of the demigods.

Keats had an unusually small head, covered with copious auburn-brown ringlets, which he wore parted down the middle : his lower limbs also were small beyond the due proportion for his broad-shouldered and generally alert and vigorous-looking, though by no means tall, frame. His eyes were large, blue, and sensitive ; his mouth likewise was singularly sensitive, combined with a certain pugnacious look of the full

* So in Leigh Hunt's narrative ; Lord Houghton says "the flowers."

under-lip, meeting a rather overhanging upper lip. The general brightness and even beauty of his face were most observable, marked by an "expression as if he had been looking on some glorious sight." Wide at the forehead, and comparatively small at the chin, the visage was partly feminine in contour, and with less than masculine squareness, yet eminently virile and gallant. But in fact he was never strong constitutionally : his tendency to consumption was congenital, and so great were the ravages of the disease before its final triumph that his lungs were found, after death, to be almost obliterated. As to his character, no one who is even cursorily acquainted with his poems can doubt that an intense capacity for enjoyment, and a great readiness to yield himself up to impulses of this kind, were pre-eminent in his nature. These qualities were united with kindliness, love of right, and a quick sense of honour. Courage was also conspicuous. Habitually gentle, Keats was indignant at any calumny or baseness : about the time when he was composing *Endymion*, he thrashed a butcher who was beating a little boy in the street, and his vigorous comment upon hearing of certain shabbinesses of conduct has been recorded, "Is there no human dust-hole into which we can sweep such fellows?" With such a tendency of feeling, it is not perhaps surprising that he was personally a little thinskin, and that his relations with friendly people of a social origin superior to his own had a tinge of antagonism. In society he combined earnestness and pleasantry. His intensest delight in life, he once told Severn, had been the watching of the growth of flowers ; in poetry, after a while, his great

standard of style, and continual companion, was the Sonnets of Shakspeare. He said in one instance that "the polar-star of poetry," in his view, was Invention: and, among the many striking observations which he has left upon the art of which he was so great though so youthful a master, none is more rememberable than this, "The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream; he awoke, and found it truth."

As of Keats's character, so of his poetry, enjoyment is the primary element, the perpetual undertone: his very melancholy is the luxury of sadness, his despair the drained and reversed cup of ecstasy. Enjoyment as the soul of the work, profusion as its body; consummate niceties of art as its adornment. The spirit of art was always vividly near and precious to Keats. He fashioned it exuberantly into a thousand shapes, now of gem-like exquisiteness, now mere sightly or showy trinkets; and of these the scrupulous taste will even pronounce the cheapest, and rightly pronounce them, to be trumpery. Still, there is the feeling of art, however provoking its masquerade; recognisable here as clearly as it is in the formative fine art, wrought by a cunning hand, in a period of great and overblown development and impending decadence—such as the late cinquecento or the earlier French rococo. Not indeed that, in Keats's case, there is any taint of decadence—but on the contrary the wanton and tangled wilfulnesses of a beautiful precocity, and a beautiful immaturity. Clearer and clearer did the true and high promptings of art become to him as he advanced, and more immediate and certain his re-

sponse to them. He might have said at the last with Nero "*Qualis artifex pereo!*"

The reader of Keats is conscious mainly of two critical impressions—the unsatisfied perception of what the glorious aspirant could and would have done with a longer span of life, and astonishment that so much was actually accomplished by one so young. If he is a reader qualified to peruse Keats, these two impressions will leave scanty room for another, which is nevertheless perfectly correct—the sense of the extreme and even exasperating faultiness of much of that which the delightful poet has left us—a positive, not a negative, faultiness—no falling-short, but a distinct misdoing. Nor will such a reader much mope over the reflection that Keats, had he lived longer, would have written more, and still better to boot. Keats, youthful and prodigal, the magician of unnumbered beauties which neither author nor reader can think of counting or assessing, is the Keats of our affections. Mature him, and he would be a more perfect planner and executant, and promoted to yet loftier office among the immortals; but he could not win upon us more,—could not leave us a more lovely memory, nor so priceless a treasure of regret.

W. M. ROSSETTI.





KEATS'S POETICAL WORKS.

ENDYMION :

A POETIC ROMANCE.

INSCRIBED TO

THE MEMORY OF THOMAS CHATTERTON.

THE STRETCHED METRE OF AN ANTIQUE SONG.

PREFACE.

KNOWING within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good; —it will not: the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for

A

me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

This may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment: but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it: he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature.

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness: for I wish to try once more, before I bid it farewell.

TEIGNMOUTH, *April 10, 1818.*

BOOK I.

A THING of beauty is a joy for ever :
 Its loveliness increases ; it will never
 Pass into nothingness ; but still will keep
A hower quiet for us, and a sleep

Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darken'd ways
Made for our searching : yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep ; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in ; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season ; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms :
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead ;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read :
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour ; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
They alway must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.

The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own valleys : so I will begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's din ;
Now while the early budders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests ; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber ; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
My little boat, for many quiet hours,
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
Many and many a verse I hope to write,
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
Hide in deep herbage ; and ere yet the bees
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
I must be near the middle of my story.
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
See it half-finish'd : but let Autumn bold,
With universal tinge of sober gold,
Be all about me when I make an end.
And now at once, adventuresome, I send
My herald thought into a wilderness :
There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
A mighty forest ; for the moist earth fed
So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
Into o'erhanging boughs, and precious fruits.

And it had gloomy shades, sequester'd deep,
Where no man went; and if from shepherd's keep
A lamb stray'd far a-down those inmost glens.
Never again saw he the happy pens
Whither his brethren, bleating with content,
Over the hills at every night-fall went.
Among the shepherds 'twas believed ever,
That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever
From the white flock, but pass'd unworried
By any wolf, or pard with prying head,
Until it came to some unfooted plains
Where fed the herds of Pan: ay, great his gains
Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were many,
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,
And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly
To a wide lawn, whence one could only see
Stems thronging all around between the swell
Of tuft and slanting branches: who could tell
The freshness of the space of heaven above,
Edged round with dark tree-tops? through which a dove
Would often beat its wings, and often too
A little cloud would move across the blue.

Full in the middle of this pleasantness
There stood a marble altar, with a tress
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew
Had taken fairy phantasies to strew
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve,
And so the dawned light in pomp receive.
For 'twas the morn: Apollo's upward fire
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
Of brightness so unsullied, that therein

A melancholy spirit well might win
 Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine
 Into the winds: rain-scented eglantine
 Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing ~~sex~~ ;
 The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run
 To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass;
 Man's voice was on the mountains; and the mass
 Of nature's lives and wonders pulsed tenfold,
 To feel this sun-rise and its glories old.

Now while the silent workings of the dawn
 Were busiest, into that self-same lawn
 All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped
 A troop of little children garlanded ;
 Who gathering round the altar, seem'd to pry
 Earnestly round as wishing to espy
 Some folk of holiday: nor had they waited
 For many moments, ere their ears were sated
 With a faint breath of music, which even then
 Fill'd out its voice, and died away again.
 Within a little space again it gave
 Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave,
 To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes breaking
 Through copse-clad valleys,—ere their death, o'ertaking
 The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea.

And now, as deep into the wood as we
 Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmer'd light
 Fair faces and a rush of garments white.
 Plainer and plainer showing, till at last
 Into the widest alley they all past,
 Making directly for the woodland altar.

O kindly muse! let not my weak tongue falter
 In telling of this goodly company,
 Of their old piety, and of their glee:
 But let a portion of ethereal dew
 Fall on my head, and presently unmew
 My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring,
 To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,
 Bearing the burden of a shepherd's song;
 Each having a white wicker, overbrimm'd
 With April's tender younglings: next, well trimm'd
 A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
 As may be read of in Arcadian books;
 Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe.
 When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
 Let his divinity o'erflowing die
 In music, through the vales of Thessaly:
 Some idly trail'd their sheep-hooks on the ground.
 And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
 With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,
 Now coming from beneath the forest trees,
 A venerable priest full soberly,
 Begirt with ministering looks: always his eye
 Steadfast upon the matted turf he kept,
 And after him his sacred vestments swept.
 From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white.
 Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light;
 And in his left he held a basket full
 Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cult:
 Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
 Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill

ENDYMION.

His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
Seem'd like a poll of ivy in the teeth
Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,
Upp' follow'd by a multitude that rear'd
Their voices to the clouds, a fair-wrought car
Easily rolling so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown
Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown;
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftain king's: beneath his breast, half bare,
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nery knees there lay a boar-spear keen.
A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd
To common lookers-on, like one who dream'd
Of idleness in groves Elysian:
But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether lip,
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
Through his forgotten hands: then would they sigh,
And think of yellow leaves, of owlets' cry,
Of logs piled solemnly.—Ah, well-a-day,
Why should our young Endymion pine away!

Soon the assembly, in a circle ranged,
Stood silent round the shrine: each look was chang'd
To sudden veneration: women meek
Beckon'd their sons to silence; while each cheek
Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.

Endymion too, without a forest peer,
Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face,
Among his brothers of the mountain chase.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,
And, after lifting up his aged hands,
Thus spake he : “ Men of Latmos ! shepherd bands !
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks :
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains ; whether come
From valleys where the pipe is never dumb ;
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold ; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibble their fill at ocean’s very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touch’d with sounds forlorn
By the dim echoes of old Triton’s horn :
Mothers and wives ! who day by day prepare
The scrip, with needments, for the mountain air .
And all ye gentle girls who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup
Will put choice honey for a favour’d youth :
Yea, every one attend ! for in good truth
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
Night-swollen mushrooms ? Are not our wide
 plains
Speckled with countless fleeces ? Have not rains
Greer’d over April’s lap ? No howling sad
Sickens our fearful ewes ; and we have had
Great bounty from Endymion our lord.
The earth is glad : the merry lark has pour’d

His early song against yon breezy sky,
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heaped a spire
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire :
Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod
With wine, in honour of the shepherd-god.
Now while the earth was drinking it, and while
Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
Spread grayly eastward, thus a chorus sang :

"O thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness ;
Who lovest to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken ;
And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds—
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth,
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth
Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
By thy love's milky brow !
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan !

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide

Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossed realms : O thou, to whom
Broad-leaved fig-trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage ; yellow-girted bees
Their golden honeycombs ; our village leas
Their fairest blossom'd beans and popped corn ;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee ; low-creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness ; pent-up butterflies
Their freckled wings ; yea, the fresh-budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O forester divine !

“Thou, to whom every faun and satyr flies
For willing service ; whether to surprise
The squatted hare while in half-sleeping fit ;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw ;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewilder'd shepherds to their path again ;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping ;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
The while they pelt each other on the crown
With silvery oak-apples, and fir-cones brown—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O satyr king !

“ O Harkener to the loud-clapping shears,

While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A ram goes bleating : Winder of the horn,
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsman : Breather round our farms,
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms :
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors :
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows !

“ Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings ; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain : be still the leaven,
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth,
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth :
Be still a symbol of immensity ;
A firmament reflected in a sea ;
An element filling the space between ;
An unknown—but no more : we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven-rending,
Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan.
Upon thy Mount Lycean !”

Even while they brought the burden to a close,
A shout from the whole multitude arose,
That linger'd in the air like dying rolls

Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,
Young companies nimbly began dancing
To the swift treble pipe, and humming string.
Ay, those fair living forms swam heavenly
To tunes forgotten—out of memory :
Fair creatures ! whose young children's children bred
Thermopylæ its heroes—not yet dead,
But in old marbles ever beautiful.
High genitors, unconscious did they cull
Time's sweet first-fruits—they danced to weariness,
And then in quiet circles did they press
The hillock turf, and caught the latter end
Of some strange history, potent to send
A young mind from its bodily tenement.
Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent
On either side ; pitying the sad death
Of Hyacinthus, when the cruel breath
Of Zephyr slew him,—Zephyr penitent,
Who now, ere Phœbus mounts the firmament,
Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain.
The archers too, upon a wider plain,
Beside the feathery whizzing of the shaft,
And the dull twanging bowstring, and the raft
Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top,
Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope
Those who would watch. Perhaps, the trembling knee
And frantic gape of lonely Niobe,
Poor, lonely Niobe ! when her lovely young
Were dead and gone, and her caressing tongue
Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip,

And very, very deadliness did nip
Her motherly cheeks. Aroused from this sad mood
By one, who at a distance loud halloo'd,
Uplifting his strong bow into the air,
Many might after brighter visions stare :
After the Argonauts, in blind amaze
Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways,
Until, from the horizon's vaulted side,
There shot a golden splendour far and wide,
Spangling those million poutings of the brine
With quivering ore : 'twas even an awful shine
From the exaltation of Apollo's bow ;
A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe.
Who thus were ripe for high contemplating,
Might turn their steps towards the sober ring
Where sat Endymion and the aged priest
'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks increased
The silvery setting of their mortal star.
There they discoursed upon the fragile bar
That keeps us from our homes ethereal ;
And what our duties there : to nightly call
Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather ;
To summon all the downiest clouds together
For the sun's purple couch ; to emulate
In ministering the potent rule of fate
With speed of fire-tail'd exhalations ;
To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who counts
Sweet poesy by moonlight : besides these,
A world of other unguess'd offices.
Anon they wander'd, by divine converse,
Into Elysium ; vying to rehearse
Each one his own anticipated bliss.

One felt heart-certain that he could not miss
His quick-gone love, among fair blossom'd boughs,
Where every zephyr-sigh pouts, and endows
Her lips with music for the welcoming.
Another wish'd, 'mid that eternal spring,
To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails,
Sweeping, eye-earnestly, through almond vales :
Who, suddenly, should stoop through the smooth
wind,
And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind :
And, ever after, through those regions be
His messenger, his little Mercury.
Some were athirst in soul to see again
Their fellow-huntsmen o'er the wide champaign
In times long past ; to sit with them, and talk
Of all the chances in their earthly walk ;
Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores
Of happiness, to when upon the moors,
Benighted, close they huddled from the cold,
And shared their famish'd scrips. Thus all out-told
Their fond imaginations,—saving him
Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim,
Endymion : yet hourly had he striven
To hide the cankering venom, that had riven
His fainting recollections. Now indeed
His senses had swoon'd off : he did not heed
The sudden silence, or the whispers low,
Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe,
Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,
Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms ;
But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,
Like one who on the earth had never slept

**Ay, even as dead-still as a marble man,
Frozen in that old tale Arabian.**

Who whispers him so pantingly and close?
Peona, his sweet sister: of all those,
His friends, the dearest. Hushing signs she made,
And breathed a sister's sorrow to persuade
A yielding up, a cradling on her care.
Her eloquence did breathe away the curse
She led him, like some midnight spirit nurse
Of happy changes in emphatic dreams,
Along a path between two little streams,—
Guarding his forehead, with her round elbow,
From low-grown branches, and his footsteps slow
From stumbling over stumps and hillocks small;
Until they came to where these streamlets fall,
With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush,
Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush
With crystal mocking of the trees and sky
A little shallop, floating there hard by,
Pointed its beak over the fringed bank;
And soon it lightly dipt, and rose, and sank,
And dipt again, with the young couple's weight,—
Peona guiding, through the water straight,
Towards a bowery island opposite;
Which gaining presently, she steered light
Into a shady, fresh, and ripply cove,
Where nested was an harbour, overwove
By many a summer's silent fingering;
To whose cool bosom she was used to bring
Her playmates, with their needle broidery,
And minstrel memories of times gone by.

ENDYMION.

So she was gently glad to see him laid
Under her favourite bower's quiet shade,
On her own couch, new made of flower leaves,
Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves
When last the sun his autumn tresses shook,
And the tann'd harvesters rich armfuls took.
Soon was he quieted to slumbrous rest :
But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest
Peona's busy hand against his lips,
And still, a-sleeping, held her finger-tips
In tender pressure. And as a willow keep
A patient watch over the stream that creeps
Windingly by it, so the quiet maid
Held her in peace : so that a whispering blade
Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling
Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling
Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard.

O magic sleep ! O comfortable bird,
That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind
Till it is hush'd and smooth ! O unconfined
Restraint ! imprison'd liberty ! great key
To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,
Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves,
Echoing grottoes, full of tumbling waves
And moonlight ; ay, to all the mazy world
Of silvery enchantment !—who, upfurl'd
Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour,
But renovates and lives ?—Thus, in the bower,
Endymion was calm'd to life again.
Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain,
He said : “ I feel this thine endearing love

All through my bosom: thou art as a dove
Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings
About me; and the pearliest dew not brings
Such morning incense from the fields of May,
As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray
From those kind eyes,—the very home and haunt
Of sister'y affection. Can I want
Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such tears?
Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all fears
That, any longer, I will pass my days
Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise
My voice upon the mountain-heights; once more
Make my horn parley from their foreheads hoar:
Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall loll
Around the breathed boar: again I'll poll
The fair-grown yew-tree, for a chosen bow;
And, when the pleasant sun is getting low,
Again I'll linger in a sloping mead
To hear the speckled thrushes, and see feed
Our idle sheep. So be thou cheered, sweet!
And, if thy lute is here, softly entreat
My soul to keep in its resolved course."

Hereat Peona, in their silver source,
Shut her pure sorrow-drops with glad exclaim,
And took a lute, from which there pulsing came
A lively prelude, fashioning the way
In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay
More subtle-cadenced, more forest wild
Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child;
And nothing since has floated in the air
So mournful strange. Surely some influence rare

Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand;
For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spann'd
The quick invisible strings, even though she saw
Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw
Before the deep intoxication.
But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon
Her self-possession—swung the lute aside,
And earnestly said: "Brother, 'tis vain to hide
That thou dost know of things mysterious,
Immortal, starry; such alone could thus
Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinn'd in aught
Offensive to the heavenly powers? Caught
A Paphian dove upon a message sent?
Thy deathful bow against some deer-herd bent,
Sacred to Dian? Haply, thou hast seen
Her naked limbs among the alders green;
And that, alas! is death. No, I can trace
Something more high perplexing in thy face!"

Endymion look'd at her, and press'd her hand,
And said, "Art thou so pale, who wast so bland
And merry in our meadows? How is this?
Tell me thine ailment: tell me all amiss!
Ah! thou hast been unhappy at the change
Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more strange?
Or more complete to overwhelm surmise?
Ambition is no sluggard: 'tis no prize,
That toiling years would put within my grasp,
That I have sigh'd for: with so deadly gasp
No man e'er panted for a mortal love.
So all have set my heavier grief above
These things which happen. Rightly have they done."

I, who still saw the horizontal sun
Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the world
Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd
My spear aloft, as signal for the chase—
I, who, for very sport of heart, would race
With my own steed from Araby; pluck down
A vulture from his towery perching; frown
A lion into growling, loth retire—
To lose, at once, all my toil-breeding fire,
And sink thus low! but I will ease my breast
Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

“This river does not see the naked sky.
Till it begins to progress silverly
Around the western border of the wood,
Whence, from a certain spot, its winding flood
Seems at the distance like a crescent moon:
And in that nook, the very pride of June,
Had I been used to pass my weary eves;
The rather for the sun unwilling leaves
So dear a picture of his sovereign power,
And I could witness his most kingly hour,
When he doth tighten up the golden reins,
And paces leisurely down amber plains
His snorting four. Now when his chariot last
Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast,
There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed
Of sacred dittany, and poppies red:
At which I wonder'd greatly, knowing well
That but one night had wrought this flowery spell;
And, sitting down close by, began to muse
What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I, Morpheus,

In passing here, his owlet pinions shook ;
Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook
Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth,
Had dipp'd his rod in it: such garland wealth
Came not by common growth. Thus on I thought,
Until my head was dizzy and distraught.
Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole
A breeze most softly lulling to my soul;
And shaping visions all about my sight
Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light;
The which became more strange, and strange, and dim,
And then were gulf'd in a tumultuous swim:
And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell
The enchantment that afterwards befel?
Yet it was but a dream: yet such a dream
That never tongue, although it overteem
With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring,
Could figure out and to conception bring
All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay
Watching the zenith, where the milky way
Among the stars in virgin splendour pours ;
And travelling my eye, until the doors
Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight,
I became loth and fearful to alight
From such high soaring by a downward glance :
So kept me stedfast in that airy trance,
Spreading imaginary pinions wide.
When, presently, the stars began to glide,
And faint away, before my eager view :
At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue,
And dropp'd my vision to the horizon's verge ;
And lo ! from opening clouds, I saw emerge

The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er
A shell for Neptune's goblet ; she did soar
So passionately bright, my dazzled soul
Commingling with her argent spheres did roll
Through clear and cloudy, even when she went
At last into a dark and vapoury tent—
Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train
Of planets all were in the blue again.
To commune with those orbs, once more I raised
My sight right upward : but it was quite dazed
By a bright something sailing down apace,
Making me quickly veil my eyes and face :
Again I look'd, and, O ye deities,
Who from Olympus watch our destinies !
Whence that completed form of all completeness ?
Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness ?
Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O where
Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair ?
Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun ;
Not—thy soft hand, fair sister ! let me shun
Such follying before thee—yet she had,
Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad ;
And they were simply gordian'd up and braided,
Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded,
Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orb'd brow ;
The which were blended in, I know not how,
With such a paradise of lips and eyes,
Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest sighs,
That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings
And plays about its fancy, till the stings
Of human neighbourhood envenom all.
Unto what awful power shall I call ?

To what high fane?—Ah ! see her hovering feet,
More bluely vein'd, more soft, more whitely sweet
Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose
From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows
Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion ;
'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,
Handfuls of daisies.”—“ Endymion, how strange !
Dream within dream !”—“ She took an airy range,
And then, towards me, like a very maid,
Came blushing, waning, willing, and afraid,
And press'd me by the hand : Ah ! 'twas too much ;
Methought I fainted at the charmed touch,
Yet held my recollection, even as one
Who dives three fathoms where the waters run
Gurgling in beds of coral : for anon,
I felt upmounted in that region
Where falling stars dart their artillery forth,
And eagles struggle with the buffeting north
That balances the heavy meteor-stone ;—
Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone,
But lapp'd and lull'd along the dangerous sky.
Soon, as it seem'd, we left our journeying high,
And straightway into frightful eddies swoop'd :
Such as aye muster where gray time has scoop'd
Huge dens and caverns in a mountain's side :
There hollow sounds aroused me, and I sigh'd
To faint once more by looking on my bliss—
I was distracted ; madly did I kiss
The wooing arms which held me, and did give
My eyes at once to death : but 'twas to live,

To take in draughts of life from the gold fount
Of kind and passionate looks ; to count, and count
The moments, by some greedy help that seem'd
A second self, that each might be redeem'd
And plunder'd of its load of blessedness.
Ah, desperate mortal ! I even dared to press
Her very cheek against my crowned lip,
And, at that moment, felt my body dip
Into a warmer air : a moment more,
Our feet were soft in flowers. There was storè
Of newest joys upon that alp. Sometimes
A scent of violets, and blossoming limes,
Loiter'd around us ; then of honey cells,
Made delicate from all white-flower bells ;
And once, above the edges of our nest,
An arch face peep'd,—an Oread as I guess'd.

“Why did I dream that sleep o'er-power'd me
In midst of all this heaven ? Why not see,
Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark,
And stare them from me ? But no, like a spark
That needs must die, although its little beam
Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream
Fell into nothing—into stupid sleep.
And so it was, until a gentle creep,
A careful moving caught my waking ears,
And up I started : Ah ! my sighs, my tears,
My clenched hands ;—for lo ! the poppies hung
Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung
A heavy ditty, and the sullen day
Had chidden herald Hesperus away,
With leaden looks : the solitary breeze

Bluster'd, and slept, and its wild self did tease
With wayward melancholy ; and I thought,
Mark me, Peona ! that sometimes it brought
Faint fare-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled adieus !—
Away I wander'd—all the pleasant hues
Of heaven and earth had faded : deepest shades
Were deepest dungeons ; heaths and sunny glades
Were full of pestilent light ; our taintless rills
Seem'd sooty, and o'erspread with upturn'd gills
Of dying fish ; the vermeil rose had blown
In frightful scarlet, and its thorns outgrown
Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird
Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and stirr'd
In little journeys, I beheld in it
A disguised demon, missioned to knit
My soul with under darkness ; to entice
My stumblings down some monstrous precipice :
Therefore I eager follow'd, and did curse
The disappointment. Time, that aged nurse,
Rock'd me to patience. Now, thank gentle heaven !
These things, with all their comfortings, are given
To my down-sunken hours, and with thee,
Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea
Of weary life."

Thus ended he, and both
Sat silent : for the maid was very loth
To answer ; feeling well that breathed words
Would all be lost, unheard, and vain as swords
Against the enchased crocodile, or leaps
Of grasshoppers against the sun. She weeps,
And wonders ; struggles to devise some blame ;

To put on such a look as would say, *Shame*
On this poor weakness! but, for all her strife,
She could as soon have crush'd away the life
From a sick dove. At length, to break the pause,
She said with trembling chance: "Is this the cause?"
This all? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas!
That one who through this middle earth should pass
Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave
His name upon the harp-string, should achieve
No higher bard than simple maidenhood,
Singing alone, and fearfully,—how the blood
Left his young cheek; and how he used to stray
He knew not where: and how he would say, *nay*,
If any said 'twas love: and yet 'twas love;
What could it be but love? How a ring-dove
Let fall a sprig of yew-tree in his path
And how he died: and then, that love doth scathe
The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses;
And then the ballad of his sad life closes
With sighs, and an alas!—Endymion!
Be rather in the trumpet's mouth—anon
Among the winds at large—that all may hearken!
Although, before the crystal heavens darken,
I watch and dote upon the silver lakes
Pictured in western cloudiness, that takes
The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold sands,
Islands, and creeks, and amber-fretted strands
With horses prancing o'er them, palaces
And towers of amethyst,—would I so tease
My pleasant days, because I could not mount
Into those regions? The Morphean fount
Of that fine element that visions, dreams,

And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams
Into its airy channels with so subtle,
So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle,
Circled a million times within the space
Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace,
A tinting of its quality: how light
Must dreams themselves be; seeing they're more
slight

Than the mere nothing that engenders them!
Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem
Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick?
Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick
For nothing but a dream?" Hereat the youth
Look'd up: a conflicting of shame and ruth
Was in his plaited brow: yet his eyelids
Widen'd a little, as when Zephyr bids
A little breeze to creep between the fans
Of careless butterflies: amid his pains
He seem'd to taste a drop of manna-dew,
Full palatable; and a colour grew
Upon his cheek, while thus he lifeful spake.

"Peona! ever have I long'd to slake
My thirst for the world's praises: nothing base,
No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace
The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepared—
Though now 'tis tatter'd; leaving my bark bared
And sullenly drifting: yet my higher hope
Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,
To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.
Wherein lies happiness? In that which beck
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,

A fellowship with essence ; till we shine,
Full alchemised, and free of space. Behold
The clear religion of heaven ! Fold
A rose-leaf round thy finger's taperness,
And soothe thy lips hist ! when the airy stress
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
Æolian magic from their lucid wombs :
Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs ;
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave ;
Ghosts of melodious prophesyings rave
Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot ;
Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,
Where long ago a giant battle was ;
And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
In every place where infant Orpheus slept.
Feel we these things !—that moment have we stept
Into a sort of oneness, and our state
Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
To the chief intensity: the crown of these
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
Upon the forehead of humanity.
All its more ponderous and bulky worth
Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
A steady splendour ; but at the tip-top,
There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop
Of light, and that is love : its influence
Thrown in our eyes genders a novel sense,
At which we start and fret : till in the end,
Melting into its radiance, we blend,

Mingle, and so become a part of it,—
Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
So wingedly: when we combine therewith
Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,
And we are nurtured like a pelican brood
Ay, so delicious is the unsating food,
That men, who might have tower'd in the van
Of all the congregated world, to fan
And winnow from the coming step of time
All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime
Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,
Have been content to let occasion die,
Whilst they did sleep in love's Elysium.
And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb,
Than speak against this ardent listlessness:
For I have ever thought that it might bless
The world with benefits unknowingly;
As does the nightingale, up-perched high,
And cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves—
She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives,
How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-gray
hood.

Just so may love, although 'tis understood
The mere commingling of passionate breath,
Produce more than our searching witnesseth:
What I know not: but who, of men, can tell
That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would
swell

To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,
The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,
The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,

Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet,
If human souls did never kiss and greet ?

“ Now, if this earthly love has power to make
Men's being mortal, immortal ; to shake
Ambition from their memories, and brim
Their measure of content ; what merest whim,
Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
To one, who keeps within his steadfast aim
A love immortal, an immortal too.
Look not so wilder'd ; for these things are true,
And never can be born of atomies
That buzz about our slumbers, like brain flies,
Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I'm sure,
My restless spirit never could endure
To brood so long upon one luxury,
Unless it did, though fearfully, espy
A hope beyond the shadow of a dream.
My sayings will the less obscured seem
When I have told thee how my waking sight
Has made me scruple whether that same night
Was pass'd in dreaming. Harken, sweet Peona !
Beyond the matron-temple of Latona,
Which we should see but for these darkening boughs,
Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows
Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart,
And meet so nearly, that with wings outraught,
And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide
Past them, but he must brush on every side.
Some moulder'd steps lead into this cool cell,
Far as the slabbed margin of a well,
Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye

Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky.
Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks set
Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet
Edges them round, and they have golden pits :
'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and slits
In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my seat,
When all above was faint with mid-day heat,
And there in strife no burning thoughts to heed,
I'd bubble up the water through a reed ;
So reaching back to boyhood : make me ships
Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips,
With leaves stuck in them ; and the Neptune be
Of their petty ocean. Oftener, heavily,
When lovelorn hours had left me less a child,
I sat contemplating the figures wild
Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror through.
Upon a day, while thus I watch'd, by flew
A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver ;
So plainly character'd, no breeze would shiver
The happy chance : so happy, I was fain
To follow it upon the open plain,
And, therefore, was just going ; when, behold !
A wonder, fair as any I have told—
The same bright face I tasted in my sleep,
Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap
Through the cool depth.—It moved as if to flee—
I started up, when lo ! refreshfully,
There came upon my face, in plenteous showers,
Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers,
Wrapping all objects from my smother'd sight,
Bathing my spirit in a new delight.
Ay, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss

Alone preserved me from the drear abyss
Of death, for the fair form had gone again.
Pleasure is oft a visitant ; but pain
Clings cruelly to us, like the gnawing sloth
On the deer's tender haunches : late, and loth,
'Tis scared away by slow-returning pleasure.
How sickening, how dark the dreadful leisure
Of weary days, made deeper exquisite,
By a foreknowledge of unslumbrous night '
Like sorrow came upon me, heavier still,
Than when I wander'd from the poppy hill :
And a whole age of lingering moments crept
Sluggishly by, ere more contentment swept
Away at once the deadly yellow spleen.
Yes, thrice have I this fair enchantment seen ;
Once more been tortured with renewed life.
When last the wintry gusts gave over strife
With the conquering sun of spring, and left the skies
Warm and serene, but yet with moisten'd eyes
In pity of the shatter'd infant buds,—
That time thou didst adorn, with amber studs,
My hunting-cap, because I laugh'd and smiled,
Chatted with thee, and many days exiled
All torment from my breast ;—'twas even then,
Straying about, yet, coop'd up in the den
Of helpless discontent,—hurling my lance
From place to place, and following at chance,
At last, by hap, through some young trees it struck,
And, plashing among bedded pebbles, stuck
In the middle of a brook,—whose silver ramble
Down twenty little falls through reeds and bramble,
Tracing along, it brought me to a cave,

Whence it ran brightly forth, and white did lave
The nether sides of mossy stones and rock,—
'Mong which it gurgled blithe adieus, to mock
Its own sweet grief at parting. Overhead,
Hung a lush screen of drooping weeds, and spread
Thick, as to curtain up some wood-nymph's home.
'Ah! impious mortal, whither do I roam!'—
Said I, low-voiced: 'Ah, whither! 'Tis the grot
Of Proserpine, when Hell, obscure and hot,
Doth her resign: and where her tender hands
She dabbles on the cool and sluicy sands;
Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits,
And babbles thorough silence, till her wits
Are gone in tender madness, and anon,
Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone
Of sadness. O that she would take my vows,
And breathe them sighingly among the boughs,
To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head,
Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed,
And weave them dyingly--send honey-whispers
Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers
May sigh my love unto her pitying!
O charitable Echo! hear, and sing
This ditty to her!—tell her'—So I stay'd
My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid,
Stood stupefied with my own empty folly,
And blushing for the freaks of melancholy.
Salt tears were coming, when I heard my name
Most fondly lipp'd, and then these accents came:
'Endymion! the cave is secreter
Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir
No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise

Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling cloy
And trembles through my labyrinthine hair.'
At that oppress'd, I hurried in.—Ah! where
Are those swift moments! Whither are they fled?
I'll smile no more, Peona; nor will wed
Sorrow, the way to death; but patiently
Bear up against it: so farewell, sad sigh;
And come instead demurest meditation,
To occupy me wholly, and to fashion
My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink.
No more will I count over, link by link,
My chain of grief: no longer strive to find
A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind
Blustering about my ears: ay, thou shalt see,
Dearest of sisters, what my life shall be;
What a calm round of hours shall make my days.
There is a paly flame of hope that plays
Where'er I look: but yet, I'll say 'tis nought--
And here I bid it die. Have not I caught,
Already, a more healthy countenance?
By this the sun is setting; we may chance
Meet some of our near-dwellers with my car."

This said, he rose, faint-smiling like a star
Through autumn mists, and took Peona's hand:
They stept into the boat, and launch'd from land.

BOOK II.

O SOVEREIGN power of love! O grief! O balm!
All records, saving thine, come cool, and calm,

And shadowy, through the mist of passed years:
For others, good or bad, hatred and tears
Have become indolent; but touching thine,
One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine,
One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days.
The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their blaze,
Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades,
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks—all dimly fades
Into some backward corner of the brain;
Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain
The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet.
Hence, pageant history! hence, gilded cheat!
Swart planet in the universe of deeds!
Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds
Along the pebbled shore of memory!
Many old rotten-timber'd boats there be
Upon thy vaporous bosom, magnified
To goodly vessels; many a sail of pride,
And golden-keel'd, is left unlaunch'd and dry.
But wherefore this? What care, though owl did fly
About the great Athenian admiral's mast?
What care, though striding Alexander past
The Indus with his Macedonian numbers?
Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers
The glutton Cyclops, what care?—Juliet leaning
Amid her window-flowers,—sighing,—weaning
Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,
Doth more avail than these: the silver flow
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully

Must such conviction come upon his head,
Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,
Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,
The path of love and poesy. But rest,
In chafing restlessness, is yet more drear
Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear
Love's standard on the battlements of song.
So once more days and nights aid me along,
Like legion'd soldiers.

Brain-sick shepherd prince!

What promise hast thou faithful guarded since
The day of sacrifice? Or, have new sorrows
Come with the constant dawn upon thy morrows?
Alas! 'tis his old grief. For many days,
Has he been wandering in uncertain ways:
Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks;
Counting his woe-worn minutes, by the strokes
Of the lone wood-cutter; and listening still,
Hour after hour, to each lush-leaved rill.
Now he is sitting by a shady spring,
And elbow-deep with feverous fingering
Stems the upbursting cold: a wild rose-tree
Pavilions him in bloom, and he doth see
A bud which snares his fancy: lo! but now
He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water: how!
It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight;
And, in the middle, there is softly pight
A golden butterfly; upon whose wings
There must be surely character'd strange things,
For with wide eye he wonders, and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft.

Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands:
Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands
His limbs are loosed, and eager, on he hies
Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies.
It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was;
And like a new-born spirit did he pass
Through the green evening quiet in the sun,
O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun,
Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight dreams
The summer time away. One track unseams
A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue
Of ocean fades upon him; then, anew,
He sinks adown a solitary glen,
Where there was never sound of mortal men,
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet,
To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet
Went swift beneath the merry-winged guide,
Until it reach'd a splashing fountain's side
That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever pour'd
Unto the temperate air; then high it soar'd,
And, downward, suddenly began to dip,
As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip
The crystal spout-head: so it did, with touch
Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch
Even with mealy gold the waters clear.
But, at that very touch, to disappear
So fairy-quick, was strange! Bewildered.
Endymion sought around, and shook each bed
Of covert flowers in vain; and then he flung
Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue,

What whisperer disturb'd his gloomy rest?
It was a nymph uprisen to the breast
In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood
'Mong lilies, like the youngest of the brood.
To him her dripping hand she softly kist,
And anxiously began to plait and twist
Her ringlets round her fingers saying: "Youth!
Too long, alas, hast thou starved on the ruth,
The bitterness of love: too long indeed,
Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed
Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer
All the bright riches of my crystal coffer
To Amphitrite; all my clear-eyed fish,
Golden, or rainbow sided, or purplish,
Vermilion-tail'd, or fin'd with silvery gauze;
Yea, or my veined pebble floor, that draws
A virgin-light to the deep; my grotto-sands,
Tawny and gold, oozed slowly from far lands
By my diligent springs: my level lilies, shells,
My charming-rod, my potent river spells;
Yes, everything, even to the pearly cup
Meander gave me,—for I bubbled up
To fainting creatures in a desert wild.
But woe is me, I am but as a child
To gladden thee; and all I dare to say,
Is, that I pity thee; that on this day
I've been thy guide; that thou must wander far
In other regions, past the scanty bar
To mortal steps, before thou canst be ta'en
From every wasting sigh, from every pain,
Into the gentle bosom of thy love.
Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above:

But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewell!
I have a ditty for my hollow cell."

Hereat she vanish'd from Endymion's gaze,
Who brooded o'er the water in amaze :
The dashing fount pour's' on, and where its pool
Lay, half asleep, in grass and rushes cool,
Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still,
And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill
Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer,
Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr
Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down ;
And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown
Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps,
Thus breathed he to himself : " Whoso encamp's
To take a fancied city of delight,
O what a wretch is he ! and when 'tis his,
After long toil and travelling, to miss
The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile !
Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil :
Another city doth he set about,
Free from the smallest pebble-bead of doubt
That he will seize on trickling honey-combs :
Alas ! he finds them dry ; and then he foams,
And onward to another city speeds.
But this is human life : the war, the deeds,
The disappointment, the anxiety,
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
All human ; bearing in themselves this good,
That they are still the air, the subtle food,
To make us feel existence, and to show
How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow,

Whether to weeds or flowers ; but for me,
There is no depth to strike in : I can see
Nought earthly worth my compassing ; so stand
Upon a misty, jutting head of land—
Alone ? No, no ; and by the Orphean lute,
When mad Eurydice is listening to't.
I'd rather stand upon this misty peak,
With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek,
But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love,
Than be—I care not what. O meekest dove
Of heaven ! O Cynthia, ten-times bright and fair
From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,
Glance but one little beam or temper'd light
Into my bosom, that the dreadful might
And tyranny of love be somewhat scared !
Yet do not so, sweet queen ; one torment spared,
Would give a pang to jealous misery,
Worse than the torment's self : but rather tie
Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out
My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout
Of Cupids shun thee, too divine art thou,
Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow
Not to have dipp'd in love's most gentle stream,
O be propitious, nor severely deem
My madness impious ; for, by all the stars
That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars
That kept my spirit in are burst—that I
Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky !
How beautiful thou art ! The world how deep !
How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep
Around their axle ! Then these gleaming reins.
How lithe ! When this thy chariot attains

Its airy goal, haply some bower veils
Those twilight eyes? Those eyes!—my spirit fails;
Dear goddess, help! or the wide gaping air
Will gulf me—help!”—At this, with madden’d stare,
And lifted hands, and trembling lips, he stood;
Like old Deucalion mountain’d o’er the flood,
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.
And, but from the deep cavern there was borne
A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone;
Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion’d moan
Had more been heard. Thus swell’d it forth:

“Descend,
Young mountaineer! descend where alleys bend
Into the sparry hollows of the world!
Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl’d
As from thy threshold; day by day hast been
A little lower than the chilly sheen
Of icy pinnacles, and dipp’dst thine arms
Into the deadening ether that still charms
Their marble being: now, as deep profound
As those are high, descend! He ne’er is crown’d
With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow,
The silent mysteries of earth, descend!”

He heard but the last words, nor could contend
One moment in reflection: for he fled
Into the fearful deep, to hide his head
From the clear moon, the trees, and coming madness.

’Twas far too strange, and wonderful for sadness;
Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite

To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light,
The region ; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,
But mingled up ; a gleaming melancholy ;
A dusky empire and its diadems ;
One faint eternal eventide of gems.
Ay, millions sparkled on a vein of gold,
Along whose track the prince quick footsteps told,
With all its lines abrupt and angular :
Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star,
Through a vast antre ; then the metal woof,
Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous root
Curves hugely : now, far in the deep abyss,
It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss
Fancy into belief : anon it leads
Through winding passages, where sameness breeds
Vexing conceptions of some sudden change ;
Whether to silver grots, or giant range
Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge
Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge
Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath
Towers like an ocean cliff, and whence he seeth
A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come
But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb
His bosom grew, when first he, far away,
Described an orb'd diamond, set to fray
Old Darkness from his throne : 'twas like the sun
Uprisen o'er chaos : and with such a stun
Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it,
He saw not fiercer wonders—past the wit
Of any spirit to tell, but one of those
Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close,
Will be its high remembrancers : who they ?

The mighty ones who have made eternal day
 For Greece and England. While astonishment
 With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went
 Into a marble gallery, passing through
 A mimic temple, so complete and true
 In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd
 To search it inwards; whence far off appear'd,
 Through a long pillar'd vista, a fair shrine,
 And, just beyond, on light tiptoe divine,
 A quiver'd Dian. Stepping awfully,
 The youth approach'd; oft turning his veil'd eye
 Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old:
 And, when more near against the marble cold
 He had touch'd his forehead, he began to thread
 All courts and passages, where silence dead,
 Roused by his whispering footsteps, murmur'd faint:
 And long he traversed to and fro, to acquaint
 Himself with every mystery, and awe;
 Till, weary, he sat down before the maw
 Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim,
 To wild uncertainty and shadows grim.
 There, when new wonders ceased to float before,
 And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore
 The journey homeward to habitual self!
 A mad pursuing of the fog-born elf,
 Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-brier,
 Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,
 Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowningly doth sing
 In lone Endymion's ear, now he has caught
 The goal of consciousness? Ah, 'tis the thought,

The deadly feel of solitude: for lo!
He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow
Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild
In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-piled,
The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west
Like herded elephants; nor felt, nor prest
Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air,
But far from such companionship to wear
An unknown time, surcharged with grief, away,
Was now his lot. And must he patient stay,
Tracing fantastic figures with his spear?
“No!” exclaim’d he, “why should I tarry here?”
No! loudly echoed times innumerable.
At which he straightway started, and ’gan tell
His paces back into the temple’s chief;
Warming and glowing strong in the belief
Of help from Dian: so that when again
He caught her airy form, thus did he plain,
Moving more near the while: “O Haunter chaste
Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste,
Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen
Art thou now forested? O woodland Queen,
What smoothest air thy smoother forehead woos?
Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos
Of thy departed nymphs? Through what dark tree
Glimmers thy crescent? Wheresoe’er it be,
’Tis in the breath of heaven: thou dost taste
Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste
Thy loveliness in dismal elements;
But, finding in our green earth sweet contents,
There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee
It feels Elysian, how rich to me,

An exiled mortal, sounds its pleasant name!
Within my breast there lives a choking flame—
O let me cool it zephyr-boughs among!
A homeward fever parches up my tongue—
O let me slake it at the running springs!
Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings—
O let me once more hear the linnet's note!
Before mine eyes thick films and shadows float—
O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light!
Dost thou now lave thy feet and ankles white?
O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice!
Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-juice?
O think how this dry palate would rejoice!
If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice,
O think how I should love a bed of flowers!
Young goddess! let me see my native bowers!
Deliver me from this rapacious deep!"

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap
His destiny, alert he stood : but when
Obstinate silence came heavily again,
Feeling about for its old couch of space
And airy cradle, lowly bow'd his face,
Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill.
But 'twas not long ; for, sweeter than the rill
To its old channel, or a swollen tide
To margin shallows, where the leaves he spied,
And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle crowns
Up heaping through the slab : refreshment drowns
Itself, and strives its own delights to hide—
Nor in one spot alone ; the floral pride
In a long whispering birth enchanted grew

Before his footsteps, as when heaved anew
Old ocean rolls a lengthen'd wave to the shore,
Down whose green back the short-lived foam, all hoar,
Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.

Increasing still in heart, and pleasant sense,
Upon his fairy journey on he hastes;
So anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes
One moment with his hand among the sweets;
Onward he goes—he stops—his bosom beats
As plainly in his ear, as the faint charm
Of which the throbs were born—This still alarm,
This sleepy music, forced him walk tiptoe:
For it came more softly than the east could blow
Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles;
Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles
Of throned Apollo, could breathe back the lyre
To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

O did he ever live, that lonely man,
Who loved—and music slew not? 'Tis the pest
Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest;
That things of delicate and tenderest worth
Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth,
By one consuming flame: it doth immerse
And suffocate true blessings in a curse.
Half-happy, by comparison of bliss,
Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this
Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear;
First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear,
Vanish'd in elemental passion.

And down some swart abysm he had gone,

Had not a heavenly guide benignant led
To where thick myrtle branches, 'gainst his head
Brushing, awaken'd : then the sounds again
Went noiseless as a passing noontide rain
Over a bower, where little space he stood ;
For as the sunset peeps into a wood,
So saw he panting light, and towards it went
Through winding alleys ; and lo, wonderment !
Upon soft verdure saw, one here, one there,
Cupids a-slumbering on their pinions fair.

After a thousand mazes overgone,
At last, with sudden step, he came upon
A chamber, myrtle-wall'd, embower'd high,
Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy,
And more of beautiful and strange beside :
For on a silken couch of rosy pride,
In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth
Of fondest beauty ; fonder, in fair sooth,
Than sighs could fathom, or contentment reach :
And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,
Or ripe October's faded marigolds,
Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds—
Not hiding up an Apollonian curve
Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve
Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light ;
But rather, giving them to the fill'd sight
Officiously. Sideway his face reposed
On one white arm, and tenderly unclosed,
By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth
To slumbery pout ; just as the morning south
Disparts a dew-lipp'd rose. Above his head,

Four lily stalks did their white honours wed
To make a coronal ; and round him grew
All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,
Together intertwined and trammell'd fresh :
The vine of glossy sprout ; the ivy mesh,
Shading its Ethiop berries ; and woodbine,
Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine ;
Convolvulus in streaked vases flush ;
The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush .
And virgin's bower, trailing airily ;
With others of the sisterhood. Hard by,
Stood serene Cupids watching silently.
One, kneeling to a lyre, touch'd the strings.
Muffling to death the pathos with his wings :
And, ever and anon, uprose to look
At the youth's slumber ; while another took
A willow bough, distilling odorous dew,
And shook it on his hair ; another flew
In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise
Rain'd violets upon his sleeping eyes.

At these enchantments, and yet many more,
The breathless Latmian wonder'd o'er and o'er ;
Until impatient in embarrassment,
He forthright pass'd, and lightly treading went
To that same feather'd lyrist, who straightway,
Smiling, thus whisper'd : " Though from upper day
Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here
Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer !
For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour,
When some ethereal and high-favouring donor
Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense ;

As now 'tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence
Was I in no wise startled. So recline
Upon these living flowers. Here is wine,
Alive with sparkles—never, I aver,
Since Ariadne was a vintager,
So cool a purple : taste these juicy pears,
Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears
Were high about Pomona : here is cream,
Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam ;
Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd
For the boy Jupiter : and here, undimm'd
By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums
Ready to melt between an infant's gums :
And here is manna pick'd from Syrian trees,
In starlight, by the three Hesperides.
Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know
Of all these things around us." He did so,
Still brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre ;
And thus : "I need not any hearing tire
By telling how the sea-born goddess pined
For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind
Him all in all unto her doting self.
Who would not be so prison'd? but, fond elf,
He was content to let her amorous plea
Faint through his careless arms ; content to see
An unseized heaven dying at his feet ;
Content, O fool ! to make a cold retreat,
When on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn,
Lay sorrowing ; when every tear was born
Of diverse passion ; when her lips and eyes
Were closed in sullen moisture, and quick sighs
Came vex'd and pettish through her nostrils small

Hush ! no exclaim—yet, justly might'st thou call
Curses upon his head.—I was half glad,
But my poor mistress went distract and mad,
When the boar tusk'd him : so away she flew
To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings drew
Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer's beard ;
Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear'd
Each summer-time to life. Lo ! this is he,
That same Adonis, safe in the privacy
Of this still region all his winter-sleep.
Ay, sleep ; for when our love-sick queen did weep
Over his waned corse, the tremulous shower
Heal'd up the wound, and, with a balmy power,
Medicined death to a lengthen'd drowsiness :
The which she fills with visions, and doth dress
In all this quiet luxury ; and hath set
Us young immortals, without any let,
To watch his slumber through. 'Tis well nigh pass'd
Even to a moment's filling up, and fast
She scuds with summer breezes, to pant through
The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew
Embower'd sports in Cytherea's isle.
Look, how those winged listeners all this while
Stand anxious : see ! behold !"—This clamant word
Broke through the careful silence ; for they heard
A rustling noise of leaves, and out there flutter'd
Pigeons and doves : Adonis something mutter'd,
The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh
Lay dormant, moved convulsed and gradually
Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum
Of sudden voices, echoing, "Come ! come !
Arise ! awake ! Clear summer has forth walk'd

Unto the clover-sward, and she has talk'd
Full soothingly to every nested finch,
Rise, Cupids! or we'll give the blue-bell pinch
To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life begin!
At this, from every side they hurried in,
Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists,
And doubling overhead their little fists
In backward yawns. But all were soon alive:
For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, dive
In nectar'd clouds and curls through water fair,
So from the harbour roof down swell'd an air
Odorous and enlivening; making all
To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call
For their sweet queen: when lo! the wreathed green
Disparted, and far upward could be seen
Blue heaven, and a silver car, air-borne,
Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn,
Spun off a drizzling dew,—which falling chill
On soft Adonis' shoulders, made him still
Nestle and turn uneasily about.
Soon were the white doves plain, with necks stretch'd
out,
And silken traces lighten'd in descent;
And soon, returning from love's banishment,
Queen Venus leaning downward open-arm'd:
Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm'd
A tumult to his heart, and a new life
Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife,
But for her comforting! unhappy sight,
But meeting her blue orbs! Who, who can write
Of these first minutes? The unchariest must
To embracements warm as theirs makes coy excuse

O it has ruffled every spirit there,
Saving love's self, who stands superb to share
The general gladness : awfully he stands ;
A sovereign quell is in his waving hands ;
No sight can bear the lightning of his bow ;
His quiver is mysterious, none can know
What themselves think of it ; from forth his eyes
There darts strange light of varied hues and dyes :
A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who
Look full upon it feel anon the blue
Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls.
Endymion feels it, and no more controls
The burning prayer within him ; so, bent low,
He had begun a plaining of his woe.
But Venus, bending forward, said : " My child,
Favour this gentle youth ; his days are wild
With love—he—but alas ! too well I see
Thou know'st the deepness of his misery.
Ah, smile not so, my son : I tell thee true,
That when through heavy hours I used to rue
The endless sleep of this new-born Adon',
This stranger aye I pitied. For upon
A dreary morning once I fled away
Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray
For this my love : for vexing Mars had teased
Me even to tears : thence, when a little eased.
Down-looking, vacant, through a hazy wood,
I saw this youth as he despairing stood :
Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the wind ;
Those same full fringed lids a constant blind
Over his sullen eyes : I saw him throw
Himself on wither'd leaves, even as though

Death had come sudden ; for no jot he moved,
Yet mutter'd wildly. I could hear he loved
Some fair immortal, and that his embrace
Had zoned her through the night. There is no trace
Of this in heaven : I have mark'd each cheek,
And find it is the vainest thing to seek ;
And that of all things 'tis kept secretest.
Endymion ! one day thou wilt be blest :
So still obey the guiding hand that fends
Thee safely through these wonders for sweet ends.
'Tis a concealment needful in extreme ;
And if I guess'd not so, the sunny beam
Thou shouldst mount up to with me. Now adieu !
Here must we leave thee."—At these words up flew
The impatient doves, up rose the floating car,
Up went the hum celestial. High afar
The Latmian saw them minish into nought ;
And, when all were clear vanish'd, still he caught
A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow .
When all was darken'd, with Ætnean throe
The earth closed—gave a solitary moan—
And left him once again in twilight lone.

He did not rave, he did not stare aghast,
For all those visions were o'ergone, and past,
And he in loneliness : he felt assured
Of happy times, when all he had endured
Would seem a feather to the mighty prize.
So, with unusual gladness, on he hies
Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore,
Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquoise floor,
Black polish'd porticoes of awful shade,

And, at the last, a diamond balustrade,
Leading afar past wild magnificence,
Spiral through ruggedest loop-holes, and thence
Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er
Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,
Streams subterranean tease their granite beds,
Then heighten'd just above the silvery heads
Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash
The waters with his spear; but at the splash,
Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose
Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to inclose
His diamond path with fretwork streaming round
Alike, and dazzling cool, and with a sound,
Haply, like dolphin tumults, when sweet shells
Welcome the float of Thetis. Long he dwells
On this delight; for, every minute's space,
The streams with changed magic interlace:
Sometimes like delicatest lattices,
Cover'd with crystal vines; then weeping trees,
Moving about as in a gentle wind,
Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refined,
Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies,
Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries
Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair
Swifter than lightning went these wonders rare;
And then the water, into stubborn streams
Collecting, mimick'd the wrought oaken beams,
Pillars, and frieze, and high fantastic roof,
Of those dusk places in times far aloof
Cathedrals call'd. He bade a loath farewell
To these founts Protean, passing gulf, and dell,
And torrent, and ten thousand jutting slapes,

Half seen through deepest gloom, and gristy gapes,
Blackening on every side, and overhead
A vaulted dome like heaven's far bespread
With starlight gems : ay, all so huge and strange,
The solitary felt a hurried change
Working within him into something dreary,—
Vex'd like a morning eagle, lost and weary,
And purblind amid foggy midnight wolds.
But he revives at once : for who beholds
New sudden things, nor casts his mental slough ?
Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,
Came mother Cybele ! alone—alone—
In sombre chariot ; dark foldings thrown
About her majesty, and front death-pale,
With turrets crown'd. Four maned lions hale
The sluggish wheels ; solemn their toothed maws,
Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws
Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails
Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails
This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away
In another gloomy arch.

Wherefore delay,
Young traveller, in such a mournful place ?
Art thou wayworn, or canst not further trace
The diamond path ? And does it indeed end
Abrupt in middle air ? Yet earthward bend
Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne
Call ardently ! He was indeed wayworn ;
Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost ;
To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost
Towards him a large eagle. 'twixt whose wings,

Without one impious word, himself he flings,
Committed to the darkness and the gloom :
Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom,
Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell
Through unknown things; till exhaled asphodel,
And rose, with spicy fannings interbreathed,
Came swelling forth where little caves were wreathed
So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd
Large honeycombs of green, and freshly teem'd
With airs delicious. In the greenest nook
The eagle landed him, and farewell took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown
With golden moss. His every sense had grown
Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head
Flew a delight half-graspable; his tread
Was Hesperian; to his capable ears
Silence was music from the holy spheres;
A dewy luxury was in his eyes;
The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs
And stirr'd them faintly. Verdant cave and cell
He wander'd through, oft wondering at such swell
Of sudden exaltation: but, "Alas!"
Said he, "will all this gush of feeling pass
Away in solitude? And must they wane,
Like melodies upon a sandy plain,
Without an echo? Then shall I be left
So sad, so melancholy, so bereft!
Yet still I feel immortal! O my love,
My breath of life, where art thou? High above.
Dancing before the morning gates of heaven?
Or keeping watch among those starry seven.

Old Atlas' children? Art a maid of the waters,
One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters?
Or art, impossible! a nymph of Dian's,
Weaving a coronal of tender scions
For very idleness? Where'er thou art,
Methinks it now is at my will to start
Into thine arms; to scare Aurora's train,
And snatch thee from the morning; o'er the main
To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off
From thy sea-foamy cradle; or to doff
Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee 'mid fresh leaves.
No, no, too eagerly my soul deceives
Its powerless self: I know this cannot be.
O let me then by some sweet dreaming flee
To her entrancements: hither sleep awhile!
Hither most gentle sleep! and soothing foil
For some few hours the coming solitude."

Thus spake he, and that moment felt endued
With power to dream deliciously; so wound
Through a dim passage, searching till he found
The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where
He threw himself, and just into the air
Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss!
A naked waist: "Fair Cupid, whence is this?
A well-known voice sigh'd, "Sweetest, here am I!"
At which soft ravishment, with doting cry
They trembled to each other—Helicon!
O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon!
That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er
These sorry pages; then the verse would soar
And sing above this gentle pair, like lark

Over his nested young : but all is dark
Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount
Exhales in mists to heaven. Ay, the count
Of mighty Poets is made up ; the scroll
Is folded by the Muses ; the bright roll
Is in Apollo's hand : our dazed eyes
Have seen a new tinge in the western skies :
The world has done its duty. Yet, oh yet,
Although the sun of poesy is set,
These lovers did embrace, and we must weep
That there is no old power left to steep
A quill immortal in their joyous tears.
Long time in silence did their anxious fears
Question that thus it was ; long time they lay
Fondling and kissing every doubt away ;
Long time ere soft caressing sobs began
To mellow into words, and then there ran
Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet lips.
“ O known Unknown ! from whom my being sips
Such darling essence, wherefore may I not
Be ever in these arms ? in this sweet spot
Pillow my chin for ever ? ever press
These toying hands and kiss their smooth excess ?
Why not for ever and for ever feel
That breath about my eyes ? Ah, thou wilt steal
Away from me again, indeed, indeed—
Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed
My lonely madness. Speak, my kindest fair !
Is—is it to be so ? No ! Who will dare
To pluck thee from me ? And, of thine own will,
Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. Still
Let me entwine thee surer, surer—now

How can we part? Elysium! Who art thou?
Who, that thou canst not be for ever here,
Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere?
Enchantress! tell me by this soft embrace,
By the most soft complexion of thy face,
Those lips, O slippery blisses! twinkling eyes,
And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties—
These tenderest, and by the nectar-wine,
The passion"————"O loved Ida the divine!
Endymion! dearest! Ah, unhappy me!
His soul will 'scape us—O felicity!
How he does love me! His poor temples beat
To the very tune of love—how sweet, sweet, sweet!
Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die;
Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by
In tranced dulness; speak, and let that spell
Affright this lethargy! I cannot quell
Its heavy pressure, and will press at least
My lips to thine, that they may richly feast
Until we taste the life of love again.
What! dost thou move? dost kiss? O bliss! O pain?
I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive;
And so long absence from thee doth bereave
My soul of any rest: yet must I hence.
Yet, can I not to starry eminence
Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own
Myself to thee. Ah, dearest! do not groan,
Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy,
And I must blush in heaven. O that I
Had done it already! that the dreadful smiles
At my lost brightness, my impassion'd wiles,
Had waned from Olympus' solemn height,

And from all serious Gods ; that our delight
Was quite forgotten, save of us alone !
And wherefore so ashamed ? 'Tis but to atone
For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes :
Yet must I be a coward ! Horror rushes
Too palpable before me—the sad look
Of Jove—Minerva's start—no bosom shook
With awe of purity—no Cupid pinion
In reverence veil'd—my crystalline dominion
Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity !
But what is this to love ? Oh ! I could fly
With thee into the ken of heavenly powers,
So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours
Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once
That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce—
Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown—
Oh ! I do think that I have been alone
In chastity ! yes, Pallas has been sighing,
While every eye saw me my hair uptying
With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love !
I was as vague as solitary dove,
Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft kiss—
Ay, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss,
An immortality of passion's thine :
Ere long I will exalt thee to the shine
Of heaven ambrosial ; and we will shade
Ourselves whole summers by a river glade ;
And I will tell the stories of the sky,
And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy
My happy love will overwing all bounds !
O let me melt into thee ! let the sounds
Of our close voices marry at their birth ;

Let us entwine hovering! O dearth
Of human words! roughness of mortal speech!
Lispings empyrean will I sometimes teach
Thine honey'd tongue—lute-breathings which I gasp
To have thee understand, now while I clasp
Thee thus, and weep for fondness—I am pain'd,
Endymion: woe! woe! is grief contain'd
In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?"—
Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife
Melted into a languor. He return'd
Entranced vows and tears.

Ye who have yearn'd
With too much passion, will here stay and pity,
For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty
Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told
By a cavern wind unto a forest old;
And then the forest told it in a dream
To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam
A poet caught as he was journeying
To Phœbus' shrine; and in it he did fling
His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
And after, straight in that inspired place
He sang the story up into the air,
Giving it universal freedom. There
Has it been ever sounding for those ears
Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend cheers
Yon sentinel stars; and he who listens to it
Must surely be self-doom'd or he will rue it:
For quenchless burnings come upon the heart,
Made fiercer by a fear lest any part
Should be engulfed in the eddying wind.

As much as here is penn'd doth always find
A resting-place, thus much comes clear and plain ;
Anon the strange voice is upon the wane—
And 'tis but echoed from departing sound,
That the fair visitant at last unwound
Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep. -
Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.---
Endymion awoke, that grief of hers
Sweet paining on his ear : he sickly guess'd
How lone he was once more, and sadly press'd
His empty arms together, hung his head,
And most forlorn upon that widow'd bed
Sat silently. Love's madness he had known :
Often with more than tortured lion's groan
Moanings had burst from him ; but now that rage
Had pass'd away : no longer did he wage
A rough-voiced war against the dooming stars.
No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars :
The lyre of his soul Æolian tuned
Forgot all violence, and but communed
With melancholy thought : O he had swoon'd
Drunken from pleasure's nipple ! and his love
Henceforth was dove-like.—Loth was he to move
From the imprinted couch, and when he did,
'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid
In muffling hands. So temper'd, out he stray'd
Half seeing visions that might have dismay'd
Alecto's serpents ; ravishments more keen
Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean
Over eclipsing eyes : and at the last

It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast,
O'erstudded with a thousand, thousand pearls,
And crimson-mouthed shells with stubborn curls,
Of every shape and size, even to the bulk
In which whales harbour close, to brood and sulk
Against an endless storm. Moreover too,
Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue,
Ready to snort their streams. In this cool wonder
Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder
On all his life : his youth, up to the day
When 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands gay,
He stepp'd upon his shepherd throne : the look
Of his white palace in wild forest nook,
And all the revels he had lorded there :
Each tender maiden whom he once thought fair,
With every friend and fellow-woodlander—
Pass'd like a dream before him. Then the spur
Of the old bards to mighty deeds : his plans
To nurse the golden age 'mong shepherd clans :
That wondrous night : the great Pan-festival :
His sister's sorrow ; and his wanderings all,
Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd :
Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd
High with excessive love. "And now," thought !
"How long must I remain in jeopardy
Of blank amazements that amaze no more ?
Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core,
All other depths are shallow : essences,
Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,
Meant but to fertilise my earthly root,
And make my branches lift a golden fruit
Into the bloom of heaven : other light.

Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight
The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark,
Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark !
My silent thoughts are echoing from these shells ;
Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells
Of noises far away?—list !”—Hereupon
He kept an anxious ear. The humming tone
Came louder, and behold, there as he lay,
On either side outgush'd, with misty spray,
A copious spring ; and both together dash'd
Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks, and lash'd
Among the conchs and shells of the lofty grot,
Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot
Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a noise
As of some breathless racers whose hopes poise
Upon the last few steps, and with spent force
Along the ground they took a winding course.
Endymion follow'd—for it seem'd that one
Ever pursued, the other strove to shun—
Follow'd their languid mazes, till well nigh
He had left thinking of the mystery,—
And was now rapt in tender hoverings
Over the vanish'd bliss. Ah ! what is it sings
His dream away? What melodies are these?
They sound as through the whispering of trees,
Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear !

“O Arethusa, peerless nymph ! why fear
Such tenderness as mine? Great Dian, why,
Why didst thou hear her prayer? O that I
Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,
Circling about her waist, and striving how

To entice her to a dive ! then stealing in
Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin.
O that her shining hair was 'n the sun,
And I distilling from it thence to run
In amorous rillets down her shrinking form !
To linger on her lily shoulders, warm
Between her kissing breasts, and every charm
Touch raptur'd !—See how painfully I flow :
Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe
Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead,
A happy wooer, to the flowery mead
Where all that beauty snared me.”—“Cruel god,
Desist ! or my offended mistress' nod
Will stagnate all thy fountains :—tease me not
With syren words—Ah, have I really got
Such power to madden thee ? And is it true—
Away, away, or I shall dearly rue
My very thoughts : in mercy then away, b
Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey
My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane.”—
“O, Oread-Queen ! would that thou hadst a pain
Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn
And be a criminal.”—“Alas, I burn,
I shudder—gentle river, get thee hence.
Alpheus ! thou enchanter ! every sense
Of mine was once made perfect in these woods.
Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent floods,
Ripe fruits, and lonely couch, contentment gave ;
But ever since I heedlessly did lave
In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow
Grew strong within me : wherefore serve me so,
And call it love ? Alas ! 'twas cruelty.

Not once more did I close my happy eyes
Amid the thrush's song. Away! avaunt!
O 'twas a cruel thing."—"Now thou dost taunt
So softly, Arethusa, that I think
If thou wast playing on my shady brink,
Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent maid!
Stifle thine heart no more;—nor be afraid
Of angry powers: there are deities
Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful sighs
'Tis almost death to hear: O let me pour
A dewy balm upon them!—fear no more,
Sweet Arethusa! Dian's self must feel,
Sometimes, these very pangs. Dear maiden, steal
Blushing into my soul, and let us fly
These dreary caverns for the open sky.
I will delight thee all my winding course,
From the green sea up to my hidden source
About Arcadian forests; and will show
The channels where my coolest waters flow
Through mossy rocks; where 'mid exuberant green,
I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen
Than Saturn in his exile; where I brim
Round flowery islands, and take thence a skim
Of mealy sweets, which myriads of bees
Buzz from their honey'd wings: and thou shouldst
 please
Thyself to choose the richest, where we might
Be incense-pillow'd every summer night.
Doff all sad fears, thou white deliciousness,
And let us be thus comforted; unless
Thou couldst rejoice to see my hopeless stream
Hurry distracted from Sol's temperate beam,

And pour to death along some hungry sands."—
"What can I do, Alpheus? Dian stands
Severe before me: persecuting fate!
Unhappy Arethusa! thou wast late
A huntress free in—" At this, sudden fell
Those two sad streams adown a fearful dell.
The Latmian listen'd, but he heard no more,
Save echo, faint repeating o'er and o'er
The name of Arethusa. On the verge
Of that dark gulf he wept, and said: "I urge
Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage,
By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage,
If thou art powerful, these lovers' pains;
And make them happy in some happy plains."

He turn'd—there was a whelming sound—he stept,
There was a cooler light; and so he kept
Towards it by a sandy path, and lo!
More suddenly than doth a moment go,
The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
He saw the giant sea above his head.

BOOK III.

THERE are who lord it o'er their fellow-men
With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen
Their baaing vanities, to browse away
The comfortable green and juicy hay
From human pastures; or, O torturing fact!
Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd
Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe

Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one tinge
Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight
Able to face an owl's, they still are dight
By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests,
And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts,
Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount
To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,
Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones—
Amid the fierce intoxicating tones
Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums,
And sudden cannon. Ah! how all this hums,
In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone—
Like thunder-clouds that spake to Babylon,
And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.—
Are then regalities all gilded masks?
No, there are throned seats unscalable
But by a patient wing, a constant spell,
Or by ethereal things that, unconfined,
Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,
And poise about in cloudy thunder-tents
To watch the abysm-birth of elements.
Ay, 'bove the withering of old-lipp'd Fate
A thousand Powers keep religious state,
In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne;
And, silent as a consecrated urn,
Hold sphery sessions for a season due.
Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few!
Have bared their operations to this globe—
Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe
Our piece of heaven—whose benevolence
Shakes hand with our own Ceres; every sense
Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude,

As bees gorge full their cells. And by the feud
'Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear,
Eterne Apollo ! that thy Sister fair
Is of all these the gentlier-mightiest.
When thy gold breath is misting in the west
She unobserved steals unto her throne,
And there she sits most meek and most alone ;
As if she had not pomp subservient ;
As if thine eye, high Poet ! was not bent
Towards her with the Muses in thine heart ;
As if the minist'ring stars kept not apart,
Waiting for silver-footed messages
O Moon ! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees
Feel palpitations when thou lookest in :
O Moon ! old boughs lisp forth a holier din
The while they feel thine airy fellowship.
Thou dost bless everywhere, with silver lip
Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine,
Couch'd in thy brightness, dream of fields divine :
Innumerable mountains rise, and rise,
Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes ;
And yet thy benediction passeth not
One obscure hiding-place, one little spot
Where pleasure may be sent : the nested wren
Has 'hy fair face within its tranquil ken,
And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf
Takes glimpses of thee ; thou art a relief
To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps
Within its pearly house ;—The mighty deeps,
The monstrous sea is thine—the myriad sea !
O Moon ! far spooming Ocean bows to thee,
And Tellus feels her forehead's cumbrous load.

Cynthia ! where art thou now ? What far abode
Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine
Such utmost beauty ? Alas, thou dost pine
For one as sorrowful : thy cheek is pale
For one whose cheek is pale : thou dost bewail
His tears who weeps for thee ! Where dost thou
sigh ?

Ah ! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye,
Or, what a thing is love ! 'Tis She, but lo !
How changed, how full of ache, how gone in woe !
She dies at the thinnest cloud ; her loveliness
Is wan on Neptune's blue : yet there's a stress
Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees,
Dancing upon the waves, as if to please
The curly foam with amorous influence.
O, not so idle ! for down glancing thence,
She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about
O'erwhelming water-courses ; scaring out
The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and fright'ning
Their savage eyes with unaccustom'd lightning.
Where will the splendour be content to reach ?
O love ! how potent hast thou been to teach
Strange journeyings ! Wherever beauty dwells,
In gulf or aerie, mountains or deep dells,
In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,
Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.
Amid his toil thou gavest Leander breath ;
'Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death ;
'Thou madest Pluto bear thin element :
And now, O winged Chieftain ! thou hast sent
A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world,
To find Endymion.

On gold sand impearl'd
With lily shells, and pebbles milky white,
Poor Cynthia greeted him, and soothed her light
Against his pallid face ! he felt the charm
To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm
Of his heart's blood : 'twas very sweet ; he stay'd
His wandering steps, and half-entranced laid
His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds,
To taste the gentle moon, and freshening beads
Lash'd from the crystal roof by fishes' tails.
And so he kept, until the rosy veils
Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand
Were lifted from the water's breast, and fann'd
Into sweet air ; and sober'd morning came
Meekly through billows :—when like taper-flame
Left sudden by a dallying breath of air,
He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare
Along his fated way.

Far had he roam'd,
With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd
Above, around, and at his feet ; save things
More dead than Morpheus' imaginings :
Old rusted anchors, helmets, breastplates large
Of gone sea-warriors ; brazen beaks and targe ;
Rudders that for a hundred years had lost
The sway of human hand ; gold vase emboss'd
With long-forgotten story, and wherein
No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin
But those of Saturn's vintage ; mouldering scrolls,
Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls
Who first were on the earth ; and sculptures rude

In ponderous stone, developing the mood
Of ancient Nox ;—then skeletons of man,
Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,
And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw
Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe
These secrets struck into him ; and unless
Dian had chased away that heaviness,
He might have died : but now, with cheered feel,
He onward kept ; wooing these thoughts to steal
About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

“ What is there in thee, Moon ! that thou shouldst
move

My heart so potently ? When yet a child
I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smiled.
Thou seem'dst my sister : hand in hand we went
From eve to morn across the firmament.
No apples would I gather from the tree,
Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously :
No tumbling water ever spake romance,
But when my eyes with thine thereon could dance :
No woods were green enough, no bower divine,
Until thou lifted'st up thine eyelids fine :
In sowing-time ne'er would I dibble take,
Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake ;
And, in the summer-tide of blossoming,
No one but thee hath heard me blithely sing
And mesh my dewy flowers all the night.
No melody was like a passing spright
If it went not to solemnise thy reign.
Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain
By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end ;

And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend
With all my ardours : thou wast the deep glen ;
Thou wast the mountain-top—the sage's pen—
The poet's harp—the voice of friends—the sun ;
Thou wast the river—thou wast glory won ;
Thou wast my clarion's blast—thou wast my steed—
My goblet full of wine—my topmost deed :—
Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon !
O what a wild and harmonised tune
My spirit struck from all the beautiful !
On some bright essence could I lean, and lull
Myself to immortality : I prest
Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest.
But gentle Orb ! there came a nearer bliss—
My strange love came—Felicity's abyss !
She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away—
Yet not entirely ; no, thy starry sway
Has been an under-passion to this hour.
Now I begin to feel thine orby power
Is coming fresh upon me : O be kind !
Keep back thine influence, and do not blind
My sovereign vision.—Dearest love, forgive
'That I can think away from thee and live !—
Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize
One thought beyond thine argent luxuries !
How far beyond !" At this a surprised start
Frosted the springing verdure of his heart ;
For as he lifted up his eyes to swear
How his own goddess was past all things fair,
He saw far in the concave green of the sea
An old man sitting calm and peacefully.
Upon a weeded rock this old man sat,

And his white hair was awful, and a mat
Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet,
And, ample as the largest winding-sheet,
A cloak of blue wrapp'd up his aged bones,
O'erwrought with symbols by the deepest groans
Of ambitious magic : every ocean-form
Was woven in with black distinctness ; storm,
And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar
Were emblem'd in the woof ; with every shape
That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and cape.
The gulphing whale was like a dot in the spell,
Yet look upon it, and 'twould size and swell
To its huge self ; and the minutest fish
Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish,
And show his little eye's anatomy.
Then there was pictured the regality
Of Neptune ; and the sea-nymphs round his state,
In beauteous vassalage, look up and wait.
Beside this old man lay a pearly wand,
And in his lap a book, the which he conn'd
So steadfastly, that the new denizen
Had time to keep him in amazed ken,
To mark these shadowings, and stand in awe.

The old man raised his hoary head and saw
The wilder'd stranger—seeming not to see,
His features were so lifeless. Suddenly
He woke as from a trance ; his snow-white brows
Went arching up, and like two magic ploughs
Furrow'd deep wrinkles in his forehead large,
Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge,
Till round his wither'd lips had gone a smile.

Then up he rose, like one whose tedious toil
Had watch'd for years in forlorn hermitage,
Who had not from mid-life to utmost age
Eased in one accent his o'erburden'd soul,
Even to the trees. He rose : he grasp'd his stole.
With convulsed clenches waving it abroad,
And in a voice of solemn joy, that awed
Echo into oblivion, he said :—

“Thou art the man ! Now shall I lay my head
In peace upon my watery pillow : now
Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow.
O Jove ! I shall be young again, be young !
O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierced and stung
With new-born life ! What shall I do ? Where go,
When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe ?—
I'll swim to the syrens, and one moment listen
Their melodies, and see their long hair glisten ;
Anon upon that giant's arm I'll be,
That writhes about the roots of Sicily :
To northern seas I'll in a twinkling sail,
And mount upon the snortings of a whale
To some black cloud ; thence down I'll madly sweep
On forked lightning, to the deepest deep,
Where through some sucking pool I will be hurl'd
With rapture to the other side of the world !
O, I am full of gladness ! Sisters three,
I bow full-hearted to your old decree !
Yes, every god be thank'd, and power benign,
For I no more shall wither, droop, and pine.
Thou art the man !’ Endymion started back
Dismay'd ; and like a wretch from whom the rack

Tortures hot breath, and speech of agony,
Mutter'd : " What lonely death am I to die
In this cold region ? Will he let me freeze,
And float my brittle limbs o'er polar seas ?
Or will he touch me with his searing hand,
And leave a black memorial on the sand ?
Or tear me piecemeal with a bony saw,
And keep me as a chosen food to draw
His magian fish through hated fire and flame ?
O misery of hell ! resistless, tame,
Am I to be burn'd up ? No, I will shout,
Until the gods through heaven's blue look out !—
O Tartarus ! but some few days ago
Her soft arms were entwining me, and on
Her voice I hung like fruit among green leaves :
Her lips were all my own, and— ah, ripe sheaves
Of happiness ! ye on the stubble droop,
But never may be garner'd. I must stoop
My head, and kiss death's foot. Love ! love, fare-
well !
Is there no hope from thee ? ' This horrid spell
Would melt at thy sweet breath.—By Dian's hind
Feeding from her white fingers, on the wind
I see thy streaming hair ! and now, by Pan,
I care not for this old mysterious man !"

He spake, and walking to that aged form,
Look'd high defiance. Lo ! his heart 'gan warm
With pity, for the gray-hair'd creature wept.
Had he then wrong'd a heart where sorrow kept ?
Had he, though blindly contumelious, brought
Rheum to kind eyes, a sting to human thought,

Convulsion to a mouth of many years?
He had in truth ; and he was ripe for tears.
The penitent shower fell, as down he knelt
Before that care-worn sage, who trembling felt
About his large dark locks, and faltering spake :

“ Arise, good youth, for sacred Phœbus’ sake !
I know thine inmost bosom, and I feel
A very brother’s yearning for thee steal
Into mine own : for why ? thou openest
The prison-gates that have so long oppress’d
My weary watching. Though thou know’st it not
Thou art commission’d to this fated spot
For great enfranchisement. O weep no more !
I am a friend to love, to loves of yore :
Ay, hadst thou never loved an unknown power,
I had been grieving at this joyous hour.
But even now, most miserable old,
I saw thee, and my blood no longer cold
Gave mighty pulses : in this tottering case
Grew a new heart, which at this moment plays
As dancingly as thine. Be not afraid,
For thou shalt hear this secret all display’d,
Now as we speed towards our joyous task.”

So saying, this young soul in age’s mask
Went forward with the Carian side by side :
Resuming quickly thus ; while ocean’s tide
Hung swollen at their backs, and jewell’d sands
Took silently their foot-prints.

“ My soul stands

Now past the midway from mortality,
And so I can prepare without a sigh
To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain.
I was a fisher once, upon this main,
And my boat danced in every creek and bay;
Rough billows were my home by night and day,—
The sea-gulls not more constant ; for I had
No housing from the storm and tempests mad,
But hollow rocks,—and they were palaces
Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease :
Long years of misery have told me so.
Ay, thus it was one thousand years ago.
One thousand years!—Is it then possible
To look so plainly through them? to dispel
A thousand years with backward glance sublime?
To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime
From off a crystal pool, to see its deep,
And one's own image from the bottom peep?
Yes : now I am no longer wretched thrall,
My long captivity and moanings all
Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum,
The which I breathe away, and thronging come
Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.

“I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no measures :
I was a lonely youth on desert shores.
My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars,
And craggy isles, and seamew's plaintive cry
Plaining discrepant between sea and sky.
Dolphins were still my playmates ; shapes unseen
Would let me feel their scales of gold and green,
Nor be my desolation ; and, full oft,

When a dread waterspout had rear'd aloft
Its hungry hugeness, seeming ready ripe
To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe
My life away like a vast sponge of fate,
Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state,
Has dived to its foundations, gulf'd it down,
And left me tossing safely. But the crown
Of all my life was utmost quietude :
More did I love to lie in cavern rude,
Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's voice,
And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice !
There blush'd no summer eve but I would steer
My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear
The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery steep,
Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep :
And never was a day of summer shine,
But I beheld its birth upon the brine :
For I would watch all night to see unfold
Heaven's gates, and Æthion snort his morning gold
Wide o'er the swelling streams : and constantly
At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea,
My nets would be spread out, and I at rest.
The poor folk of the sea-country I blest
With daily boon of fish most delicate :
They knew not whence this bounty, and elate
Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

“Why was I not contented? Wherefore reach
At things which, but for thee, O Latmian !
Had been my dreary death ! Fool ! I began
To feel distemper'd longings : to desire
The utmost privilege that ocean's sire

Could grant in benediction : to be free
Of all his kingdom. Long in misery
I wasted, ere in one extremest fit
I plunged for life or death. To interknit
One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff
Might seem a work of pain ; so not enough
Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt,
And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt
Whole days and days in sheer astonishment ;
Forgetful utterly of self-intent ;
Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow.
Then, like a new-fledged bird that first doth show
His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill,
I tried in fear the pinions of my will.
'Twas freedom ! and at once I visited
The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed.
No need to tell thee of them, for I see
That thou hast been a witness—it must be
For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth,
By the melancholy corners of that mouth.
So I will in my story straightway pass
To more immediate matter. Woe, alas !
That love should be my bane ! Ah, Scylla fair !
Why did poor Glaucus ever—ever dare
To sue thee to his heart ? Kind stranger-youth !
I loved her to the very white of truth,
And she would not conceive it. Timid thing !
She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing,
Round every isle, and point, and promontory,
From where large Hercules wound up his story
Far as Egyptian Nile. My passion grew
The more, the more I saw her dainty hue

Gleam delicately through the azure clear :
Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear ;
And in that agony, across my grief
It flash'd, that Circe might find some relief—
Cruel enchantress ! So above the water
I rear'd my head, and look'd for Phœbus' daughter.
Ææa's isle was wondering at the moon :—
It seem'd to whirl around me, and a swoon
Left me dead-drifting to that fatal power.

“ When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower ;
Just when the light of morn, with hum of bees,
Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh trees.
How sweet, and sweeter ! for I heard a lyre,
And over it a sighing voice expire.
It ceased—I caught light footsteps ; and anon
The fairest face that morn e'er look'd upon
Push'd through a screen of roses. Starry Jove !
With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she wove
A net whose thraldom was more bliss than all
The range of flower'd Elysium. Thus did fall
The dew of her rich speech : ‘ Ah ! art awake ?
O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake !
I am so oppress'd with joy ! Why, I have shed
An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold dead ;
And now I find thee living, I will pour
From these devoted eyes their silver store,
Until exhausted of the latest drop,
So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop
Here, that I too may live : but if beyond
Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art fond
Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme ;

If thou art ripe to taste a long love-dream ;
If smiles, if dimples, tongues for ardour mute,
Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit,
O let me pluck it for thee !' Thus she link'd
Her charming syllables, till indistinct
Their music came to my o'er-sweeten'd soul ;
And then she hover'd over me, and stole
So near, that if no nearer it had been
This furrow'd visage thou hadst never seen.

"Young man of Latmos ! thus particular
Am I, that thou may'st plainly see how far
This fierce temptation went : and thou may'st not
Exclaim, How, then, was Scylla quite forgot ?

"Who could resist ? Who in this universe ?
She did so breathe ambrosia ; so immerse
My fine existence in a golden clime.
She took me like a child of suckling time,
And cradled me in roses. Thus condemn'd,
The current of my former life was stemm'd,
And to this arbitrary queen of sense
I bow'd a tranced vassal : nor would thence
Have moved, even though Amphion's harp had woo'd
Me back to Scylla o'er the billows rude.
For as Apollo each eve doth devise
A new apparelling for western skies ;
So every eve, nay, every spendthrift hour
Shed balmy consciousness within that bower.
And I was free of haunts umbrageous ;
Could wander in the mazy forest-house
Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antler'd deer,

And birds from coverts innermost and drear
Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow—
To me new-born delights !

“ Now let me borrow,
For moments few, a temperament as stern
As Pluto's sceptre, that my words not burn
These uttering lips, while I in calm speech tell
How specious heaven was changed to real hell.

“ One morn she left me sleeping : half awake
I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake
My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-draughts ;
But she was gone. Whereat the barbed shafts
Of disappointment stuck in me so sore,
That out I ran and searched the forest o'er.
Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom
Damp awe assail'd me, for there 'gan to boom
A sound of moan, an agony of sound,
Sepulchral from the distance all around.
Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and rumbled
That fierce complain to silence : while I stumbled
Down a precipitous path, as if impell'd.
I came to a dark valley.—Groanings swell'd
Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew,
The nearer I approach'd a flame's gaunt blue,
That glared before me through a thorny brake.
This fire, like the eye of gordian snake,
Bewitch'd me towards ; and I soon was near
A sight too fearful for the feel of fear :
In thicket hid I cursed the haggard scene—
The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen,

Seated upon an uptorn forest root ;
And all around her shapes, wizzard and brute,
Laughing, and wailing, grovelling, serpentine,
Showing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting.
O such deformities ! old Charon's self,
Should he give up awhile his penny pelf,
And take a dream 'mong rushes Stygian,
It could not be so fantasied. Fierce, wan,
And tyrannising was the lady's look,
As over them a gnarled staff she shook.
Oft-times upon the sudden she laugh'd out,
And from a basket emptied to the rout
Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd quick
And roar'd for more ; with many a hungry lick
About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow,
Anon she took a branch of mistletoe,
And emptied on 't a black dull-gurgling phial :
Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial
Was sharpening for their pitiable bones.
She lifted up the charm : appealing groans
From their poor breasts went suing to her ear
In vain ; remorseless as an infant's bier
She whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil.
Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil,
Increasing gradual to a tempest rage,
Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage ;
Until their grieved bodies 'gan to bloat
And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat :
Then was appalling silence : then a sight
More wildering than all that hoarse affright ;
For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind writhen,
Went through the dismal air like one huge Python

Antagonising Boreas,—and so vanish'd.
Yet there was not a breath of wind : she banish'd
These phantoms with a nod. Lo ! from the dark
Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs stark,
With dancing and loud revelry,—and went
Swifter than centaurs after rapine bent.—
Sighing an elephant appear'd and bow'd
Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud
In human accent : ' Potent goddess ! chief
Of pains resistless ! make my being brief,
Or let me from this heavy prison fly :
Or give me to the air, or let me die !
I sue not for my happy crown again ;
I sue not for my phalanx on the plain ;
I sue not for my lone, my widow'd wife ;
I sue not for my ruddy drops of life,
My children fair, my lovely girls and boys !
I will forget them ; I will pass these joys ;
Ask nought so heavenward, so too—too high :
Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die,
Or be deliver'd from this cumbrous flesh,
From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh,
And merely given to the cold bleak air.
Have mercy, Goddess ! Circe, feel my prayer !'

“ That curst magician's name fell icy numb
Upon my wild conjecturing : truth had come
Naked and sabre-like against my heart.
I saw a fury whetting a death-dart ;
And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright,
Fainted away in that dark lair of night.
Think, my deliverer, how desolate

My waking must have been ! disgust and hate,
And terrors manifold divided me
A spoil amongst them. I prepared to flee
Into the dungeon core of that wild wood :
I fled three days—when lo ! before me stood
Glaring the angry witch. O Dis, even now,
A clammy dew is beading on my brow,
At mere remembering her pale laugh, and curse.
' Ha ! ha ! Sir Dainty ! there must be a nurse
Made of rose-leaves and thistle-down, express,
To cradle thee, my sweet, and lull thee : yes,
I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch :
My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch.
So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies
Unheard of yet ; and it shall still its cries
Upon some breast more lily-feminine.
Oh, no—it shall not pine, and pine, and pine
More than one pretty, trifling thousand years ;
And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears
Cut short its immortality. Sea-flirt !
Young dove of the waters ! truly I'll not hurt
One hair of thine : see how I weep and sigh,
That our heart-broken parting is so nigh.
And must we part ? Ah, yes, it must be so.
Yet ere thou leavest me in utter woe,
Let me sob over thee my last adieus,
And speak a blessing : Mark me ! thou hast thews
Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race :
But such a love is mine, that here I chase
Eternally away from thee all bloom
Of youth, and destine thee towards a tomb.
Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast :

And there, ere many days be overpast,
 Disabled age shall seize thee ; and even then
 Thou shalt not go the way of aged men ;
 But live and wither, cripple and still breathe
 Ten hundred years : which gone, I then bequeath
 Thy fragile bones to unknown burial.
 Adieu, sweet love, adieu ! '—As shot stars fall,
 She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung
 And poison'd was my spirit : despair sung
 A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell.
 A hand was at my shoulder to compel
 My sullen steps ; another 'fore my eyes
 Moved on with pointed finger. In this guise
 Enforced, at the last by ocean's foam
 I found me ; by my fresh, my native home,
 Its tempering coolness, to my life akin,
 Came salutary as I waded in ;
 And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave
 Battle to the swollen billow-ridge, and drave
 Large froth before me, while there yet remain'd
 Hale strength, nor from my bones all marrow drain'd.

“ Young lover, I must weep—such hellish spite
 With dry cheek who can tell ? While thus my might
 Proving upon this element, dismay'd,
 Upon a dead thing's face my hand I laid ;
 I look'd—'twas Scylla ! Cursed, cursed Circe !
 O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy !
 Could not thy harshest vengeance be content,
 But thou must nip this tender innocent
 Because I loved her ?—Cold, O cold indeed
 Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed

The sea-swell took her hair. Dead as she was
I clung about her waist, nor ceased to pass
Fleet as an arrow through unfathom'd brine,
Until there shone a fabric crystalline,
Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl.
Headlong I darted ; at one eager swirl
Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd, and behold
'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold ;
And all around—But wherefore this to thee
Who in few minutes more thyself shalt see?—
I left poor Scylla in a niche and fled.
My fever'd parchings up, my scathing dread
Met palsy half-way : soon these limbs became
Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame.

“ Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space,
Without one hope, without one faintest trace
Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble
Of colour'd phantasy ; for I fear 'twould trouble
Thy brain to loss of reason : and next tell
How a restoring chance came down to quell
One half of the witch in me.

“ On a day,
Sitting upon a rock above the spray,
I saw grow up from the horizon's brink
A gallant vessel : soon she seem'd to sink
Away from me again, as though her course
Had been resumed in spite of hindering force—
So vanish'd : and not long, before arose
Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose.
Old Æolus would stifle his mad spleen,

But could not, therefore all the billows green
Toss'd up the silver spume against the clouds.
The tempest came : I saw that vessel's shrouds
In perilous bustle ; while upon the deck
Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck ;
The final gulping ; the poor struggling souls :
I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls.
O they had all been saved but crazed eld
Annull'd my vigorous cravings : and thus quell'd
And curb'd, think on 't, O Latmian ! did I sit
Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit
Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had gone,
By one and one, to pale oblivion ;
And I was gazing on the surges prone,
With many a scalding tear, and many a groan,
When at my feet emerged an old man's hand,
Grasping this scroll, and this same slender wand.
I knelt with pain—reach'd out my hand—had grasp'd
These treasures—touch'd the knuckles—they un-
clasp'd—

I caught a finger : but the downward weight
O'erpower'd me—it sank. Then 'gan abate
The storm, and through chill aguish gloom outburst
The comfortable sun. I was athirst
To search the book, and in the warming air
Parted its dripping leaves with eager care.
Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on
My soul page after page, till well-nigh won
Into forgetfulness ; when, stupefied,
I read these words, and read again, and tried
My eyes against the heavens, and read again.
O what a load of misery and pain

Each Atlas-line bore off !—a shine of hope
 Came gold around me, cheering me to cope
 Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend !
 For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

“ ‘In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch,
 Doom’d with enfeebled carcase to outstretch
 His loathed existence through ten centuries,
 And then to die alone. Who can devise
 A total opposition ? No one. So
 One million times ocean must ebb and flow,
 And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die,
 These things accomplish’d :—If he utterly
 Scans **all** the depths of magic, and expounds
The meanings of all motions, shapes, and sounds ;
 If he explores all forms and substances
 Straight homeward to their symbol-essences ;
 He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,
 He must pursue this task of joy and grief
 Most piously ;—all lovers tempest-tost,
 And in the savage overwhelming lost,
 He shall deposit side by side, until
 Time’s creeping shall the dreary space fulfil :
 Which done, and all these labours ripened,
 A youth, by heavenly power loved and led,
 Shall stand before him ; whom he shall direct
 How to consummate all. The youth elect
 Must do the thing, or both will be destroy’d.’ ”

“ Then,” cried the young Endymion, overjoy’d,
 “ We are twin brothers in this destiny !
 Say, I entreat thee, what achievement high

Is, in this restless world, for me reserved.
What ! if from thee my wandering feet had swerved,
Had we both perish'd ?"—" Look !" the sage replied,
" Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the tide,
Of divers brilliances ? 'tis the edifice
I told thee of, where lovely Scylla lies ;
And where I have enshrined piously
All lovers, whom fell storms have doom'd to die
Throughout my bondage." Thus discoursing, on
They went till unobscured the porches shone ;
Which hurryingly they gain'd, and enter'd straight.
Sure never since king Neptune held his state
Was seen such wonder underneath the stars.
Turn to some level plain where haughty Mars
Has legion'd all his battle ; and behold
How every soldier, with firm foot, doth hold
His even breast : see, many steeled squares,
And rigid ranks of iron—whence who dares
One step ? Imagine further, line by line,
These warrior thousands on the field supine :—
So in that crystal place, in silent rows,
Poor lovers lay at rest from joys and woes.
The stranger from the mountains, breathless, traced
Such thousands of shut eyes in order placed ;
Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips
All ruddy,—for here death no blossom nips.
He mark'd their brows and foreheads ; saw their hair
Put sleekly on one side with nicest care ;
And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence,
Put cross-wise to its heart.

" Let us commence

(Whisper'd the guide, stuttering with joy) even now."
He spake, and, trembling like an aspen-bough,
Began to tear his scroll in pieces small,
Uttering the while some mumblings funeral.
He tore it into pieces small as snow
That drifts unfeather'd when bleak northerns blow;
And having done it, took his dark blue cloak
And bound it round Endymion : then struck
His wand against the empty air times nine.
"What more there is to do, young man, is thine :
But first a little patience ; first undo
This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue.
Ah, gentle ! 'tis as weak as spider's skein ;
And shouldst thou break it—What, is it done so
clean ?

A power overshadows thee ! Oh, brave !
The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.
Here is a shell ; 'tis pearly blank to me,
Nor mark'd with any sign or character—
Canst thou read aught ? O read for pity's sake !
Olympus ! we are safe ! Now, Carian, break
This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal."

'Twas done : and straight with sudden swell and
fall

Sweet music breathed her soul away, and sigh'd
A lullaby to silence.—"Youth ! now strew
These minced leaves on me, and passing through
Those files of dead, scatter the same around,
And thou wilt see the issue."—'Mid the sound
Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,
Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,

And scatter'd in his face some fragments light.
How lightning-swift the change ! a youthful wight
Smiling beneath a coral diadem,
Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,
Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,
Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force
Press'd its cold hand, and wept—and Scylla sigh'd !
Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied—
The nymph arose : he left them to their joy,
And onward went upon his high employ,
Showering those powerful fragments on the dead,
And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head,
As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.
Death felt it to his inwards ; 'twas too much :
Death fell a-weeping in his charnel-house.
The Latmian persevered along, and thus
All were reanimated. There arose
A noise of harmony, pulses and throes
Of gladness in the air—while many, who
Had died in mutual arms devout and true,
Sprang to each other madly ; and the rest
Felt a high certainty of being blest.
They gazed upon Endymion. Enchantment
Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent.
Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,
Budded, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full
showers
Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.
The two deliverers tasted a pure wine
Of happiness, from fairy press oozed out.
Speechless they eyed each other, and about
The fair assembly wander'd to and fro,

Distracted with the richest overflow
Of joy that ever poured from heaven.

——“Away !”

Shouted the new-born god ; “ Follow, and pay
Our piety to Neptune's supreme !”—
Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream,
They led on first, bent to her meek surprise,
Through portal columns of a giant size
Into the vaulted, boundless emerald.
Joyous all follow'd, as the leader call'd,
Down marble steps ; pouring as easily
As hour-glass sand—and fast, as you might see
Swallows obeying the south summer's call,
Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

Thus went that beautiful multitude, not far,
Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,
Just within ken, they saw descending thick
Another multitude. Whereat more quick
Moved either host. On a wide sand they met,
And of those numbers every eye was wet ;
For each their old love found. A murmuring rose,
Like what was never heard in all the throes
Of wind and waters : 'tis past human wit
To tell ; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host
Moved on for many a league ; and gain'd and lost
Huge sea-marks ; vanward swelling in array,
And from the rear diminishing away,
Till a faint dawn surprised them. Glaucus cried,

“Behold ! behold, the palace of his pride !
God Neptune’s palaces !” With noise increased,
They shoulder’d on towards that brightening east.
At every onward step proud domes arose
In prospect, diamond gleams and golden glows
Of amber ’gainst their faces levelling.
Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring,
Still onward ; still the splendour gradual swell’d.
Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld
By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts
Each gazer drank ; and deeper drank more near :
For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere
As marble was there lavish, to the vast
Of one fair palace, that far, far surpass’d,
Even for common bulk, those olden three,
Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

As large, as bright, as colour’d as the bow
Of Iris, when unfading it doth show
Beyond a silvery shower, was the arch
Through which this Paphian army took its march
Into the outer courts of Neptune’s state :
Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate,
To which the leaders sped ; but not half raught
Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought,
And made those dazzled thousands veil their eyes
Like callow eagles at the first sunrise.
Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze
Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze,
And then, behold ! large Neptune on his throne
Of emerald deep : yet not exalt alone ;

At his right hand stood winged Love, and on
His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast
Can see all round upon the calmed vast,
So wide was Neptune's hall : and as the blue
Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew
Their doming curtains, high, magnificent,
Awed from the throne aloof ;—and when storm-rent
Disclosed the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air ;
But soothed as now, flash'd sudden everywhere,
Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering
Death to a human eye : for there did spring
From natural west, and east, and south, and north,
A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth
A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head
Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread
As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe
Of feather'd Indian darts about, as through
The delicatest air : air verily,
But for the portraiture of clouds and sky :
This palace floor breath-air,—but for the amaze
Of deep-seen wonders motionless,—and blaze
Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes,
Globing a golden sphere.

They stood in dreams
Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang ;
The Nereids danced ; the Syrens faintly sang ;
And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping head.
Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed
On all the multitude a nectarous dew.

The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew
Fair Scylla and her guides to conference ;
And when they reach'd the throned eminence
She kiss'd the sea-nymph's cheek, who sat her
down

A toying with the doves. Then, "Mighty crown
And sceptre of this kingdom!" Venus said,
"Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid:
Behold!"—Two copious tear-drops instant fell
From the God's large eyes ; he smiled delectable,
And over Glaucus held his blessing hands.—
"Endymion ! Ah ! still wandering in the bands
Of love ? Now this is cruel. Since the hour
I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power
Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet
Escaped from dull mortality's harsh net ?
A little patience, youth ! 'twill not be long,
Or I am skillless quite : an idle tongue,
A humid eye, and steps luxurious
Where these are new and strange, are ominous
Ay, I have seen these signs in one of heaven,
When others were all blind ; and were I given
To utter secrets, haply I might say
Some pleasant words : but Love will have his day.
So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon,
Even in the passing of thine honey-moor,
Visit my Cythera : thou wilt find
Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind ;
And pray persuade with thee—Ah, I have done,
All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son!"—
Thus the fair Goddess : while Endymion
Knelt to receive those accents halcyon.

Meantime a glorious revelry began
Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran
In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd ;
And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless, pleach'd
New growth about each shell and pendent lyre ;
The which, in entangling for their fire,
Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture
For dainty toy. Cupid, empire-sure,
Flutter'd and laugh'd, and oft-times through the throng
Made a delighted way. Then dance, and song,
And garlanding, grew wild ; and pleasure reign'd.
In harmless tendrils they each other chain'd,
And strove who should be smother'd deepest in
Fresh crush of leaves.

O 'tis a very sin
For one so weak to venture his poor verse
In such a place as this. O do not curse,
High Muses ! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending
Of dulcet instruments came charmingly ;
And then a hymn.

“ King of the stormy sea !
Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor
Of elements ! Eternally before
Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock,
At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock
Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.
All mountain-rivers lost, in the wide home
Of thy capacious bosom ever flow.

Thou frownest, and old Æolus thy foe
 Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint
 Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint
 When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam
 Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team
 Gulfs in the morning light, and scuds along
 To bring thee nearer to that golden song
 Apollo singeth, while his chariot
 Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not
 For scenes like this : an empire stern hast thou ;
 And it hath furrow'd that large front : yet now,
 As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit
 To blend and interknit
 Subdued majesty with this glad time.
 O shell-born King sublime !
 We lay our hearts before thee evermore —
 We sing, and we adore !

“ Breathe softly, flutes ;
 Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes ;
 Nor be the trumpet heard ! O vain, O vain !
 Not flowers budding in an April rain,
 Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow—
 No, nor the Æolian twang of Love's own bow,
 Can mingle music fit for the soft ear
 Of goddess Cytherea !
 Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes
 On our souls' sacrifice.

“ Bright-winged Child !
 Who has another care when thou hast smiled ?
 Unfortunates on earth, we see at last

All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast
 Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions.
 O sweetest essence ! sweetest of all minions !
 God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair,
 And panting bosoms bare !
 Dear unseen light in darkness ! eclipser
 Of light in light ! delicious poisoner !
 Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until
 We fill—we fill !
 And by thy Mother's lips——”

Was heard no more

For clamour, when the golden palace-door
 Open'd again, and from without, in shone
 A new magnificence. On oozy throne
 Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old,
 To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold,
 Before he went into his quiet cave
 To muse for ever—Then, a lucid wave,
 Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea,
 Afloat, and pillowing up the majesty
 Of Doris, and the *Ægean* seer, her spouse—
 Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs,
 Theban Amphion leaning on his lute :
 His fingers went across it—All were mute
 To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls,
 And Thetis pearly too.—

The palace whirls

Around giddy Endymion ; seeing he
 Was there far strayed from mortality.
 He could not bear it shut his eyes in vain ;

Imagination gave a dizzier pain.
"O I shall die! sweet Venus, be my stay!
Where is my lovely mistress? Well away!
I die—I hear her voice—I feel my wing—"
At Neptune's feet he sank. A sudden ring
Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife
To usher back his spirit into life:
But still he slept. At last they interwove
Their cradling arms, and purposed to convey
Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo! while slow carried through the pitying crowd,
To his inward senses these words spake aloud;
Written in star-light on the dark above:
"Dearest Endymion! my entire love!
How have I dwelt in fear of fate; 'tis done—
Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.
Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch
Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch
Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!"

The youth at once arose: a placid lake
Came quiet to his eyes; and forest green,
Cooler than all the wonder he had seen,
Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering breast,
How happy once again in grassy nest!

BOOK IV.

MUSE of my native land! loftiest Muse!
O first-born on the mountains! By the hues

Of heaven on the spiritual air begot :
 Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot,
 While yet our England was a wolfish den ;
 Before our forests heard the talk of men ;
 Before the first of Druids was a child ;—
 Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild,
 Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.
 There came an eastern voice of solemn mood :—
 Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine,
 Apollo's garland :—yet didst thou divine
 Such home-bred glory, that they cried in vain,
 “ Come hither, Sister of the Island ! ” Plain
 Spake fair Ausonia ; and once more she spake
 A higher summons :—still didst thou betake
 Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won
 A full accomplishment ! The thing is done,
 Which undone, these our latter days had risen
 On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st what
 prison
 Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets
 Our spirits' wings : despondency besets
 Our pillows ; and the fresh to-morrow morrow
 Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
 Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.
 Long have I said, how happy he who shrives
 To thee ! But then I thought on poets gone,
 And could not pray :—nor can I now—so on
 I move to the end in lowliness of heart.—

“ Ah, woe is me ! that I should fondly part
 From my dear native land ! Ah, foolish maid !
 Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads bade

Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields !
To one so friendless the clear freshet yields
A bitter coolness; the ripe grape is sour :
Yet I would have, great gods! but one short hour
Of native air—let me but die at home.”

Endymion to heaven's airy dome
Was offering up a hecatomb of vows,
When these words reach'd him. Whereupon he bows
His head through thorny-green entanglement
Of underwood, and to the sound is bent,
Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn.

“ Is no one near to help me? No fair dawn
Of life from charitable voice? No sweet saying
To set my dull and sadden'd spirit playing!
No hand to toy with mine? No lips so sweet
That I may worship them? No eyelids meet
To twinkle on my bosom? No one dies
Before me, till from these enslaving eyes
Redemption sparkles!—I am sad and lost.”

Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been tost
Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,
Warm mountaineer! for canst thou only bear
A woman's sigh alone and in distress?
See not her charms! Is Phoebe passionless?
Phoebe is fairer far—O gaze no more:—
Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store,
Behold her panting in the forest grass!
Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass
For tenderness the arms so idly lain

Amongst them? Feelest not a kindred pain,
 To see such lovely eyes in swimming search
 After some warm delight, that seems to perch
 Dovelike in the dim cell lying beyond
 Their upper lids?—Hist!

“O for Hermes’ wand,
 To touch this flower into human shape!
 That woodland Hyacinthus could escape
 From his green prison, and here kneeling down,
 Call me his queen, his second life’s fair crown!
 Ah me, how I could love!—My soul doth melt
 For the unhappy youth—Love! I have felt
 So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender
 To what my own full thoughts had made too tender,
 That but for tears my life had fled away!—
 Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day,
 And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,
 There is no lightning, no authentic dew
 But in the eye of love: there’s not a sound,
 Melodious howsoever, can confound
 The heavens and earth in one to such a death
 As doth the voice of love: there’s not a breath
 Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,
 Till it has panted round, and stolen a share
 Of passion from the heart!”—

Upon a bough
 He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now
 Thirst for another love: O impious,
 That he can even dream upon it thus!
 Thought he, “Why am I not as are the dead,
 Since to a woe like this I have been led

Through the dark earth, and through the wondrous
sea?

Goddess! I love thee not the less : from thee
By Juno's smile I turn not—no, no, no—
While the great waters are at ebb and flow,—
I have a triple soul ! O fond pretence—
For both, for both my love is so immense,
I feel my heart is cut in twain for them."

And so he groan'd, as one by beauty slain.
The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see
Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously.
He sprang from his green covert: there she lay,
Sweet as a musk-rose upon new-made hay;
With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes
Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries:
"Fair damsel, pity me! forgive that I
Thus violate thy bower's sanctity!
O pardon me, for I am full of grief—
Grief born of thee, young angel! fairest thief!
Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith
I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith
Thou art my executioner, and I feel
Loving and hatred, misery and weal,
Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,
And all my story that much passion slew me;
Do smile upon the evening of my days;
And, for my tortured brain begins to crase,
Be thou my nurse; and let me understand
How dying I shall kiss that lily hand.—
Dost weep for me! Then should I be content.
Scowl on, ye fates! until the firmament

Outblackens Erebus, and the full-cavern'd earth
Crumbles into itself. By the cloud-girth
Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst
To meet oblivion."—As her heart would burst
The maiden sobb'd awhile, and then replied:
"Why must such desolation betide
As that thou speakest of? Are not these green nooks
Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks
Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush,
Schooling its half-fledged little ones to brush
About the dewy forest, whisper tales?—
Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails
Will slime the rose to-night. Though if thou wilt,
Methinks 'twould be a guilt—a very guilt—
Not to companion thee, and sigh away
The light—the dusk—the dark—till break of day!"
"Dear lady," said Endymion, "'tis past:
I love thee! and my days can never last.
That I may pass in patience still speak:
Let me have music dying, and I seek
No more delight—I bid adieu to all.
Didst thou not after other climates call,
And murmur about Indian streams?"—Then she,
Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,
For pity sang this roundelay—

"O Sorrow!

Why dost borrow

The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?—

To give maiden blushes

To the white rose bushes?

Or is it thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

“ O Sorrow!

Why dost borrow

The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye?—

To give the glow-worm light?

Or, on a moonless night,

To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry?

“ O Sorrow!

Why dost borrow

The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?—

To give at evening pale

Unto the nightingale,

That thou mayst listen the cold dew among?

“ O Sorrow!

Why dost borrow

Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?

A lover would not tread

A cowslip on the head,

Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—

Nor any drooping flower

Held sacred for thy bower,

Wherever he may sport himself and play.

“ To Sorrow,

I bade good morrow,

And thought to leave her far away behind;

But cheerly, cheerly,

She loves me dearly;

She is so constant to me, and so kind :

I would deceive her,

And so leave her,

But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

“Beneath my palm-trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept—

And so I kept
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
Cold as my fears.

“Beneath my palm-trees, by the river side
I sat a weeping: what enamour’d bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm-trees by a river side?

“And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers: the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
’Twas Bacchus and his crew!
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
’Twas Bacchus and his kin!
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crown’d with green leaves, and faces all on flame;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,
To scare thee, Melancholy!
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly
By shepherds is forgotten, when in June,
Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon:—
I rush’d into the folly!

“Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,

With sidelong laughing ;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite ;
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
Tipsily quaffing.

" Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye,
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
Your lutes, and gentler fate?
' We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,
A conquering!
Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide:—
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our wild minstrelsy! "

" Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came ye,
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
Your nuts in oak-tree cleft?—
' For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
And cold mushrooms;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;
Great god of breathless cups and chirping mirth!
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our mad minstrelsy! "

" Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,

Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
 With Asian elephants:
Onward these myriads—with song and dance.
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil:
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
 Nor care for wind and tide.

“Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains;
A three days' journey in a moment done;
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
 On spleenful unicorn.

“I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
 Before the vine-wreath crown!
I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing
 To the silver cymbals' ring!
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
 Old Tartary the fierce!
The kings of Ind their jewel-sceptres vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearly hail;
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
 And all his priesthood moans,
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.
Into these regions came I, following him,
Sick-hearted, weary—so I took a whim
To stray away into these forests drear,

Alone, without a peer :
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

“ Young Stranger !
I've been a ranger
In search of pleasure throughout every clime ;
Alas ! 'tis not for me :
Bewitch'd I sure must be,
To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

“ Come then, Sorrow,
Sweetest Sorrow !
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast :
I thought to leave thee,
And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best.

“ There is not one,
No, no, not one
But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid ;
Thou art her mother,
And her brother,
Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade.”

O, what a sigh she gave in finishing,
And look, quite dead to every worldly thing !
Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her :
And listen'd to the wind that now did stir
About the crisped oaks full drearily,
Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
Remember'd from its velvet summer song.
At last he said : “ Poor lady ! how thus long

Have I been able to endure that voice?
 Fair Melody! kind Syren! I've no choice;
 I must be thy sad servant evermore:
 I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.
 Alas, I must not think—by Phœbe, no!
 Let me not think, soft Angel! shall it be so?
 Say, beautifullest, shall I never think?
 O thou couldst foster me beyond the brink
 Of recollection! make my watchful care
 Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair!
 Do gently murder half my soul, and I
 Shall feel the other half so utterly!—
 I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth;
 O let it blush so ever: let it soothe
 My madness! let it mantle rosy-warm
 With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm.
 This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is;
 And this is sure thine other softling—this
 Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near!
 Wilt fall asleep? O let me sip that tear!
 And whisper one sweet word that I may know
 This is this world—sweet dewy blossom!"—WOE!
 WOE! WOE TO THAT ENDYMION! WHERE IS HE?—
 Even these words went echoing dismally
 Through the wide forest—a most fearful tone
 Like one repenting in his latest moan;
 And while it died away a shade pass'd by,
 As of a thunder-cloud. When arrows fly
 Through the thick branches, poor ring-doves sleek
 forth
 Their timid necks and tremble; so these both
 Leant to each other trembling, and sat so

Waiting for some destruction—when lo !
Foot-feather'd Mercury appear'd sublime
Beyond the tall tree tops ; and in less time
Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he dropp'd
Towards the ground ; but rested not, nor stopp'd
One moment from his home : only the sword
He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward
Swifter than sight was gone—even before
The teeming earth a sudden witness bore
Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear
Above the crystal circlings white and clear ;
And catch the cheated eye in wild surpris,
How they can dive in sight and unseen rise—
So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-black,
Each with large dark blue wings upon his back.
The youth of Caria placed the lovely dame
On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame
The other's fierceness. Through the air they flew,
High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew
Exhaled to Phœbus' lips, away they are gone,
Far from the earth away—unseen, alone,
Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free
The buoyant life of song can floating be
Above their heads, and follow them untired.
Muse of my native land ! am I inspired ?
This is the giddy air, and I must spread
Wide pinions to keep here ; nor do I dread
Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance
Precipitous : I have beneath my glance
Those towering horses and their mournful freight.
Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await
Fearless for power of thought, without thine aid ?

There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade
From some approaching wonder, and behold
Those winged steeds, with snorting nostrils bold
Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire,
Dying to embers from their native fire!

There curl'd a purple mist around them; soon,
It seem'd as when around the pale new moon
Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping willow:
'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on pillow,
For the first time, since he came nigh dead-born
From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn
Had he left more forlorn; for the first time,
He felt aloof the day and morning's prime—
Because into his depth Cimmerian
There came a dream, showing how a young man,
Ere a lean bat could plump its wintry skin,
Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win
An immortality, and how espouse
Jove's daughter, and be reckon'd of his house.
Now was he slumbering towards heaven's gate,
That he might at the threshold one hour wait
'To hear the marriage melodies, and then
Sink downward to his dusky cave again;
His litter of smooth semiluculent mist,
Diversely tinged with rose and amethyst,
Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought;
And scarcely for one moment could be caught
His sluggish form reposing motionless.
Those two on winged steeds, with all the stress
Of vision search'd for him, as one would look
Athwart the sallows of a river nook

To catch a glance at silver-throated eels, - -
Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals
His rugged forehead in a mantle pale,
With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale,
Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they foster'd are
Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop
Their full-vein'd ears, nostrils blood wide, and stop;
Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread
Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,—
And on those pinions, level in mid-air,
Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair.
Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle
Upon a calm sea drifting: and meanwhile
The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold! he walks
On heaven's pavement, brotherly he talks
To divine powers: from his hand full fain
Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain:
He tries the nerve of Phœbus' golden bow,
And asketh where the golden apples grow:
Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,
And strives in vain to unsettle and wield
A Jovian thunderbolt: arch Hebe brings
A full-brimm'd goblet, dances lightly, sings
And tantalises long; at last he drinks,
And lost in pleasure, at her feet he sinks,
Touching with dazzled lips her star-light hand,
He blows a bugle,—an ethereal band
Are visible above: the Seasons four,—
Green-kirtled Spring, flush Summer, golden store
In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar,

Join dance with shadowy Hours, while still the blast,
In swells unmitigated, still doth last
To sway their floating morris. "Whose is this?
Whose bugle?" he inquires: they smile—"O Dis!
Why is this mortal here? Dost thou not know
Its mistress' lips? Not thou?—'Tis Dian's: lo!
She rises crescented!" He looks, 'tis she,
His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea,
And air, and pains, and care, and suffering;
Good-bye to all but love! Then doth he spring
Towards her, and awakes—and, strange, o'erhead,
Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,
Beheld awake his very dream: the gods
Stood smiling; merry Hebe laughs and nods;
And Phœbe bends towards him crescented.
O state perplexing! On the pinion bed,
Too well awake, he feels the panting side
Of his delicious lady. He who died
For soaring too audacious in the sun,
Where that same treacherous wax began to run,
Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion.
His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne,
To that fair-shadow'd passion pulsed its way—
Ah, what perplexity! Ah, well a-day!
So fond, so beauteous was his bed-fellow,
He could not help but kiss her: then he grew
Awhile forgetful of all beauty save
Young Phœbe's, golden hair'd; and so 'gan crave
Forgiveness: yet he turn'd once more to look
At the sweet sleeper,—all his soul was shook,—
She press'd his hand in slumber; so once more
He could not help but kiss her and adore.

At this the shadow wept, melting away.
The Latmian started up : " Bright goddess, s'ay!
Search my most hidden breast! By truth's own tongue
I have no dædale heart ; why is it wrung
To desperation? Is there nought for me,
Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?"

These words awoke the stranger of dark tresses:
Her dawning love-look rapt Endymion blesses
With 'haviour soft. Sleep yawn'd from underneath
" Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe
This murky phantasm! thou contented seem'st
Pillow'd in lovely idleness, nor dream'st
What horrors may discomfort thee and me.
Ah, shouldst thou die from my heart-treachery!—
Yet did she merely weep—her gentle soul
Hath no revenge in it ; as it is whole
In tenderness, would I were whole in love!
Can I prize thee, fair maid, all price above,
Even when I feel as true as innocence!
I do, I do.—What is this soul then? Whence
Came it? It does not seem my own, and I
Have no self-passion or identity.
Some fearful end must be ; where, where is it?
By Nemesis! I see my spirit flit
Alone about the dark—Forgive me, sweet!
Shall we away?" He roused the steeds; they beat
Their wings chivalrous into the clear air,
Leaving old Sleep within his vapoury lair.

The good-night blush of eve was waning slow,
And Vesper, risen star, began to throe

In the dusk heavens silvery, when they
Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy.
Nor did speed hinder converse soft and strange—
Eternal oaths and vows they interchange,
In such wise, in such temper, so aloof
Up in the winds, beneath a starry
So witless of their doom, that verily
'Tis well nigh past man's search their hearts to see ;
Whether they wept, or laugh'd, or grieved, or toy'd--
Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow cloy'd.

Fu! facing their swift flight, from ebon streak,
The moon put forth a little diamond peak,
No bigger than an unobserved star,
Or tiny point of fairy scimeter ;
Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie
Her silver sandals, ere deliciously
She bow'd into the heavens her timid head.
Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled,
While to his lady meek the Carian turn'd,
To mark if her dark eyes had yet discern'd
This beauty in its birth—Despair ! despair !
He saw her body fading gaunt and spare
In the cold moonshine. Straight he seized her wrist ;
It melted from his grasp ; her hand he kiss'd,
And, horror ! kiss'd his own—he was alone.
Her steed a little higher soar'd, and then
Dropt hawk-wise to the earth.

There lies a den,
Beyond the seeming confines of the space
Made for the soul to wander in and trace

Its own existence, of remotest glooms.
 Dark regions are around it, where the tombs
 Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce
 One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce
 Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart:
 And in these regions many a venom'd dart
 At random flies; they are the proper home
 Of every ill: the man is yet to come
 Who hath not journey'd in this native hell.
 But few have ever felt how calm and well
 Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
 There anguish does not sting, nor pleasure pall;
 Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate,
 Yet all is still within and desolate.
 Beset with painful gusts, within ye hear
 No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier
 The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none
 Who strive therefore; on the sudden it is won.
 Just when the sufferer begins to burn,
 Then it is free to him; and from an urn,
 Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught—
 Young Semele such richness never quaff'd
 In her maternal longing. Happy gloom!
 Dark Paradise! where pale becomes the bloom
 Of health by dew; where silence dreariest
 Is most articulate; where hopes infest;
 Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep,
 Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.
 O happy spirit-home! O wondrous soul!
 Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
 In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian!
 For, never since thy griefs and woes began,

Hast thou felt so content : a grievous feud
Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude.
Ay, his lull'd soul was there, although upborne
With dangerous speed : and so he did not mourn
Because he knew not whither he was going.
So happy was he, not the aerial blowing
Of trumpets at clear parley from the east
Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast.
They stung the feather'd horse ; with fierce alarm
He flapped towards the sound. Alas ! no charm
Could lift Endymion's head, or he had view'd
A skyey mask, a pinion'd multitude,—
And silvery was its passing : voices sweet
Warbling the while as if to lull and greet
The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they
While past the vision went in bright array.

“Who, who from Dian's feast would be away ?
For all the golden bowers of the day
Are empty left ? Who, who away would be
From Cynthia's wedding and festivity ?
Not Hesperus : lo ! upon his silver wings
He leans away for highest heaven and sings,
Snapping his lucid fingers merrily !—
Ah, Zephyrus ! art here, and Flora too ?
Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,
Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,
Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill
 Your baskets high
With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,
Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,
Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme ;

Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,
All gather'd in the dewy morning : hie

Away ! fly, fly !—

Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,
Aquarius ! to whom king Jove has given
Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd wings,
Two fanlike fountains,—thine illuminings

For Dian play :

Dissolve the frozen purity of air ;
Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare
Show cold through watery pinions ; make more bright
The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night :

Haste, haste away !

Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see !
And of the Bear has Pollux mastery :
A third is in the race ! who is the third,
Speeding away swift as the eagle bird ?

The ramping Centaur !

The Lion's mane's on end : the Bear how fierce !
The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce
Some enemy : far forth his bow is bent
Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,

Pale unrelentor,

When he shall hear the wedding lutes a playing — .
Andromeda ! sweet woman ! why delaying
So timidly among the stars : come hither !
Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither

They all are going.

Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd,
Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.
Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral :
Ye shall for ever live and love, for all

Thy tears are flowing.—
By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo!"—

More
Endymion heard not : down his steed him bore,
Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill.
"Alas !" said he, "were I but always borne
Through dangerous winds, had but my footsteps worn
A path in hell, for ever would I bless
Horrors which nourish an uneasiness
For my own sullen conquering ; to him
Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is dim,
Sorrow is but a shadow : now I see
The grass ; I feel the solid ground—Ah, me !
It is thy voice—divinest ! Where?—who? who
Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew ?
Behold upon this happy earth we are ;
Let us aye love each other ; let us fare
On forest-fruits, and never, never go
Among the abodes of mortals here below,
Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny !
Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,
But with thy beauty will I deaden it.
Where didst thou melt to ? By thee will I sit
For ever : let our fate stop here—a kid
I on this spot will offer : Pan will bid
Us live in peace, in love and peace among
His forest wildernesses. I have clung
To nothing, loved a nothing, nothing seen
Or felt but a great dream ! Oh, I have been

Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
Against all elements, against the tie
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
Of heroes gone ! Against his proper glory
Has my own soul conspired : so my story
Will I to children utter, and repent.
There never lived a mortal man, who bent
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
But starved and died. My sweetest Indian, here,
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
My life from too thin breathing : gone and past
Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell !
And air of visions, and the monstrous swell
Of visionary seas ! No, never more
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.
Adieu, my daintiest Dream ! although so vast
My love is still for thee. The hour may come
When we shall meet in pure elysium.
On earth I may not love thee, and therefore
Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store
All through the teeming year : so thou wilt shine
On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,
And bless our simple lives. My Indian bliss !
My river-lily bud ! one human kiss !
One sigh of real breath—one gentle squeeze,
Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees,
And warm with dew at ooze from living blood !
Whither didst melt ? Ah, what of that !—all good
We'll talk about—no more of dreaming.—Now,
Where shall our dwelling be ? Under the brow

Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none ;
And where dark yew-trees, as we rustle through,
Will drop their scarlet-berry cups of dew !
O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place !
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclined :
For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find,
And by another, in deep dell below,
See, through the trees, a little river go
All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.
Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring,
And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,—
Cresses that grow where no man may them see,
And sorrel untorn by the dew-claw'd stag :
Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag,
That thou mayst always know whither I roam,
When it shall please thee in our quiet home
To listen and think of love. Still let me speak ;
Still let me dive into the joy I seek,—
For yet the past doth prison me. The rill,
Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill
With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn,
And thou shalt feed them from the squirrel's barn.
Its bottom will I strew with amber shells,
And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells.
Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine,
And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine.
I will entice this crystal rill to trace
Love's silver name upon the meadow's face.
I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire ;
And to god Phœbus, for a golden lyre ;

To Enpress Dian, for a hunting spear;
To Vesper, for a taper silver-clear,
That I may see thy beauty through the night;
To Flora, and a nightingale shall light
Tame on thy finger; to the River-gods,
And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods
Of gold, and lines of naiads' long bright tress.
Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness!
Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be
'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to thee:
Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak
Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek,
Trembling or steadfastness to this same voice,
And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice:
And that affectionate light, those diamond things,
Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl springs
Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.
Say, is not bliss within our perfect seizure?
O that I could not doubt!"

The mountaineer

Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear
His brier'd path to some tranquillity.
It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye,
And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow;
Answering thus, just as the golden morrow
Beam'd upward from the valleys of the east:
"O that the flutter of his heart had ceased,
Or the sweet name of love had pass'd away!
Young feather'd tyrant! by a swift decay
Wilt thou devote this body to the earth:
And I do think that at my very birth

I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly;
For at the first, first dawn and thought of thee,
With uplift hands I bless'd the stars of heaven.
Art thou not cruel? ever have I striven
To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do!
When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew
Favour from thee, and so I kisses gave
To the void air, bidding them find out love:
But when I came to feel how far above
All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,
All earthly pleasure, all imagined good,
Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,—
Even then that moment, at the thought of this,
Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers,
And languish'd there three days. Ye milder powers,
Am I not cruelly wrong'd? Believe, believe
Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave
With my own fancies garlands of sweet life,
Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife!
I may not be thy love: I am forbidden—
Indeed I am—thwarted, affrighted, chidden,
By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath.
Twice hast thou ask'd whither I went: henceforth
Ask me no more! I may not utter it,
Nor may I be thy love. We might commit
Ourselves at once to vengeance; we might die;
We might embrace and die: voluptuous thought!
Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught
In trammels of perverse deliciousness.
No, no, that shall not be: thee will I bless,
And bid a long adieu."

The Carian

No word return'd : both lovelorn, silent, war,
Into the valleys green together went.
Far wandering, they were perforce content
To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree;
Nor at each other gazed, but heavily
Pored on it hazel cirque of shedded leaves

Endymion! unhappy! it nigh grieves
Me to behold thee thus in last extreme:
Enskied ere this, but truly that I deem
Truth the best music in a first-born song.
Thy lute-voiced brother will I sing ere long,
And thou shalt aid—hast thou not aided me?
Yes, moonlight Emperor! felicity
Has been thy meed for many thousand years;
Yet often have I, on the brink of tears,
Mourn'd as if yet thou wert a forester;—
Forgetting the old tale.

He did not stir

His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small pulse
Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls
Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays
Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.
A little onward ran the very stream
By which he took his first soft poppy dream;
And on the very bark 'gainst which he leant
A crescent he had carved, and round it spent
His skill in little stars. The teeming tree
Had swoll'n and green'd the pious character,
But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope
Up which he had not fear'd the antelope;

And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade
He had not with his tamed leopards play'd ;
Nor could an arrow light, or javelin,
Fly in the air where his had never been—
And yet he knew it not.

O treachery!

Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye
With all his sorrowing? He sees her not.
But who so stares on him? His sister sure!
Peona of the woods!—Can she endure?—
Impossible—how dearly they embrace!
His lady smiles ; delight is in her face ;
It is no treachery.

“ Dear brother mine!

Endymion, weep not so! Why shouldst thou pine
When all great Latmos so exalt will be?
Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly;
And speak not one pale word, and sigh no more.
Sure I will not believe thou hast such store
Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again.
Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain,
Come hand in hand with one so beautiful.
Be happy both of you! for I will pull
The flowers of autumn for your coronals.
Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls;
And when he is restored, thou, fairest dame,
Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame
To see ye thus,—not very, very sad?
Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad:
O feel as if it were a common day;
Free-voiced as one who never was away.

No tongue shall ask, whence come ye? but ye shall
Be gods of your own rest imperial.
Not even I, for one whole month, will pry
Into the hours that have pass'd us by,
Since in my arbour I did sing to thee.
O Hermes! on this very night will be
A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light;
For the soothsayers old saw yesternight
Good visions in the air,—whence will befall,
As say these sages, health perpetual
To shepherds and their flocks; and furthermore,
In Dian's face they read the gentle lore:
Therefore for her these vesper-carols are.
Our friends will all be there from nigh and far.
Many upon thy death have ditties made;
And many, even now, their foreheads shade
With cypress, on a day of sacrifice.
New singing for our maids shalt thou devise,
And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's brows,
Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse
This wayward brother to his rightful joys!
His eyes are no thee bent, as thou didst poise
His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray,
To lure—Endymion, dear brother, say
What ails thee?" He could bear no more, and so
Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,
And twang'd it inwardly, and calmly said:
"I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid!
My only visitor! not ignorant though,
That those deceptions which for pleasure go
'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be:
But there are higher ones I may not see,

If impiously an earthly realm I take.
Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake
Night after night, and day by day, until
Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.
Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me
More happy than betides mortality.
A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave,
Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave
Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell.
Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper well ;
For to thy tongue will I all health confide.
And for my sake, let this young maid abide
With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone,
Peona, mayst return to me. I own
This may sound strangely: but when, dearest girl,
Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl
Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair !
Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share
This sister's love with me ?" Like one resign'd
And bent by circumstances, and thereby blind
In self-commitment, thus, that meek unknown :
" Ay, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,
Of jubilee to Dian :—truth I heard !
Well then, I see there is no little bird,
Tender soever, but is Jove's own care.
Long have I sought for rest, and unaware,
Behold I find it ! so exalted too !
So after my own heart ! I knew, I knew
There was a place untenanted in it ;
In that same void white Chastity shall sit,
And monitor me nightly to lone slumber.
With sanest lips I vow me to the number

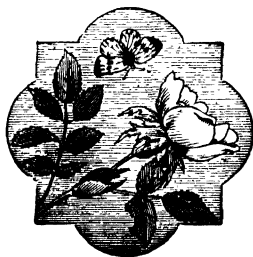
Of Dian's sisterhood ; and kind lady,
With thy good help, this very night shall see
My future days to her fane consecrate."

As feels a dreamer what doth most create
His own particular fright, so these three felt :
Or like one who, in after ages, knelt
To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine
After a little sleep : or when in mine
Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends
Who know him not. Each diligently bends
Towards common thoughts and things for very fear ;
Striving their ghastly malady to cheer,
By thinking it a thing of yes and no,
That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow
Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last
Endymion said : " Are not our fates all cast ?
Why stand we here ? Adieu, ye tender pair !
Adieu !" Whereat those maidens, with wild stare,
Walk'd dizzily away. Pained and hot
His eyes went after them, until they got
Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw,
In one swift moment, would what then he saw
Engulf for ever. " Stay !" he cried, " ah, stay !
Turn, damsels ! hist ! one word I have to say :
Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again.
It is a thing I dote on : so I'd fain,
Peona, ye should hand in hand repair,
Into those holy groves that silent are
Behind great Dian's temple. I'll be yon,
At vesper's earliest twinkle—they are gone—
But once, once, once again—" At this he prest

His hands against his face, and then did rest
His head upon a mossy hillock green
And so remain'd as he a corpse had been
All the long day ; save when he scanty lifted
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted
With the slow move of time,—sluggish and weary
Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,
Had reach'd the river's brim. Then up he rose,
And, slowly as that very river flows,
Walk'd towards the temple-grove with this lament :
“ Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent
Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall
Before the serene father of them all
Bows down his summer head below the west.
Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest,
But at the setting I must bid adieu
To her for the last time. Night will strew
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,
And with them shall I die ; nor much it grieves
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.
Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord
Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour-roses ;
My kingdom's at its death, and just it is
That I should die with it : so in all this
We miscall grief, bale, sorrow, heart-break, woe,
What is there to plain of? By Titan's foe
I am but rightly served.” So saying, he
Tripped lightly on, in sort of deathful glee ;
Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun,
As though they jests had been : nor had he done
His laugh at nature's holy countenance,

Until that grove appear'd, as if perchance,
And then his tongue with sober seemlihed
Gave utterance as he enter'd : " Ha !" he said,
" King of the butterflies ; but by this gloom,
And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom,
This dusk religion, pomp of solitude,
And the Promethean clay by thief endued,
By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head
Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed
Myself to things of light from infancy ;
And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,
Is sure enough to make a mortal man
Grow impious." So he inwardly began
On things for which no wording can be found ,
Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd
Beyond the reach of music : for the choir
Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough brier
Nor muffling thicket interposed to dull
The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full,
Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles.
He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles,
Wan as primroses gather'd at midnight
By chilly-finger'd spring. Unhappy wight !
" Endymion !" said Peona, " we are here !
What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier ?
Then he embraced her, and his lady's hand
Press'd, saying : " Sister, I would have command,
If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate."
At which that dark-eyed stranger stood elate
And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love,
To Endymion's amaze : " By Cupid's dove,
And so thou shalt ! and by the lily truth

Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth!"
And as she spake, into her face there came
Light, as reflected from a silver flame:
Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display
Full golden; in her eyes a brighter day
Dawn'd blue, and full of love. Aye, he beheld
Phœbe, his passion! joyous she upheld
Her lucid bow, continuing thus: "Drear, drear
Has our delaying been; but foolish fear
Withheld me first; and then decrees of fate;
And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state
Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd-for change
Be spiritualised. Peona, we shall range
These forests, and to thee they safe shall be
As was thy cradle; hither shalt thou flee
To meet us many a time." Next Cynthia bright
Peona kiss'd, and bless'd with fair good night:
Her brother kiss'd her too, and knelt adown
Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon.
She gave her fair hands to him, and behold,
Before three swiftest kisses he had told,
They vanish'd far away!—Peona went
Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment





LAMIA.

PART I.

UPON a time, before the faery broods
Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,
Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,
Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslipp'd lawns,
The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft :
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.
For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt ;
At whose white feet the languid Tritons pour'd
Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored
Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,
And in those meads where sometimes she might
haunt,

Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose.
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet!
So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
Burn'd from his winged heels to either ear,
That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.
From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
And wound with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepared her secret
bed:

In vain; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
All pain but pity: thus the lone voice spake:
"When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake!
When move in a sweet body fit for life,
And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!"
The God, dove-footed, glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;

Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd ;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
She seem'd at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:
And for her eyes—what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
And thus ; while Hermes on his pinions lay,
Like a stoop'd falcon ere he takes his prey:

“Fair Hermes! crown'd with feathers, fluttering light,
I had a splendid dream of thee last night;
I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
The only sad one; for thou didst not hear
The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chanting clear,
Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious
moan.

I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart,

Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art!
Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?"
Whereat the star of Lethe not delay'd
His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired :
"Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high-inspired !
Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—
Where she doth breathe!" "Bright planet, thou hast
said,"

Return'd the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God!"
"I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,
And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!"
Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms
blown.

Then thus again the brilliance feminine:
"Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet:
From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,
She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
And by my power is her beauty veil'd
To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd
By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs.
Pale grew her immortality, for woe
Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
I took compassion on her, bade her steep
Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep
Her loveliness invisible, yet free

To wander as she loves, in liberty.
Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!"
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
Ravish'd she lifted her Circean head,
Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lisping said,
"I was a woman, let me have once more
A woman's shape, and charming as before.
I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!
Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is
Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now."
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
She breathed upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green
It was no dream; or say a dream it was,
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
One warm, flush'd moment, hovering, it might seem
Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burn'd;
Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd
To the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm,
Delicate, put to proof the lithe Caducean charm.
So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
Full of adoring tears and blandishment,
And towards her stept: she, like a moon in wane,
Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
That faints into itself at evening hour:
But the God fostering her chilled hand,

She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,
And, like new flowers at morning song of bees
Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees.
Into the green-recessed woods they flew ;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change ; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,
Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent ;
Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,
Hot, glazed, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one
cooling tear.

The colours all inflamed throughout her train,
She writhed about, convulsed with scarlet pain :
A deep volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder-mooned body's grace ;
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede :
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
Eclipsed her crescents, and lick'd up her stars :
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent : of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
Still shone her crown ; that vanish'd, also she
Melted and disappear'd as suddenly ;
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
Cried, " Lycius ! gentle Lycius !" — borne aloft
With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
These words dissolved : Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
She fled into that valley they pass o'er
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore ;
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
The rugged founts of the Peræan rills,
And of that other ridge whose barren back
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,
Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
By a clear pool, wherein she passioned
To see herself escaped from so sore ills,
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flower'd lea
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy:
A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core:
Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counterchange;
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art ;
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,
And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so fairly

By the wayside to linger, we shall see;
But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
Of all she list, strange or magnificent:
How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went;
Whether to faint Elysium, or where
Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair
Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair;
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine;
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine
Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.
And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim
He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quay-stones with her brazen prow
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchor'd; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense
rare.

Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire;
For by some freakful chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk,

Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:
Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless, at first, but ere eve's star appear'd
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen
She stood: he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eyes
Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white
Turn'd—syllabing thus, "Ah, Lycius bright!
And will you leave me on the hills alone?
Lycius look back! and be some pity shown."
He did; not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice;
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seem'd he had loved them a whole summer long:
And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore;
Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure:
"Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see
Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
For pity do not this sad heart belie—
Even as thou vanishest so I shall die.
Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
To thy far wishes will thy streams obey:
Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain,

Alone they can drink up the morning rain ;
Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine ?
So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine
Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade,
Thy memory will waste me to a shade :—
For pity do not melt ! ” — “ If I should stay,”
Said Lamia, “ here, upon this floor of clay,
And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
What canst thou say or do of charm enough
To dull the nice remembrance of my home ?
Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
Empty of immortality and bliss !
Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
That finer spirits cannot breathe below
In human climes, and live : Alas ! poor youth,
What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
My essence ? What serener palaces,
Where I may all my many senses please,
And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease ;
It cannot be—Adieu ! ” So said, she rose
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
The amorous promise of her lone complain,
Swoon'd murmuring of love, and pale with pain.
The cruel lady, without any show
Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe,
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
The life she had so tangled in her mesh :

And as he from one trance was wakening
Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and everything,
A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting
fires.

And then she whisper'd in such trembling tone,
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguish'd days,
Use other speech than looks ; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
For that she was a woman, and without
Any more subtle fluid in her veins
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
And next she wonder'd how his eyes could miss
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retired, and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love ; yet in content
Till she saw him, as once she pass'd him by,
Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully
At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heap'd
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap'd
Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before
The Adonian feast ; whereof she saw no more,
But wept alone those days, for why should she adore ?
Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays ;
Then from amaze into delight he fell
To hear her whisper woman's lore so well ;
And every word she spake enticed him on

To unperplex'd delight and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
Of the sweets of Fairies, Peris, Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lineal indeed
From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judged, and judged aright.
That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.
Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
Marrying to every word a twin-born sigh ;
And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her **sweet**,
If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces ; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprised
They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all.
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,
To the wide-spreaded night above her **towers**.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companion'd or alone ; while **many a light**

Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them cluster'd in the corniced shade
Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near
With curl'd gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald
crown,
Slow-stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown .
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled : " Ah," said he,
" Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully ?
Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew ?" --
" I'm wearied," said fair Lamia : " tell me who
Is that old man ? I cannot bring to mind
His features :—Lycius ! wherefore did you blind
Yourself from his quick eyes ?" Lycius replied,
" 'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
And good instructor ; but to-night he seems
The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams "

While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,
Where hung a silver lamp whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
Mild as a star in water ; for so new
And so unsullied was the marble hue,
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds *Æolian*

Breathed from the hinges, as the ample span
 Of the wide doors disclosed a place unknown
 Some time to any, but those two alone,
 And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
 Were seen about the markets: none knew where
 They could inhabit; the most curious
 Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their
 house

And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,
 For truth's sake what woe afterwards befel,
 'Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus,
 Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

PART II.

LOVE in a hut, with water and a crust,
 Is—Love, forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust;
 Love in a palace is perhaps at last
 More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:--
 That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
 Hard for the non-elect to understand.
 Had Lycius lived to hand his story down,
 He might have given the moral a fresh frown,
 Or clench'd it quite: but too short was their bliss
 To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice
 hiss.

Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
 Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
 Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,

Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side
They were enthroned, in the even tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Floated into the room, and let appear
Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts :—there they reposed,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
Saving a tithe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost
slept;

When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harbour'd in
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, more than her empery
Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing
bell.

“Why do you sigh, fair creature?” whisper'd he:

“Why, do you think?” return'd she tenderly:

“You have deserted me; where am I now?”

Not in your heart while care weighs on your
brow:

No, no, you have dismiss'd me; and I go
From your breast houseless: ay, it must be so."

He answer'd, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,—

"My silver planet, both of eve and morn!
Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
While I am striving how to fill my heart
With deeper crimson, and a double smart?

How to entangle, trammel up and snare
Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there,
Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?

Ay, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.
My thoughts! shall I unveil them? Listen then!

What mortal hath a prize, that other men
May be confounded and abash'd withal,
But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestic,
And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice
Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
While through the thronged streets your bridal car
Wheels round its dazzling spokes."—The lady's
cheek

Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim;
Besides, for all his love, in self despite,

Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.
Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent—Ha, the serpent ! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she loved the tyranny,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
“Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my
truth,

I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee
Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
Or friends or kinsfolk on the citted earth,
To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?”
“I have no friends,” said Lamia, “no, not one;
My presence in wide Corinth hardly known:
My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
Even as you list invite your many guests;
But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
With any pleasure on me, do not bid
Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid.”
Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank,
Made close inquiry: from whose touch she shrank,

Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade
Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.

It was the custom then to bring away
The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
Veil'd, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
With other pageants: but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone
(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin),
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched
grace.

A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might
fade.

Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honour of the bride:
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branch'd one to one
All down the aisled place; and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to
wall.

So canopied, lay an untasted feast
 Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest,
 Silently paced about, and as she went,
 In pale contented sort of discontent,
 Mission'd her viewless servants to enrich
 The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.
 Between the tree-stems marbled plain at first,
 Came jasper panels ; then, anon, there burst
 Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
 And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
 Approving all, she faded at self-will,
 And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still,
 Complete and ready for the revels rude,
 When dreadful guests would come to spoil her
 solitude.

The day appear'd, and all the gossip rout.
 O senseless Lycius ! Madman ! wherefore flout
 The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,
 And show to common eyes these secret bowers ?
 The herd approach'd ; each guest, with busy
 brain,
 Arriving at the portal, gazed amain,
 And enter'd marvelling : for they knew the street,
 Remember'd it from childhood all complete
 Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
 That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne ;
 So in they hurried all, mazed, curious and keen :
 Save one, who look'd thereon with eye severe,
 And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere ;
 'Twas Apollonius : something too he laugh'd,
 As though some knotty problem, that had daft

His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
And solve and melt :—'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
His young disciple. "'Tis no common rule,
Lycius," said he, "for uninvited guest
To force himself upon you, and infest
With an unbidden presence the bright throng
Of younger friends ; yet must I do this wrong,
And you forgive me." Lycius blush'd and led
The old man through the inner doors broad-
spread ;
With reconciling words and courteous mien
Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume.
Before each lucid panel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerved upon the soft
Wool-woofed carpets : fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took
To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose
Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve sphered tables by silk seats insphered,
High as the level of a man's breast rear'd
On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine
Came from the gloomy tun with merry shine.

Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

When in an antechamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure press'd,
By ministering slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
Pour'd on his hair, they all moved to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed
Around the silken couches, wondering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could
spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greck a vowel'd under-song
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow ;
But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
Of powerful instruments:—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendour of the draperies,
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange ; for merry wine, sweet wine,
Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.
Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height ;
Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double
bright :
Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales deflower'd, or forest-trees branch-rent,

In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought
 High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought
 Of every guest ; that each, as he did please,
 Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?
 What for the sage, old Apollonius?
 Upon her aching forehead be there hung
 The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue ;
 And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
 The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim
 Into forgetfulness ; and, for the sage,
 Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
 War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
 At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
 There was an awful rainbow once in heaven :
 We know her woof, her texture ; she is given
 In the dull catalogue of common things.
 Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
 Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
 Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
 Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
 The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
 Scarce saw in all the room another face,
 Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
 Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look
 'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
 From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
 And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
 Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or a stir,

Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet
pride.

Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch.
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:
'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins;
Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.

"Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou
start?

Know'st thou that man?" Poor Lamia answer'd not.

He gazed into her eyes, and not a jot
Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal:
More, more he gazed: his human senses reel:
Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;
There was no recognition in those orbs.

"Lamia!" he cried—and no soft-toned reply.

The many heard, and the loud revelry
Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;
The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.

"Lamia!" he shriek'd; and nothing but the shriek
With its sad echo did the silence break.

"Begone, foul dream!" he cried, gazing again
In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
Wander'd on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek; no passion to illumine
The deep-recessed vision:—all was blight;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.

“Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man !
Turn them aside, wretch ! or the righteous ban
Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
Here represent their shadowy presences,
May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
Of painful blindness ; leaving thee forlorn,
In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
Of conscience, for their long-offended night,
For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
Corinthians ! look upon that gray-beard wretch !
Mark how, possess’d, his lashless eyelids stretch
Around his demon eyes ! Corinthians, see !
My sweet bride withers at their potency.”
“Fool !” said the sophist, in an under-tone
Gruff with contempt ; which a death-nighning moan
From Lycius answer’d, as heart-struck and lost,
He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
“Fool ! Fool !” repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor moved ; “from every ill
Of life have I preserved thee to this day,
And shall I see thee made a serpent’s prey ?”
Then Lamia breathed death-breath ; the sophist’s eye,
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging : she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motion’d him to be silent ; vainly so,
He look’d and look’d again a level—No !
“A serpent !” echoed he ; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanished :
And Lycius’ arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life, from that same night

On the high couch he lay!—his friends came round—
Supported him—no pulse or breath they found,
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.*

* “Philostratus, in his fourth book, *de Vita Apollonii*, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that, going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which, taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phœnician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him; but she, being fair and lovely, would die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her awhile to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus’ gold, described by Homer, no substance, but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant; many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece.”—BURTON’S *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 3, Sect. 2, Memb. I. Subs. I.





ISABELLA ; OR, THE POT OF BASIL ;

A STORY, FROM BOCCACCIO.

I.

FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel !

Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye !

They could not in the self-same mansion dwell

Without some stir of heart, some malady ;

They could not sit at meals but feel how well

It soothed each to be the other by ;

They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep,

But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

II.

With every morn their love grew tenderer,

With every eve deeper and tenderer still ;

He might not in house, field, or garden stir,

But her full shape would all his seeing fill ;

And his continual voice was pleasanter

To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill ;

Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,

She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

III.

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch,
Before the door had given her to his eyes;
And from her chamber-window he would catch
Her beauty farther than the falcon spies;
And constant as her vespers would he watch,
Because her face was turn'd to the same skies;
And with sick longing all the night outwear,
To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

IV.

A whole long month of May in this sad plight
Made their cheeks paler by the break of June:
"To-morrow will I bow to my delight,
To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon."—
"O may I never see another night,
Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune."—
So spake they to their pillows; but, alas,
Honeyless days and days did he let pass;

V.

Until sweet Isabella's untouch'd cheek
Fell sick within the rose's just domain,
Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek
By every lull to cool her infant's pain:
"How ill she is!" said he, "I may not speak,
And yet I will, and tell my love all plain:
If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,
And at the least 'twill startle off her cares."

VI.

So said he one fair morning, and all day
His heart beat awfully against his side;

And to his heart he inwardly did pray
For power to speak ; but still the ruddy tide
Stifled his voice, and pulsed resolve away—
Fever'd his high conceit of such a bride,
Yet brought him to the meekness of a child :
Alas ! when passion is both meek and wild !

VII.

So once more he had waked and anguished
A dreary night of love and misery,
If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed
To every symbol on his forehead high ;
She saw it waxing very pale and dead,
And straight all flush'd ; so, lisped tenderly,
“Lorenzo !”—here she ceased her timid quest,
But in her tone and look he read the rest

VIII.

“O Isabella ! I can half perceive
That I may speak my grief into thine ear ;
If thou didst ever anything believe,
Believe how I love thee, believe how near
My soul is to its doom : I would not grieve
Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear
Thine eyes by gazing ; but I cannot live
Another night, and not my passion thrive.

IX.

‘Love ! thou art leading me from wintry cold,
Lady ! thou leadest me to summer clime,
And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time.”

So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,
And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme:
Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.

X.

Parting they seem'd to tread upon the air,
Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart
Only to meet again more close, and share
The inward fragrance of each other's heart,
She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair
Sang, of delicious love and honey'd dart;
He with light steps went up a western hill,
And bade the sun farewell, and joy'd his fill.

XI.

All close they met again, before the dusk
Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
All close they met, all eves, before the dusk
Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,
Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
Ah! better had it been for ever so,
Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

XII.

Were they unhappy then?—It cannot be—
Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
Too much of pity after they are dead,
Too many doleful stories do we see,
Whose matter in bright gold were best be read;

Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse
Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

XIII.

But, for the general award of love,
The little sweet doth kill much bitterness;
Though Dido silent is in under-grove,
And Isabella's was a great distress,
Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove
Was not embalm'd, this truth is not the less—
Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers,
Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

XIV.

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
Enriched from ancestral merchandise,
And for them many a weary hand did swelt
In torched mines and noisy factories,
And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt
In blood from stinging whip ; with hollow eyes
Many all day in dazzling river stood,
To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

XV.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
And went all naked to the hungry shark ;
For them his ears gush'd blood ; for them in death
The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark
Lay full of darts ; for them alone did seethe
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark :
Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel,
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

XVI.

Why were they proud? Because their marble founts
 Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears?
 Why were they proud? Because fair orange mounts
 Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?
 Why were they proud? Because red-lined accounts
 Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?
 Why were they proud? again we ask aloud,
 Why in the name of Glory were they proud?

XVII.

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired
 In hungry pride and gainful cowardice,
 As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,
 Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies;
 The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired
 And pannier'd mules for ducats and old lies—
 Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away,—
 Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

XVIII.

How was it these same leger-men could spy
 Fair Isabella in her downy nest?
 How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye
 A straying from his toil? Hot Egypt's pest
 Into their vision covetous and sly!
 How could these money-bags see east and west?
 Yet so they did—and every dealer fair
 Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

XIX.

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio!
 Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,

And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
Now they can no more hear thy ghittern's tune,
For venturing syllables that ill beseem
The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

XX.

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale
Shall move on soberly, as it is meet ;
There is no other crime, no mad assail
To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet ;
But it is done—succeed the verse or fail—
To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet ;
To stead thee as a verse in English tongue.
An echo of thee in the north-wind sung

XXI.

These brethren having found by many signs
What love Lorenzo for their sister had,
And how she loved him too, each unconfines
His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad
That he, the servant of their trade designs,
Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
To some high noble and his olive-trees.

XXII.

And many a jealous conference had they,
And many times they bit their lips alone,
Before they fix'd upon a surest way
To make the youngster for his crime atone ;

And at the last, these men of cruel clay
Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone;
For they resolved in some forest dim
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

XXIII.

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant
Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade
Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent
Their footing through the dews ; and to him said,
“ You seem there in the quiet of content,
Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade
Calm speculation ; but if you are wise,
Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

XXIV.

“ To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount
To spur three leagues towards the Apennine ;
Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count
His dewy rosary on the eglantine.”
Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,
Bow'd a fair greeting to these serpents' whine ;
And went in haste, to get in readiness,
With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's dress.

XXV.

And as he to the court-yard pass'd along,
Each third step did he pause, and listen'd oft
If he could hear his lady's matin-song,
Or the light whisper of her footstep soft ;
And as he thus over his passion hung,
He heard a laugh full musical aloft ;

When, looking up, he saw her features bright
Smile through an in-door lattice all delight.

XXVI.

“Love, Isabel !” said he, “I was in pain
Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow :
Ah ! what if I should lose thee, when so fain
I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow
Of a poor three hours’ absence? but we’ll gain
Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.
Good bye ! I’ll soon be back.”—“Good bye!” said
she :
And as he went she chanted merrily.

XXVII.

So the two brothers and their murder’d man
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno’s stream
Gurgles through straighten’d banks, and still doth fan
Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan
The brothers’ faces in the ford did seem,
Lorenzo’s flush with love. They pass’d the water
Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

XXVIII.

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,
There in that forest did his great love cease ;
Ah ! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,
It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace
As the break-covert blood-hounds of such sin :
They dipp’d their swords in the water, and did tease
Their horses homeward, with convulsed spur,
Each richer by his being a murderer.

XXIX.

They told their sister how, with sudden speed,
Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands,
Because of some great urgency and need
In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.
Poor girl ! put on thy stifling widow's weed,
And 'scape at once from Hope's accursed bands;
To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,
And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

XXX.

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be;
Sorely she wept until the night came on,
And then, instead of love, O misery!
She brooded o'er the luxury alone :
His image in the dusk she seem'd to see,
And to the silence made a gentle moan,
Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,
And on her couch low murmuring, "Where? O
where?"

XXXI.

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long
Its fiery vigil in her single breast ;
She fretted for the golden hour, and hung
Upon the time with feverish unrest—
Not long ; for soon into her heart a throng
Of higher occupants, a richer zest,
Came tragic ; passion not to be subdued,
And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

XXXII.

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves
The breath of Winter comes from far away,

And the sick west continually bereaves
Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay
Of death among the bushes and the leaves,
To make all bare before he dares to stray
From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel
By gradual decay from beauty fell,

XXXIII.

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes
She ask'd her brothers, with an eye all pale,
Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes
Could keep him off so long? They spake a tale
Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes
Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale;
And every night in dreams they groan'd aloud,
To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

XXXIV.

And she had died in drowsy ignorance,
But for a thing more deadly dark than all;
It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,
Which saves a sick man from the feather'd pall
For some few gasping moments; like a lance.
Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall
With cruel pierce, and bringing him again
Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

XXXV.

It was a vision. In the drowsy gloom,
The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb
Had marr'd his glossy hair which once could shoot

Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears
Had made a miry channel for his tears.

XXXVI.

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake;
For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,
To speak as when on earth it was awake,
And Isabella on its music hung:
Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake,
As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung;
And through it moan'd a ghostly under-song,
Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

XXXVII.

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
From the poor girl by magic of their light,
The while it did unthread the horrid woof
Of the late darken'd time—the murderous spite
Of pride and avarice—the dark pine roof
In the forest—and the sodden turfed dell,
Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

XXXVIII.

Saying moreover, "Isabel, my sweet!
Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet;
Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
Their leaves and prickly nuts; a sheep-fold bleat
Comes from beyond the river to my bed:

Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
And it shall comfort me within the tomb

XXXIX.

“I am a shadow now, alas ! alas !

Upon the skirts of human nature dwelling
Alone : I chant alone the holy mass,

While little sounds of life are round me knelling,
And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,

And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,
Paining me through : those sounds grow strange to
me,

And thou art distant in Humanity.

XL.

“I know what was, I feel full well what is,

And I should rage, if spirits could go mad ;
Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,

That paleness warms my grave, as though I had
A seraph chosen from the bright abyss

To be my spouse : thy paleness makes me glad :
Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
A greater love through all my essence steal.”

XLI.

The Spirit mourn'd “Adieu !”—dissolved, and left

The atom darkness in a slow turmoil ;
As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,

And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil :
It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache,
And in the dawn she started up awake ;

XLII.

“Ha! ha!” said she, “I knew not this hard life,
I thought the worst was simple misery;
I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife
Portion’d us—happy days, or else to die;
But there is crime—a brother’s bloody knife!
Sweet Spirit, thou hast school’d my infancy:
I’ll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,
And greet thee morn and even in the skies.”

XLIII.

When the full morning came, she had devised
How she might secret to the forest hie;
How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,
And sing to it one latest lullaby;
How her short absence might be unsurmised,
While she the inmost of the dream would try.
Resolved, she took with her an aged nurse,
And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

XLIV.

See, as they creep along the river side,
How she doth whisper to that aged dame,
And, after looking round the champaign wide,
Shows her a knife.—“What feverous hectic flame
Burns in thee, child?—what good can thee betide
That thou shouldst smile again?”—The evening
came,
And they had found Lorenzo’s earthy bed;
The flint was there, the berries at his head.

XLV.

Who hath not loiter’d in a green church-yard,
And let his spirit, like a demon mole,

Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
To see skull, coffin'd bones, and funeral stoie;
Pitying each form that hungry Death had marr'd,
And filling it once more with human soul?
Ah! this is holiday to what was felt
When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

XLVI.

She gazed into the fresh-thrown mould, as though
One glance did fully all its secrets tell;
Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know
Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well;
Upon the murderous spot she seem'd to grow,
Like to a native lily of the dell:
Then with her knife, all sudden she began
To dig more fervently than misers can

XLVII.

Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove, whereon
Her silk had play'd in purple phantasies;
She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone,
And put it in her bosom, where it dries
And freezes utterly unto the bone
Those dainties made to still an infant's cries:
Then 'gan she work again; nor stay'd her care,
But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

XLVIII.

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
Until her heart felt pity to the core
At sight of such a dismal labouring,
And so she kneeled. with her locks all hoar,

And put her lean hands to the horrid thing:

Three hours they labour'd at this travail sore;
At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

XLIX.

Ah! wherefore all this wormy circumstance?

Why linger at the yawning tomb so long?
O for the gentleness of old Romance,
The simple plaining of a minstrel's song!
Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong
To speak:—O turn thee to the very tale,
And taste the music of that vision pale.

L.

With duller steel than the Perséan sword
They cut away no formless monster's head,
But one, whose gentleness did well accord
With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,
Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord:
If Love impersonate was ever dead,
Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.
Twas love; cold—dead indeed, but not dethroned.

LI.

In anxious secrecy they took it home,
And then the prize was all for Isabel:
She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb,
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell
Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,

She drench'd away : and still she comb'd and kept
Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd and wept.

LII.

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dew
Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully,—
She wrapp'd it up ; and for its tomb did choose
A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,
And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set
Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

LIII.

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
And she forgot the blue above the trees,
And she forgot the dells where waters run,
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze ;
She had no knowledge when the day was done,
And the new morn she saw not : but in peace
Hung over her sweet Basil ever more,
And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.

LIV.

And so she ever fed it with thin tears,
Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
Of Basil-tufts in Florence ; for it drew
Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
From the fast mouldering head there shut from view :
So that the jewel, safely casketed,
Came forth, and in perfumed leaflets spread.

LV.

O Melancholy, linger here awhile !
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,
Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh !
Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile ;
Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,
And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,
Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs.

LVI.

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
From the deep throat of sad Melpomene !
Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
And touch the strings into a mystery ;
Sound mournfully upon the winds and low ;
For simple Isabel is soon to be
Among the dead : She withers, like a palm
Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

LVII.

O leave the palm to wither by itself ;
Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour !—
It may not be—those Baâlites of pelf,
Her brethren, noted the continual shower
From her dead eyes ; and many a curious elf,
Among her kindred, wonder'd that such dower
Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside
By one mark'd out to be a Noble's bride.

LVIII.

And, furthermore, her brethren wonder'd much
Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,

And why it flourish'd, as by magic touch ;
Greatly they wonder'd what the thing might mean :
They could not surely give belief, that such
A very nothing would have power to wean
Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,
And even remembrance of her love's delay.

LIX.

Therefore they watch'd a time when they might sift
This hidden whim ; and long they watch'd in vain ;
For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,
And seldom felt she any hunger-pain ;
And when she left, she hurried back, as swift
As bird on wing to breast its eggs again :
And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there
Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

LX.

Yet they contrived to steal the Basil-pot,
And to examine it in secret place :
The thing was vile with green and livid spot,
And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face :
The guerdon of their murder they had got,
And so left Florence in a moment's space,
Never to turn again.—Away they went,
With blood upon their heads, to banishment.

LXI.

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away !
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh !

Spirits of grief, sing not your "Well-a-way!"

For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die;
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have ta'en away her Basil sweet.

LXII.

Piteous she look'd on dead and senseless things,

Asking for her lost Basil amorously:
And with melodious chuckle in the strings
Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,

To ask him where her Basil was; and why
'Twas hid from her: "For cruel 'tis," said she
"To steal my Basil-pot away from me."

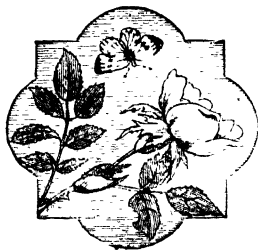
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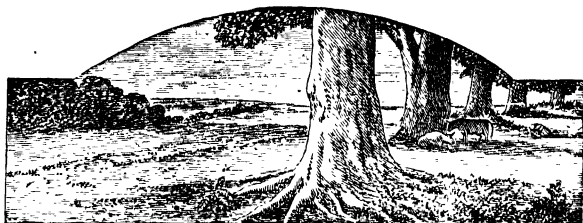
And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,

Imploring for her Basil to the last.
No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
In pity of her love, so overcast.

And a sad ditty of this story borne

From mouth to mouth through all the country pass'd
Still is the burthen sung—"O cruelty,
To steal my Basil-pot away from me!"





THE EVE OF ST. AGNES.

I.

ST. AGNES' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was !
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold :
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

II.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man ;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees :
The sculptured dead, on each side seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails :
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by ; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

III.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor ;
But no—already had his death-bell rung ;
The joys of all his life were said and sung :
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve :
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinner's sake to grieve.

IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft ;
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide :
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests.
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on
their breasts.

V.

At length burst in the argent revelry.
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
The brain, new-stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day.
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

VI.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright ;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white,
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

VII.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline :
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all : in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired ; not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not : her heart was elsewhere ;
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

VIII.

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short :
The hallow'd hour was near at hand : she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport ;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy ; all amort,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such
things have been.

X.

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's feverous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

XI.

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

XII.

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand :
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land :
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit !
Flit like a ghost away."—" Ah, Gossip dear,
We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
And tell me how"—" Good Saints! not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

XIII.

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume;
And as she mutter'd " Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
" Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,
" O tell me Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

XIV.

" St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve."

XV.

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth closed a wondrous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose ; and he scarce could brook
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

XVI.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot : then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start :
"A cruel man and impious thou art :
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, Go ! I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.

XVII.

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
Quoth Porphyro : "O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face :
Good Angela, believe me by these tears ;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fang'd than
wolves and bears."

XVIII.

“ Ah ! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul ?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll ;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never miss'd.” Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro ;
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

XIX.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a c'oset, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legion'd fairies paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

XX.

“ It shall be as thou wishest,” said the Dame :
“ All cates and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night : by the tambour frame
Her own lute thou wilt see : no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience kneel in prayer
The while : Ah ! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.”

XXI.

So saying she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd;
The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

XXII.

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware:
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dovefray'd and fled

XXIII.

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No utter'd syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

XXIV.

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imageries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and
kings.

XXV.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

XXVI.

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Uncclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

XXVII.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppi'd warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away ;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day ;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain ;
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray ;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XXVIII.

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness ;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breathed himself : then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo !—how fast
she slept.

XXIX.

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet !
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :—
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd ;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon ;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez ; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

XXXI.

These delicacies he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver : sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
“ And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake !
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite :
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.”

XXXII.

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains :—’twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream :
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam ;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies :
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes ;
So mused awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

XXXIII.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd "*La belle dame sans mercy*:"
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan :
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone :
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

XXXIV:

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep :
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep.
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh ;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep ;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

XXXV.

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow ;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear :
How changed thou art ! how pallid, chill, and drear !
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear !
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

XXXVI.

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
 At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
 Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
 Seen 'mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose :
 Into her dream he melted, as the rose
 Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
 Solution sweet : meantime the frost-wind blows
 Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
 Against the window-panes ; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII.

'Tis dark : quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet :
 "This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline !"
 'Tis dark : the ice gusts still rave and beat :
 "No dream, alas ! alas ! and woe is mine !
 Porphyro will leave me here to fad and pine.—
 Cruel ! what traitor could thee hither bring ?
 I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
 Though thou forsakest a deceived thing ;—
 A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

XXXVIII.

"My Madeline ! sweet dreamer ! lovely bride !
 Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest ?
 Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil dyed ?
 Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
 After so many hours of toil and quest,
 A famish'd pilgrim,—saved by miracle
 Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
 Saving of thy sweet self ; if thou think'st well
 To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel."

XXXIX.

"Hark ! 'tis an elfin storm from faery land,
 Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed :
 Arise—arise ! the morning is at hand ;—
 The bloated wassailers will never heed :—
 Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;
 There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
 Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :
 Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be,
 For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

XL.

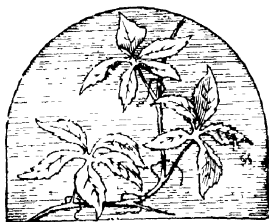
She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
 For there were sleeping dragons all around,
 At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
 Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found,
 In all the house was heard no human sound.
 A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door ;
 The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
 Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar ;
 And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor

XLI.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall !
 Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide,
 Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
 With a huge empty flagon by his side :
 The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
 But his sagacious eye an inmate owns :
 By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide :—
 The chains lie silent on the footworn stones ;
 The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans. N

XLII.

And they are gone : ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform ;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.





HYPERION.

BOOK I.

DEEP in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat grey-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deaden'd more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred; and his realmless eyes were closed:

While his bow'd head seem'd listening to the Earth
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place:
But there came one, who with a kindred hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was a Goddess of the infant world;
By her in stature the tall Amazon
Had stood a pigmy's height: she would have ta'en
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck;
Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel.
Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,
Pedestal'd haply in a palace-court,
When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.
But oh! how unlike marble was that face:
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain:
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenour and deep organ tone:
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in these like accents; O how frail

To that large utterance of the early Gods!
"Saturn, look up!—though wherefore, poor old King?
I have no comfort for thee, no not one:
I cannot say, 'O wherefore sleepest thou?'
For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God;
And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
Has from thy sceptre pass'd; and all the air
Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house;
And thy sharp lightning in unpractised hands
Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
O aching time! O moments big as years!
All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
And press it so upon our weary griefs
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
Saturn, sleep on:—O thoughtless, why did I
Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
Saturn, sleep on! while at thy feet I weep."

As when, upon a tranced summer-night,
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave:
So came these words and went; the while in tears
She touch'd her fair large forehead to the ground,
Just where her falling hair might be outspread

A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
Her silver seasons four upon the night,
And still these two were postured motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern;
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet:
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess; and then spake
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady:
"O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face;
Look up, and let me see our doom in it;
Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
Is Saturn's; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
Of Saturn; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
Naked and bare of its great diadem,
Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
To make me desolate? whence came the strength?
How was it nurtured to such bursting forth,
While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp?
But it is so; and I am smother'd up,
And buried from all godlike exercise
Of influence benign on planets pale,
Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
And all those acts which Deity supreme
Doth ease its heart of love in. I am gone
Away from my own bosom: I have left

My strong identity, my real self,
Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search!
Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round
Upon all space: space starr'd, and lorn of light:
Space region'd with life-air, and barren void;
Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell.
Search, Thea, search! and tell me if thou seest
A certain shape or shadow, making way
With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
A heaven he lost erewhile: it must—it must
Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be king.
Yes, there must be a golden victory;
There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets
 blown
Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,
Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
Of strings in hollow shells; and there shall be
Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
Of the sky-children; I will give command:
Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?"

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
And made his hands to struggle in the air,
His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.
He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep;
A little time, and then again he snatch'd
Utterance thus:—"But cannot I create?
Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
Another world, another universe,

To overbear and crumple this to nought?
Where is another chaos? Where?" That word
Found way unto Olympus, and made quake
The rebel three. Thea was startled up,
And in her bearing was a sort of hope,
As thus she quick-voice spake, yet full of awe.

"This cheers our fallen house: come to our friends,
O Saturn! come away, and give them heart;
I know the covert, for thence came I hither."
Thus brief; then with beseeching eyes she went
With backward footing through the shade a space:
He follow'd, and she turn'd to lead the way
Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist
Which eagles cleave, upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe:
The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
Groan'd for the old allegiance once more,
And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.
But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept
His sovereignty, and rule, and majesty;
Blazing Hyperion on his orbid fire
Still sat, still snuff'd the incense, teeming up
From man to the sun's God, yet unsecure:
For as among us mortals omens drear
Fright and perplex, so also shudder'd he,
Not at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's hated screech,
Or the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing-bell,
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp;

But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve,
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright,
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glared a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries ;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush'd angerly: while sometimes eagles' wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men.
Darken'd the place ; and neighing steeds were heard
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men,
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breathed aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick :
And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day,
For rest divine upon exalted couch,
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He paced away the pleasant hours of ease
With stride colossal, on from hall to hall ;
While far within each aisle and deep recess,
His winged minions in close clusters stood,
Amazed and full of fear; like anxious men
Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers,
Even now, while Saturn, roused from icy trance,
Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upon the threshold of the west ;
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothed silence, save what solemn tubes,

Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies:
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath;
His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
That scared away the meek ethereal Hours
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades,
Until he reach'd the great main cupola;
There standing fierce beneath, he stamp'd his foot,
And from the basements deep to the high towers
Jarr'd his own golden region; and before
The quavering thunder thereupon had ceased,
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
To this result: "O dreams of day and night!
O monstrous forms! O effigies of pain!
O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom!
O lank-ear'd Phantoms of black-weeded pools!
Why do I know ye? why have I seen ye? why
Is my eternal essence thus distraught
To see and to behold these horrors new?
Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
This calm luxuriance of blissful light,

These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
Of all my lucent empire? It is left
Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
The blaze, the splendour, and the symmetry,
I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.
Even here, into my centre of repose,
The shady visions come to domineer,
Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp—
Fall!—No, by Tellus and her briny robes!
Over the fiery frontier of my realms
I will advance a terrible right arm
Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
And bid old Saturn take his throne again.”
He spake, and ceased, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat, but came not forth;
For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out “Hush!”
So at Hyperion’s words the Phantoms pale
Bestirr’d themselves, thrice horrible and cold,
And from the mirror’d level where he stood
A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh.
At this, through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convulsed
From over-strained might. Released, he fled
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
Before the dawn in season due should blush,
He breathed fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
Clear’d them of heavy vapours, burst them wide
Suddenly on the ocean’s chilly streams.
The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode

Each day from east to west the heavens through,
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds ;
Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure,
Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep
Up to the zenith—hieroglyphics old,
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries :
Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
Of stone, or marble swart ; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled. Two wings this orb
Possess'd for glory, two fair argent wings,
Ever exalted at the God's approach :
And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense
Rose, one by one, till all outspreaded were ;
While still the dazzling globe maintain'd eclipse,
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin, if but for change.
He might not :—No, though a primeval God :
The sacred seasons might not be disturbed.
Therefore the operations of the dawn
Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
Eager to sail their orb ; the porches wide
Open'd upon the disk demesnes of night ;
And the bright Titan, frenzied with new woes,
Unused to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time ;

And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice
Of Cœlus, from the universal space,
Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear:
"O brightest of my children dear, earth-born
And sky-engender'd, Son of Mysteries!
All unrevealed even to the powers
Which met at thy creating! at whose joys
And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
I, Cœlus, wonder how they came and whence;
And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,
Distinct, and visible; symbols divine,
Manifestations of that beauteous life
Diffused unseen throughout eternal space;
Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child!
Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses!
There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
I saw my firstborn tumbled from his throne!
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
Found way from forth the thunders round his head!
Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
Art thou, too, near such doom? vague fear there is:
For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
Divine ye were created, and divine
In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd,
Unruffled, like high Gods, ye lived and ruled:
Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath;
Actions of rage and passion; even as

I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son !
Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall !
Yet do thou strive ; as thou art capable,
As thou canst move about, an evident God,
And canst oppose to each malignant hour
Ethereal presence :—I am but a voice ;
My life is but the life of winds and tides,—
No more than winds and tides can I avail : --
But thou canst.—Be thou therefore in the van
Of circumstance ; yea, seize the arrow's barb
Before the tense string murmur.—To the earth !
For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
And of thy seasons be a careful nurse.”—
Ere half this region-whisper had come down
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curvèd lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceased ; and still he kept them wide :
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,
And plunged all noiseless into the deep night

BOOK II.

JUST at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd.

It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns,
And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled
Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering.
Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,
Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,
With many more, the brawniest in assault,
Were pent in legions of laborious breath ;
Dungeon'd in opaque element to keep
Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs
Lock'd up like veins of metal, cramp'd and screw'd ;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convulsed
With sanguine, feverous, boiling gurge of pulse.
Mnemosyne was straying in the world ;
Far from her moon had Phœbe wander'd ;
And many else were free to roam abroad,
But for the main, here found they covert drear.
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
Lay vast and edgeways ; like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,

In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
Or word or look, or action of despair.
Creüs was one ; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iapetus another ; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck ; its barbed tongue
Squeezed from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length
Dead ; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus : prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain ; for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
Though feminine, than any of her sons :
More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory ;
And in her wide imagination stood
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelf,
Upon his elbow raised, all prostrate else,
Shadow'd Enceladus ; once tame and mild
As grazing ox unworried in the meads ;
Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth,

He meditated, plotted, and even now
Was hurling mountains in that second war,
Not long delay'd, that scared the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
Not far hence Atlas ; and beside him prone
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close
Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
Sobb'd Clymene among her tangled hair.
In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight ;
No shape distinguishable, more than when
'Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds :
And many else whose names may not be told.
For when the muse's wings are air ward spread,
Who shall delay her flight ? And she must chant
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd
With damp and slippery footing from a depth
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grew
Till on the level height their steps found ease :
Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
And sidelong fix'd her eye on Saturn's face :
There saw she direst strife ; the supreme God
At war with all the frailty of grief,
Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
Against these plagues he strove in vain ; for Fate
Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,
A disanointing poison : so that Thea,
Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart
Is persecuted more, and fever'd more,
When it is nighing to the mournful house
Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise ;
So Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst,
Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,
But that he met Enceladus's eye,
Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
Came like an inspiration ; and he shouted,
"Titans, behold your God !" at which some groan'd ;
Some started on their feet ; some also shouted ;
Some wept, some wail'd—all bow'd with reverence ;
And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
Show'd her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan,
Her eyebrows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.
There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
When Winter lifts his voice ; there is a noise
Among immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought,
With thunder, and with music, and with pomp :
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines ;
Which, when it ceases in this mountain'd world
No other sound succeeds ; but ceasing here,
Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
Grew up like organ, that begins anew
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,
Leave the dinn'd air vibrating silverly.
Thus grew it up :—"Not in my own sad breast,
Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
Not in the legends of the first of days,

Studied from that old spirit-leaved book
Which starry Uranus with finger bright
Saved from the shores of darkness, when the waves
Low-ebb'd still hid it up in shallow gloom;
And the which book ye know I ever kept
For my firm-based footstool :—Ah, infirm !
Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,—
At war, at peace, or inter-quarrelling
One against one, or two, or three, or all,
Each several one against the other three,
As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
Drown both, and press them both against earth's face.
Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath
Unhinges the poor world ;—not in that strife,
Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
No, nowhere can unriddle, though I search,
And pore on Nature's universal scroll
Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
The first-born of all shaped and palpable Gods,
Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here,
O'erwhelm'd, and spurn'd, and batter'd, ye are here!
O Titans, shall I say 'Arise!'—Ye groan:
Shall I say 'Crouch!'—Ye groan. What can I then
O Heaven wide! O unseen parent dear!
What can I? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,
How we can war, how engine our great wrath!
O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear
Is all a-hunger'd. Thou, Oceanus,
Ponderest high and deep; and in thy face

I see, astonished, that severe content
Which comes of thought and musing: give us help !”

So ended Saturn ; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades,
Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,
In murmurs, which his first endeavouring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands.
“ O ye, whom wrath consumes ! who, passion-stung,
Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies !
Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop :
And in the proof much comfort will I give,
If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
We fall by course of Nature’s law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
Hast sifted well the atom-universe ;
But for this reason, that thou art the King,
And only blind from sheer supremacy,
One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
Through which I wander’d to eternal truth.
And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
So art thou not the last ; it cannot be.
Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
From chaos and parental darkness came
Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
And with it light, and light engendering

Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
The whole enormous matter into life.
Upon that very hour, our parentage,
The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest :
Then thou first-born, and we the giant-race,
Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain ;
O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well !
As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;
And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
In form and shape compact and beautiful,
In will, in action free, companionship,
And thousand other signs of purer life ;
So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us, as we pass
In glory that old Darkness : nor are we
Thereby more conquer'd than by us the rule
Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
Quarrel with the proud forest it hath fed,
And feedeth still, more comely than itself?
Can it deny the chieftdom of green groves?
Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
Above us in their beauty, and must reign

In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might :
Yea, by that law, another race may drive
Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
My disposessor? Have ye seen his face?
Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
By noble winged creatures he hath made?
I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
'That it enforced me to bid sad farewell
To all my empire: farewell sad I took,
And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best
Give consolation in this woe extreme.
Receive the truth, and let it be your balm."

Whether through pozed conviction, or disdain,
They guarded silence, when Oceanus
Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell?
But so it was, none answer'd for a space,
Save one whom none regarded, Clymene:
And yet she answer'd not, only complain'd,
With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild,
Thus wording timidly among the fierce:
"O Father! I am here the simplest voice,
And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,
There to remain for ever, as I fear:
I would not bode of evil, if I thought
So weak a creature could turn off the help
Which by just right should come of mighty Gods;

Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
And know that we had parted from all hope.
I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief;
Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth;
So that I felt a movement in my heart
To chide, and to reproach that solitude
With songs of misery, music of our woes;
And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell
And murmur'd into it, and made melody—
O melody no more! for while I sang,
And with poor skill let pass into the breeze
The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
Just opposite, an island of the sea,
There came enchantment with the shifting wind
That did both drown and keep alive my ears.
I threw my shell away upon the sand,
And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd
With that new blissful golden melody.
A living death was in each gush of sounds,
Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
That fell one after one, yet all at once,
Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string;
And then another, then another strain,
Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
To hover round my head, and make me sick
Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
And I was stopping up my frantic ears,

When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands,
A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
And still it cried, 'Apollo! young Apollo!
The morning-bright Apollo! young Apollo!
I fled, it follow'd me, and cried 'Apollo!'
O Father, and O Brethren! had ye felt
Those pains of mine! O Saturn, hadst thou felt,
Ye would not call this too indulged tongue
Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard!"

So far her voice flow'd on, like timorous brook
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
Doth fear to meet the sea : but see it met,
And shudder'd ; for the overwhelming voice
Of huge Enceladus swallow'd it in wrath :
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,
Came booming thus, while still upon his arm
He lean'd; not rising, from supreme contempt.
"Or shall we listen to the over-wise,
Or to the over-foolish giant, Gods?
Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all
That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent,
Not world on world upon these shoulders piled,
Could agonise me more than baby-words
In midst of this dethronement horrible.
Speak! roar! shout! yell! ye sleepy 'Titans all.
Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile?
Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm?
Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,
Thy scalding in the seas? What! have I roused
Your spleens with so few simple words as these?

O joy! for now I see ye are not lost:
O joy! for now I see a thousand eyes
Wide glaring for revenge."—As this he said,
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,
Still without intermission speaking thus:
"Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,
And purge the ether of our enemies;
How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,
And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,
Stifling that puny essence in its tent.
O let him feel the evil he hath done;
For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,
Much pain have I for more than loss of realms:
The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled;
Those days, all innocent of scathing war,
When all the fair Existences of heaven
Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak:—
That was before our brows were taught to frown,
Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds;
That was before we knew the winged thing,
Victory, might be lost, or might be won.
And be ye mindful that Hyperion,
Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—
Hyperion, lo! his radiance is here!"

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A pallid gleam across his features stern:
Not savage, for he saw full many a God
Wroth as himself. He look'd upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,

But splendor in Saturn's, whose hoar locks
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
In pale and silver silence they remain'd,
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf, and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams:
And all the everlasting cataracts,
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
Now saw the light and made it terrible.
It was Hyperion:—a granite peak
His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to view
The misery his brilliance had betray'd
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
To one who travels from the dusking East:
Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp,
He utter'd, while his hands, contemplative,
He press'd together, and in silence stood.
Despondence seized again the fallen Gods
At sight of the dejected King of Day,
And many hid their faces from the light:
But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
Among the brotherhood; and, at their glare,
Uprose Iäpetus, and Creüs too,

And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode
To where he tower'd on his eminence.
There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name;
Hyperion from the peak loud answer'd, "Saturn!"
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of "Saturn!"

BOOK III.

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace,
Amazed were those Titans utterly.
O leave them, Muse! O leave them to their woes!
For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire:
A solitary sorrow best befits
Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief.
Leave them, O Muse! for thou anon wilt find
Many a fallen old Divinity
Wandering in vain about bewilder'd shores.
Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute;
For lo! 'tis for the Father of all verse.
Flush everything that hath a vermeil hue,
Let the rose glow intense and warm the air,
And let the clouds of even and of morn
Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills;
Let the red wine within the goblet boil,
Cold as a bubbling well; let faint-lipp'd shells,
On sands or in great deeps, vermilion turn
Through all their labyrinths; and let the maid

Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surprised.
Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,
Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,
And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech,
In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,
And hazels thick, dark-stemm'd beneath the shade:
Apollo is once more the golden theme!
Where was he, when the Giant of the Sun
Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers?
Together had he left his mother fair
And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower,
And in the morning twilight wander'd forth
Beside the osiers of a rivulet,
Full ankle-deep in lilies of the vale.
The nightingale had ceased, and a few stars
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle
There was no covert, no retired cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
He listen'd, and he wept, and his bright tears
Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,
While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by
With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
And there was purport in her looks for him,
Which he with eager guess began to read
Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said:
"How camest thou over the unfooted sea?
Or hath that antique mien and robed form
Moved in these vales invisible till now?
Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er

The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
In cool mid forest. Surely I have traced
The rustle of those ample skirts about
These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd.
Goddess ! I have beheld those eyes before,
And their eternal calm, and all that face,
Or I have dream'd."—"Yes," said the supreme shape,
"Thou hast dream'd of me ; and awaking up
Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast
Unwearied ear of the whole universe
Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth
Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange
That thou shouldst weep, so gifted ? Tell me, youth,
What sorrow thou canst feel ; for I am sad
When thou dost shed a tear : explain thy griefs
To one who in this lonely isle hath been
The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,
From the young day when first thy infant hand
Pluck'd witless the weak flowers, till thine arm
Could bend that bow heroic to all times.
Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power
Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones
For prophecies of thee, and for the sake
Of loveliness new-born."—Apollo then,
With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes,
Thus answer'd, while his white melodious throat
Throbb'd with the syllables:—"Mnemosyne !
Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how ;
Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest ?
Why should I strive to show what from thy lips

Would come no mystery? For me, dark, dark,
And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes :
I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
Until a melancholy numbs my limbs ;
And then upon the grass I sit, and moan,
Like one who once had wings.—O why should I
Feel cursed and thwarted, when the liegeless air
Yields to my step aspirant? why should I
Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet?
Goddess benign ! point forth some unknown thing :
Are there not other regions than this isle ?
What are the stars ? There is the sun, the sun !
And the most patient brilliance of the moon !
And stars by thousands ! Point me out the way
To any one particular beauteous star,
And I will flit into it with my lyre,
And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.
I have heard the cloudy thunder : Where is power ?
Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
Makes this alarm in the elements,
While I here idle listen on the shores
In fearless yet in aching ignorance ?
O tell me, lonely Goddess ! by thy harp,
That walleth every morn and eventide,
Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves !
Mute thou remainest—Mute ? yet I can read
A wondrous lesson in thy silent face :
Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,

And deify me, as if some blithe wine
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
And so become immortal."—Thus the God,
While his enkindled eyes, with level glance
Beneath his white soft temples, steadfast kept
Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.
Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
All the immortal fairness of his limbs :
Most like the struggle at the gate of death ;
Or liker still to one who should take leave
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
Die into life : so young Apollo anguish'd ;
His very hair, his golden tresses famed
Kept undulation round his eager neck.
During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
Her arms as one who prophesied.—At length
Apollo shriek'd ;—and lo ! from all his limbs
Celestial





MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty !

Fate of the Butterfly.—SPENSER.

DEDICATION.

TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

GLORY and Loveliness have pass'd away ;
For if we wander out in early morn,
No wreathed incense do we see upborne
Into the east to meet the smiling day :
No crowd of nymphs soft-voiced and young and gay,
In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,
Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn
The shrine of Flora in her early May.
But there are left delights as high as these.
And I shall ever bless my destiny,
'That in a time when under pleasant trees
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free,
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please
With these poor offerings, a man like thee.

IMITATION OF SPENSER.

Now morning from her orient chamber came
And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill :
Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,
Silvering the untainted gushes of its rill ;
Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distil,
And after parting beds of simple flowers,
By many streams a little lake did fill,
Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,
And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

There the kingfisher saw his plumage bright,
Vying with fish of brilliant dye below ;
Whose silken fins' and golden scales' light
Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow :
There saw the swan his neck of arched snow,
And oar'd himself along with majesty :
Sparkled his jetty eyes ; his feet did show
Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony,
And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.

Ah ! could I tell the wonders of an isle
That in that fairest lake had placed been,
I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile ;
Or rob from aged Lear his bitter teen
For sure so fair a place was never seen
Of all that ever charm'd romantic eye :
It seem'd an emerald in the silver sheen
Of the bright waters ; or as when on high,
Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the cœrulean sky.

And all around it dipp'd luxuriously
Slopings of verdure through the glossy tide,
Which, as it were in gentle amity,
Rippled delighted up the flowery side ;
As if to glean the ruddy tears it tried,
Which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem !
Haply it was the workings of its pride,
In strife to throw upon the shore a gem
Outvying all the buds in Flora's diadem.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minú'e past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth !
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained meath ;

That I might drink the world unseen,
And with thee fade dim :

Fade far away, dissolve
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs ;
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays ;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves ;
And mid-May's eldest child,

The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen ; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath ;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy !
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down ;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown :
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades :
Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?
Fled is that music :—do I wake or sleep ?

ODE ON A GRECIAN URN.

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness !
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme :
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady ?
What men or gods are these? what maidens loath?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on ;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone :
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare ;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve ;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

Ah, happy, happy boughs ! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu ;

And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new ;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed ;
Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

TO AUTUMN.

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness!

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?

Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometime like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozeings, hours by hours

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing ; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

ODE ON MELANCHOLY.

No, no! go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips

Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
 Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
 Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous
 tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

STANZAS.

IN a drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy tree,
 Thy branches ne'er remember
 Their green felicity:
 The north cannot undo them,
 With a sleety whistle through them;
 Nor frozen thawings glue them
 From budding at the prime.
 In a drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy brook,
 Thy bubblings ne'er remember
 Apollo's summer look;
 But with a sweet forgetting,
 They stay their crystal fretting,
 Never, never petting
 About the frozen time.

Ah! would 'twere so with many
 A gentle girl and boy!

But were there ever any
Writhed not at passed joy?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numbed sense to steal it,
Was never said in rhyme.

ON

THINK not of it, sweet one, so;—
Give it not a tear;
Sigh thou mayst, and bid it go
Any—any where.

Do not look so sad, sweet one,—
Sad and fadingly;
Shed one drop then—it is gone—
Oh! 'twas born to die!

Still so pale? then dearest weep;
Weep, I'll count the tears,
And each one shall be a bliss
For thee in after years.

Brighter has it left thine eyes
Than a sunny rill;
And thy whispering melodies
Are tenderer still.

Yet—as all things mourn awhile
At fleeting blisses;
Let us too; but be our dirge
A dirge of kisses.

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI.

A BALLAD.

I.

O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

II.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

III.

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

V.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

VI.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

VII.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
“I love thee true.”

VIII.

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

IX.

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

X.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—“La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!”

XI.

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

XII.

And is this why I sojourn here,
 Alone and palely loitering,
 Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
 And no birds sing.

1819.

THE EVE OF SAINT MARK.

(UNFINISHED.)

UPON a Sabbath-day it fell;
 Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,
 That call'd the folk to evening prayer;
 The city streets were clean and fair
 From wholesome drench of April rains;
 And, on the western window panes,
 The chilly sunset faintly told
 Of unmatured green, vallies cold,
 Of the greer thorny bloomless hedge,
 Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,
 Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
 And daisies on the aguish hills.
 Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell:
 The silent streets were crowded well
 With staid and pious companies,
 Warm from their fire-side orat'ries;
 And moving, with demurest air,
 To even-song, and vesper prayer.
 Each arched porch, and entry low,
 Was fill'd with patient folk and slow,
 With whispers hush, and shuffling feet,
 While play'd the organ loud and sweet.

The bells had ceased, the prayers begun,
And Bertha had not yet half done
A curious volume, patch'd and torn,
That all day long, from earliest morn,
Had taken captive her two eyes,
Among its golden broideries ;
Perplexed her with a thousand things,-
The stars of Heaven, and angels' wings,
Martyrs in a fiery blaze,
Azure saints and silver rays,
Moses' breastplate, and the seven
Candlesticks John saw in Heaven,
The winged Lion of Saint Mark,
And the Covenantal Ark,
With its many mysteries,
Cherubim and golden mice.

Bertha was a maiden fair,
Dwelling in th' old minster-square ;
From her fire-side she could see,
Sidelong, its rich antiquity,
Far as the Bishop's garden-wall ;
Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,
Full-leaved, the forest had outstript,
By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,
So shelter'd by the mighty pile.
Bertha arose, and read awhile,
With forehead 'gainst the window-pane.
Again she tried, and then again,
Until the dusk eve left her dark
Upon the legend of St. Mark.
From plaited lawn-frill, fine and thin,

She lifted up her soft warm chin,
With aching neck and swimming eyes.
And dazed with saintly imag'ries.

All was gloom, and silent all,
Save now and then the still foot-fall
Of one returning homewards late,
Past the echoing minster-gate.
The clamorous daws, that all the day
Above tree-tops and towers play,
Pair by pair had gone to rest,
Each in its ancient belfry-nest,
Where asleep they fall betimes,
To music and the drowsy chimes.

All was silent, all was gloom,
Abroad and in the homely room :
Down she sat, poor cheated soul !
And struck a lamp from the dismal coal ;
Leaned forward, with bright drooping hair
And slant book, full against the glare.
Her shadow, in uneasy guise,
Hover'd about, a giant size,
On ceiling-beam and old oak chair,
The parrot's cage, and panel square ;
And the warm angled winter-screen,
On which were many monsters seen,
Call'd doves of Siam, Lima mice,
And legless birds of Paradise,
Macaw, and tender Av'davat,
And silken-furr'd Angora cat.
Untired she read, her shadow still

Glower'd about, as it would fill
 The room with wildest forms and shades,
 As though some ghostly queen of spaces
 Had come to mock behind her back,
 And dance, and ruffle her garments black.
 Untired she read the legend page,
 Of holy Mark, from youth to age,
 On land, on sea, in pagan chains,
 Rejoicing for his many pains.
 Sometimes the learned eremite,
 With golden star, or dagger bright,
 Referr'd to pious poesies
 Written in smallest crow-quill size
 Beneath the text ; and thus the rhyme
 Was parcell'd out from time to time :
 —“ Als writith he of swevenis,
 Men han beforne they wake in bliss,
 Whanne that hir friendes thinke him bound
 In crimped shroude farre under grounde ;
 And how a litling child mote be
 A saint er its nativitie,
 Gif that the modre (God her blesse !)
 Kepen in solitarinesse,
 And kissen devoute the holy croce
 Of Goddes love, and Sathan's force,—
 He writith ; and thinges many mo
 Of swiche thinges I may not shew.
 Bot I must tellen verilie
 Somdel of Saintè Cicilie,
 And chieflie what he auctorethe
 Of Saintè Markis life and dethe : ”
 At length her constant eyelids come

Upon the fervent martyrdom ;
Then lastly to his holy shrine
Exalt amid the taper's shine
At Venice,—

1819.

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne :
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien..

ON A PICTURE OF LEANDER.

COME hither, all sweet maidens soberly,
Down-looking aye, and with a chasten'd light.
Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,
And meekly let your fair hands joined be,
As if so gentle that ye could not see,
Untouch'd, a victim of your beauty bright,

Q

Sinking away to his young spirit's night,
 Sinking bewilder'd 'mid the dreary sea :
 'Tis young Leander toiling to his death ;
 Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips
 For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her smile.
 O horrid dream ! see how his body dips
 Dead-heavy ; arms and shoulders gleam awhile :
 He's gone ; up bubbles all his amorous breath'

ON A DREAM.

As Hermes once took to his feathers light,
 When lulled Argus, baffled, swoon'd and slept,
 So on a Delphic reed, my idle spright,
 So play'd, so charm'd, so conquer'd, so bereft
 The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes,
 And seeing it asleep, so fled away,
 Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies,
 Nor unto Tempe, where Jove grieved a day,
 But to that second circle of sad Hell,
 Where in the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw
 Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell
 Their sorrows,—pale were the sweet lips I saw,
 Pale were the lips I kiss'd, and fair the form
 I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

1819.

THE DAY IS GONE.

The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone !
 Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,
 Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,

Bright eyes, accomplish'd shape, and lang'rous waist !
 Faded the **flower** and all its budded charms,
 Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
 Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
 Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise—
 Vanished unseasonably at shut of eve,
 When the dusk holiday—or holinight
 Of fragrant-curtain'd love begins to weave
 The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight ;
 But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,
 He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

1819.

KEATS'S LAST SONNET.

BRIGHT star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
 The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
 Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
 No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
 To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
 And so live ever—or else swoon to death.*

* Another reading :—

Half-passionless, and so swoon on to death.

TO SPENSER.*

SPENSER ! a jealous honourer of thine,
A forester deep in thy midmost trees,
Did, last eve, ask my promise to refine
Some English, that might strive thine ear to please.
But, Elfin-poet ! 'tis impossible
For an inhabitant of wintry earth
To rise, like Phœbus, with a golden quill,
Fire-winged, and make a morning in his mirth.
It is impossible to 'scape from toil
O' the sudden, and receive thy spiriting :
The flower must drink the nature of the soil
Before it can put forth its blossoming :
Be with me in the summer days, and I
Will for thine honour and his pleasure try.

TO CHATTERTON.

O CHATTERTON ! how very sad thy fate !
Dear child of sorrow—son of misery !
How soon the film of death obscured that eye,
Whence Genius mildly flashed, and high debate.
How soon that voice, majestic and elate,
Melted in dying numbers ! Oh ! how nigh
Was night to thy fair morning. Thou didst die
A half-blown flow'ret which cold blasts amate.
But this is past : thou art among the stars

* From this point onwards, the poems printed in the present volume had not hitherto appeared in any of the editions of Keats's works.

Of highest Heaven : to the rolling spheres
 Thou sweetly singest : nought thy hymning mars,
 Above the ingrate world and human fears.
 On earth the good man base detraction bars
 From thy fair name, and waters it with tears.

TO BYRON.

BYRON ! how sweetly sad thy melody!
 Attuning still the soul to tenderness,
 As if soft Pity, with unusual stress,
 Had touched her plaintive lute, and thou, being by,
 Hadst caught the tones, nor suffered them to die.
 O'ershading sorrow doth not make thee less
 Delightful: thou thy griefs dost dress
 With a bright halo, shining beamily,
 As when a cloud the golden moon doth veil,
 Its sides are unged with a resplendent glow,
 Through the dark robe oft amber rays prevail,
 And like fair veins in sable marble flow ;
 Still warble, dying swan ! still tell the tale,
 The enchanting tale, the tale of pleasing woe.

ON THE ELGIN MARBLES

My spirit is too weak ; mortality
 Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
 And each imagined pinnacle and steep
 Of godlike hardship tells me I must die

Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.

Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep,

That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain,

Bring round the heart an indescribable feud;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,

That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main,
A sun, a shadow of a magnitude.

TO HAYDON,

ENCLOSING THE PRECEDING SONNET.

HAYDON! forgive me that I cannot speak

Definitively of these mighty things;

Forgive me, that I have not eagle's wings,
That what I want I know not where to seek.
And think that I would not be over-meek,

In rolling out upfollowed thunderings,
Even to the steep of Heliconian springs,
Were I of ample strength for such a freak.

Think, too, that all these numbers should be thine;

Whose else? In this who touch thy vesture's hem!
For, when men stared at what was most divine
With brainless idiotism and o'erwise phlegm,
Thou hadst beheld the full Hesperian shine
Of their star in the east, and gone to worship them

SONNET.

["I was led into these thoughts, my dear Reynolds, by the beauty of the morning operating on a sense of idleness. I have not read any books—the morning said I was right—I had no idea but of the morning, and the thrush said I was right—seeming to say,"]

O THOU! whose face hath felt the Winter's wind,
Whose eye hath seen the snow-clouds hung in mist,
And the black elm-tops among the freezing stars
To thee the Spring will be a harvest-time.
O thou, whose only book hath been the light
Of supreme darkness, which thou feddest on
Night after night, when Phœbus was away,
To thee the Spring shall be a triple morn.
O fret not after knowledge!—I have none,
And yet my song comes native with the warmth.
O fret not after knowledge!—I have none,
And yet the Evening listens. He who saddens
At thought of idleness cannot be idle,
And he's awake who thinks himself asleep.

WRITTEN BEFORE RE-READING KING LEAR.

O GOLDEN-TONGUED Romance with serene lute!
Fair plumed Syren! Queen! if far away!
Leave melodizing on this wintry day,
Shut up thine olden volume, and be mute.
Adieu! for once again the fierce dispute,
Betwixt Hell torment and impassioned clay
Must I burn through; once more assay
The bitter sweet of this Shakespearian fruit.

Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,
Begetters of our deep eternal theme,
When I am through the old oak forest gone
Let me not wander in a barren dream,
But when I am consumed with the Fire,
Give me new Phoenix-wings to fly at my desire.

TO THE NILE.

SON of the old moon-mountains African!
Stream of the Pyramid and Crocodile!
We call thee fruitful, and that very while
A desert fills our seeing's inward span:
Nurse of swart nations since the world began
Art thou so fruitful? or dost thou beguile
Those men to honour thee, who, worn with toil,
Rest them a space 'twixt Cairo and Decan?
O may dark fancies err! They surely do;
'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
Of all beyond itself. Thou dost bedew
Green rushes like our rivers, and dost taste
The pleasant sun-rise. Green isles hast thou too,
And to the sea as happily dost haste.

ON VISITING THE TOMB OF BURNS.

THE town, the churchyard, and the setting sun,
The clouds, the trees, the rounded hills all seem,
Though beautiful, cold—strange—as in a dream,
I dreamed long ago, now new begun.

The short-lived, paly, Summer is but won
From Winter's ague, for one hour's gleam ;
Though sapphire-warm, their stars do never beam :
All is cold Beauty ; pain is never done :
For who has mind to relish, Minos-wise,
The Real of Beauty, free from that dead hue
Sickly imagination and sick pride
Cast wan upon it ! Burns ! with honour due
 oft have honour'd thee. Great shadow, hide
Thy face ; I sin against thy native skies.

TO BURNS.

(WRITTEN IN THE COTTAGE WHERE HE WAS BORN).

THIS mortal body of a thousand days
Now fills, O Burns, a space in thine own room,
Where thou didst dream alone on budded bays,
Happy and thoughtless of thy day of doom !
My pulse is warm with thine own Barley-bree,
My head is light with pledging a great soul,
My eyes are wandering, and I cannot see,
Fancy is dead and drunken at its goal ;
Yet can I stamp my foot upon thy floor,
Yet can I ope thy window-sash to find
The meadow thou hast tramped o'er and o'er,—
Yet can I think of thee till thought is blind,—
Yet can I gulp a bumper to thy name,—
O smile among the shades, for this is fame !

BEN NEVIS.

READ me a lesson, Muse, and speak it loud
Upon the top of Nevis, blind in mist !
I look into the chasms, and a shroud
Vaporous doth hide them,—just so much I wist
Mankind do know of hell ; I look o'erhead,
And there is sullen mist,—even so much
Mankind can tell of heaven ; mist is spread
Before the earth, beneath me,—even such,
Even so vague is man's sight of himself !
Here are the craggy stones beneath my feet,—
Thus much I know that, a poor witless elf,
I tread on them,—that all my eye doth meet
Is mist and crag, not only on this height,
But in the world of thought and mental might !

FROM RONSARD.

FRAGMENT OF A SONNET.

NATURE withheld Cassandra in the skies,
For more adornment, a full thousand years ;
She took their cream of Beauty, fairest dies,
And shaped and tinted her above all Peers :
Meanwhile Love kept her dearly with his wings,
And underneath their shadow filled her eyes
With such a richness that the cloudy Kings
Of high Olympus uttered slavish sighs.
When from the Heavens I saw her first descend,
My heart took fire, and only burning pains,
They were my pleasures—they my Life's sad end ;
Love poured her beauty into my warm veins.

ON SEEING A LOCK OF MILTON'S HAIR.

CHIEF of organic numbers !
 Old Scholar of the Spheres !
 Thy spirit never slumbers,
 But rolls about our ears
 For ever and for ever !
 O what a mad endeavour
 Worketh He,
 Who to thy sacred and ennobled hearse
 Would offer a burnt sacrifice of verse
 And melody.

How heaven-ward thou soundest !
 Live Temple of sweet noise,
 And Discord unconfoundest,
 Giving Delight new joys,
 And Pleasure nobler pinions :
 O where are thy dominions ?

Lend thine ear
 To a young Delian oath—aye, by thy soul,
 By all that from thy mortal lips did roll,
 And by the kernel of thy earthly love,
 Beauty in things on earth and things above.

I swear !
 When every childish fashion
 Has vanished from my rhyme,
 Will I, gray gone in passion,
 Leave to an after-time,
 Hymning and Harmony
 Of thee and of thy works, and of thy life ;

But vain is now the burning and the strife;
Pangs are in vain, until I grow high-rife
 With old Philosophy,
And wed with glimpses of futurity.

For many years my offerings must be hush'd;
When I do speak, I'll think upon this hour,
Because I feel my forehead hot and flushed,
Even at the simplest vassal of thy power,
 A lock of thy bright hair,—
 Sudden it came,
And I was startled when I caught thy name
 Coupled so unaware ;
Yet at the moment temperate was my blood—
I thought I had beheld it from the flood !

REMINISCENCE OF CLAUDE'S ENCHANTED
CASTLE.

TO JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS.

DEAR Reynolds ! as last night I lay in bed,
There came before my eyes that wonted thread
Of shapes, and shadows, and remembrances,
That every other minute vex and please :
Things all disjointed come from north and south,—
Two Witch's eyes above a Cherub's mouth,
Voltaire with casque and shield and habergeon,
And Alexander with his night-cap on ;
Old Socrates a tying his cravat,
And Hazlitt playing with Miss Edgeworth's Cat ;

And Junius Brutus, pretty well, so so,
Making the best of's way towards Soho.

Few are there who escape these visitings,—
Perhaps one or two whose lives have patent wings,
And thro' whose curtains peeps no hellish nose,
No wild-boar tushes, and no Mermaid's toes ;
But flowers bursting out with lusty pride,
And young Æolian harps personified ;
Some Titian colours touch'd into real life,—
The sacrifice goes on ; the pontif knife
Gleams in the Sun, the milk-white heifer lows,
The pipes go shrilly, the libation flows :
A white sail shows above the green-head cliff,
Moves round the point, and throws her anchor stiff ;
The mariners join hymn with those on land.

You know the Enchanted Castle,—it doth stand
Upon a rock, on the border of a Lake,
Nested in trees, which all do seem to shake
From some old magic-like Urganda's Sword.
O Phœbus ! that I had thy sacred word
To show this Castle, in fair dreaming wise,
Unto my friend, while sick and ill he lies !

You know it well enough, where it doth seem
A mossy place, a Merlin's Hall, a dream ;
You know the clear Lake, and the little Isles,
The mountains blue, and cold near neighbour rills,
All which elsewhere are but half animate ;
There do they look alive to love and hate,
To smiles and frowns ; they seem a lifted mound
Above some giant, pulsing underground.

Part of the Building was a chosen See,
Built by a banished Santon of Chaldee ;
The other part, two thousand years from him,
Was built by Cuthbert de Saint Aldebrim ;
Then there's a little wing, far from the Sun,
Built by a Lapland Witch turn'd maudlin Nur ;
And many other juts of aged stone
Founded with many a mason-devil's groan.

The doors all look as if they oped themselves,
The windows as if latched by Fays and Elves,
And from them comes a silver flash of light,
As from the westward of a Summer's night ;
Or like a beauteous woman's large blue eyes
Gone mad through olden songs and poesies.

See ! what is coming from the distance dim !
A golden Galley all in silken trim !
Three rows of oars are lightening, moment whiles,
Into the verd'rous bosoms of those isles ;
Towards the shade, under the Castle wall,
It comes in silence,—now 'tis hidden all.
The Clarion sounds, and from a Postern-gate
An echo of sweet music doth create
A fear in the poor Herdsman, who doth bring
His beasts to trouble the enchanted spring,—
He tells of the sweet music, and the spot,
To all his friends, and they believe him not.

Oh, that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,
Would all their colours from the sunset take :
From something of material sublime,
Rather than shadow our own soul's day-time

In the dark void of night. For in the world
We jostle,—but my flag is not unfurl'd
On the Admiral-staff,—and to philosophise
I dare not yet ! Oh, never will the prize,
High reason, and the love of good and ill,
Be my award ! Things cannot to the will
Be settled, but they tease us out of thought ;
Or is it that imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confined,
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven ? It is a flaw
In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,—
It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.

Dear Reynolds ! I have a mysterious tale,
And cannot speak it : the first page I read
Upon a Lampit rock of green sea-weed
Among the breakers ; 'twas a quiet eve,
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the flat brown sand ; I was at home
And should have been most happy,—but I saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore.—
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction,
And so from happiness I far was gone.
Still am I sick of it, and tho', to-day,
I've gather'd young spring-leaves, and flowers gay
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,

Still do I that most fierce destruction see,—
 The Shark at savage prey,—the Hawk at pounce.—
 The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,
 Ravening a Worm,—Away, ye horrid moods !
 Moods of one's mind ! You know I hate them well
 You know I'd sooner be a clapping Bell
 To some Kamchatsan Missionary Church,
 Than with these horrid moods be left in lurch.

WRITTEN IN DEVONSHIRE.

I.

HERE all the summer could I stay,
 For there's a Bishop's Teign,
 And King's Teign,
 And Coomb at the clear Teign's head;
 Where, close by the stream,
 You may have your cream,
 All spread upon barley bread.

II.

There's Arch Brook,
 And there's Larch Brook,
 Both turning many a mill;
 And cooling the drouth
 Of the salmon's mouth,
 And fattening his silver gill.

III.

There's a wild wood,
 A mild hood,

To the sheep on the lea o' the down;
Where the golden furze,
With its green, thin spurs,
Doth catch at the maiden's gown.

IV.

There's Newton Marsh,
With its spear-grass harsh,—
A pleasant summer level;
Where the maidens sweet
Of the Market street,
Do meet in the dark to revel.

V.

There's Barton rich,
With dyke and ditch,
And hedge for the thrush to live in;
And the hollow tree,
For the buzzing bee,
And a bank for the wasp to hive in

VI.

And O and O,
The daisies blow,
And the primroses are wakened;
And the violets white
Sit in silver light,
And the green buds are long in the spike end.

VII.

Then who would go
Into dark Sono,

And chatter with dank-haired critics.
When he can stay
For the new-mown hay,
And startle the dappled crickets?

SONG.

I.

WHERE be you going, you Devon maid?
And what have ye there in the basket?
Ye tight little fairy, just fresh from the dairy,
Will ye give me some cream if I ask it?

II.

I love your hills and I love your dales,
And I love your flocks a-bleating;
But oh, on the heather to lie together,
With both our hearts a-beating!

III.

I'll put your basket all safe in a nook,
Your shawl I'll hang on a willow;
And we will sigh in the daisy's eye,
And kiss on a grass-green pillow

WRITTEN ON MAY DAY.

MOTHER of Hermes! and still youthful Maia!
May I sing to thee
As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baiæ?
Or may I woo thee

In earlier Sicilian? or thy smiles
 Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,
 By bards who died content on pleasant sward,
 Leaving great verse unto a little clan?
 O, give me their old vigour, and unheard
 Save of the quiet Primrose, and the span
 Of heaven and few ears,
 Rounded by thee, my song should die away
 Content as theirs,
 Rich in the simple worship of a day.*

MEG MERRILIES.

OLD Meg she was a gipsy,
 And lived upon the moors:
 Her bed it was the brown heath turf,
 And her house was out of doors.
 Her apples were swart blackberries,
 Her currants, pods o' broom;
 Her wine was dew of the wild white rose,
 Her book a churchyard tomb.

 Her brothers were the craggy hills,
 Her sisters larchen trees;
 Alone with her great family
 She lived as she did please.
 No breakfast had she many a morn,
 No dinner many a noon,
 And, 'stead of supper, she would stare
 Full hard against the moon.

* It is much to be regretted he did not finish this Ode; this commencement is in his best manner: the sentiment and expression perfect.

But every morn, of woodbine fresh
She made her garlanding,
And, every night, the dark glen yew
She wove, and she would sing.
And with her fingers, old and brown,
She plaited mats of rushes,
And gave them to the cottagers
She met among the bushes.

Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen,
And tall as Amazon;
An old red blanket cloak she wore,
A ship-hat had she on :
God rest her aged bones somewhere!
She died full long ago!

WRITTEN AFTER VISITING THE BIRTHPLACE
OF BURNS.

THERE is a charm in footing slow across a silent plain,
Where patriot battle had been fought, where glory had
the gain ;
There is a pleasure on the heath, where Druids old
have been,
Where mantles gray have rustled by, and swept the
nettled green ;
There is a joy in every spot made known in times of old,
New to the feet altho' each tale a hundred times be told ;
There is a deeper joy than all, more solemn in the heart,
More parching to the tongue than all, of more divine a
smart,

When weary steps forget themselves upon a pleasant turf,
Upon hot sand, or flinty road, or sea-shore iron surf,
Toward the castle or the cot, where long ago was born
One who was great through mortal days, and died of
fame unshorn.

Light heather-bells may tremble then,—but they are far
away;
Wood-lark may sing from sandy fern,—the Sun may
hear his lay;
Runnels may kiss the grass on shelves and shallows
clear,—
But their low voices are not heard, tho' come on travels
drear;
Blood-red the sun may set behind black mountain peaks,
Blue tides may sluice and drench their time in caves
and weedy creeks,
Eagles may seem to sleep wing-wide upon the air,
Ring-doves may fly convulsed across to some high
cedared lair,—
But the forgotten eye is still fast lidded to the ground,
As Palmer's that with weariness mid-desert shrine hath
found.

At such a time the soul's a child, in childhood is the brain,
Forgotten is the worldly heart,—alone it beats in vain!
Aye, if a madman could have leave to pass a healthful day,
To tell his forehead's swoon and faint, when first began
decay,
He might make tremble many a one, whose spirit had
gone forth
To find a Bard's low cradle-place about the silent north!

Scanty the hour, and few the steps, beyond the bourn
of care,

Beyond the sweet and bitter world,—beyond it unaware!
Scanty the hour, and few the steps,—because a longer stay
Would bar return and make a man forget his mortal way!
O horrible! to lose the sight of well-remembered face,
Of Brother's eyes, of Sister's brow,—constant to every
place,

Filling the air as on we move with portraiture intense,
More warm than those heroic tints that pain a painter's
sense,

When shapes of old come striding by, and visages of old,
Locks shining black, hair scanty gray, and passions
manifold!

No, no,—that horror cannot be! for at the cable's length
Man feels the gentle anchor pull, and gladdens in its
strength:

One hour, half idiot, he stands by mossy waterfall,
But in the very next he reads his soul's memorial;
He reads it on the mountain's height, where chance **he**
may sit down,

Upon rough marble diadem, that hill's eternal crown.
Yet be his anchor e'er so fast, room is there for a prayer,
That **man** may never lose his mind in mountains black
and bare;

That he may stray, league after league, some great birth-
place to find,

And keep his vision clear from speck, his inward sight
unblind.

WRITTEN AFTER VISITING FINGAL'S CAVE.

NOT Aladdin magian
Ever such a work began ;
Not the wizard of the Dee
Ever such a dream could see ;
Not St. John, in Patmos' isle,
In the passion of his toil,
When he saw the churches seven,
Golden-aisled, built up in heaven,
Gazed at such a rugged wonder,
As I stood its roofing under.
Lo ! I saw one sleeping there,
On the marble cold and bare ;
While the surges washed his feet,
And his garments white did beat
Drenched about the sombre rocks ;
On his neck his well-grown locks,
Lifted dry above the main,
Were upon the curl again.
"What is this ? and what art thou ?"
Whispered I, and touched his brow ;
"What art thou ? and what is this ?"
Whispered I, and strove to kiss
The spirit's hand, to wake his eyes ;
Up he started in a trice :
"I am Lycidas," said he,
"Fam'd in fun'ral minstrelsy !
This was architectur'd thus
By the great Oceanus !—
Here his mighty waters play
Hollow organs all the day ;

Here, by turns, his dolphins all,
Finny palmers, great and small,
Come to pay devotion due,—
Each a mouth of pearls must strew !
Many a mortal of these days,
Dares to pass our sacred ways ;
Dares to touch, audaciously,
This cathedral of the sea !
I have been the pontiff-priest,
Where the waters never rest,
Where a fledgy sea-bird choir
Soars for ever ! Holy fire
I have hid from mortal man ;
Proteus is my Sacristan !
But the dulled eye of mortal
Hath passed beyond the rocky portal ;
So for ever will I leave
Such a taint, and soon unweave
All the magic of the place.”
So saying, with a Spirit’s glance
He dived !

A PROPHECY.*

’Tis the witching hour of night,
Orbed is the moon and bright,

* These verses occur in a letter addressed by Keats on 29th October 1818, to his brother George, then in America. He says : “If I had a prayer to make for any great good, next to Tom’s recovery, it should be that one of your children should be the first American poet. I have a great mind to make a prophecy ; and they say that prophecies work out their own fulfilment.”

And the stars they glisten, glisten,
Seeming with bright eyes to listen—

For what listen they?

For a song and for a charm,
See they glisten in alarm,
And the moon is waxing warm

To hear what I shall say.

Moon! keep wide thy golden ears—
Hearken, stars! and hearken, spheres!--
Hearken, thou eternal sky!

I sing an infant's lullaby,

A pretty lullaby.

Listen, listen, listen, listen,
Glisten, glisten, glisten, glisten,

And hear my lullaby!

Though the rushes that will make
Its cradle still are in the lake—
Though the linen that will be
Its swathe, is on the cotton tree—
Though the woollen that will keep
It warm, is on the silly sheep—
Listen, starlight, listen, listen,
Glisten, glisten, glisten, glisten,

And hear my lullaby!

Child, I see thee! Child, I've found thee
Midst of the quiet all around thee!
Child, I see thee! Child, I spy thee!
And thy mother sweet is nigh thee!
Child, I know thee! Child no more,
But a Poet evermore!
See, see, the lyre, the lyre,
In a flame of fire,

Upon the little cradle's top
 Flaring, flaring, flaring,
 Past the eyesight's bearing.
 Awake it from its sleep,
 And see if it can keep
 Its eyes upon the blaze—
 Amaze, amaze!
 It stares, it stares, it stares,
 It dares what no one dares!
 It lifts its little hand into the flame
 Unharmed, and on the strings
 Paddles a little tune, and sings,
 With dumb endeavour sweetly—
 Bard art thou completely!
 Little child
 O' th' western wild,
 Bard art thou completely!
 Sweetly with dumb endeavour,
 A Poet now or never,
 Little child
 O' th' western wild,
 A Poet now or never!

A PORTRAIT.*

"HE is to weet a melancholy carle:
 Thin in the waist, with bushy head of hair,
 As hath the seeded thistle, when a parle
 It holds with Zephyr, ere it senleth fair
 Its light balloons into the summer air;

These jocose verses relate to Keats's friend Mr. Brown.

Thereto his beard had not begun to bloom,
 No brush had touched his chin, or razor sheet;
 No care had touched his cheek with mortal dooⁿ,
 But new he was, and bright, as scarf from Persian loom.

“ Ne cared he for wine or half-and-half;
 Ne cared he for fish, or flesh, or fowl;
 And sauces held he worthless as the chaff;
 He 'sdeigned the swine-head at the wassail-bowl;
 Ne with lewd ribbalds sat he cheek by jowl;
 Ne with sly lemans in the scorner's chair;
 But after water-brooks this pilgrim's soul
 Panted, and all his food was woodland air;
 Though he would oft-times feast on gilliflowers rare.

“ The slang of cities in no wise he knew,
Tipping the wink to him was heathen Greek;
 He sipped no “ olden Tom,” or “ ruin blue,”
 Or Nantz, or cherry-brandy, drank full meek
 By many a damsel brave, and rouge of cheek;
 Nor did he know each aged watchman's beat,
 Nor in obscured purlieus would he seek
 For curled Jewesses, with ankles neat,
 Who, as they walk abroad, make tinkling with their feet.”

A SPENSERIAN STANZA.*

“ IN after-time, a sage of mickle lore
 Yclep'd Typographus, the Giant took,

Lord Houghton explains this effusion as follows:—“ The copy of ‘ Spenser ’ which Keats had in daily use, contains the following stanza, inserted at the close of Canto II. Book v. His sympathies were very much on the side of the revolutionary ‘ Giant,’ who

And did refit his limbs as heretofore,
 And made him read in many a learned book.
 And into many a lively legend look ;
 Thereby in goodly themes so training him,
 That all his brutishness he quite forsook,
 When, meeting Artegall and Talus grim,
 The one he struck stone-blind, the other's eyes wox
 dim."

FRAGMENT.

WHERE'S the Poet? show him! show him!
 Muses nine! that I may know him!
 'Tis the man who with a man
 Is an equal, be he King,
 Or poorest of the beggar-clan,
 Or any other wondrous thing
 A man may be 'twixt ape and Plato ;
 'Tis the man who with a bird,
 Wren, or Eagle, finds his way to
 All its instincts; he hath heard
 The Lion's roaring, and can tell
 What his horny throat expresseth
 And to him the Tiger's yell
 Comes articulate and presseth
 On his ear like mother-tongue.

'undertook for to repair' the 'realms and nations run awry,' and to suppress 'tyrants that make men subject to their law,' 'and lordings curbe that commons over-aw,' while he grudged the legitimate victory, as he rejected the conservative philosophy, of the 'righteous Artegall' and his comrade, the fierce defender of privilege and order. And he expressed, in this *ex post facto* prophecy, his conviction of the ultimate triumph of freedom and equality by the power of transmitted knowledge.

MODERN LOVE.

AND what is love? It is a doll dress'd up
 For idleness to cosset, nurse, and dandle;
 A thing of soft misnomers, so divine
 That silly youth doth think to make itself
 Divine by loving, and so goes on
 Yawning and doting a whole summer long,
 Till Miss's comb is made a pearl tiara,
 And common Wellingtons turn Romeo boots;
 Then Cleopatra lives at number seven,
 And Anthony resides in Brunswick Square.
 Fools! if some passions high have warm'd the world,
 If Queens and Soldiers have play'd deep for hearts,
 It is no reason why such agonies
 Should be more common than the growth of weeds.
 Fools! make me whole again that weighty pearl
 The Queen of Egypt melted, and I'll say
 That ye may love in spite of beaver hats.

FRAGMENT OF "THE CASTLE BUILDER."

TO-NIGHT I'll have my friar—let me think
 About my room,—I'll have it in the pink;
 It should be rich and *sombre*, and the moon,
 Just in its mid-life in the midst of June,
 Should look thro' four large windows and display
 Clear, but for gold-fish vases in the way,
 Their glassy *diamonding* on Turkish floor;
 The tapers keep aside, an hour and more,

To see what else the moon alone can show ;
While the night-breeze doth softly let us know
My terrace is well bower'd with oranges.
Upon the floor the dullest spirit sees
A guitar-ribband and a lady's glove
Beside a crumple-leaved tale of love ;
A tambour-frame, with Venus sleeping there,
All finished but some ringlets of her hair ;
A viol, bow-strings torn, cross-wise upon
A glorious folio of Anacreon ;
A skull upon a mat of roses lying,
Ink'd purple with a song concerning dying ;
An hour-glass on the turn, amid the trails
Of passion-flower ;—just in time there sails
A cloud across the moon,—the lights bring in !
And see what more my phantasy can win.
It is a gorgeous room, but somewhat sad ;
'The draperies are so, as tho' they had
Been made for Cleopatra's winding-sheet ;
And opposite the stedfast eye doth meet
A spacious looking-glass, upon whose face,
In letters raven-sombre, you may trace
Old " Mene, Mene, 'Tekel Upharsin."
Greek busts and statuary have ever been
Held, by the finest spirits, fitter far
'Than vase grotesque and Siamesian jar ;
'Therefore 'tis sure a want of attic taste
'That I should rather love a gothic waste
Of eyesight on cinque-coloured potter's clay,
Than on the marble fairness of old Greece.
My table-coverlits of Jason's fleece
And black Numidian sheep-wool should be wrought,

Gold, black, and heavy from the Lama brought.
 My ebon sofas should delicious be
 With down from Leda's cygnet progeny.
 My pictures all Salvator's, save a few
 Of Titian's portraiture, and one, though new,
 Of Haydon's in its fresh magnificence.
 My wine—O good! 'tis here at my desire,
 And I must sit to supper with my friar.

FRAGMENT.

“ Under the flag
 Of each his faction, they to battle bring
 Their embryo atoms.”

MILTON.

WELCOME joy, and welcome sorrow,
 Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather;
 Come to-day, and come to-morrow,
 I do love you both together!—
 I love to mark sad faces in fair weather;
 And hear a merry laugh amid the thunder;
 Fair and foul I love together.
 Meadows sweet where flames are under,
 And a giggle at a wonder;
 Visage sage at pantomime;
 Funeral, and steeple-chime;
 Infant playing with a skull;
 Morning fair, and shipwreck'd hull;
 Nightshade with the woodbine kissing;
 Serpents in red roses hissing;
 Cleopatra regal-dress'd
 With the aspic at her breast;

Dancing music, music sad,
Both together, sane and mad ;
Muses bright, and muses pale ;
Sombre Saturn, Momus hale ;—
Laugh and sigh, and laugh again ;
Oh the sweetness of the pain !
Muses bright, and muses pale,
Bare your faces of the veil ;
Let me see : and let me write
Of the day, and of the night—
Both together :—let me slake
All my thirst for sweet heart-ache !
Let my bower be of yew,
Interwreath'd with myrtles new ;
Pines and lime-trees full in bloom,
And my couch a low grass-tomb.

TO ———.

WHAT can I do to drive away
Remembrance from my eyes? for they have seen
Aye, an hour ago, my brilliant Queen !
Touch has a memory. O say, love, say,
What can I do to kill it and be free
In my old liberty ?
When every fair one that I saw was fair,
Enough to catch me in but half a snare,
Not keep me there :
When, howe'er poor or particolour'd things,
My muse had wings,
And ever ready was to take her course
Whither I bent her force,

Unintellectual, yet divine to me ;—
Divine, I say !—What sea-bird o'er the sea
Is a philosopher the while he goes
Winging along where the great water throes ?
How shall I do
To get anew
Those moulted feathers, and so mount once more
Above, above
The reach of fluttering Love,
And make him cower lowly while I soar ?
Shall I gulp wine ? No, that is vulgarism,
A heresy and schism,
Foisted into the canon-law of love ;—
No,—wine is only sweet to happy men ;
More dismal cares
Seize on me unawares,—
Where shall I learn to get my peace again ?
To banish thoughts of that most hateful land,
Dungeoner of my friends, that wicked strand
Where they were wreck'd and live a wrecked life ;
That monstrous region, whose dull rivers pour,
Ever from their sordid urns unto the shore,
Unown'd of any weedy-haired gods ;
Whose winds, all zephyrless, hold scourging rods,
Iced in the great lakes, to afflict mankind ;
Whose rank-grown forests, frosted, black, and blind,
Would fright a Dryad ; whose harsh herbaged meads
Make lean and lank the starv'd ox while he feeds ;
There bad flowers have no scent, birds no sweet song,
And great unerring Nature once seems wrong

O, for some sunny spell

To dissipate the shadows of this hell !
 Say they are gone,—with the new dawning light
 Steps forth my lady bright !
 O, let me once more rest
 My soul upon that dazzling breast !
 Let once again these aching arms be placed,
 The tender gaolers of thy waist !
 And let me feel that warm breath here and there
 To spread a rapture in my very hair,—
 O, the sweetness of the pain !
 Give me those lips again !
 Enough ! Enough ! it is enough for me
 To dream of thee !

AN EARLIER VERSION OF "HYPERION."

HYPERION, A VISION.*

FANATICS have their dreams, wherewith they weave
 A paradise for a sect ; the savage, too,
 From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
 Guesses at heaven ; pity these have not
 Traced upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
 The shadows of melodious utterance,
 But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die ;
 For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,—
 With the fine spell of words alone can save
 Imagination from the sable chain
 And dumb enchantment. Who alive can say,
 "Thou art no Poet—may'st not tell thy dreams?"
 Since every man whose soul is not a clod
 Hath visions and would speak, if he had loved,

* The passages within brackets are those which are to be found in the printed poem.

And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.
Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse
Be poet's or fanatic's will be known
When this warm scribe, my hand, is in the grave.

Methought I stood where trees of every clime,
Palm, myrtle, oak, and sycamore, and beech,
With plantane and spice-blossoms, made a screen,
In neighbourhood of fountains (by the noise
Soft-showering in mine ears), and (by the touch
Of scent) not far from roses. Twining round
I saw an arbour with a drooping roof
Of trellis vines, and bells, and larger blooms,
Like floral censers, swinging light in air ;
Before its wreathed doorway, on a mound
Of moss, was spread a feast of summer fruits,
Which, nearer seen, seem'd refuse of a meal
By angel tasted or our Mother Eve ;
For empty shells were scatter'd on the grass,
And grapestalks but half-bare, and remnants more
Sweet-smelling, whose pure kinds I could not know.
Still was more plenty than the fabled horn
Thrice emptied could pour forth at banqueting,
For Proserpine return'd to her own fields,
Where the white heifers low. And appetite,
More yearning than on earth I ever felt,
Growing within, I ate deliciously,—
And, after not long, thirsted ; for thereby
Stood a cool vessel of transparent juice
Sipp'd by the wander'd bee, the which I took,
And pledging all the mortals of the world,
And all the dead whose names are in our lips,

Drank. That full draught is parent of my theme.
No Asian poppy nor elixir fine
Of the soon-fading, jealous, Caliphat,
No poison gender'd in close monkish cell,
To thin the scarlet conclave of old men,
Could so have wrapt unwilling life away.
Among the fragrant husks and berries crush'd
Upon the grass, I struggled hard against
The domineering potion, but in vain.
The cloudy swoon came on, and down I sank,
Like a Silenus on an antique vase.
How long I slumber'd 'tis a chance to guess.
When sense of life return'd, I started up
As if with wings, but the fair trees were gone,
The mossy mound and arbour were no more
I look'd around upon the curved sides
Of an old sanctuary, with roof august,
Builted so high, it seem'd that filmed clouds
Might spread beneath as o'er the stars of heaven.
So old the place was, I remember'd none
The like upon the earth: what I had seen
Of gray cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers,
The superannuations of sunk realms,
Or Nature's rocks toil'd hard in waves and winds,
Seem'd but the faulture of decrepit things
To that eternal domed monument.
Upon the marble at my feet there lay
Store of strange vessels and large draperies,
Which needs had been of dyed asbestos wove,
Or in that place the moth could not corrupt,
So white the linen, so, in some, distinct
Ran imageries from a sombre loom.

All in a mingled heap confused there lay
Robes, golden tongs, censer and chafing-dish,
Girdles, and chains, and holy jewelries.

Turning from these with awe, once more I raised
My eyes to fathom the space every way :
The embossed roof, the silent massy range
Of columns north and south, ending in mist
Of nothing ; then to eastward, where black gates
Were shut against the sunrise evermore ;
Then to the west I look'd, and saw far off
An image, huge of feature as a cloud,
At level of whose feet an altar slept,
To be approach'd on either side by steps
And marble balustrade, and patient travail
To count with toil the innumerable degrees.
Towards the altar sober-paced I went,
Repressing haste as too unholy there ;
And, coming nearer, saw beside the shrine
One ministering ; and there arose a flame.
When in mid-day the sickening east-wind
Shifts sudden to the south, the small warm rain
Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers,
And fills the air with so much pleasant health
That even the dying man forgets his shroud ;—
Even so that lofty sacrificial fire,
Sending forth Maian incense, spread around
Forgetfulness of everything but bliss
And clouded all the altar with soft smoke ;
From whose white fragrant curtains thus I heard
Language pronounced : “ If thou canst not ascend
These steps, die on that marble where thou art.

Thy flesh, near cousin to the common dust,
Will parch for lack of nutriment ; thy bones
Will wither in few years, and vanish so
That not the quickest eye could find a grain
Of what thou now art on that pavement cold.
The sands of thy short life are spent this hour,
And no hand in the universe can turn
Thy hourglass, if these gummed leaves be burnt
Ere thou canst mount up these immortal steps.”
I heard, I look’d : two senses both at once,
So fine, so subtle, felt the tyranny
Of that fierce threat and the hard task proposed.
Prodigious seem’d the toil ; the leaves were yet
Burning, when suddenly a palsied chill
Struck from the paved level up my limbs,
And was ascending quick to put cold grasp
Upon those streams that pulse beside the throat.
I shriek’d, and the sharp anguish of my shriek
Stung my own ears ; I strove hard to escape
The numbness, strove to gain the lowest step.
Slow, heavy, deadly was my pace : the cold
Grew stifling, suffocating at the heart ;
And when I clasp’d my hands I felt them not.
One minute before death my iced foot touch’d
The lowest stair ; and, as it touch’d, life seem’d
To pour in at the toes ; I mounted up
As once fair angels on a ladder flew
From the green turf to heaven. “ Holy Power,”
Cried I, approaching near the horned shrine,
“ What am I that should so be saved from death ?
What am I that another death come not
To choke my utterance, sacrilegious, here ? ”

Then said the veiled shadow : "Thou hast felt
What 'tis to die and live again before
Thy fated hour ; that thou hadst power to do so
Is thine own safety ; thou hast dated on
Thy doom." "High Prophetess," said I, "purge off
Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film."
"None can usurp this height," returned that shade,
"But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.
All else who find a haven in the world,
Where they may thoughtless sleep away their days,
If by a chance into this fane they come,
Rot on the pavement where thou rottedst half."
"Are there not thousands in the world," said I,
Encouraged by the sooth voice of the shade,
"Who love their fellows even to the death,
Who feel the giant agony of the world,
And more, like slaves to poor humanity,
Labour for mortal good? I sure should see
Other men here, but I am here alone."
"Those whom thou spakest of are no visionaries,"
Rejoin'd that voice ; "they are no dreamers weak ;
They seek no wonder but the human face,
No music but a happy-noted voice :
They come not here, they have no thought to come ;
And thou art here, for thou art less than they.
What benefit canst thou do, or all thy tribe,
To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing,
A fever of thyself : think of the earth ;
What bliss, even in hope, is there for thee?
What haven? every creature hath its home,
Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,

Whether his labours be sublime or low—
The pain alone, the joy alone, distinct ·
Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.
Therefore, that happiness be somewhat shared,
Such things as thou art are admitted oft
Into like gardens thou didst pass erewhile,
And suffer'd in these temples : for that cause
Thou standest safe beneath this statue's knees. '
"That I am favour'd for unworthiness
By such propitious parley medicined
In sickness not ignoble, I rejoice,
Aye, and could weep for love of such award. '
So answer'd I, continuing, " If it please.
Majestic shadow, tell me where I am,
Whose altar this, for whom this incense curls ;
What image this whose face I cannot see
For the broad marble knees ; and who thou art,
Of accent feminine, so courteous ? "

Then the tall shade, in drooping linen veil'd,
Spoke out, so much more earnest, that her breath
Stirr'd the thin folds of gauze that drooping hung
About a golden censer from her hand
Pendent ; and by her voice I knew she shed
Long-treasured tears. " This temple, sad and lone,
Is all spared from the thunder of a war
Foughten long since by giant hierarchy
Against rebellion : this old image here,
Whose carved features wrinkled as he fell,
Is Saturn's ; I, Moneta, left supreme,
Sole goddess of this desolation. "

I had no words to answer, for my tongue,
Useless, could find about its roofed home
No syllable of a fit majesty
To make rejoinder to Moneta's mourn :
There was a silence, while the altar's blaze
Was fainting for sweet food. I look'd thereon,
And on the paved floor, where nigh were piled
Faggots of cinnamon, and many heaps
Of other crisped spicewood : then again
I look'd upon the altar, and its horns
Whiten'd with ashes, and its languorous flame,
And then upon the offerings again ;
And so, by turns, till sad Moneta cried :
" The sacrifice is done, but not the less
Will I be kind to thee for thy good will.
My power, which to me is still a curse,
Shall be to thee a wonder ; for the scenes
Still swooning vivid through my globed brain,
With an electal changing misery,
Thou shalt with these dull mortal eyes behold
Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not.'
As near as an immortal's sphered words
Could to a mother's soften were these last :
And yet I had a terror of her robes,
And chiefly of the veils that from her brow
Hung pale, and curtain'd her in mysteries,
That made my heart too small to hold its blood.
This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
Parted the veils. Then saw I a wan face,
Not pined by human sorrows, but bright-blanch'd
By an immortal sickness which kills not ;
It works a constant change, which happy death

Can put no end to ; deathwards progressing
To no death was that visage ; it had past
The lily and the snow ; and beyond these
I must not think now, though I saw that face.
But for her eyes I should have fled away ;
They held me back with a benignant light,
Soft, mitigated by divinest lids
Half-closed, and visionless entire they seem'd
Of all external things ; they saw me not,
But in blank splendour beam'd, like the mild moon,
Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
What eyes are upward cast. As I had found
A grain of gold upon a mountain's side,
And, twinged with avarice, strain'd out my eyes
To search its sullen entrails rich with ore,
So, at the view of sad Moneta's brow,
I asked to see what things the hollow brow
Behind environed : what high tragedy
In the dark secret chambers of her skull
Was acting, that could give so dread a stress
To her cold lips, and fill with such a light
Her planetary eyes, and touch her voice
With such a sorrow ? " Shade of Memory ! "
Cried I, with act adorant at her feet,
" By all the gloom hung round thy fallen house,
By this last temple, by the golden age,
By great Apollo, thy dear foster-child,
And by thyself, forlorn divinity,
The pale Omega of a wither'd race,
Let me behold, according as thou saidst,
What in thy brain so ferments to and fro ! "
No sooner had this conjuration past

My devout lips, than side by side we stood
 (Like a stunt bramble by a solemn pine)
 [Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
 Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
 Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star.]*
 Onward I look'd beneath the gloomy boughs,
 And saw what first I thought an image huge,
 Like to the image pedestall'd so high
 In Saturn's temple; then Moneta's voice
 Came brief upon mine ear. "So Saturn sat
 When he had lost his realms;" whereon there grew
 A power within me of enormous ken
 To see as a god sees, and take the depth
 Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
 Can size and shape pervade. The lofty theme
 Of those few words hung vast before my mind
 With half-unravell'd web. I sat myself
 Upon an eagle's watch, that I might see,
 And seeing ne'er forget. No stir of life*
 Was in this shrouded vale,—not so much air
 As in the zoning of a summer's day
 [Robs not one light seed from the feathered grass;
 But where the dead leaf fell there did it rest.
 A stream went noiseless by, still deaden'd more
 By reason of the † fallen divinity
 Spreading more ‡ shade; the Naiad 'mid her reeds
 Prest her cold finger closer to her lips.

* Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
 Still as the silence round about his lair;
 Forest on forest hung about his head,
 Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
 Not so much life as on a summer's day
 Robs not one light seed . . .

† His.

‡ a.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went]
 No further than to where old Saturn's feet
 Had rested, and there slept how long a sleep!*

Degraded, cold, [upon the sodden ground
 His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
 Unsceptred, and his realmless eyes were closed ;
 While his bow'd head seem'd listening to the Earth,
 His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place ;
 But there came one who, with a kindred hand,
 Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
 With reverence, though to one who knew it not.]

Then came the grieved voice of Mnemosyne,
 And grieved I hearken'd. " That divinity
 Whom thou saw'st step from yon forlornest wood,
 And with slow pace approach our fallen king,
 Is Thea, softest-natured of our brood."
 I mark'd the Goddess, in fair statuary
 Surpassing wan Moneta by the head,
 And in her sorrow nearer woman's tears.†

* No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
 And slept there since.

† She was a goddess of the infant world ;
 By her, in stature, the tall Amazon
 Had stood a pigmy's height ; she would have taunt'd
 Achilles by the hair and bent his neck,
 Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel.
 Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx
 Pedestall'd, haply, in a palace-court,
 When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.
 But oh ! how unlike beauty was that face ;
 How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
 Sorrow more beautiful than beauty's self !

[There was a list'ning fear in her regard,
 As if calamity had but begun ;
 As if the venom'd clouds of evil days
 Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
 Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
 One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
 Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
 Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain ;
 The other upon Saturn's bended neck
 She laid, and to the level of his ear
 Leaning, with parted lips some words she spoke
 In solemn tenour and deep organ-tone ;
 Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
 Would come in this like accenting ;* how frail
 To that large utterance of the early gods !

“ Saturn, look up ! and for what, poor lost
 king ? †

I have no comfort for thee ; no, not one ;
 I cannot say, wherefore thus sleepest thou ? ‡
 For Heaven is parted from thee, and the Earth
 Knows thee not, so § afflicted, for a god.
 The Ocean, too, with all its solemn noise,
 Has from thy sceptre pass'd ; and all the air
 Is emptied of thy hoary majesty.
 Thy thunder, captious || at the new command,
 Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house ;

* In these like accents.

† Though wherefore, poor old king ?

‡ O ! wherefore sleepest thou.

§ thus

|| Conscious of the new command.

And thy sharp lightning, in unpractised hands,
Scourges and burns our once serene domain.

With such remorseless speed still come new woes,*
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
Saturn! sleep on: me thoughtless,† why should I
Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
Saturn! sleep on, while at thy feet I weep.”

As when upon a tranced summer night‡
Forests, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a noise,§
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Swelling upon the silence, dying off,||
As if the ebbing air had but one wave,
So came these words and went; the while in tears
She prest her fair large forehead to the earth,
Just where her fallen hair might spread in curls ¶
A soft and silken net for Saturn's feet.]
Long, long these two were postured motionless,
Like sculpture builded-up upon the grave
Of their own power. A long awful time

* O aching time! O moments big as years!
All, as ye pass, swell out the monstrous truth,
And press it so upon our weary griefs,
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.

† O, thoughtless, why did I.

‡ *Add*,—Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks for forests.

§ Stir.

|| Which comes upon the silence and dies off.

¶ She touch'd her fair large forehead to the ground,
Just where her falling hair might be outspread.

I look'd upon them; still they were the same:
The frozen God still bending to the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet:
Moneta silent. Without stay or prop
But my own weak mortality, I bore
The load of this eternal quietude,
The unchanging gloom and the three fixed shapes
Ponderous upon my senses, a whole moon;
For by my burning brain I measured sure
Her silver seasons shedded on the night,
And every day by day methought I grew
More gaunt and ghostly. Oftentimes I pray'd
Intense, that death would take me from the vale
And all its burthens; gasping with despair
Of change, hour after hour I cursed myself,
Until old Saturn raised his faded eyes,
And look'd around and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place.
And that fair kneeling goddess at his feet.

As the moist scent of flowers, and grass, and leaves,
Fills forest-dells with a pervading air,
Known to the woodland nostril, so the words
Of Saturn fill'd the mossy glooms around,
Even to the hollows of time-eaten oaks,
And to the windings of the foxes' hole,
With sad, low tones, while thus he spoke, and sent
Strange moanings to the solitary Pan.
"Moan, brethren, moan, for we are swallow'd up
And buried from all godlike exercise
[Of influence benign on planets pale,
And peaceful sway upon man's harvesting,

And all those acts which Deity supreme
 Doth ease its heart of love in.*] Moan and wail;
 Moan, brethren, moan; for lo, the rebel spheres
 Spin round; the stars their ancient courses keep;
 Clouds still with shadowy moisture haunt the earth,
 Still suck their fill of light from sun and moon;
 Still buds the tree, and still the seashores murmur;

' One moon, with alternations slow, had shed
 Her silver seasons four upon the night,
 And still these two were postured motionless,
 Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern:
 The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
 And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet:
 Until at length old Saturn lifted up
 His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
 And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
 And that fair kneeling goddess; and then spoke
 As with a palsied tongue; and while his beard
 Shook horrid with such aspen-malady.
 "O tender Spouse of gold Hyperion,
 Thea! I feel thee ere I see thy face!
 Look up, and let me see our doom in it;
 Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
 Is Saturn's; tell me if thou hear'st the voice
 Of Saturn; tell me if this wrinkling brow,
 Naked and bare of its great diadem,
 Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
 To make me desolate? whence came the strength?
 How was it nurtured to such bursting-forth,
 While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp?
 But it is so; and I am smother'd up
 And buried from all godlike exercise
 Of influence benign on planets pale,
 Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
 Of peaceful sway above men's harvesting,
 And all the acts which Deity supreme
 Doth ease its heart of love in."

There is no death in all the universe,
No smell of death.—There shall be death. Moan,
moan ;

Moan, Cybele, moan ; for thy pernicious babes
Have changed a god into an aching palsy.
Moan, brethren, moan, for I have no strength left ;
Weak as the reed, weak, feeble as my voice.
Oh ! Oh ! the pain, the pain of feebleness ;
Moan, moan, for still I thaw ; or give me help ;
Throw down those imps, and give me victory.
Let me hear other groans, [and trumpets blown
Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival,]
From the gold peaks of heaven's high-piled clouds ;*
[Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
Of strings in hollow shells ; and there shall be
Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
Of the sky-children."] So he feebly ceased,
With such a poor and sickly-sounding pause,
Methought I hear some old man of the earth
Bewailing earthly loss ; nor could my eyes
And ears act with that unison of sense
Which marries sweet sound with the grace of form,
And dolorous accent from a tragic harp
With large-limb'd visions. More I scrutinized.
Still fixt he sat beneath the sable trees,
Whose arms spread straggling in wild serpent forms,
With leaves all hush'd ; his awful presence there
(Now all was silent) gave a deadly lie
To what I erewhile heard : only his lips
Trembled amid the white curls of his beard ;
They told the truth, though round the snowy locks

* Upon the gold clouds metropolitan.

Hung nobly, as upon the face of heaven
A mid-day fleece of clouds. Thea arose,
And stretcht her white arm through the hollow dark.
Pointing some whither: whereat he too rose,
Like a vast giant, seen by men at sea
To grow pale from the waves at dull midnight
They melted from my sight into the woods ;
Ere I could turn, Moneta cried, " These twain
Are speeding to the families of grief,
Where, rooft in by black rocks, they waste [wait ?] in
 pain
And darkness, for no hope." And she spake on,
As ye may read who can unwearied pass
Onward from the antechamber of this dream,
Where, even at the open doors, awhile
I must delay, and glean my memory
Of her high phrase—perhaps no further dare.

END OF CANTO I.

CANTO II.

" MORTAL, that thou mayst understand aright,
I humanize my sayings to thine ear,
Making comparisons of earthly things ;
Or thou mightst better listen to the wind,
Whose language is to thee a barren noise,
Though it blows legend-laden thro' the trees.
In melancholy realms * big tears are shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe.

* Meanwhile in other realms . . .

The Titans fierce, self-hid or prison-bound,
Groan for the old allegiance once more,
Listening in their doom for Saturn's voice.*
But one of the whole eagle-brood† still keeps
His sovereignty, and rule, and majesty:
Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire
Still sits, still snuffs the incense teeming up
From Man to the Sun's God—yet insecure.
For as upon the earth‡ dire prodigies
[Fright and perplex, so also shudders he ;
Not at dog's howl or gloom-bird's hated screech,
Or the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing bell,
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp ;
But horrors, portioned to a giant nerve,
Make great Hyperion ache.§ His palace bright.
Bastioned with pyramids of shining gold,
And touched with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glares a blood-red thro' all the thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries ;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flash angrily ;] when he would taste the wreaths
[Of incense breathed aloft from sacred hills
Instead of sweets, his ample palate takes
Savour of poisonous brass and metals sick ;]
Wherefore [when harbour'd in the sleepy West,
After the full completion of fair day,
For rest divine upon exalted couch,

* And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.

† Mammoth-brood.

‡ For as among us mortals omens drear.

§ Oft made Hyperion ache.

And slumber in the arms of melody,
 He paces through * the pleasant hours of ease,
 With strides colossal, on from hall to hall,
 While far within each aisle and deep recess
 His winged minions in close clusters stand
 Amazed, and full of fear ; like anxious men,
 Who on a wide plain gather in sad troops,†
 When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
 Even now where Saturn, roused from icy trance,
 Goes step for step with Thea from yon ‡ woods,
 Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
 Is sloping § to the threshold of the West.]
 Thither we tend." Now in clear light I stood,
 Relieved from the dusk vale. Mnemosyne
 Was sitting on a square-edged polish'd stone,
 That in its lucid depth reflected pure
 Her priestess' garments. My quick eyes ran on
 [From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
 Through bow'rs of fragrant and enwreathed light,
 And diamond-paned lustrous long arcades.]
 Anon rush'd by the bright Hyperion
 [His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
 And gave a roar as if of earthy fire,
 That scared away the meek ethereal hours,
 And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared.]

Here MS. ends.

* Paced away.

† Who on wide plains gather in panting troops.

‡ The. Through the.

§ Came slope upon.



THE CAP AND BELLS;*

OR, THE JEALOUSIES.

A FAERY TALE. UNFINISHED.

I.

IN midmost Ind, beside Hydaspes cool,
There stood, or hover'd, tremulous in the air,
A faery city, 'neath the potent rule
Of Emperor Elfinan; famed ev'rywhere
For love of mortal women, maidens fair,
Whose lips were solid, whose soft hands were made
Of a fit mould and beauty, ripe and rare,
To pamper his slight wooing, warm yet staid :
He lov'd girls smooth as shades, but hated a mere shade

II.

This was a crime forbidden by the law;
And all the priesthood of his city wept,

* This Poem was written subject to future amendments and omissions : it was begun without a plan, and without any prescribed laws for the supernatural machinery.—CHARLES BROWN.

For ruin and dismay they well foresaw,
If impious prince no bound or limit kept,
And faery Zendervester overstept ;
They wept, he sinn'd, and still he would sin on,
They dreamt of sin, and he sinn'd while they
slept ;
In vain the pulpit thunder'd at the throne,
Caricature was vain, and vain the tart lampoon.

III.

Which seeing, his high court of parliament
Laid a remonstrance at his Highness' feet,
Praying his royal senses to content
Themselves with what in faery land was sweet,
Befitting best that shade with shade should meet :
Whereat, to calm their fears, he promised soon
From mortal tempters all to make retreat,—
Aye, even on the first of the new moon,
An immaterial wife to espouse as heaven's boon.

IV.

Meantime he sent a fluttering embassy
To Pigmio, of Imaus sovereign,
To half beg, and half demand, respectfully,
The hand of his fair daughter Bellanaine ;
An audience had, and speeching done, they gain
Their point, and bring the weeping bride away ;
Whom, with but one attendant, safely lain
Upon their wings, they bore in bright array,
While little harps were touch'd by many a lyric fay.

THE CAP AND BELLS.

V.

As in old pictures tender cherubim
A child's soul thro' the sapphired canvas bear,
So, thro' a real heaven, on they swim
With the sweet princess on her plumaged lair,
Speed giving to the winds her lustrous hair ;
And so she journey'd, sleeping or awake,
Save when, for healthful exercise and air,
She chose to "promener à l'aile," or take
A pigeon's somerset, for sport or change's sake.

VI.

"Dear princess, do not whisper me so loud."
Quoth Corallina, nurse and confidant,
"Do not you see there, lurking in a cloud,
Close at your back, that sly old Crafticant ?
He hears a whisper plainer than a rant :
Dry up your tears, and do not look so blue ;
He's Elfinan's great state-spy militant,
His running, lying, flying foot-man too,—
Dear mistress, let him have no handle against you !

VII.

"Show him a mouse's tail, and he will guess,
With metaphysic swiftness, at the mouse ;
Show him a garden, and with speed no less,
He'll surmise sagely of a dwelling-house,
And plot, in the same minute, how to chouse
The owner out of it ; show him a —" "Peace !
Peace ! nor contrive thy mistress' ire to rouse ;"
Return'd the princess, "my tongue shall not cease
Till from this hated match I get a free release.

VIII.

“Ah, beauteous mortal!” “Hush!” quoth Coralline,
“Really you must not talk of him indeed.”
“You hush!” replied the mistress, with a shine
Of anger in her eyes, enough to breed
In stouter hearts than nurse’s fear and dread:
’Twas not the glance itself made nurseey flinch,
But of its threat she took the utmost heed;
Not liking in her heart an hour-long pinch,
Or a sharp needle run into her back an inch.

IX.

So she was silenced, and fair Bellanaine,
Writhing her little body with ennui,
Continued to lament and to complain,
That Fate, cross-purposing, should let her be
Ravish’d away far from her dear countree;
That all her feelings should be set at nought,
In trumping up this match so hastily,
With lowland blood; and lowland blood she thought
Poison, as every staunch true-born Imaian ought.

X.

Sorely she grieved, and wetted three or four
White Provence rose-leaves with her faery tears,
But not for this cause;—alas! she had more
Bad reasons for her sorrow, as appears
In the famed memoirs of a thousand years,
Written by Crafticant, and published
By Parpaglion and Co., (those sly compeers
Who raked up ev’ry fact against the dead,)
In Scarab Street, Panthea, at the Jubal’s Head.

XI.

Where, after a long hypercritic howl
Against the vicious manners of the age,
He goes on to expose, with heart and soul,
What vice in this or that year was the rage,
Backbiting all the world in ev'ry page ;
With special strictures on the horrid crime,
(Section'd and subsection'd with learning sage,)
Of faeries stooping on their wings sublime
To kiss a mortal's lips, when such were in their prime.

XII.

Turn to the copious index, you will find
Somewhere in the column, headed letter B,
The name of Bellanaine, if you're not blind ;
Then pray refer to the text, and you will see
An article made up of calumny
Against this highland princess, rating her
For giving way, so over fashionably,
To this new-fangled vice, which seems a burr
Stuck in his moral throat, no coughing e'er could stir.

XIII.

There he says plainly that she loved a man !
That she around him flutter'd, flirted, toy'd,
Before her marriage with great Elfinan ;
That after marriage too, she never joy'd
In husband's company, but still employ'd
Her wits to 'scape away to Angle-land ;
Where liv'd the youth, who worried and annoy'd
Her tender heart, and its warm ardours fann'd
To such a dreadful blaze, her side would scorch her
hand.

XIV.

But let us leave this idle tittle tattle
To waiting-maids, and bed-room coteries,
Nor till fit time against her fame wage battle.
Poor Elfinan is very ill at ease,
Let us resume his subject if you please :
For it may comfort and console him much,
To rhyme and syllable his miseries ;
Poor Elfinan ! whose cruel fate was such,
He sat and cursed a bride he knew he could not touch.

XV.

Soon as (according to his promises)
The bridal embassy had taken wing,
And vanish'd, bird-like, o'er the suburb trees,
The Emperor, empierced with the sharp sting
Of love, retired, vex'd and murmuring
Like any drone shut from the fair bee-queen,
Into his cabinet, and there did fling
His limbs upon a sofa, full of spleen,
And damn'd his House of commons, in complete chagrin.

XVI.

"I'll trounce some of the members," cried the prince,
"I'll put a mark against some rebel names,
I'll make the opposition-benches wince.
I'll show them very soon, to all their shames,
What 'tis to smother up a prince's flames ;
That ministers should join in it, I own,
Surprises me !—they too at these high games !
Am I an Emperor ? Do I wear a crown ?
Imperial Elfinan, go hang thyself or drown !

XVII.

"I'll trounce 'em!—there's the square-cut chancellor,
 His son shall never touch that bishopric ;
 And for the nephew of old Palfior,
 I'll show him that his speeches made me sick,
 And give the colonelcy to Phalaric ;
 The tiptoe marquis, moral and gallant,
 Shall lodge in shabby taverns upon tick ;
 And for the Speaker's second cousin's aunt,
 She sha'n't be maid of honour,—by heaven that she
 sha'n't!

XVIII.

"I'll shirk the Duke of A. ; I'll cut his brother ;
 I'll give no garter to his eldest son ;
 I won't speak to his sister or his mother !
 The Viscount B. shall live at cut-and-run ;
 But how in the world can I contrive to stun
 That fellow's voice, which plagues me worse than any,
 That stubborn fool, that impudent state-dun,
 Who sets down ev'ry sovereign as a zany,—
 That vulgar commoner, Esquire Biancopy?

XIX.

"Monstrous affair! Pshaw! pah! what ugly minx
 Will they fetch from Imaus for my bride?
 Alas! my wearied heart within me sinks,
 To think that I must be so near allied
 To a cold dullard fay,—ah, woe betide!
 Ah, fairest of all human loveliness!
 Sweet Bertha! what crime can it be to glide
 About the fragrant plaitings of thy dress,
 Or kiss thine eyes, or count thy locks, tress after tress?"

XX.

So said, one minute's while his eyes remain'd
Half lidded, piteous, languid, innocent;
But, in a wink, their splendour they regain'd,
Sparkling revenge with amorous fury blent.
Love thwarted in bad temper oft has vent:
He rose, he stamp'd his foot, he rang the bell,
And order'd some death-warrants to be sent
For signature:—somewhere the tempest fell,
As many a poor fellow does not live to tell.

XXI.

“At the same time, Eban,”—(this was his page,
A fay of colour, slave from top to toe,
Sent as a present, while yet under age,
From the Viceroy of Zanguebar,—wise, slow,
His speech, his only words were “yes” and “no,”
But swift of look, and foot, and wing was he,)—
“At the same time, Eban, this instant go
To Hum the soothsayer, whose name I see
Among the fresh arrivals in our empery.

XXII.

“Bring Hum to me! But stay—here take my ring,
The pledge of favour, that he not suspect
Any foul play, or awkward murdering,
Tho' I have bowstrung many of his sect;
Throw in a hint, that if he should neglect
One hour, the next shall see him in my grasp,
And the next after that shall see him neck'd,
Or swallow'd by my hunger-starved asp,—
And mention ('tis as well) the torture of the wasp.”

XXIII.

These orders given, the Prince, in half a pet,
Let o'er the silk his propping elbow slide,
Caught up his little legs, and, in a fret,
Fell on the sofa on his royal side.
The slave retreated backwards, humble-eyed,
And with a slave-like silence closed the door,
And to old Hum thro' street and alley hied ;
He "knew the city," as we say, of yore,
And for short cuts and turns, was nobody knew more.

XXIV.

It was the time when wholesale dealers close
Their shutters with a moody sense of wealth,
But retail dealers, diligent, let loose
The gas (objected to on score of health),
Convey'd in little solder'd pipes by stealth,
And make it flare in many a brilliant form,
That all the powers of darkness it repell'th,
Which to the oil-trade doth great scaith and harm,
And supersedeth quite the use of the glow-worm.

XXV.

Eban, untempted by the pastry-cooks,
(Of pastry he got store within the palace,)
With hasty steps, wrapp'd cloak, and solemn looks,
Incognito upon his errand sallies,
His smelling-bottle ready for the allies ;
He pass'd the hurdy-gurdies with disdain,
Vowing he'd have them sent on board the gallies ;
Just as he made his vow, it 'gan to rain,
Therefore he called a coach, and bade it drive amain

XXVI.

"I'll pull the string," said he, and further said,
"Polluted jarvey! Ah, thou filthy hack!
Whose springs of life are all dried up and dead,
Whose linsey-wolsey lining hangs all slack,
Whose rug is straw, whose wholeness is a crack
And evermore thy steps go clatter-clitter;
Whose glass once up can never be got back,
Who prov'st, with jolting arguments and bitter,
That 'tis of modern use to travel in a litter.

XXVII.

"Thou inconvenience! thou hungry crop
For all corn! thou snail-creeper to and fro,
Who while thou goest ever seem'st to stop,
And fiddle-faddle standest while you go;
I' the morning, freighted with a weight of woe,
Unto some lazar-house thou journeyest,
And in the evening tak'st a double row
Of dowdies, for some dance or party drest,
Besides the goods meanwhile thou movest east and west.

XXVIII.

"By thy ungallant bearing and sad mien,
An inch appears the utmost thou couldst budge;
Yet at the slightest nod, or hint, or sign,
Round to the curb-stone patient dost thou trudge,
School'd in a beckon, learned in a nudge,
A dull-eyed Argus watching for a fare;
Quiet and plodding thou dost bear no grudge
To whisking tilburies, or phaetons rare,
Curricles, or mail-coaches, swift beyond compare."

XXIX.

Philosophising thus, he pull'd the check,
And bade the coachman wheel to such a street.
Who turning much his body, more his neck,
Louted full low, and hoarsely did him greet :
" Certes, Monsieur were best take to his feet,
Seeing his servant can no further drive
For press of coaches, that to-night here meet,
Many as bees about a straw-capp'd hive.
When first for April honey into faint flowers they dive."

XXX.

Eban then paid his fare, and tiptoe went
To Hum's hotel; and, as he on did pass
With head inclined, each dusky lineament
Show'd in the pearl-paved street, as in a glass;
His purple vest, that ever peeping was
Rich from the fluttering crimson of his cloak,
His silvery trowsers, and his silken sash
Tied in a burnish'd knot, their semblance took
Upon the mirror'd walls, wherever he might look.

XXXI.

He smiled at self, and, smiling, show'd his teeth,
And seeing his white teeth, he smiled the more;
Lifted his eye-brows, spurn'd the path beneath,
Show'd teeth again, and smiled as heretofore,
Until he knock'd at the magician's door;
Where, till the porter answer'd, might be seen.
In the clear panel more he could adore,—
His turban wreath'd of gold, and white, and green,
Mustachios, ear-ring, nose-ring, and his sabre keen.

XXXII.

“Does not your master give a rout to-night?”
 Quoth the dark page; “Oh, no!” return’d the Swiss.
 “Next door but one to us, upon the right,
 The *Magazin des Modes* now open is
 Against the Emperor’s wedding;—and sir, this
 My master finds a monstrous horrid bore;
 As he retired, an hour ago I wis,
 With his best beard and brimstone, to explore
 And cast a quiet figure in his second floor.

XXXIII.

“Gad! he’s obliged to stick to business!
 For chalk, I hear, stands at a pretty price;
 And as for *aqua vitæ*—there’s a mess!
 The *dentes sapientiæ* of mice
 Our barber tells me too are on the rise,—
 Tinder’s a lighter article,—nitre pure
 Goes off like lightning,—grains of Paradise
 At an enormous figure!—stars not sure!—
 Zodiac will not move without a slight *douceur*!

XXXIV.

“Venus won’t stir a peg without a fee,
 And master is too partial *entre nous*
 To—” “Hush—hush!” cried Eban, “sure that is he
 Coming downstairs,—by St. Bartholomew!
 As backwards as he can,—is’t something new?
 Or is’t his custom, in the name of fun?”
 “He always comes down backward, with one shoe”—
 Return’d the porter—“off, and one shoe on,
 Like, saving shoe for sock or stocking, my man John!”

XXXV.

It was indeed the great Magician,
 Feeling, with careful toe, for every stair,
 And retrograding careful as he can,
 Backwards and downwards from his own two pair :
 "Salpietro !" exclaim'd Hum, "is the dog there?
 He's always in my way upon the mat !"
 "He's in the kitchen, or the Lord knows where,"—
 Replied the Swiss,—"the nasty, whelping brat !"
 "Don't beat him !" returned Hum, and on the floor
 came pat.

XXXVI.

Then facing right about, he saw the Page,
 And said : "Don't tell me what you want, Eban ;
 The Emperor is now in a huge rage,—
 'Tis nine to one he'll give you the rattan !
 Let us away !" Away together ran
 The plain-dress'd sage and spangled blackamoor,
 Nor rested till they stood to cool, and fan,
 And breathe themselves at th' Emperor's chamber
 door,
 When Eban thought he heard a soft imperial snore.

XXXVII.

"I thought you guess'd, foretold, or prophesied,
 That's Majesty was in a raving fit."
 "He dreams," said Hum, "or I have ever lied,
 That he is tearing you, sir, bit by bit."
 "He's not asleep, and you have little wit,"
 Replied the Page, "that little buzzing noise,
 Whate'er your palmistry may make of it,
 Comes from a play-thing of the Emperor's choice,
 From a Man-Tiger-Organ, prettiest of his toys."

XXXVIII.

Eban then usher'd in the learned Seer:
 Elfinan's back was turn'd, but, ne'ertheless,
 Both, prostrate on the carpet, ear by ear,
 Crept silently, and waited in distress,
 Knowing the Emperor's moody bitterness;
 Eban especially, who on the floor 'gan
 Tremble and quake to death,—he feared less
 A dose of senna-tea, or nightmare Gorgon,
 Than the Emperor when he play'd on his Man-Tiger-
 Organ.

XXXIX.

They kiss'd nine times the carpet's velvet face
 Of glossy silk, soft, smooth, and meadow-green,
 Where the close eye in deep rich fur might trace
 A silver tissue, scantily to be seen,
 As daisies lurk'd in June-grass, buds in green;
 Sudden the music ceased, sudden the hand
 Of majesty, by dint of passion keen,
 Doubled into a common fist, went grand,
 And knock'd down three cut glasses, and his best ink-
 stand.

XL.

Then turning round, he saw those trembling two:
 "Eban," said he, "as slaves should taste the fruits
 Of diligence, I shall remember you
 To-morrow, or next day, as time suits,
 In a finger conversation with my mutes,—
 Begone!—for you, Cha'dean! here remain;
 Fear not, quake not, and as good wine recruits
 A conjurer's spirits, what cup will you drain?
 Sherry in silver, hock in gold, or glass'd champagne?"

XLI.

"Commander of the faithful!" answer'd Hum,
 "In preference to these, I'll merely taste
 A thimble-full of old Jamaica rum."
 "A simple boon!" said Elfinan, "thou may'st
 Have Nantz, with which my morning-coffee's laced."*
 "I'll have a glass of Nantz, then,"—said the Seer,—
 "Made racy—(sure my boldness is misplaced!)—
 With the third part—(yet that is drinking dear!)—
 Of the least drop of *crème de citron* crystal clear."

XLII.

"I pledge you, Hum! and pledge my dearest love,
 My Bertha!" "Bertha! Bertha!" cried the sage,
 "I know a many Berthas!" "Mine's above
 All Berthas!" sighed the Emperor. "I engage,"
 Said Hum, "in duty, and in vassalage,
 To mention all the Berthas in the earth;—
 There's Bertha Watson,—and Miss Bertha Page,—
 This famed for languid eyes, and that for mirth,—
 There's Bertha Blount of York,—and Bertha Knox of
 Perth."

XLIII.

"You seem to know"—"I do know," answer'd Hum,
 "Your Majesty's in love with some fine girl
 Named Bertha; but her surname will not come,
 Without a little conjuring." "'Tis Pearl,
 'Tis Bertha Pearl! What makes my brains so whirl?
 And she is softer, fairer than her name!"

* "Mr. Nisby is of opinion that laced coffee is bad for the head."—*Spectator*

“Where does she live?” ask’d Hum. “Her fair
locks curl

So brightly, they put all our fays to shame !—
Live !—O ! at Canterbury, with her old grand-dame.”

XLIV.

“Good ! good !” cried Hum, “I’ve known her from
a child !

She is a changeling of my management ;
She was born at midnight in an Indian wild ;
Her mother’s screams with the striped tiger’s blent,
While the torch-bearing slaves a halloo sent
Into the jungles ; and her palanquin,
Rested amid the desert’s dreariment,
Shook with her agony, till fair were seen
The little Bertha’s eyes ope on the stars serene.”

XLV.

“I can’t say,” said the monarch, “that may be
Just as it happen’d, true or else a bam !
Drink up your brandy, and sit down by me,
Feel, feel my pulse, how much in love I am ;
And if your science is not all a sham,
Tell me some means to get the lady here.”
“Upon my honour !” said the son of Cham,*
“She is my dainty changeling, near and dear,
Although her story sounds at first a little queer.”

* Cham is said to have been the inventor of magic. Lucy learnt this from Bayle’s Dictionary, and had copied a long Latin note from that work.

XLVI.

"Convey her to me, Hum, or by my crown,
My sceptre, and my cross-surmounted globe,
I'll knock you—" "Does your majesty mean—
down?

No, no, you never could my feelings probe
To such a depth!" The Emperor took his robe,
And wept upon its purple palatine,
While Hum continued, shamming half a sob,—
"In Canterbury doth your lady shine?
But let me cool *your* brandy with a little wine."

XLVII.

Whereat a narrow Flemish glass he took,
That since belong'd to Admiral De Witt,
Admired it with a connoisseuring look,
And with the ripest claret crowned it,
And, ere the lively bead could burst and flit,
He turned it quickly, nimbly upside down,
His mouth being held conveniently fit
To catch the treasure: "Best in all the town!"
He said, smack'd his moist lips, and gave a pleasant frown.

XLVIII.

"Ah! good my Prince, weep not!" And then again
He fill'd a bumper. "Great sire, do not weep!
Your pulse is shocking, but I'll ease your pain."
Fetch me that Ottoman, and prithee keep
Your voice low," said the Emperor, "and steep
Some lady's fingers nice in Candy wine;
And prithee, Hum, behind the screen do peep
For the rose-water vase, magician mine!
And sponge my forehead,—so my love doth make me
pine."

XLIX.

“Ah, cursed Bellanaine !” “Don’t think of her,”
 Rejoin’d the Mago, “but on Bertha muse ;
 For, by my choicest best barometer,
 You shall not throttled be in marriage noose ;
 I’ve said it, sire ; you only have to choose
 Bertha or Bellanaine.” So saying, he drew
 From the left pocket of his threadbare hose,
 A sampler hoarded slyly, good as new,
 Holding it by his thumb and finger full in view.

L.

“Sire, this is Bertha Pearl’s neat handy-work,
 Her *name*, see here, *Midsummer, ninety-one.*”
 Elfinan snatch’d it with a sudden jerk,
 And wept as if he never would have done,
 Honouring with royal tears the poor homespun ;
 Whereon were broider’d tigers with black eyes,
 And long-tail’d pheasants, and a rising sun,
 Plenty of posies, great stags, butterflies
 Bigger than stags,—a moon,—with other mysteries.

LI.

The monarch handled o’er and o’er again
 These day-school hieroglyphics with a sigh ;
 Somewhat in sadness, but pleas’d in the main,
 Till this oracular couplet met his eye
 Astounded,—*Cupid, I do thee defy!*
 It was too much. He shrunk back in his chair,
 Grew pale as death, and fainted—very nigh !
 “Pho! nonsense!” exclaim’d Hum, “now don’t
 despair ;
 She does not mean it really. Cheer up, hearty—there !

LII.

"And listen to my words. You say you won't,
 On any terms, marry Miss Bellanaine ;
 It goes against your conscience—good ! Well, don't
 You say, you love a mortal. I would fain
 Persuade your honour's highness to refrain
 From peccadilloes. But, sire, as I say,
 What good would that do ? And, to be more plain,
 You would do me a mischief some odd day,
 Cut off my ears and hands, or head too, by my fay !

LIII.

"Besides, manners forbid that I should pass any
 Vile strictures on the conduct of a prince
 Who should indulge his genius, if he has any,
 Not, like a subject, foolish matters mince.
 Now I think on't, perhaps I could convince
 Your majesty there is no crime at all
 In loving pretty little Bertha, since
 She's very delicate,—not over tall,—
 A fairy's hand, and in the waist why—very small."

LIV.

"Ring the repeater, gentle Hum !" " 'Tis five,"
 Said gentle Hum ; " the nights draw in apace ;
 The little birds I hear are all alive ;
 I see the dawning touch'd upon your face ;
 Shall I put out the candles, please your Grace ?"
 " Do put them out, and, without more ado,
 Tell me how I may that sweet girl embrace, —
 How you can bring her to me." " That's for you,
 Great Emperor ! to adventure, like a lover true."

LV.

"I fetch her!"—"Yes, an't like your majesty;
And as she would be frighten'd wide awake,
To travel such a distance through the sky,
Use of some soft manœuvre you must make,
For your convenience, and her dear nerves' sake;
Nice way would be to bring her in a swoon,
Anon, I'll tell what course were best to take;
You must away this morning." "Hum! so soon?"
"Sire, you must be in Kent by twelve o'clock at noon."

LVI.

At this great Cæsar started on his feet,
Lifted his wings, and stood attentive-wise.
"Those wings to Canterbury you must beat,
If you hold Bertha as a worthy prize,
Look in the Almanack—*Moore* never lies—
April the twenty-fourth,—this coming day,
Now breathing its new bloom upon the skies
Will end in St. Mark's eve;—you must away.
For on that eve alone can you the maid convey."

LVII.

Then the magician solemnly 'gan to frown
So that his frost-white eyebrows, beetling low,
Shaded his deep green eyes, and wrinkles brown
Plaited upon his furnace-scorched brow:
Forth from his hood that hung his neck below,
He lifted a bright casket of pure gold,
'Touch'd a spring-lock, and there in wool or snow,
Charm'd into ever freezing, lay an old
And legend-leaved book, mysterious to behold

LVIII.

"Take this same book,—it will not bite you, sire;
 There, put it underneath your royal arm;
 Though it's a pretty weight, it will not tire,
 But rather on your journey keep you warm:
 This is the magic, this the potent charm,
 That shall drive Bertha to a fainting fit!
 When the time comes, don't feel the least alarm,
 But lift her from the ground, and swiftly flit
 Back to your palace.

LIX.

"What shall I do with that same book?" "Why
 merely
 Lay it on Bertha's table, close beside
 Her work-box, and 'twill help your purpose dearly;
 I say no more." "Or good or ill betide,
 Through the wide air to Kent this morn I glide!"
 Exclaim'd the Emperor, "When I return,
 Ask what you will,—I'll give you my new bride!
 And take some more wine, Hum;—O, Heavens! I
 burn
 To be upon the wing! Now, now, that minx I spurn!"

LX.

"Leave her to me," rejoined the magian:
 "But how shall I account, illustrious fay!
 For thine imperial absence? Pho! I can
 Say you are very sick, and bar the way
 To your so loving courtiers for one day;
 If either of their two Archbishops' graces
 Should talk of extreme unction, I shall say
 You do not like cold pig with Latin phrases,
 Which never should be used but in alarming cases."

LXI.

“Open the window, Hum ; I’m ready **now!**”
 “Zooks !” exclaim’d Hum, as up the sash he **drew,**
 “Behold, your majesty, upon the brow
 Of yonder hill, what crowds of people !” “Where ?
 The monster’s always after something new,”
 Return’d his highness, “they are piping hot
 To see my pigsney Bellanaine. Hum ! do
 Tighten my belt a little,—so, so,—not
 Too tight,—the book !—my wand !—so, nothing is
 forgot.”

LXII.

“Wounds ! how they shout !” said Hum, “and there,
 —see, see,
 Th’ ambassador’s returned from Pigmio !
 The morning’s very fine,—uncommonly !
 See, past the skirts of yon white cloud they **go,**
 Tinging it with soft crimsons ! Now below
 The sable-pointed heads of firs and pines
 They dip, move on, and with them moves a glow
 Along the forest side ! Now amber lines
 Reach the hill top, and **now** throughout the valley shines.”

LXIII.

“Why, Hum, you’re getting quite poetical !
 Those *nows* you managed in a special style.”
 “If ever you have leisure, sire, you shall
 See scraps of mine will make it worth your while,
 Tit-bits for Phœbus !—yes, you well may smile.
 Hark ! hark ! the bells !” “A little further yet,
 Good Hum, and let me view this mighty coil.”
 Then the great Emperor full graceful set
 His elbow for a prop, and snuff’d his mignonette.”

LXIV.

The morn is full of holiday ; loud bells
With rival clamours ring from every spire ;
Cunningly-station'd music dies and swells
In echoing places ; when the winds respire,
Light flags stream out like gauzy tongues of fire ;
A metropolitan murmur, lifeful, warm,
Comes from the northern suburbs ; rich attire
Freckles with red and gold the moving swarm ;
While here and there clear trumpets blow a keen alarm.

LXV.

And now the fairy escort was seen clear,
Like the old pageant of Aurora's train,
Above a pearl-built minster, hovering near ;
First wily Crafticant, the chamberlain,
Balanced upon his gray-grown pinions twain,
His slender wand officially reveal'd ;
Then black gnomes scattering sixpences like rain ;
Then pages three and three ; and next, slave-held,
The Imaian 'scutcheon bright,—one mouse in argent
field.

LXVI.

Gentlemen pensioners next ; and after them,
A troop of winged Janizaries flew ;
Then slaves, as presents bearing many a gem ;
Then twelve physicians fluttering two and two ;
And next a chaplain in a cassock new ;
Then Lords in waiting ; then (what head not reels
For pleasure ?)—the fair Princess in full view,
Borne upon wings,—and very pleased she feels
To have such splendour dance attendance at her heels.

LXVII.

For there was more magnificence behind :
She waved her handkerchief. " Ah, very grand !"
Cried Elfinan, and closed the window-blind ;
" And, Hum, we must not shilly-shally stand,—
Adieu ! adieu ! I'm off for Angle-land !
I say, old Hocus, have you such a thing
About you,—feel your pockets, I command,—
I want, this instant, an invisible ring,—
Thank you, old mummy !—now securely I take wing."

LXVIII.

Then Elfinan swift vaulted from the floor,
And lighted graceful on the window-sill ;
Under one arm the magic book he bore,
The other he could wave about at will ;
Pale was his face, he still look'd very ill :
He bow'd at Bellanaine, and said—" Poor Bell !
Farewell ! farewell ! and if for ever ! still
For ever fare thee well !"—and then he fell
A laughing !—snapp'd his fingers !—shame it is to tell !

LXIX.

" By'r Lady ! he is gone !" cries Hum, " and I,—
(I own it,)—have made too free with his wine ;
Old Crafticant will smoke me, by-the-bye !
This room is full of jewels as a mine,—
Dear valuable creatures, how ye shine !
Sometime to-day I must contrive a minute,
If Mercury propitiously incline,
To examine his scrutoire, and see what's in it,
For of superfluous diamonds I as well may thin it.

LXX.

"The Emperor's horrid bad ; yes, that's my cue!"
 Some histories say that this was Hum's last speech ;
 That, being fuddled, he went reeling through
 The corridor, and scarce upright could reach
 The stair-head ; that being glutted as a leach,
 And used, as we ourselves have just now said,
 To manage stairs reversely, like a peach
 Too ripe, he fell, being puzzled in his head
 With liquor and the staircase: verdict—*found stone dead.*

LXXI.

This, as a falsehood, Crafticanto treats ;
 And as his style is of strange elegance,
 Gentle and tender, full of soft conceits,
 (Much like our Boswell's), we will take a glance
 At his sweet prose, and, if we can, make dance
 His woven periods into careless rhyme ;
 O, little faery Pegasus ! rear—prance—
 Trot round the quarto—ordinary time !
 March, little Pegasus, with pawing hoof sublime !

LXXII.

Well, let us see,—*tenth book and chapter nine*,—
 Thus Crafticant pursues his diary:—
 'Twas twelve o'clock at night, the weather fine,
 Latitude thirty-six ; our scouts descry
 A flight of starlings making rapidly
 Tow'rds Thibet. Mem. :—birds fly in the night ;
 From twelve to half-past—wings not fit to fly
 For a thick fog—the Princess sulky quite :
 Call'd for an *extra* shawl, and gave her nurse a bite.

LXXIII.

Five minutes before one—brought down a moth
With my new double-barrel—stew'd the thighs,
And made a very tolerable broth—
Princess turn'd dainty, to our great surprise,
Alter'd her mind, and thought it very nice :
Seeing her pleasant, tried her with a pun,
She frown'd ; a monstrous owl across us flies
About this time,—a sad old figure of fun ;
Bad omen—this new match can't be a happy one.

LXXIV.

From two to half-past, dusky way we made,
Above the plains of Gobi,—desert, bleak ;
Beheld afar off, in the hooded shade
Of darkness, a great mountain (strange to speak),
Spitting, from forth its sulphur-baken peak,
A fan-shaped burst of blood-red, arrowy fire,
Turban'd with smoke, which still away did reek,
Solid and black from that eternal pyre,
Upon the laden winds that scantily could respire.

LXXV.

Just upon three o'clock, a falling star
Created an alarm among our troop,
Kill'd a man-cook, a page, and broke a jar,
A tureen, and three dishes, at one swoop,
Then passing by the Princess, sing'd her hoop :
Could not conceive what Coralline was at,
She clapp'd her hands three times, and cried out
"Whoop!"

Some strange Imaian custom. A large bat
Came sudden 'fore my face, and brush'd against my hat.

LXXVI.

Five minutes thirteen seconds after three,
Far in the west a mighty fire broke out,
Conjectured, on the instant, it might be
The city of Balk—'twas Balk beyond all doubt:
A griffin, wheeling here and there about,
Kept reconnoitring us—doubled our guard—
Lighted our torches, and kept up a shout,
Till he sheer'd off—the Princess very scared—
And many on their marrow-bones for death prepared.

LXXVII.

At half-past three arose the cheerful moon—
Bivouac'd for four minutes on a cloud—
Where from the earth we heard a lively tune
Of tambourines and pipes, serene and loud,
While on a flowery lawn a brilliant crowd
Cinque-parted danced, some half asleep reposed
Beneath the green-fan'd cedars, some did shroud
In silken tents, and 'mid light fragrance dosed.
Or on the open turf their soothed eyelids closed.

LXXVIII.

Dropp'd my gold watch, and kill'd a kettle-drum—
It went for apoplexy—foolish folks!—
Left it to pay the piper—a good sum—
(I've got a conscience, maugre people's jokes.)
To scrape a little favour; 'gan to coax
Her Highness' pug-dog—got a sharp rebuff—
She wish'd a game at whist—made three revokes—
Turn'd from myself, her partner, in a huff;
His Majesty will know her temper time enough.

LXXIX.

She cried for chess—I play'd a game with her—
Castled her king with such a vixen look,
It bodes ill to his Majesty—(refer
To the second chapter of my fortieth book.
And see what hoity-toity airs she took :)
At half-past four the morn essay'd to beam—
Saluted, as we pass'd, an early rook—
The Princess fell asleep, and, in her dream,
Talk'd of one Master Hubert, deep in her esteem.

LXXX.

About this time,—making delightful way,—
Shed a quill-feather from my larboard wing—
Wish'd, trusted, hoped 'twas no sign of decay—
Thank Heaven, I'm hearty yet !—'twas no such
thing :—
At five the golden light began to spring,
With fiery shudder through the bloomed east ;
At six we heard Panthea's churches ring—
The city all his unhived swarms had cast,
To watch our grand approach, and hail us as we pass'd.

LXXXI.

As flowers turn their faces to the sun,
So on our flight with hungry eyes they gaze,
And, as we shaped our course, this, that way run,
With mad-cap pleasure, or hand-clasp'd amaze :
Sweet in the air a mild-toned music plays,
And progresses through its own labyrinth ;
Buds gather'd from the green spring's middle-days,
They scatter'd,—daisy, primrose, hyacinth,—
Or round white columns wreath'd from capital to plinth.

LXXXII.

Onward we floated o'er the panting streets,
That seem'd throughout with upheld faces paved ;
Look where we will, our bird's-eye vision meets
Legions of holiday ; bright standards waved,
And fluttering ensigns emulously craved
Our minute's glance ; a busy thunderous roar,
From square to square, among the buildings raved,
As when the sea, at flow, gluts up once more
The craggy hollowness of a wild reefed shore.

LXXXIII.

And “ Bellanaine for ever ! ” shouted they !
While that fair Princess, from her winged chair,
Bow'd low with high demeanour, and, to pay
Their new-blown loyalty with guerdon fair,
Still emptied, at meet distance, here and there,
A plenty horn of jewels. And here I
(Who wish to give the devil her due) declare
Against that ugly piece of calumny,
Which calls them Highland pebble-stones not worth a fly.

LXXXIV.

Still “ Bellanaine ! ” they shouted, while we glide
'Slant to a light Ionic portico,
The city's delicacy, and the pride
Of our Imperial Basilic ; a row
Of lords and ladies, on each hand, make show
Submissive of knee-bent obeisance,
All down the steps ; and, as we enter'd, lo !
The strangest sight—the most unlook'd-for chance—
All things turn'd topsy-turvy in a devil's dance.

LXXXV.

'Stead of his anxious Majesty and court
At the open doors, with wide saluting eyes,
Congées and scrape-graces of every sort,
And all the smooth routine of gallantries,
Was seen, to our immoderate surprise,
A motley crowd thick gather'd in the hall,
Lords, scullions, deputy scullions, with wild cries
Stunning the vestibule from wall to wall,
Where the Chief Justice on his knees and hands doth
crawl.

LXXXVI.

Counts of the palace, and the state purveyor
Of moth's down, to make soft the royal beds,
The Common Council and my fool Lord Mayor
Marching a-row, each other slipshod treads ;
Powder'd bag-wigs and ruffy-tuffy heads
Of cinder wenches meet and soil each other ;
Toe crush'd with heel ill-natured fighting breeds,
Frill-rumpling elbows brew up many a bother,
And fists in the short ribs keep up the yell and pother.

LXXXVII.

A Poet, mounted on the Court-Clown's back,
Rode to the Princess swift with spurring heels,
And close into her face, with rhyming clack,
Began a Prothalamion ;—she reels,
She falls, she faints! while laughter peals
Over her woman's weakness. “Where!” cried I,
“Where is his Majesty?” No person feels
Inclined to answer ; wherefore instantly
I plunged into the crowd to find him or to die.

LXXXVIII.

Jostling my way I gain'd the stairs, and ran
To the first landing, where, incredible !
I met, far gone in liquor, that old man,
That vile impostor Hum,——

So far so well,——

For we have proved the Mago never fell
Down stairs on Crafticanto's evidence;
And therefore duly shall proceed to tell,
Plain in our own original mood and tense,
The sequel of this day, though labour 'tis immense!

(No more was written.)





OTHO THE GREAT:

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

OTHO THE GREAT, <i>Emperor of Germany</i>	<i>An Hungarian Captain</i>
LUDOLPH, <i>his Son.</i>	<i>Physician.</i>
CONRAD, <i>Duke of Franconia.</i>	<i>Page.</i>
ALBERT, <i>a Knight, favoured by Otho</i>	<i>Nobles, Knights, Attendants, & Soldier.</i>
SIGIERFD, <i>an Officer, friend of Ludolph.</i>	
THEODORE and GONFRED, <i>Officers</i>	ERMINIA, <i>Niece of Otho</i>
ETHELBERT, <i>an Abbot.</i>	AURANTHE, <i>Conrad's Sister.</i>
GERSA, <i>Prince of Hungary.</i>	<i>Ladies and Attendants.</i>

SCENE.—*The Castle of Friedburg, its vicinity, and the Hungarian Camp.*

TIME.—*One Day.*

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Castle.*

Enter CONRAD.

So, I am safe emerged from these broils !
 Amid the wreck of thousands I am whole ;
 For every crime I have a laurel-wreath,
 For every lie a lordship. Nor yet has
 My ship of fortune furl'd her silken sails,—
 Let her glide on ! This danger'd neck is saved,
 By dexterous policy, from the rebels' axe ;
 And of my ducal palace not one stone
 Is bruised by the Hungarian petards.
 Toil hard, ye slaves, and from the miser-earth
 Bring forth once more my bullion, treasured deep.
 With all my jewell'd salvers, silver and gold,
 And precious goblets that make rich the wine.
 But why do I stand babbling to myself?
 Where is Auranthe ? I have news for her
 Shall—

Enter AURANTHE.

Auranthe. Conrad ! what tidings ? Good, if I may
guess

From your alert eyes and high-lifted brows.
What tidings of the battle ? Albert ? Ludolph ?
Otho ?

Conrad. You guess aright. And, sister, slurring o'er
Our by-gone quarrels, I confess my heart
Is beating with a child's anxiety,
To make our golden fortune known to you.

Auranthe. So serious ?

Conrad. Yes, so serious, that before
I utter even the shadow of a hint
Concerning what will make that sin-worn cheek
Blush joyous blood through every lineament,
You must make here a solemn vow to me.

Auranthe. I pr'ythee, Conrad, do not overact
The hypocrite. What vow would you impose ?

Conrad. Trust me for once. That you may be
assured

'Tis not confiding in a broken reed,
A poor court-bankrupt, outwitted and lost,
Revolve these facts in your acutest mood,
In such a mood as now you listen to me :
A few days since, I was an open rebel,—
Against the Emperor had suborn'd his son,—
Drawn off his nobles to revolt,—and shown
Contented fools causes for discontent,
Fresh hatch'd in my ambition's eagle-nest ;
So thrived I as a rebel,—and, behold !
Now I am Otho's favourite, his dear friend,
His right hand, his brave Conrad !

Auranthe. I confess
You have intrigued with these unsteady times
To admiration. But to be a favourite!

Conrad. I saw my moment. The Hungarians,
Collected silently in holes and corners,
Appear'd, a sudden host, in the open day.
I should have perish'd in our empire's wreck,
But, calling interest loyalty, swore faith
To most believing Otho ; and so help'd
His blood-stain'd ensigns to the victory
In yesterday's hard fight, that it has turn'd
The edge of his sharp wrath to eager kindness.

Auranthe. So far yourself. But what is this to me
More than that I am glad? I gratulate you.

Conrad. Yes, sister, but it does regard you greatly,
Nearly, momentously,—aye, painfully!
Make me this vow—

Auranthe. Concerning whom or what?

Conrad. Albert!

Auranthe. I would inquire somewhat of him:
You had a letter from me touching him?
No treason 'gainst his head in deed or word!
Surely you spared him at my earnest prayer?
Give me the letter—it should not exist!

Conrad. At one pernicious charge of the enemy
I, for a moment-whiles, was prisoner ta'en
And rifled,—stuff! the horses' hoofs have minced it!

Auranthe. He is alive?

Conrad. He is! but here make oath
To alienate him from your scheming brain,
Divorce him from your solitary thoughts,
And cloud him in such utter banishment,

That when his person meets again your eye,
Your vision shall quite lose its memory,
And wander past him as through vacancy.

Auranthe. I'll not be perjured.

Conrad. No, nor great, nor mighty;
You would not wear a crown, or rule a kingdom.
To you it is indifferent.

Auranthe. What means this?

Conrad. You'll not be perjured! Go to Albert then,
That camp-mushroom—dishonour of our house.
Go, page his dusty heels upon a march,
Furbish his jingling baldric while he sleeps,
And share his mouldy ration in a siege.
Yet stay,—perhaps a charm may call you back,
And make the widening circlets of your eyes
Sparkle with healthy fevers.—The Emperor
Hath given consent that you should marry Ludolph!

Auranthe. Can it be, brother? For a golden crown
With a queen's awful lips I doubly thank you!
This is to wake in Paradise! Farewell
Thou clod of yesterday—'twas not myself!
Not till this moment did I ever feel
My spirit's faculties! I'll flatter you
For this, and be you ever proud of it;
Thou, Jove-like, struck'dst thy forehead,
And from the teeming marrow of thy brain
I spring complete Minerva! But the prince—
His highness Ludolph—where is he?

Conrad. I know not.

When, lackeying my counsel at a beck,
The rebel lords, on bended knees, received
The Emperor's pardon, Ludolph kept aloof,

High commented with smiles.

Auranthe.

Noble Albert!

Conrad (aside). Noble!

Auranthe. Such salutation argues a glad heart
In our prosperity. We thank you, sir.

Albert.

Lady!

O, would to Heaven your poor servant
Could do you better service than mere words!
But I have other greeting than mine own,
From no less man than Otho, who has sent
This ring as pledge of dearest amity;
'Tis chosen I hear from Hymen's jewel'ry,
And you will prize it, lady, I doubt not,
Beyond all pleasures past, and all to come.
To you great duke—

Conrad.

To me! What of me, ha?

Albert. What pleased your grace to say?

Conrad.

Your message, sir!

Albert. You mean not this to me?

Conrad.

Sister, this way;

For there shall be no "gentle Alberts" now, [*Aside.*
No "sweet Auranthes!"

[*Excunt CONRAD and AURANTHE.*

Albert (solus). The duke is out of temper; if he
knows

More than a brother of a sister ought,
I should not quarrel with his peevishness.
Auranthe—Heaven preserve her always fair!—
Is in the heady, proud, ambitious vein;
I bicker not with her,—bid her farewell!
She has taken flight from me, then let her soar,—
He is a fool who stands at pining gaze!

But for poor Ludolph, he is food for sorrow :
 No levelling bluster of my licensed thoughts,
 No military swagger of my mind,
 Can smother from myself the wrong I've done him,—
 Without design, indeed,—yet it is so,—
 And opiate for the conscience have I none !

[*Lxii.*

SCENE II.—*The Court-yard of the Castle.*

Martial Music. Enter, from the outer gate, OTHO, Nobles, Knights, and Attendants. The Soldiers halt at the gate, with Banners in sight.

Otho. Where is my noble Herald ?

[*Enter* CONRAD, *from the Castle, attended by two Knights and Servants. ALBERT following.*

Well, hast told

Auranthe our intent imperial ?

Lest our rent banners, too o' the sudden shown,
 Should fright her silken casements, and dismay
 Her household to our lack of entertainment.

A victory !

Conrad. God save illustrious Otho !

Otho. Aye, Conrad, it will pluck out all gray hairs ;
 It is the best physician for the spleen ;
 The courtliest inviter to a feast ;
 The subtlest excuser of small faults ;
 And a nice judge in the age and smack of wine.

[*Enter, from the Castle. AURANTHE, followed by Pages, holding up her robes, and a train of Women. She kneels.*

Hail my sweet hostess ! I do thank the stars,
 Or my good soldiers, or their ladies' eyes,
 That, after such a merry battle fought,

I can, all safe in body and in soul,
 Kiss your fair hand and lady fortune's too.
 My ring! now, on my life, it doth rejoice
 These lips to feel't on this soft ivory!
 Keep it, my brightest daughter; it may prove
 The little prologue to a line of kings.
 I strove against thee and my hot-blood son,
 Dull blockhead that I was to be so blind,
 But now my sight is clear; forgive me, lady.

Auranthe. My lord, I was a vassal to your frown,
 And now your favour makes me but more humble;
In wintry winds the simple snow is safe,
 But fadeth at the greeting of the sun:
 Unto thine anger I might well have spoken,
 Taking on me a woman's privilege,
 But this so sudden kindness makes me dumb.

Otho. What need of this? Enough, if you will be
 A potent tutoress to my wayward boy,
 And teach him, what it seems his nurse could not,
 To say, for once, I thank you. Sigifred!

Albert. He has not yet returned, my gracious liege.

Otho. What then! No tidings of my friendly Arab?

Conrad. None, mighty Otho.

[*To one of his Knights who goes out.*

Send forth instantly

An hundred horsemen from my honoured gates,
 To scour the plains and search the cottages.
 Cry a reward, to him who shall first bring
 News of that vanished Arabian,
 A full-heaped helmet of the purest gold.

Otho. More thanks, good Conrad; for, except my
 son's,

Otho. I see 'tis like to be a tedious day.
Were Theodore and Gonfred and the rest
Sent forth with my commands?

Albert. Aye, my lord.

Otho. And no news! No news! 'Faith! 'tis very
strange

He thus avoids us. Lady, is't not strange?
Will he be truant to you too? It is a shame.

Conrad. Wilt please your highness enter, and accept
The unworthy welcome of your servant's house?
Leaving your cares to one whose diligence
May in few hours make pleasures of them all.

Otho. Not so tedious, Conrad. No, no, no,—
I must see Ludolph or the—What's that shout?

Voices without. Huzza! huzza! Long live the
Emperor!

Other voices. Fall back! Away there!

Otho. Say what noise is that?

[ALBERT *advancing from the back of the Stage, whither he had
hastened on hearing the cheers of the soldiery.*

Albert. It is young Gersa, the Hungarian prince,
Pick'd like a red stag from the fallow herd
Of prisoners. Poor prince, forlorn he steps,
Slow, and demure, and proud in his despair.
If I may judge by his so tragic bearing,
His eye not downcast, and his folded arm,
He doth this moment wish himself asleep
Among his fallen captains on yon plains.

Enter GERSA, in chains, and guarded.

Otho. Well said, Sir Albert.

Gersa. Not a word of greeting,

No welcome to a princely visitor,
Most mighty Otho? Will not my great host
Vouchsafe a syllable, before he bids
His gentlemen conduct me with all care
To some securest lodging—cold perhaps!

Otho. What mood is this? Hath fortune touch'd
thy brain?

Gersa. O kings and princes of this fev'rous world,
What abject things, what mockeries must ye be,
What nerveless minions of safe palaces!
When here, a monarch, whose proud foot is used
To fallen princes' necks, as to his stirrup,
Must needs exclaim that I am mad forsooth,
Because I cannot flatter with bent knees
My conqueror!

Otho. Gersa, I think you wrong me :
I think I have a better fame abroad.

Gersa. I pr'ythee mock me not with gentle speech,
But, as a favour, bid me from thy presence ;
Let me no longer be the wondering food
Of all these eyes ; pr'ythee command me hence!

Otho. Do not mistake me, Gersa. That you may not,
Come, fair Auranthe, try if your soft hands
Can manage those hard rivets to set free
So brave a prince and soldier.

Auranthe (sets him free). Welcome task!

Gersa. I am wound up in deep astonishment'
Thank you, fair lady. Otho! emperor!
You rob me of myself ; my dignity
Is now your infant ; I am a weak child.

Otho. Give me your hand, and let this kindly grasp
Live in our memories.

Gersa.

In mine it will.

I blush to think of my unchasten'd tongue ;
But I was haunted by the monstrous ghost
Of all our slain battalions. Sire, reflect,
And pardon you will grant, that, at this hour,
The bruised remnants of our stricken camp
Are huddling undistinguished, my dear friends,
With common thousands, into shallow graves.

Otho. Enough, most noble Gersa. You are free
To cheer the brave remainder of your host
By your own healing presence, and that too,
Not as their leader merely, but their king ;
For, as I hear, the wily enemy,
Who eas'd the crownet from your infant brows,
Bloody Taraxa, is among the dead.

Gersa. Then I retire, so generous Otho please,
Bearing with me a weight of benefits
Too heavy to be borne.

Otho.

It is not so ;

Still understand me, King of Hungary,
Nor judge my open purposes awry.
Though I did hold you high in my esteem
For your self's sake, I do not personate
The stage-play emperor to entrap applause,
To set the silly sort o' the world agape,
And make the politic smile ; no, I have heard
How in the Council you condemn'd this war,
Urging the perfidy of broken faith,—
For that I am your friend.

Gersa.

If ever, sire,

You are my enemy, I dare here swear
'Twill not be Gersa's fault. Otho, farewell !

Otho. Will you return, Prince, to our banqueting?

Gersa. As to my father's board I will return.

Otho. Conrad, with all due ceremony, give
The prince a regal escort to his camp ;
Albert, go thou and bear him company.
Gersa, farewell !

Gersa. All happiness attend you !

Otho. Return with what good speed you may ; for
soon

We must consult upon our terms of peace.

[*Exeunt GERSA and ALBERT with others.*]

And thus a marble column do I build
To prop my empire's dome. Conrad, in thee
I have another steadfast one, to uphold
The portals of my state ; and, for my own
Pre-eminence and safety, I will strive
To keep thy strength upon its pedestal.
For, without thee, this day I might have been
A show-monster about the streets of Prague,
In chains, as just now stood that noble prince :
And then to me no mercy had been shown,
For when the conquer'd lion is once dungeoned,
Who lets him forth again ? or dares to give
An old lion sugar-cakes of mild reprieve ?
Not to thine ear alone I make confession,
But to all here, as, by experience,
I know how the great basement of all power
Is frankness, and a true tongue to the world ;
And how intriguing secresy is proof
Of fear and weakness, and a hollow state.
Conrad, I owe thee much.

Conrad.

To kiss that hand,

My emperor, is ample recompense,
For a mere act of duty.

Otho. Thou art wrong;
For what can any man on earth do more?
We will make trial of your house's welcome,
My bright Auranthe!

Conrad. How is Friedburg honoured!

Enter **ETHELBERT** *and six Monks.*

Ethelbert. The benison of heaven on your head,
Imperial Otho !

Otho. Who stavs me? Speak! Quick!

Ethelbert. Pause but one moment, mighty conqueror!
Upon the threshold of this house of joy.

Otho. Pray, do not prose, good Ethelbert, but speak.
What is your purpose.

Ethelbert. The restoration of some captive maids,
Devoted to Heaven's pious ministries,
Who, driven forth from their religious cells,
And kept in thralldom by our enemy,
When late this province was a lawless spoil,
Still weep amid the wild Hungarian camp,
Though hemm'd around by thy victorious arms.

Otho. Demand the holy sisterhood in our name
From Gersa's tents. Farewell, old Ethelbert.

Ethelbert. The saints will bless you for this pious care

Otho. Daughter, your hand; Ludolph's would fit it best.

Conrad. Ho! let the music sound!

[*Music.* ETHELBERT raises his hands, as in benediction of OTHO.
Exeunt severally. The scene closes on them.]

SCENE III.—*The Country, with the Castle in the distance.*

Enter LUDOLPH and SIGIFRED.

Ludolph. You have my secret; let it not be breath'd.

Sigifred. Still give me leave to wonder that the prince,
Ludolph, and the swift Arab are the same;
Still to rejoice that 'twas a German arm
Death doing in a turban'd masquerade.

Ludolph. The emperor must not know it, Sigifred.

Sigifred. I pr'ythee, why? What happier hour of time
Could thy pleased star point down upon from heaven
With silver index, bidding thee make peace?

Ludolph. Still it must not be known, good Sigifred;
The star may point oblique.

Sigifred. If Otho knew
His son to be that unknown Mussulman,
After whose spurring heels he sent me forth,
With one of his well-pleased Olympian oaths,
The charters of man's greatness, at this hour
He would be watching round the castle walls,
And, like an anxious warder, strain his sight
For the first glimpse of such a son return'd—
Ludolph, that blast of the Hungarians,
That Saracenic meteor of the fight,
That silent fury, whose fell scymitar
Kept danger all aloof from Otho's head,
And left him space for wonder.

Ludolph. Say no more.
Not as a swordsman would I pardon claim,
But as a son. The bronzed centurion,
Long toil'd in foreign wars, and whose high deeds
Are shaded in a forest of tall spears,

Known only to his troop, hath greater plea
Of favour with my sire than I can have.

Sigifred. My lord, forgive me that I cannot see
How this proud temper with clear reason squares.
What made you then, with such an anxious love,
Hover around that life, whose bitter days
You vext with bad revolt? Was't opium,
Or the mad-fumed wine? Nay, do not frown,
I rather would grieve with you than upbraid.

Ludolph. I do believe you. No, 'twas not to make
A father his son's debtor, or to heal
His deep heart-sickness for a rebel child.
'Twas done in memory of my boyish days,
Poor cancel for his kindness to my youth,
For all his calming of my childish griefs,
And all his smiles upon my merriment.
No, not a thousand foughten fields could sponge
Those days paternal from my memory,
Though now upon my head he heaps disgrace.

Sigifred. My prince, you think too harshly—

Ludolph. Can I so?

Hath he not gall'd my spirit to the quick?
And with a sullen rigour obstinate
Pour'd out a phial of wrath upon my faults?
Hunted me as the Tartar does the boar,
Driven me to the very edge o' the world,
And almost put a price upon my head?

Sigifred. Remember how he spared the rebel lords

Ludolph. Yes, yes, I know he hath a noble nature
That cannot trample on the fallen. But his
Is not the only proud heart in his realm.
He hath wrong'd me, and I have done him wrong:

He hath loved me, and I have shown him kindness ;
We should be almost equal.

Sigifred. Yet, for all this,
I would you had appear'd among those lords,
And ta'en his favour.

Ludolph. Ha ! till now I thought
My friend had held poor Ludolph's honour dear.
What ! would you have me sue before his throne
And kiss the courtier's missal, its silk steps ?
Or hug the golden housings of his steed,
Amid a camp, whose steeled swarms I dared
But yesterday ? And, at the trumpet sound,
Bow like some unknown mercenary's flag
And lick the soiled grass ? No, no, my friend,
I would not, I, be pardon'd in the heap,
And bless indemnity with all that scum,—
Those men I mean, who on my shoulders propp'd
Their weak rebellion, winning me with lies,
And pitying forsooth my many wrongs ;
Poor self-deceived wretches, who must think
Each one himself a king in embryo,
Because some dozen vassals cry'd—my lord !
Cowards, who never knew their little hearts,
Till flurried danger held the mirror up,
And then they own'd themselves without a blush,
Curling, like spaniels, round my father's feet.
Such things deserted me and are forgiven,
While I, least guilty, am an outcast still,
And will be, for I love such fair disgrace.

Sigifred. I know the clear truth ; so would Otho see,
For he is just and noble. Fain would I
Be pleader for you—

Ludolph. He'll hear none of it ;
 You know his temper, hot, proud, obstinate ;
 Endanger not yourself so uselessly.
 I will encounter his thwart spleen myself,
 To-day, at the Duke Conrad's, where he keeps
 His crowded state after the victory,
 There will I be, a most unwelcome guest,
 And parley with him, as a son should do,
 Who doubly loathes a father's tyranny ;
 Tell him how feeble is that tyranny ;
 How the relationship of father and son
 Is no more valid than a silken leash
 Where lions tug adverse, if love grow not
 From interchanged love through many years.
 Ay, and those turreted Franconian walls,
 Like to a jealous casket, hold my pearl—
 My fair Auranthe ! Yes, I will be there.

Sigifred. Be not so rash ; wait till his wrath shall pass,
 Until his royal spirit softly ebbs
 Self-influenced ; then, in his morning dreams
 He will forgive thee, and awake in grief
 To have not thy good morrow.

Ludolph. Yes, to-day
 I must be there, while her young pulses beat
 Among the new plumed minions of the war.
 Have you seen her of late ? No ? Auranthe,
 Franconia's fair sister, 'tis I mean.
 She should be paler for my troublous days—
 And there it is—my father's iron lips
 Have sworn divorcement 'twixt me and my right.

Sigifred (aside). Auranthe ! I had hoped this whim
 had pass'd.

Ludolph. And, Sigifred, with all his love of justice,
When will he take that grandchild in his arms,
That, by my love I swear, shall soon be his?
This reconciliation is impossible,
For see—but who are these?

Sigifred. They are messengers
From our great emperor; to you I doubt not,
For couriers are abroad to seek you out.

Enter THEODORE and GONFRED.

Theodore. Seeing so many vigilant eyes explore
The province to invite your highness back
To your high dignities, we are too happy.

Gonfred. We have no eloquence to colour justly
The emperor's anxious wishes.

Ludolph. Go. I follow you.

[*Exeunt THEODORE and GONFRED.*]

I play the prude: it is but venturing—
Why should he be so earnest? Come, my friend,
Let us to Friedburg castle.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An ante-chamber in the Castle.*

Enter LUDOLPH and SIGIFRED.

Ludolph. No more advices, no more cautioning;
I leave it all to fate—to any thing!
I cannot square my conduct to time, place,
Or circumstance; to me 'tis all a mist!

Sigifred. I say no more.

Ludolph. It seems I am to wait
Here in the ante-room;—that may be a trifle.

You see now how I dance attendance here,
Without that tyrant temper, you so blame,
Snapping the rein. You have medicin'd me
With good advices ; and I here remain,
In this most honourable ante-room,
Your patient scholar.

Sigifred. Do not wrong me, Prince.
By Heavens, I'd rather kiss Duke Conrad's slipper,
When in the morning he doth yawn with pride,
Than see you humbled but a half-degree!
Truth is, the Emperor would fain dismiss
The Nobles ere he sees you.

Enter GONFRED from the Council-room.

Ludolph. Well, sir! what!

Gonfred. Great honour to the Prince! The Emperor,
Hearing that his brave son had re-appeared,
Instant dismiss'd the Council from his sight,
As Jove fans off the clouds. Even now they pass.

[*Exit.*

[*Enter the Nobles from the Council-room. They cross the Stage, bowing with respect to LUDOLPH, he frowning on them. CONRAD follows. Exeunt Nobles.*

Ludolph. Not the discoloured poisons of a fen,
Which he, who breathes, feels warning of his death,
Could taste so nauseous to the bodily sense,
As these prodigious sycophants disgust
The soul's fine palate.

Conrad. Princely Ludolph, hail!
Welcome, thou younger sceptre to the realm!
Strength to thy virgin crownnet's golden buds,
That they, against the winter of thy sire,

May burst, and swell, and flourish round thy brows,
Maturing to a weighty diadem !
Yet be that hour far off ; and may he live,
Who waits for thee, as the chapp'd earth for rain.
Set my life's star ! I have lived long enough,
Since under my glad roof, propitiously,
Father and son each other re-possess.

Ludolph. Fine wording, Duke ! but words could
never yet

Forestall the fates ; have you not learnt that yet ?
Let me look well : your features are the same ;
Your gait the same ; your hair of the same shade ;
As one I knew some passed weeks ago,
Who sung far different notes into mine ears.
I have mine own particular comments on't ;
You have your own perhaps.

Conrad. My gracious Prince,
All men may err. In truth I was deceived
In your great father's nature, as you were.
Had I known that of him I have since known,
And what you soon will learn, I would have
turn'd

My sword to my own throat, rather than held
Its threatening edge against a good King's quiet :
Or with one word fever'd you, gentle Prince,
Who seem'd to me, as rugged times then went,
Indeed too much oppress'd. May I be bold
To tell the Emperor you will haste to him ?

Ludolph. Your Dukedom's privilege will grant so
much. [Exit CONRAD.

He's very close to Otho, a tight leech !
Your hand—I go ! Ha ! here the thunder comes

Sullen against the wind ! If in two angry brows
My safety lies, then, Sigifred, I'm safe.

Enter OTHO and CONRAD.

Otho. Will you make Titan play the lackey-page
To chattering pigmies ? I would have you know
That such neglect of our high Majesty
Annuls all feel of kindred. What is son,—
Or friend,—or brother,—or all ties of blood,—
When the whole kingdom, centred in ourself,
Is rudely slighted ? Who am I to wait ?
By Peter's chair ! I have upon my tongue
A word to fright the proudest spirit here !—
Death !—and slow tortures to the hardy fool,
Who dares take such large charter from our smiles !
Conrad, we would be private ! Sigifred !
Off ! And none pass this way on pain of death !

[Exeunt CONRAD and SIGIFRED.]

Ludolph. This was but half expected, my good sire,
Yet I am grieved at it, to the full height,
As though my hopes of favour had been whole.

Otho. How you indulge yourself ! What can you
hope for ?

Ludolph. Nothing, my liege, I have to hope for
nothing.

I come to greet you as a loving son,
And then depart, if I may be so free,
Seeing that blood of yours in my warm veins
Has not yet mitigated into milk.

Otho. What would you, sir ?

Ludolph. A lenient banishment ;
So please you let me unmoisted pass

This Conrad's gates, to the wide air again.

I want no more. A rebel wants no more.

Otho. And shall I let a rebel loose again

To muster kites and eagles 'gainst my head?

No, obstinate boy, you shall be kept caged up,

Served with harsh food, with scum for Sunday-drink.

Ludolph. Indeed!

Otho. And chains too heavy for your life:

I'll choose a jailor, whose swart monstrous face

Shall be a hell to look upon, and she—

Ludolph. Ha!

Otho. Shall be your fair Auranthe.

Ludolph.

Amaze! Amaze!

Otho. To-day you marry her.

Ludolph.

This is a sharp jest!

Otho. No. None at all. When have I said a lie?

Ludolph. If I sleep not, I am a waking wretch.

Otho. Not a word more. Let me embrace my child.

Ludolph. I dare not. 'Twould pollute so good a
father!

O heavy crime! that your son's blinded eyes

Could not see all his parent's love aright,

As now I see it. Be not kind to me—

Punish me not with favour.

Otho.

Are you sure,

Ludolph, you have no saving plea in store?

Ludolph. My father, none!

Otho.

Then you astonish me.

Ludolph. No, I have no plea. Disobedience,

Rebellion, obstinacy, blasphemy,

Are all my counsellors. If they can make

My crooked deeds show good and plausible,

Then grant me loving pardon, but not else,
Good Gods ! not else, in any way, my liege !

Otho. You are a most perplexing, noble boy.

Ludolph. You not less a perplexing noble father.

Otho. Well, you shall have free passport through
the gates,

Farewell !

Ludolph. Farewell ! and by these tears believe,
And still remember, I repent in pain
All my misdeeds !

Otho. Ludolph, I will ! I will !
But, Ludolph, ere you go, I would enquire
If you, in all your wandering, ever met
A certain Arab haunting in these parts.

Ludolph. No, my good lord, I cannot say I did.

Otho. Make not your father blind before his time ;
Nor let these arms paternal hunger more
For an embrace, to dull the appetite
Of my great love for thee, my supreme child !
Come close, and let me breathe into thine ear.
I knew you through disguise. You are the Arab !
You can't deny it. [Embracing him.]

Ludolph. Happiest of days !

Otho. We'll make it so.

Ludolph. 'Stead of one fatted calf
Ten hecatombs shall bellow out their last,
Smote 'twixt the horns by the death-stunning mace
Of Mars, and all the soldiery shall feast
Nobly as Nimrod's masons, when the towers
Of Nineveh new kiss'd the parted clouds !

Otho. Large as a God speak out, where all is thine.

Ludolph. Ay, father, but the fire in my sad breast

Is quench'd with inward tears ! I must rejoice
 For you, whose wings so shadow over me
 In tender victory, but for myself
 I still must mourn. The fair Auranthe mine !
 Too great a boon ! I pr'ythee let me ask
 What more than I know of could so have changed
 Your purpose touching her.

Otho.

At a word, this :

In no deed did you give me more offence
 Than your rejection of Erminia.
 To my appalling, I saw too good proof
 Of your keen-eyed suspicion,—she is naught !

Ludolph. You are convinc'd ?

Otho.

Ay, spite of her sweet looks.

O, that my brother's daughter should so fall !
 Her fame has pass'd in to the grosser lips
 Of soldiers in their cups.

Ludolph.

'Tis very sad.

Otho. No more of her. Auranthe—Ludolph, come !
 This marriage be the bond of endless peace !

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The entrance of GERSA'S Tent in the
 Hungarian Camp.*

Enter ERMINIA.

Erminia. Where ! where ! where shall I find a mes-
 senger ?

A trusty soul ? A good man in the camp ?
 Shall I go myself ? Monstrous wickedness !
 O cursed Conrad ! devilish Auranthe !
 Here is proof palpable as the bright sun !
 O for a voice to reach the emperor's ears !

[*Shouts in the camp.*

Enter an HUNGARIAN CAPTAIN.

Captain. Fair prisoner, you hear these joyous shouts?
The king—aye, now our king,—but still your slave,
Young Gersa, from a short captivity
Has just return'd. He bids me say, bright dame,
That even the homage of his ranged chiefs
Cures not his keen impatience to behold
Such beauty once again. What ails you, lady?

Erminia. Say, is not that a German, yonder? There!

Captain. Methinks by his stout bearing he should be—
Yes—it is Albert; a brave German knight,
And much in the emperor's favour.

Erminia. I would fain
Enquire of friends and kinsfolk; how they fared
In these rough times. Brave soldier, as you pass
To royal Gersa with my humble thanks,
Will you send yonder knight to me?

Captain. I will. [*Exit.*

Erminia. Yes, he was ever known to be a man
Frank, open, generous; Albert I may trust.
O proof! proof! proof! Albert's an honest man;
Not Ethelbert the monk, if he were here,
Would I hold more trustworthy. Now!

Enter ALBERT.

Albert. Good Gods!
Lady Erminia! are you prisoner
In this beleaguer'd camp? Or are you here
Of your own will? You pleased to send for me.
By Venus, 'tis a pity I knew not
Your plight before, and, by her Son, I swear
To do you every service you can ask.

What would the fairest —?

Erminia. Albert, will you swear?

Albert. I have. Well!

Erminia. Albert, you have fame to lose

If men, in court and camp, lie not outright,

You should be, from a thousand, chosen forth

To do an honest deed. Shall I confide —?

Albert. Aye, anything to me, fair creature. Do,
Dictate my task. Sweet woman,—

Erminia. Truce with that.

You understand me not; and, in your speech,

I see how far the slander is abroad.

Without proof could you think me innocent?

Albert. Lady, I should rejoice to know you so.

Erminia. If you have any pity for a maid,
Suffering a daily death from evil tongues;
Any compassion for that Emperor's niece,
Who, for your bright sword and clear honesty,
Lifted you from the crowd of common men
Into the lap of honour;—save me, knight!

Albert. How? Make it clear; if it be possible,
I by the banner of Saint Maurice swear
To right you.

Erminia. Possible!—Easy. O my heart!
This letter's not so soil'd but you may read it;—
Possible! There—that letter! Read—read it.

[*Gives him a letter.*

ALBERT (*reading*).

“To the Duke Conrad.—Forget the threat you made
at parting, and I will forget to send the Emperor letters
and papers of yours I have become possessed of. His

life is no trifle to me; his death you shall find none to yourself." (*Speaks to himself.*) 'Tis me—my life that's pleaded for! (*Reads.*) "He, for his own sake, will be dumb as the grave. Erminia has my shame fix'd upon her, sure as a wen. We are safe. AURANTHE."

A she-devil! A dragon! I her imp!
Fire of Hell! Auranthe—lewd demon!
Where got you this? Where? When?

Erminia. I found it in the tent, among some spoils
Which, being noble, fell to Gersa's lot.
Come in, and see.

[*They go in and return.*]

Albert. Villany! Villany!
Conrad's sword, his corslet, and his helm,
And his letter. Caitiff, he shall feel—

Erminia. I see you are thunderstruck. Haste,
haste away!

Albert. O I am tortured by this villany.

Erminia. You needs must be. Carry it swift to
Otho ;

Tell him, moreover, I am prisoner
Here in this camp, where all the sisterhood,
Forced from their quiet cells, are parcell'd out
For slaves among these Huns. Away! Away!

Albert. I am gone.

Erminia. Swift be your steed! Within this hour
The Emperor will see it.

Albert. Ere I sleep:

That I can swear. [*Hurries out.*]

Gersa (without). Brave captains! thanks Enough
Of loyal homage now!

Enter GERSA.

Erminia. Hail, royal Hun!

Gersa. What means this, fair one? Why in such alarm?
Who was it hurried by me so distract?
It seem'd you were in deep discourse together;
Your doctrine has not been so harsh to him
As to my poor deserts. Come, come, be plain.
I am no jealous fool to kill you both,
Or, for such trifles, rob th' adorned world
Of such a beauteous vestal.

Erminia. I grieve, my Lord,
To hear you condescend to ribald-phrase.

Gersa. This is too much! Harken, my lady pure!

Erminia. Silence! and hear the magic of a name —
Erminia! I am she,—the Emperor's niece!
Praised be the Heavens, I now dare own myself!

Gersa. *Erminia!* Indeed! I've heard of her.
Pr'ythee, fair lady, what chance brought you here?

Erminia. Ask your own soldiers.

Gersa. And you dare own your name.
For loveliness you may—and for the rest
My vein is not censorious.

Erminia. Alas! poor me!
'Tis false indeed.

Gersa. Indeed you are too fair:
The swan, soft leaning on her fledgy breast,
When to the stream she launches, looks not back
With such a tender grace; nor are her wings
So white as your soul is, if that but be
Twin picture to your face. *Erminia!*
To-day, for the first day, I am a king,

Yet would I give my unworn crown away
To know you spotless.

Erminia. Trust me one day more,
Generously, without more certain guarantee,
Than this poor face you deign to praise so much;
After that, say and do whate'er you please.
If I have any knowledge of you, sir,
I think, nay I am sure you will grieve much
To hear my story. O be gentle to me,
For I am sick and faint with many wrongs,
Tired out, and weary-worn with contumelies.

Gersa. Poor lady!

Enter ETHELBERT.

Erminia. Gentle Prince, 'tis false indeed.
Good morrow, holy father! I have had
Your prayers, though I look'd for you in vain.

Ethelbert. Blessings upon you, daughter! Sure you look
Too cheerful for these foul pernicious days.
Young man, you heard this virgin say 'twas false,—
'Tis false I say. What! can you not employ
Your temper elsewhere, 'mong these burly tents,
But you must taunt this dove, for she hath lost
The Eagle Otho to beat off assault.
Fie! Fie! But I will be her guard myself;
I' the Emperor's name. I here demand
Herself, and all her sisterhood. She false!

Gersa. Peace! peace, old man! I cannot think
she is.

Ethelbert. Whom I have known from her first
infancy,
Baptised her in the bosom of the Church,

Watch'd her, as anxious husbandmen the grain,
From the first shoot till the unripe mid-May,
Then to the tender ear of her June days,
Which, lifting sweet abroad its timid green,
Is blighted by the touch of calumny ;
You cannot credit such a monstrous tale.

Gersa. I cannot. Take her. Fair Erminia,
I follow you to Friedburg,—is't not so ?

Erminia. Ay, so we purpose.

Ethelbert. Daughter, do you so ?
How's this ? I marvel ! Yet you look not mad.

Erminia. I have good news to tell you, Ethelbert.

Gersa. Ho ! ho, there ! Guards !
Your blessing, father ! Sweet Erminia,
Believe me, I am well nigh sure—

Erminia. Farewell !

Short time will show. [*Enter Chiefs.*

Yes, father Ethelbert,

I have news precious as we pass along.

Ethelbert. Dear daughter, you shall guide me.

Erminia. To no ill.

Gersa. Command an escort to the Friedburg lines.

[*Exeunt Chiefs.*

Pray let me lead. Fair lady, forget not
Gersa, how he believed you innocent.
I follow you to Friedburg with all speed.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Country.*

Enter ALBERT.

Albert. O that the earth were empty, as when Cain
 Had no perplexity to hide his head !
 Or that the sword of some brave enemy
 Had put a sudden stop to my hot breath,
 And hurl'd me down the illimitable gulph
 Of times past, unremember'd ! Better so
 Than thus fast-limed in a cursed snare,
 The white limbs of a wanton. This the end
 Of an aspiring life ! My boyhood past
 In feud with wolves and bears, when no eye saw
 The solitary warfare, fought for love
 Of honour 'mid the growling wilderness.
 My sturdier youth, maturing to the sword,
 Won by the syren-trumpets, and the ring
 Of shields upon the pavement, when bright mail'd
 Henry the Fowler pass'd the streets of Prague.
 Was't to this end I louted and became
 The menial of Mars, and held a spear
 Sway'd by command, as corn is by the wind ?
 Is it for this, I now am lifted up
 By Europe's throned Emperor, to see
 My honour be my executioner,—
 My love of fame, my prided honesty
 Put to the torture for confessional ?
 Then the damn'd crime of blurting to the world
 A woman's secret !—Though a fiend she be,
 Too tender of my ignominious life ;

But then to wrong the generous Emperor
 In such a searching point, were to give up
 My soul for foot-ball at Hell's holiday!
 I must confess,—and cut my throat,—to-day?
 To-morrow? Ho! some wine!

Enter SIGIFRED.

Sigifred. A fine humour—

Albert. Who goes there? Count Sigifred? Ha! ha!

Sigifred. What, man, do you mistake the hollow sky
 For a throng'd tavern,—and these stubbed trees
 For old serge hangings,—me, your humble friend,
 For a poor waiter? Why, man, how you stare!
 What gipsies have you been carousing with?
 No, no more wine; methinks you've had enough.

Albert. You well may laugh and banter. What a fool
 An injury may make of a staid man!
 You shall know all anon.

Sigifred. Some tavern brawl?

Albert. 'Twas with some people out of common reach;
 Revenge is difficult.

Sigifred. I am your friend;
 We meet again to-day, and can confer
 Upon it. For the present I'm in haste.

Albert. Whither?

Sigifred. To fetch King Gersa to the feast.
 The Emperor on this marriage is so hot,
 Pray Heaven it end not in apoplexy!
 The very porters, as I pass'd the doors,
 Heard his loud laugh, and answer'd in full choir.
 I marvel, Albert, you delay so long
 From these bright revelries; go, show yourself,
 You may be made a duke.

Albert. Ay, very like :
 Pray, what day has his Highness fix'd upon?
Sigifred. For what?
Albert. The marriage. What else can
 I mean?
Sigifred. To-day. O, I forgot, you could not know;
 The news is scarce a minute old with me.
Albert. Married to-day! To-day! You did not say so?
Sigifred. Now, while I speak to you, their comely
 heads
 Are bowed before the mitre.
Albert. O ! monstrous !
Sigifred. What is this?
Albert. Nothing, Sigifred. Farewell !
 We'll meet upon our subject. Farewell, count !

Sigifred. To this clear-headed Albert? He brain-
 turn'd !
 'Tis as portentous as a meteor.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the Castle.*

[*Enter as from the Marriage, OTHO, LUDOLPH, AURANTHE, CONRAD, Nobles, Knights, Ladies, &c. &c. &c. Music.*

Otho. Now, Ludolph ! Now, Auranthe ! Daughter
 fair !
 What can I find to grace your nuptial day
 More than my love, and these wide realms in fee?
Ludolph. I have too much.
Auranthe. And I, my liege, by far.
Ludolph. Auranthe ! I have ! O, my bride, my love !
 Not all the gaze upon us can restrain

My eyes, too long poor exiles from thy face,
 From adoration, and my foolish tongue
 From uttering soft responses to the love
 I see in thy mute beauty **beaming** forth !
 Fair creature, bless me with a single **word** !
 All mine !

Auranthe. Spare, spare me, my Lord ; I swoon else.

Ludolph. Soft beauty ! by to-morrow I should die,
 Wert thou not mine.

[*They talk apart.*

1st Lady. How deep she has bewitch'd him !

1st Knight. Ask you for her recipe for love philtres.

2nd Lady. They hold the Emperor in admiration.

Otho. If ever king was happy, that am I !

What are the cities 'yond the Alps to me,
 The provinces about the Danube's mouth,
 The promise of fair sail beyond the Rhone ;
 Or routing out of Hyperborean hordes,
 To these fair children, stars of a new age ?
 Unless perchance I might rejoice to win
 This little ball of earth, and chuck it them
 To play with !

Auranthe. Nay, my Lord, I do not know.

Ludolph. Let me not famish.

Otho (to Conrad). Good Franconia,
 You heard what oath I swear, as the sun rose,
 That unless Heaven would send me back my son,
 My Arab,—no soft music should enrich
 The cool wine, kiss'd off with a soldier's smack ;
 Now all my empire, barter'd for one feast,
 Seems poverty.

Conrad. Upon the neighbour-plain

The heralds have prepared a royal lists ;
Your knights, found war-proof in the bloody field,
Speed to the game.

Otho. Well, Ludolph, what say you ?

Ludolph. My lord !

Otho. A tourney ?

Conrad. Or, if't please you best—

Ludolph. I want no more !

1st Lady. He soars !

2nd Lady. Past all reason.

Ludolph. Though heaven's choir
Should in a vast circumference descend,
And sing for my delight, I'd stop my ears !
Though bright Apollo's car stood burning here,
And he put out an arm to bid me mount,
His touch an immortality, not I !
This earth, this palace, this room, Auranthe !

Otho. This is a little painful ; just too much.
Conrad, if he flames longer in this wise,
I shall believe in wizard-woven loves
And old romances ; but I'll break the spell.
Ludolph !

Conrad. He'll be calm, anon.

Ludolph. You call'd !
Yes, yes, yes, I offend. You must forgive me ;
Not being quite recover'd from the stun
Of your large bounties. A tourney, is it not ?
[*A senet heard faintly.*]

Conrad. The trumpets reach us.

Ethelbert (without). On your peril, sirs,
Detain us !

1st Voice (without). Let not the abbot pass.

2nd Voice (without).

No,

On your lives!

1st Voice (without). Holy father, you must not.

Ethelbert (without). Otho!

Otho.

Who calls on Otho?

Ethelbert (without).

Ethelbert!

Otho. Let him come in.

[*Enter* **ETHELBERT** *leading in* **ERMINIA**

Thou cursed abbot, why

Hast brought pollution to our holy rites?

Hast thou no fear of hangman, or the faggot?

Ludolph. What portent—what strange prodigy is
this?

Conrad. Away!

Ethelbert. You, Duke?

Erminia.

Albert has surely fail'd me!

Look at the Emperor's brow upon me bent!

Ethelbert. A sad delay!

Conrad.

Away, thou guilty thing!

Ethelbert. You again, Duke? Justice, most noble
Otho!

You—go to your sister there and plot again,

A quick plot, swift as thought to save your heads;

For lo! the toils are spread around your den,

The world is all agape to see dragg'd forth

Two ugly monsters.

Ludolph. What means he, my lord?

Conrad. I cannot guess.

Ethelbert.

Best ask your lady sister,

Whether the riddle puzzles her beyond

The power of utterance.

Conrad.

Foul barbarian, cease;

The Princess faints!

Ludolph. Stab him! O, sweetest wife!

[Attendants bear off AURANTHE.

Erminia. Alas !

Ethelbert. Your wife!

Ludolph. Ay, Satan! does that
yerk ye?

Ethelbert. Wife! so soon!

Ludolph. Ay, wife! Oh, impudence!

Thou bitter mischief! Venomous bad priest!

How dar'st thou lift those beetle brows at me?

Me—the prince Ludolph, in this presence here

Upon my marriage-day, and scandalise

My joys with such opprobrious surprise?

Wife! Why dost linger on that syllable,

As if it were some demon's name pronounc'd

To summon harmful lightning, and make yawn

The sleepy thunder? Hast no sense of fear?

No ounce of man in thy mortality?

Tremble! for, at my nod, the sharpen'd axe

Will make thy bold tongue quiver to the roots,

Those gray lids wink, and thou not know it, monk!

Ethelbert. O, poor deceived Prince! I pity thee!
Great Otho! I claim justice—

Ludolph. Thou shalt have't!

Thine arms from forth a pulpit of hot fire

Shall sprawl distracted ! O that that dull cowl

Were some most sensitive portion of thy life,

'That I might give it to my hounds to tear!

Thy girdle some fine zealous-pained nerve

To girth my saddle! And those devil's beads

Each one a life, that I might, every day,

Crush one with Vulcan's hammer:

Otho. Peace, my son,
You far outstrip my spleen in this affair.
Let us be calm, and hear the abbot's plea
For this intrusion.

Ludolph. I am silent, sire.

Otho. Conrad, see all depart not wanted here.

[*Exeunt Knights, Ladies, &c.*]

Ludolph, be calm. Ethelbert, peace awhile.

This mystery demands an audience
Of a just judge, and that will Otho be.

Ludolph. Why has he time to breathe another word?

Otho. Ludolph, old Ethelbert, be sure, comes not
To beard us for no cause; he's not the man
To cry himself up an ambassador
Without credentials.

Ludolph. I'll chain up myself.

Otho. Old abbot, stand here forth. Lady Erminia,
Sit. And now, abbot! what have you to say?
Our ear is open. First we here denounce
Hard penalties against thee, if't be found
The cause for which you have disturb'd us here,
Making our bright hours muddy, be a thing
Of little moment.

Ethelbert. See this innocent!
Otho! thou father of the people call'd,
Is her life nothing? Her fair honour nothing?
Her tears from matins until even-song
Nothing? Her burst heart nothing? Emperor!
Is this your gentle niece—the simplest flower
Of the world's herbal—this fair lily blanch'd
Still with the dews of piety, this meek lady

Here sitting like an angel newly-shent,
Who veils its snowy wings and grows all pale,—
Is she nothing?

Otho. What more to the purpose, abbot?

Ludolph. Whither is he winding?

Conrad. No clue yet!

Ethelbert. You have heard, my Liege, and so, no
doubt, all here,

Foul, poisonous, malignant whisperings ;
Nay open speech, rude mockery grown common,
Against the spotless nature and clear fame
Of the princess Erminia, your niece.
I have intruded here thus suddenly,
Because I hold those base weeds, with tight hand,
Which now disfigure her fair growing stem,
Waiting but for your sign to pull them up
By the dark roots, and leave her palpable,
To all men's sight, a lady innocent.
The ignominy of that whisper'd tale
About a midnight gallant, seen to climb
A window to her chamber neighbour'd near,
I will from her turn off, and put the load
On the right shoulders ; on that wretch's head,
Who, by close stratagems, did save herself,
Chiefly by shifting to this lady's room
A rope-ladder for false-witness.

Ludolph. Most atrocious !

Otho. Ethelbert, proceed.

Ethelbert. With sad lips I shall :
For, in the healing of one wound, I fear
To make a greater. His young highness here
To-day was married.

Ludolph. Good.

Ethelbert. Would it were good !

Yet why do I delay to spread abroad
The names of those two vipers, from whose jaw
A deadly breath went forth to taint and blast
This guileless lady ?

Otho. Abbot, speak their names.

Ethelbert. A minute first. It cannot be—but may
I ask, great judge, if you to-day have put
A letter by unread ?

Otho. Does't end in this ?

Conrad. Out with their names !

Ethelbert. Bold sinner, say you so ?

Ludolph. Out, hideous monk !

Otho. Confess, or by the wheel—

Ethelbert. My evidence cannot be far away ;
And, though it never come, be on my head
The crime of passing an attaint upon
The slanderers of this virgin.

Ludolph. Speak aloud !

Ethelbert. Auranthe ! and her brother there.

Conrad. Amaze !

Ludolph. Throw them from the windows !

Otho. Do what you will !

Ludolph. What shall I do with them ?
Something of quick dispatch, for should she hear,
My soft Auranthe, her sweet mercy would
Prevail against my fury. Damned priest !
What swift death wilt thou die ? As to the lady
I touch her not.

Ethelbert. Illustrious Otho, stay !
An ample store of misery thou hast,

Choak not the granary of thy noble mind
 With more bad bitter grain, too difficult
 A cud for the repentance of a man
 Gray-growing. To thee only I appeal,
 Not to thy noble son, whose yeasting youth
 Will clear itself, and crystal turn again.
 A young man's heart, by Heaven's blessing, is
 A wide world, where a thousand new-born hopes
 Empurple fresh the melancholy blood :
 But an old man's is narrow, tenantless
 Of hopes, and stuff'd with many memories,
 Which, being pleasant, ease the heavy pulse—
 Painful, clog up and stagnate. Weigh this matter
 Even as a miser balances his coin ;
 And in the name of mercy, give command
 That your knight Albert be brought here before you.
 He will expound this riddle ; he will show
 A noon-day proof of bad Auranthe's guilt.

Otho. Let Albert straight be summon'd.

[*Exit one of the Nobles.*]

Ludolph.

Impossible !

I cannot doubt—I will not—no—to doubt
 Is to be ashes !—wither'd up to death !

Otho. My gentle Ludolph, harbour not a fear ;
 You do yourself much wrong.

Ludolph.

O, wretched dolt !

Now, when my foot is almost on thy neck,
 Wilt thou infuriate me ? Proof ! Thou fool !
 Why wilt thou tease impossibility
 With such a thick-skull'd persevering suit ?
 Fanatic obstinacy ! Prodigy !
 Monster of folly ! Ghost of a turn d brain !

You puzzle me,—you haunt me,—when I dream
Of you my brain will split ! Bold sorcerer !
Juggler ! May I come near you ? On my soul
I know not whether to pity, curse, or laugh.

Enter ALBERT, and the Nobleman.

Here, Albert, this old phantom wants a proof !
Give him his proof ! A camel's load of proofs !

Otho. Albert, I speak to you as to a man
Whose words once utter'd pass like current gold ;
And therefore fit to calmly put a close
To this brief tempest. Do you stand possess'd
Of any proof against the honourableness
Of Lady Auranthe, our new-spoused daughter ?

Albert. You chill me with astonishment. How's this ?
My Liege, what proof should I have 'gainst a fame
Impossible of slur ?

[*OTHO rises.*

Erminia. O wickedness !

Ethelbert. Deluded monarch, 'tis a cruel lie.

Otho. Peace, rebel-priest !

Conrad. Insult beyond credence !

Erminia. Almost a dream !

Ludolph. We have awaked from !

A foolish dream that from my brow hath wrung

A wrathful dew. O folly ! why did I

So act the lion with this silly gnat ?

Let them depart. Lady Erminia !

I ever grieved for you, as who did not ?

But now you have, with such a brazen front,

So most maliciously, so madly striven

To dazzle the soft moon, when tenderest clouds

Should be unloop'd around to curtain her ;

I leave you to the desert of the world
 Almost with pleasure. Let them be set free
 For me! I take no personal revenge
 More than against a nightmare, which a man
 Forgets in the new dawn. *[Exit LUDOLPH.*

Otho. Still in extremes! No, they must not be loose.

Ethelbert. Albert, I must suspect thee of a crime
 So fiendish—

Otho. Fear'st thou not my fury, monk?
 Conrad, be they in your safe custody
 Till we determine some fit punishment.
 It is so mad a deed, I must reflect
 And question them in private; for perhaps,
 By patient scrutiny, we may discover
 Whether they merit death, or should be placed
 In care of the physicians.

[Exit OTHO and Nobles, ALBERT following.

Conrad. My guards, ho!

Erminia. Albert, wilt thou follow there?
 Wilt thou creep dastardly behind his back,
 And shrink away from a weak woman's eye?
 Turn, thou court-Janus! thou forget'st thyself;
 Here is the duke, waiting with open arms,
[Enter Guards.

To thank thee; here congratulate each other;
 Wring hands; embrace; and swear how lucky 'twas
 That I, by happy chance, hit the right man
 Of all the world to trust in.

Albert. Trust! to me!

Conrad (aside). He is the sole one in this mystery.

Erminia. Well, I give up, and save my prayers for
 Heaven!

You, who could do this deed, would ne'er relent,
 Though, at my words, the hollow prison-vaults
 Would groan for pity.

Conrad. Manacle them both!

Ethelbert. I know it—it must be—I see it all!
 Albert, thou art the minion!

Erminia. Ah! too plain—

Conrad. Silence! Gag up their mouths! I cannot
 bear
 More of this brawling. That the Emperor
 Had placed you in some other custody!
 Bring them away

[*Exeunt all but ALBERT.*]

Albert. Though my name perish from the book of
 honour,
 Almost before the recent ink is dry,
 And be no more remember'd after death,
 Than any drummer's in the muster-roll;
 Yet shall I season high my sudden fall
 With triumph o'er that evil-witted duke!
 He shall feel what it is to have the hand
 Of a man drowning, on his hateful throat.

Enter GERSA and SIGIFRED.

Gersa. What discord is at ferment in this house?

Sigifred. We are without conjecture; not a soul
 We met could answer any certainty.

Gersa. Young Ludolph, like a fiery arrow, shot
 By us.

Sigifred. The Emperor, with cross'd arms, in
 thought.

Gersa. In one room music, in another sadness,

Perplexity every where!

Albert.

A trifle more !

Follow ; your presences will much avail

To tune our jarred spirits. I'll explain.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—AURANTHE'S *Apartment.*

AURANTHE and CONRAD discovered.

Conrad. Well, well, I know what ugly jeopardy

We are caged in ; you need not pester that

Into my ears. Pr'ythee, let me be spared

A foolish tongue, that I may bethink me

Of remedies with some deliberation.

You cannot doubt but 'tis in Albert's power

To crush or save us?

Auranthe.

No, I cannot doubt.

He has, assure yourself, by some strange means,

My secret ; which I ever hid from him,

Knowing his mawkish honesty.

Conrad.

Cursed slave !

Auranthe. Ay, I could almost curse him now myself.

Wretched impediment! Evil genius!

A glue upon my wings, that cannot spread,

When they should span the provinces ! A snake,

A scorpion, sprawling on the first gold step,

Conducting to the throne, high canopied.

Conrad. You would not hear my counsel, when his
life

Might have been trodden out, all sure and hush'd.

Now the dull animal forsooth must be
 Intreated, managed ! When can you contrive
 The interview he demands ?

Auranthe. As speedily
 It must be done as my bribed woman can
 Unseen conduct him to me ; but I fear
 'Twill be impossible, while the broad day
 Comes through the panes with persecuting glare.
 Methinks, if't now were night I could intrigue
 With darkness, bring the stars to second me,
 And settle all this trouble.

Conrad. Nonsense ! Child !
 See him immediately ; why not now ?

Auranthe. Do you forget that even the senseless
 door-posts
 Are on the watch and gape through all the house ;
 How many whisperers there are about,
 Hungry for evidence to ruin me :
 Men I have spurn'd, and women I have taunted.
 Besides, the foolish prince sends, minute whiles,
 His pages—so they tell me—to inquire
 After my health, entreating, if I please,
 To see me.

Conrad. Well, suppose this Albert here ;
 What is your power with him ?

Auranthe. He should be
 My echo, my taught parrot ! but I fear
 He will be cur enough to bark at me ;
 Have his own say ; read me some silly creed
 'Eout shame and pity.

Conrad. What will you do then ?
Auranthe. What I shall do, I know not ; what I would

Cannot be done ; for see, this chamber-floor
Will not yield to the pick-axe and the spade,—
Here is no quiet depth of hollow ground.

Conrad. Sister, you have grown sensible and wise,
Seconding, ere I speak it, what is now,
I hope, resolved between us.

Auranthe. Say, what is't?

Conrad. You need not be his sexton too ; a man
May carry that with him shall make him die
Elsewhere,—give that to him ; pretend the while
You will to-morrow succumb to his wishes,
Be what they may, and send him from the Castle
On some fool's errand : let his latest groan
Frighten the wolves !

Auranthe. Alas ! he must not die !

Conrad. Would you were both hearsed up in stifling
lead !

Detested—

Auranthe. Conrad, hold ! I would not bear
The little thunder of your fretful tongue,
Tho' I alone were taken in these toils,
And you could free me ; but remember, sir,
You live alone in my security :
So keep your wits at work, for your own sake,
Not mine, and be more mannerly.

Conrad. Thou wasp !
If my domains were emptied of these folk,
And I had thee to starve—

Auranthe. O, marvellous !
But Conrad, now be gone ; the Host is look'd for ;
Cringe to the Emperor, entertain the Lords,
And, do ye mind, above all things, proclaim

My sickness, with a brother's sadden'd eye,
 Condoling with Prince Ludolph. In fit time
 Return to me.

Conrad. I leave you to your thoughts.

[*Exit.*

Auranthe (sola). Down, down, proud temper! down,
 Auranthe's pride!

Why do I anger him when I should kneel?

Conrad! Albert! help! help! What can I do?

O wretched woman! lost, wreck'd, swallow'd up,

Accursed, blasted! O, thou golden Crown,

Orbing along the serene firmament

Of a wide empire, like a glowing moon;

And thou, bright sceptre! lustrous in my eyes,—

There—as the fabled fair Hesperian tree,

Bearing a fruit more precious! graceful thing,

Delicate, godlike, magic! must I leave

Thee to melt in the visionary air,

Ere, by one grasp, this common hand is made

Imperial? I do not know the time

When I have wept for sorrow; but methinks

I could now sit upon the ground, and shed

Tears, tears of misery. O, the heavy day!

How shall I bear my life till Albert comes?

Ludolph! Erminia! Proofs! O heavy day!

Bring me some mourning weeds, that I may 'tire

Myself, as fits one wailing her own death:

Cut off these curls, and brand this lily hand,

And throw these jewels from my loathing sight,—

Fetch me a missal, and a string of beads,—

A cup of bitter'd water, and a crust,—

I will confess, O holy Abbot!—How!

What is this? Auranthe! thou fool, dolt,
Whimpering idiot! up! up! and quell!
I am safe! Coward! why am I in fear?
Albert! he cannot stickle, chew the cud
In such a fine extreme,—impossible!
Who knocks?

[Goes to the door, listens, and opens it.]

Enter ALBERT.

Albert, I have been waiting for you here
With such an aching heart, such swooning throbs
On my poor brain, such cruel—cruel sorrow,
That I should claim your pity! Art not well?

Albert. Yes, lady, well.

Auranthe. You look not so, alas!

But pale, as if you brought some heavy news.

Albert. You know full well what makes me look so pale.

Auranthe. No! Do I? Surely I am still to learn
Some horror; all I know, this present, is
I am near hustled to a dangerous gulph,
Which you can save me from,—and therefore safe,
So trusting in thy love; that should not make
Thee pale, my Albert.

Albert. It doth make me freeze.

Auranthe. Why should it, love?

Albert. You should not ask me that,
But make your own heart monitor, and save
Me the great pain of telling. You must know.

Auranthe. Something has vexed you, Albert. There
are times
When simplest things put on a sombre cast;

A melancholy mood will haunt a man,
Until most easy matters take the shape
Of unachievable tasks ; small rivulets
Then seem impassable.

Albert. Do not cheat yourself
With hope that gloss of words, or suppliant action,
Or tears, or ravings, or self-threaten'd death,
Can alter my resolve.

Auranthe. You make me tremble ;
Not so much at your threats, as at your voice,
Untuned, and harsh, and barren of all love.

Albert. You suffocate me ! Stop this devil's parley,
And listen to me ; know me once for all.

Auranthe. I thought I did. Alas ! I am deceived.

Albert. No, you are not deceived. You took me for
A man detesting all inhuman crime :
And therefore kept from me your demon's plot
Against Erminia. Silent ? Be so still ;
For ever ! Speak no more ; but hear my words,
Thy fate. Your safety I have bought to-day
By blazoning a lie, which in the dawn
I'll expiate with truth.

Auranthe. O cruel traitor !

Albert. For I would not set eyes upon thy shame ;
I would not see thee dragg'd to death by the hair,
Penanced, and taunted on a scaffolding !
'To-night, upon the skirts of the blind wood
That blackens northward of these horrid towers,
I wait for you with horses. Choose your fate.
Farewell !

Auranthe. Albert, you jest ; I'm sure you must.
You, an ambitious Soldier ! I, a Queen,

One who could say,—here, rule these Provinces !
 Take tribute from those cities for thyself !
 Empty these armouries, these treasuries,
 Muster thy warlike thousands at a nod !
 Go ! conquer Italy !

Albert. Auranthe, you have made
 The whole world chaff to me. Your doom is fix'd.

Auranthe. Out, villain ! dastard !

Albert. Look there to the door !
 Who is it ?

Auranthe. Conrad, traitor !

Albert. Let him in.

Enter CONRAD.

Do not affect amazement, hypocrite,
 At seeing me in this chamber.

Conrad. Auranthe ?

Albert. Talk not with eyes, but speak your curses out
 Against me, who would sooner crush and grind
 A brace of toads, than league with them t'oppress
 An innocent lady, gull an Emperor,
 More generous to me than autumn-sun
 To ripening harvests.

Auranthe. No more insult, sir.

Albert. Ay, clutch your scabbard ; but, for prudence
 sake,
 Draw not the sword ; 'twould make an uproar, Duke,
 You would not hear the end of. At nightfall
 Your lady sister, if I guess aright,
 Will leave this busy castle. You had best
 Take farewell too of worldly vanities.

Conrad. Vassal !

Albert. To-morrow, when the Emperor sends

For loving Conrad, see you fawn on him.

Good even !

Auranthe. You'll be seen !

Albert. See the coast clear then.

Auranthe (as he goes). Remorseless Albert ! Cruel,
cruel wretch !

[*She lets him out.*

Conrad. So, we must lick the dust ?

Auranthe. I follow him.

Conrad. How ? Where ? The plan of your escape ?

Auranthe. He waits

For me with horses by the forest-side,
Northward.

Conrad. Good, good ; he dies. You go, say you ?

Auranthe. Perforce.

Conrad. Be speedy, darkness ! Till that comes,
Fiends keep you company !

[*Exit.*

Auranthe. And you ! And you !

And all men ! Vanish !

[*Retires to an inner apartment.*

SCENE II.—*An Apartment in the Castle.*

Enter LUDOLPH and Page.

Page. Still very sick, my lord ; but now I went,
And there her women, in a mournful throng,
Stood in the passage whispering ; if any
Moved, 'twas with careful steps, and hush'd as death
They bade me stop.

Ludolph. Good fellow, once again
Make soft inquiry ; pr'ythee, be not stay'd
By any hindrance, but with gentlest force

Break through her weeping servants, till thou com'st
E'en to her chamber-door, and there, fair boy,—
If with thy mother's milk thou hast suck'd in
Any divine eloquence,—woo her ears
With plaints for me, more tender than the voice
Of dying Echo, echoed.

Page.

Kindest master!

To know thee sad thus, will unloose my tongue
In mournful syllables. Let but my words reach
Her ears, and she shall take them coupled with
Moans from my heart, and sighs not counterfeit.
May I speed better!

[*Exit Page.*

Ludolph (solus). Auranthe! My life!

Long have I loved thee, yet till now not loved :
Remembering, as I do, hard-hearted times
When I had heard e'en of thy death perhaps,
And thoughtless!—suffer'd thee to pass alone
Into Elysium!—now I follow thee,
A substance or a shadow, wheresoe'er
Thou leadest me,—whether thy white feet press,
With pleasant weight, the amorous-aching earth,
Or thro' the air thou pioneerest me,
A shade! Yet sadly I predestinate!
O, unbenignest Love, why wilt thou let
Darkness steal out upon the sleepy world
So wearily, as if night's chariot-wheels
Were clogg'd in some thick cloud? O, changeful Love,
Let not her steeds with drowsy-footed pace
Pass the high stars, before sweet embassy
Comes from the pillow'd beauty of that fair
Completion of all delicate Nature's wit!

Pout her faint lips anew with rubious health;
 And, with thine infant fingers, lift the fringe
 Of her sick eye-lids; that those eyes may glow
 With wooing light upon me, ere the morn
 Peers with disrelish, gray, barren, and cold!

[Enter GERSA and Courtiers.

Otho calls me his Lion,—should I blush
 To be so tamed? so—

Gersa. Do me the courtesy,
 Gentlemen, to pass on.

1st Knight. We are your servants.

[*Exeunt Courtiers.*

Ludolph. It seems then, sir, you have found out the
 man

You would confer with;—me?

Gersa. If I break not
 Too much upon your thoughtful mood, I will
 Claim a brief while your patience.

Ludolph. For what cause
 Soe'er, I shall be honour'd.

Gersa. I not less.

Ludolph. What may it be? No trifle can take place
 Of such deliberate prologue, serious 'haviour.
 But, be it what it may, I cannot fail
 To listen with no common interest;
 For tho' so new your presence is to me,
 I have a soldier's friendship for your fame.
 Please you explain.

Gersa. As thus :—for, pardon me,
 I cannot, in plain terms, grossly assault
 A noble nature; and would faintly sketch
 What your quick apprehension will fill up;

So finely I esteem you.

Ludolph.

I attend.

Gersa. Your generous father, most illustrious Otho,
Sits in the banquet-room among his chiefs ;
His wine is bitter, for you are not there ;
His eyes are fix'd still on the open doors,
And ev'ry passer in he frowns upon,
Seeing no Ludolph comes.

Ludolph.

I do neglect.

Gersa. And for your absence may I guess the
cause?

Ludolph. Stay there ! No—guess ? More princely
you must be

Than to make guesses at me. 'Tis enough.

I'm sorry I can hear no more.

Gersa.

And I

As grieved to force it on you so abrupt ;
Yet, one day, you must know a grief, whose sting
Will sharpen more the longer 'tis conceal'd.

Ludolph. Say it at once, sir ! dead—dead—is she
dead ?

Gersa. Mine is a cruel task : she is not dead,
And would, for your sake, she were innocent.

Ludolph. Hungarian ! Thou amazest me beyond
All scope of thought, convulseth my heart's blood
To deadly churning ! *Gersa*, you are young,
As I am ; let me observe you, face to face :
Not gray-brow'd like the poisonous Ethelbert,
No rheum'd eyes, no furrowing of age,
No wrinkles, where all vices nestle in
Like crannied vermin,—no ! but fresh, and young,
And hopeful featured. Ha ! by Heaven you weep !

Tears, human tears ! Do you repent you then
Of a curs'd torturer's office ? Why shouldst join,—
Tell me,—the league of devils ? Confess—confess—
The lie !

Gersa. Lie!—but begone all ceremonious points
Of honour battailous ! I could not turn
My wrath against thee for the orb'd world.

Ludolph. Your wrath, weak boy ? Tremble at
mine, unless
Retraction follow close upon the heels
Of that late stounding insult ! Why has my sword
Not done already, a sheer judgment on thee ?
Despair, or eat thy words ! Why, thou wast nigh
Whimpering away my reason ! Hark'e, sir,
It is no secret, that Erminia,
Erminia, sir, was hidden in your tent,—
O bless'd asylum ! Comfortable home !
Begone ! I pity thee ; thou art a gull,
Erminia's last new puppet !

Gersa. Furious fire !
Thou mak'st me boil as hot as thou canst flame !
And in thy teeth I give thee back the lie !
Thou liest ! Thou, Auranthe's fool ! A wittol !

Ludolph. Look ! look at this bright sword ;
There is no part of it, to the very hilt,
But shall indulge itself about thine heart !
Draw ! but remember thou must cower thy plumes,
As yesterday the Arab made thee stoop.

Gersa. Patience ! Not here ; I would not spill
thy blood
Here, underneath this roof where Otho breathes,—
Thy father,—almost mine.

Ludolph.

O faltering coward !

[*Enter Page.*

Stay, stay ; here is one I have half a word with.

Well ? What ails thee, child ?

Page.

My lord !

Ludolph.

What wouldst say ?

Page. They are fled !

Ludolph.

They ! Who ?

Page.

When anxiously

I hasten'd back, your grieving messenger,

I found the stairs all dark, the lamps extinct,

And not a foot or whisper to be heard.

I thought her dead, and on the lowest step

Sat listening ; when presently came by

Two muffled up,—one sighing heavily,

The other cursing low, whose voice I knew

For the Duke Conrad's. Close I follow'd them

Thro' the dark ways they chose to the open air ;

And, as I follow'd, heard my lady speak.

Ludolph. Thy life answers the truth !

Page.

The chamber's empty !

Ludolph. As I will be of mercy ! So, at last,

This nail is in my temples !

Gersa.

Be calm in this.

Ludolph. I am.

Gersa.

And Albert too has disappear'd ;

Ere I met you, I sought him everywhere ;

You would not hearken.

Ludolph.

Which way went they, boy ?

Gersa. I'll hunt with you.

Ludolph.

No, no, no. My senses are

Still whole. I have survived. My arm is strong,—

My appetite sharp—for revenge! I'll no sharer
 In my feast; my injury is all my own,
 And so is my revenge, my lawful chattels!
 Terrier, ferret them out! Burn—burn the witch!
 Trace me their footsteps! Away!

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A part of the Forest.*

Enter CONRAD and AURANTHE.

Auranthe. Go no further; not a step more. Thou art
 A master-plague in the midst of miseries.
 Go,—I fear thee! I tremble every limb,
 Who never shook before. There's moody death
 In thy resolved looks! Yes, I could kneel
 To pray thee far away! Conrad, go! go!—
 There! yonder underneath the boughs I see
 Our horses!

Conrad. Ay, and the man.

Auranthe. Yes, he is there!
 Go, go,—no blood! no blood!—go, gentle Conrad!

Conrad. Farewell!

Auranthe. Farewell! For this Heaven
 pardon you! [*Exit AURANTHE.*]

Conrad. If he survive one hour, then may I die
 In unimagined tortures, or breathe through
 A long life in the foulest sink o' the world!
 He dies! 'Tis well she do not advertise
 The caitiff of the cold steel at his back.

[*Exit CONRAD.*]

Enter LUDOLPH and Page.

Ludolph. Miss'd the way, boy? Say not that on
your peril!

Page. Indeed, indeed I cannot trace them further.

Ludolph. Must I stop here? Here solitary die?
Stifled beneath the thick oppressive shade
Of these dull boughs,—this oven of dark thickets,—
Silent,—without revenge?—pshaw!—bitter end,—
A bitter death,—a suffocating death,—
A gnawing—silent—deadly, quiet death!
Escaped?—fled?—vanish'd? melted into air?
She's gone! I cannot clutch her! no revenge!
A muffled death, ensnared in horrid silence!
Suck'd to my grave amid a dreamy calm!
O, where is that illustrious noise of war,
To smother up this sound of labouring breath,
This rustle of the trees!

[*AURANTHE shrieks at a distance.*

Page.

My lord, a noise!

This way—hark!

Ludolph. Yes, yes! A hope! A music!
A glorious clamour! How I live again!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Forest.*

Enter ALBERT (wounded).

Albert. Oh! for enough life to support me on
To Otho's feet!

Enter LUDOLPH.

Ludolph. Thrice villanous, stay there!
Tell me where that detested woman is,
Or this is through thee!

Albert. My good Prince, with me
The sword has done its worst ; not without worst
Done to another,—Conrad has it home!
I see you know it all !

Ludolph. Where is his sister ?

Enter AURANTHE.

Auranthe. Albert !

Ludolph. Ha! There! there!—He is the paramour!—
There—hug him—dying! O, thou innocence,
Shrine him and comfort him at his last gasp,
Kiss down his eyelids! Was he not thy love?
Wilt thou forsake him at his latest hour?
Keep fearful and aloof from his last gaze,
His most uneasy moments, when cold death
Stands with the door ajar to let him in?

Albert. O that that door with hollow slam would
close
Upon me sudden! for I cannot meet,
In all the unknown chambers of the dead,
Such horrors!

Ludolph. Auranthe! what can he mean?
What horrors? Is it not a joyous time?
Am I not married to a paragon
“Of personal beauty and untainted soul?”
A blushing fair-eyed purity? A sylph,
Whose snowy timid hand has never sinn’d
Beyond a flower pluck’d, white as itself?
Albert, you do insult my bride—your mistress—
To talk of horrors on our wedding-night!

Albert. Alas! poor Prince, I would you knew my
heart!
’Tis not so guilty—

Ludolph. Hear, he pleads not guilty !
 You are not ? or, if so, what matters it ?
 You have escaped me, free as the dusk air,
 Hid in the forest, safe from my revenge ;
 I cannot catch you ! You should laugh at me,
 Poor cheated Ludolph ! Make the forest hiss
 With jeers at me ! You tremble—faint at once,
 You will come to again. O cockatrice,
 I have you ! Whither wander those fair eyes
 To entice the devil to your help, that he
 May change you to a spider, so to crawl
 Into some cranny to escape my wrath ?

Albert. Sometimes the counsel of a dying man
 Doth operate quietly when his breath is gone :
 Disjoin those hands—part—part—do not destroy
 Each other—forget her !—Our miseries
 Are equal shared, and mercy is—

Ludolph. A boon
 When one can compass it. Auranthe, try
 Your oratory ; your breath is not so hitch'd.
 Ay, stare for help !

[ALBERT *dies.*

There goes a spotted soul
 Howling in vain along the hollow night !
 Hear him ! He calls you—sweet Auranthe, come !

Auranthe. Kill me !

Ludolph. No ! What ? Upon our mar-
 riage-night ?

'The earth would shudder at so foul a deed !
 A fair bride ! A sweet bride ! An innocent bride !
 No ! we must revel it, as 'tis in use
 In times of delicate brilliant ceremony :

Come, let me lead you to our halls again !
 Nay, linger not ; make no resistance, sweet ;—
 Will you ? Ah, wretch, thou canst not, for I have
 The strength of twenty lions 'gainst a lamb !
 Now—one adieu for Albert !—Come away !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*An inner Court of the Castle.*

Enter SIGIFRED, GONFRED, and THEODCRE, meeting.

1st Knight. Was ever such a night ?

Sigifred. What horrors more ?

Things unbeliev'd one hour, so strange they are,
 The next hour stamps with credit.

1st Knight. Your last news ?

Gonfred. After the page's story of the death
 Of Albert and Duke Conrad ?

Sigifred. And the return
 Of Ludolph with the Princess.

Gonfred. No more, save
 Prince Gersa's freeing Abbot Ethelbert,
 And the sweet lady, fair Erminia,
 From prison.

1st Knight. Where are they now ? Hast yet heard ?

Gonfred. With the sad Emperor they are closeted ;
 I saw the three pass slowly up the stairs,
 The lady weeping, the old abbot cowl'd.

Sigifred. What next ?

1st Knight. I ache to think on't.

Gonfred. 'Tis with fate.

1st Knight. One while these proud towers are
 hush'd as death.

Gonfred. The next our poor Prince fills the arched
rooms
With ghastly ravings.

Sigifred. I do fear his brain

Gonfred. I will see more. Bear you so stout a
heart?

[*Exeunt into the Castle.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Cabinet, opening towards a Terrace.*

OTHO, ERMINIA, ETHELBERT, and a Physician discovered.

Otho. O, my poor boy! My son! My son! My
Ludolph!

Have ye no comfort for me, ye physicians
Of the weak body and soul?

Ethelbert. 'Tis not in medicine,
Either of heaven or earth, to cure, unless
Fit time be chosen to administer.

Otho. A kind forbearance, holy abbot. Come,
Erminia; here, sit by me, gentle girl;
Give me thy hand; hast thou forgiven me?

Erminia. Would I were with the saints to pray for
you!

Otho. Why will ye keep me from my darling child?

Physician. Forgive me, but he must not see thy
face.

Otho. Is then a father's countenance a Gorgon?
Hath it not comfort in it? Would it not
Console my poor boy, cheer him, heal his spirits?
Let me embrace him; let me speak to him;
I will! Who hinders me? Who's Emperor?

Physician. You may not, Sire; 'twould overwhelm
him quite,

He is so full of grief and passionate wrath ;
 Too heavy a sigh would kill him, or do worse.
 He must be saved by fine contrivances ;
 And, most especially, we must keep clear
 Out of his sight a father whom he loves ;
 His heart is full, it can contain no more,
 And do its ruddy office.

Ethelbert. Sage advice ;
 We must endeavour how to ease and slacken
 The tight-wound energies of his despair,
 Not make them tenser.

Otho. Enough ! I hear, I hear.
 Yet you were about to advise more,—I listen.

Ethelbert. This learned doctor will agree with me,
 That not in the smallest point should he be thwarted,
 Or gainsaid by one word ; his very motions,
 Nods, becks, and hints, should be obey'd with care,
 Even on the moment ; so his troubled mind
 May cure itself.

Physician. There are no other means.

Otho. Open the door ; let's hear if all is quiet.

Physician. Beseech you, Sire, forbear.

Erminia. Do, do.

Otho. I command !

Open it straight ;—hush !—quiet !—my lost boy !

My miserable child !

Ludolph (indistinctly without). Fill, fill my goblet,
 —here's a health !

Erminia. O, close the door !

Otho. Let, let me hear his voice ; this cannot last ;
 And fain would I catch up his dying words,
 Though my own knell they be ! This cannot last !

O let me catch his voice—for lo! I hear
A whisper in this silence that he's dead!
It is so! Gersa?

Enter GERSA.

Physician. Say, how fares the prince?

Gersa. More calm; his features are less wild and
flush'd;

Once he complain'd of weariness.

Physician. Indeed!

'Tis good,—'tis good; let him but fall asleep,
That saves him.

Otho. Gersa, watch him like a child;
Ward him from harm,—and bring me better news!

Physician. Humour him to the height. I fear to go;
For should he catch a glimpse of my dull garb,
It might affright him, fill him with suspicion
That we believe him sick, which must not be.

Gersa. I will invent what soothing means I can.

[Exit GERSA.]

Physician. 'This should cheer up your Highness;
weariness

Is a good symptom, and most favourable;
It gives me pleasant hopes. Please you, walk forth
Upon the terrace; the refreshing air
Will blow one half of your sad doubts away.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V.—*A Banqueting Hall, brilliantly illuminated, and set forth with all costly magnificence, with Supper-tables, laden with services of Gold and Silver. A door in the back scene, guarded by two Soldiers. Lords, Ladies, Knights, Gentlemen, &c., whispering sadly, and ranging themselves; part entering and part discovered.*

1st Knight. Grievously are we tantalised, one and all;

Sway'd here and there, commanded to and fro,
As though we were the shadows of a sleep,
And link'd to a dreaming fancy. What do we here?

Gonfred. I am no seer; you know we must obey
The prince from A to Z, though it should be
To set the place in flames. I pray, hast heard
Where the most wicked Princess is?

1st Knight. There, sir,
In the next room; have you remark'd those two
Stout soldiers posted at the door?

Gonfred. For what?

[*They whisper.*]

1st Lady. How ghast a train!

2nd Lady. Sure this should be some splendid burial.

1st Lady. What fearful whispering! See, see,—
Gersa there!

Enter GERSA.

Gersa. Put on your brightest looks; smile if you
can;

Behave as all were happy; keep your eyes
From the least watch upon him; if he speaks

To any one, answer, collectedly,
Without surprise, his questions, howe'er strange.
Do this to the utmost,—though, alas ! with me
The remedy grows hopeless ! Here he comes,—
Observe what I have said,—show no surprise.

Enter LUDOLPH, followed by SIGIFRED and Page.

Ludolph. A splendid company ! rare beauties here !
I should have Orphean lips, and Plato's fancy,
Amphion's utterance, toned with his lyre,
Or the deep key of Jove's sonorous mouth,
To give fit salutation. Methought I heard,
As I came in, some whispers,—what of that ?
'Tis natural men should whisper ; at the kiss
Of Psyche given by Love, there was a buzz
Among the gods !—and silence is as natural.
These draperies are fine, and, being a mortal,
I should desire no better ; yet, in truth,
There must be some superior costliness,
Some wider-domed high magnificence !
I would have, as a mortal I may not,
Hangings of heaven's clouds, purple and gold.
Slung from the spheres ; gauze of silver mist.
Loop'd up with cords of twisted wreathed light,
And tassell'd round with weeping meteors !
These pendent lamps and chandeliers are bright
As earthly fires from dull dross can be cleansed ;
Yet could my eyes drink up intenser beams
Undazzled,—this is darkness,—when I close
These lids, I see far fiercer brilliancies,—
Skies full of splendid moons, and shooting stars,
And spouting exhalations, diamond fires,

And panting fountains quivering with deep glows!
Yes—this is dark—is it not dark?

Sigifred. My Lord,
'Tis late ; the lights of festival are ever
Quench'd in the morn.

Ludolph. 'Tis not to-morrow then?

Sigifred. 'Tis early dawn.

Gersa. Indeed full time we slept ;
Say you so, Prince ?

Ludolph. I say I quarrell'd with you ;
We did not tilt each other,—that's a blessing,—
Good gods! no innocent blood upon my head !

Sigifred. Retire, Gersa!

Ludolph. There should be three more here:
For two of them, they stay away perhaps,
Being gloomy-minded, haters of fair revels,—
They know their own thoughts best.

As for the third,
Deep blue eyes, semi-shaded in white lids,
Finish'd with lashes fine for more soft shade,
Completed by her twin-arch'd ebon-brows ;
White temples, of exactest elegance,
Of even mould, felicitous and smooth ;
Cheeks fashion'd tenderly on either side,
So perfect, so divine, that our poor eyes
Are dazzled with the sweet proportioning,
And wonder that 'tis so,—the magic chance!
Her nostrils, small, fragrant, fairy-delicate ;
Her lips—I swear no human boxes e'er wore
So taking a disguise ;—you shall behold her!
We'll have her presently ; ay, you shall see her,
And wonder at her, friends, she is so fair ;

She is the world's chief jewel, and, by heaven,
 She's mine by right of marriage!—she is mine!
 Patience, good people, in fit time I send
 A summoner,—she will obey my call,
 Being a wife most mild and dutiful.
 First I would hear what music is prepared
 To herald and receive her; let me hear!

Sigifred. Bid the musicians soothe him tenderly.

[*A soft strain of Music.*

Ludolph. Ye have none better? No, I am content;
 'Tis a rich sobbing melody, with reliefs
 Full and majestic; it is well enough,
 And will be sweeter, when ye see her pace
 Sweeping into this presence, glisten'd o'er
 With emptied caskets, and her train upheld
 By ladies, habited in robes of lawn,
 Sprinkled with golden crescents, others bright
 In silks, with spangles shower'd, and bow'd to
 By Duchesses and pearled Margravines!
 Sad, that the fairest creature of the earth—
 I pray you mind me not—'tis sad, I say,
 That the extremest beauty of the world
 Should so entrench herself away from me,
 Behind a barrier of engender'd guilt!

2nd Lady. Ah! what a moan!

1st Knight. Most piteous indeed!

Ludolph. She shall be brought before this company,
 And then—then—

1st Lady. He muses.

Gersa. O, Fortune, where will this end?

Sigifred. I guess his purpose! Indeed he must
 not have

That pestilence brought in,—that cannot be,
There we must stop him.

Gersa. I am lost! Hush, hush!
He is about to rave again.

Ludolph. A barrier of guilt! I was the fool,
She was the cheater! Who's the cheater now,
And who the fool? The entrapp'd, the caged fool,
The bird-limed raven? She shall croak to death
Secure! Methinks I have her in my fist,
To crush her with my heel! Wait, wait! I marvel
My father keeps away. Good friend—ah! Sigifred?
Do bring him to me,—and Erminia,
I fain would see before I sleep—and Ethelbert,
That he may bless me, as I know he will,
Though I have cursed him.

Sigifred. Rather suffer me
To lead you to them.

Ludolph. No, excuse me,—no!
The day is not quite done. Go, bring them hither.

[*Exit SIGIFRED.*]

Certes, a father's smile should, like sun light,
Slant on my sheaved harvest of ripe bliss.
Besides, I thirst to pledge my lovely bride
In a deep goblet: let me see—what wine?
The strong Iberian juice, or mellow Greek?
Or pale Calabrian? Or the Tuscan grape?
Or of old Ætna's pulpy wine-presses,
Black stain'd with the fat vintage, as it were
The purple slaughter-house, where Bacchus' self
Prick'd his own swollen veins! Where is my page?

Page. Here, here!

Ludolph. Be ready to obey me; anon thou shalt

Bear a soft message for me ; for the hour
 Draws near when I must make a winding up
 Of bridal mysteries—a fine-spun vengeance !
 Carve it on my tomb, that, when I rest beneath,
 Men shall confess, this Prince was gull'd and cheated,
 But from the ashes of disgrace he rose
 More than a fiery dragon, and did burn
 His ignominy up in purging fires !
 Did I not send, sir, but a moment past,
 For my father ?

Gersa. You did.

Ludolph. Perhaps 'twould be
 Much better he came not.

Gersa. He enters now !

Enter OTHO, ERMINIA, ETHELBERT, SIGIFRED, and *Physician*.

Ludolph. Oh ! thou good man, against whose sacred
 head

I was a mad conspirator, chiefly too
 For the sake of my fair newly wedded wife,
 Now to be punish'd !—do not look so sad !
 Those charitable eyes will thaw my heart,
 Those tears will wash away a just resolve,
 A verdict ten times sworn ! Awake—awake—
 Put on a judge's brow, and use a tongue
 Made iron-stern by habit ! Thou shalt see
 A deed to be applauded, 'scribed in gold !
 Join a loud voice to mine, and so denounce
 What I alone will execute !

Otho. Dear son,

What is it ? By your father's love, I sue
 That it be nothing merciless !

Ludolph. To that demon?
 Not so! No! She is in temple-stall
 Being garnish'd for the sacrifice, and I,
 The Priest of Justice, will immolate her
 Upon the altar of wrath! She stings me through!—
 Even as the worm doth feed upon the nut,
 So she, a scorpion, preys upon my brain!
 I feel her gnawing here! Let her but vanish,
 Then, father, I will lead your legions forth,
 Compact in steeled squares, and speared files,
 And bid our trumpets speak a fell rebuke
 To nations drowsed in peace!

Otho. To-morrow, son,
 Be your word law; forget to-day—

Ludolph. I will
 When I have finish'd it! Now,—now, I'm pight,
 Tight-footed for the deed!

Erminia. Alas! Alas!

Ludolph. What angel's voice is that? *Erminia!*
 Ah! gentlest creature, whose sweet innocence
 Was almost murder'd; I am penitent,
 Wilt thou forgive me? And thou, holy man,
 Good Ethelbert, shall I die in peace with you?

Erminia. Die, my lord!

Ludolph. I feel it possible.

Otho. Physician!

Physician. I fear me he is past my skill.

Otho. Not so!

Ludolph. I see it—I see it—I have been wandering!
 Half mad—not right here—I forget my purpose.
 Bestir—bestir—Auranthe! Ha! ha! ha!
 Youngster! Page! go bid them drag her to me!

Obeys ! This shall finish it !

[*Draws a dagger.*

Otho. Oh, my son ! my son !

Sigifred. This must not be—stop there !

Ludolph. Am I obey'd ?

A little talk with her—no harm—haste ! haste !

[*Exit Page.*

Set her before me—never fear I can strike.

Several Voices. My Lord ! My Lord !

Gersa. Good Prince !

Ludolph. Why do ye trouble me ? out—out—away !

There she is ! take that ! and that ! no, no,

That's not well done.—Where is she ?

[*The doors open. Enter Page. Several women are seen grouped about Auranthe in the inner-room.*

Page. Alas ! My Lord, my Lord ! they cannot move her !

Her arms are stiff,—her fingers clench'd and cold !

Ludolph. She's dead !

[*Staggers and falls into their arms.*

Ethelbert. Take away the dagger.

Gersa. Softly ; so !

Otho. Thank God for that !

Sigifred. It could not harm him now.

Gersa. No !—brief be his anguish !

Ludolph. She's gone ! I am content—Nobles, good night !

We are all weary—faint—set ope the doors—

I will to bed !—To-morrow—

[*Dies.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.



KING STEPHEN.

A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Field of Battle.*

Alarum. Enter King STEPHEN, Knights, and Soldiers.

Stephen. If shame can on a soldier's vein-swoll'n
front

Spread deeper crimson than the battle's toil,
Blush in your casing helmets! for see, see!
Yonder my chivalry, my pride of war,
Wrench'd with an iron hand from firm array,
Are routed loose about the plashy meads,
Of honour forfeit. O, that my known voice
Could reach your dastard ears, and fright you more!
Fly, cowards, fly! Gloucester is at your backs!
Throw your slack bridles o'er the flurried manes,
Ply well the rowel with faint trembling heels,
Scampering to death at last!

1st Knight. The enemy
Bears his flaunt standard close upon their rear.

2nd Knight. Sure of a bloody prey, seeing the fens
Will swamp them girth-deep.

Stephen. Over head and ears,
No matter! 'Tis a gallant enemy;
How like a comet he goes streaming on.
But we must plague him in the flank,—hey, friends?
We are well breath'd,—follow!

Enter Earl BALDWIN and Soldiers, as defeated.

Stephen. De Redvers!
What is the monstrous bugbear that can fright
Baldwin?

Baldwin. No scare-crow, but the fortunate star
Of boisterous Chester, whose fell truncheon now
Points level to the goal of victory.
This way he comes, and if you would maintain
Your person unaffronted by vile odds,
'Take horse, my Lord.

Stephen. And which way spur for life?
Now I thank Heaven I am in the toils,
That soldiers may bear witness how my arm
Can burst the meshes. Not the eagle more
Loves to beat up against a tyrannous blast,
Than I to meet the torrent of my foes.
This is a brag,—be't so,—but if I fall,
Carve it upon my 'scutcheon'd sepulchre.
On, fellow soldiers! Earl of Redvers, back!
Not twenty Earls of Chester shall brow-beat
The diadem.

[*Exeunt. Alarum.*]

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Field.*

Trumpets sounding a Victory. Enter GLOCESTER, Knights, and Forces.

Glocester. Now may we lift our bruised visors up,
And take the flattering freshness of the air,
While the wide din of battle dies away
Into times past, yet to be echoed sure
In the silent pages of our chroniclers.

1st Knight. Will Stephen's death be mark'd there, my
good Lord,
Or that we gave him lodging in yon towers?

Glocester. Fain would I know the great usurper's fate.

Enter two Captains severally.

1st Captain. My Lord!

2nd Captain. Most noble Earl!

1st Captain. The King—

2nd Captain. The Empress greets—

Glocester. What of the King?

1st Captain. He sole and lone maintains
A hopeless bustle 'mid our swarming arms,
And with a nimble savageness attacks,
Escapes, makes fiercer onset, then anew
Eludes death, giving death to most that dare
Trespass within the circuit of his sword!
He must by this have fallen. Baldwin is taken;
And for the Duke of Bretagne, like a stag
He flies, for the Welsh beagles to hunt down.
God save the Empress!

Glocester. Now our dreaded Queen:
What message from her Highness?

2nd Captain. Royal Maud

From the throng'd towers of Lincoln hath look'd
down,
Like Pallas from the walls of Ilion,
And seen her enemies havock'd at her feet.
She greets most noble Gloucester from her heart,
Intreating him, his captains, and brave knights,
To grace a banquet. The high city gates
Are envious which shall see your triumph pass;
The streets are full of music.

Enter 2nd Knight.

Gloucester. Whence come you?

2nd Knight. From Stephen, my good Prince,—
Stephen! Stephen!

Gloucester. Why do you make such echoing of his
name?

2nd Knight. Because I think, my lord, he is no
man,

But a fierce demon, 'nointed safe from wounds,
And misbaptised with a Christian name.

Gloucester. A mighty soldier!—Does he still hold
out?

2nd Knight. He shames our victory. His valour
still

Keeps elbow-room amid our eager swords,
And holds our bladed falchions all aloof—
His gleaming battle-axe being slaughter-sick,
Smote on the morion of a Flemish knight,
Broke short in his hand; upon the which he flung
The heft away with such a vengeful force,
It paunch'd the Earl of Chester's horse, who then
Spleen-hearted came in full career at him.

Glocester. Did no one take him at a vantage then?
and Knight. Three then with tiger leap upon him
 flew,

Whom, with his sword swift-drawn and nimbly held,
 He stung away again, and stood to breathe,
 Smiling. Anon upon him rush'd once more
 A throng of foes, and in this renew'd strife,
 My sword met his and snapp'd off at the hilt.

Glocester. Come, lead me to this man—and let us
 move

In silence, not insulting his sad doom
 With clamorous trumpets. To the Empress bear
 My salutation as befits the time.

[*Exeunt GLOCESTER and Forces.*]

SCENE III.—*The Field of Battle. Enter STEPHEN
 unarmed.*

Stephen. Another sword! And what if I could seize
 One from Bellona's gleaming armoury,
 Or choose the fairest of her sheaved spears!
 Where are my enemies? Here, close at hand,
 Here come the testy brood. O, for a sword!
 I'm faint—a biting sword! A noble sword!
 A hedge-stake—or a ponderous stone to hurl
 With brawny vengeance, like the labourer Cain.
 Come on! Farewell my kingdom, and all hail
 Thou superb, plumed, and helmeted renown,
 All hail—I would not truck this brilliant day
 To rule in Pylos with a Nestor's beard—
 Come on!

Enter DE KAIMS and Knights, &c.

De Kaims. Is't madness or a hunger after death

That makes thee thus unarm'd throw taunts at us?—
Yield, Stephen, or my sword's point dips in
The gloomy current of a traitor's heart.

Stephen. Do it, De Kaims, I will not budge an inch.

De Kaims. Yes, of thy madness thou shalt take the
meed.

Stephen. Darest thou?

De Kaims. How dare, against a man
disarm'd?

Stephen. What weapons has the lion but himself?
Come not near me, De Kaims, for by the price
Of all the glory I have won this day,
Being a king, I will not yield alive
To any but the second man of the realm,
Robert of Gloucester.

De Kaims. Thou shalt vail to me.

Stephen. Shall I, when I have sworn against it, sir?
Thou think'st it brave to take a breathing king,
That, on a court-day bow'd to haughty Maud,
The awed presence-chamber may be bold
To whisper, there's the man who took alive
Stephen—me—prisoner. Certes, De Kaims
The ambition is a noble one.

De Kaims. 'Tis true,
And, Stephen, I must compass it.

Stephen. No, no,
Do not tempt me to throttle you on the gorge,
Or with my gauntlet crush your hollow breast,
Just when your knighthood is grown ripe and full
For lordship.

A Soldier. Is an honest yeoman's spear
Of no use at a need? Take that.

Stephen.

Ah, dastard!

De Kaims. What, you are vulnerable! my prisoner!

Stephen. No, not yet. I disclaim it, and demand
Death as a sovereign right unto a king
Who 'sdains to yield to any but his peer,
If not in title, yet in noble deeds,
The Earl of Glocester. Stab to the hilt, De Kaims,
For I will never by mean hands be led
From this so famous field. Do you hear! Be quick!

Trumpets. Enter the Earl of CHESTER and Knights.

SCENE IV.—*A Presence Chamber. Queen MAUD in a
Chair of State, the Earls of GLOCESTER and
CHESTER, Lords, Attendants.*

Maud. Glocester, no more: I will behold that
Boulogne:

Set him before me. Not for the poor sake
Of regal pomp and a vain-glorious hour,
As thou with wary speech, yet near enough,
Has hinted.

Glocester. Faithful counsel have I given;
If wary, for your Highness' benefit.

Maud. The Heavens forbid that I should not think
For by thy valour have I won this realm
Which by thy wisdom I will ever keep.
To sage advisers let me ever bend
A meek attentive ear, so that they treat
Of the wide kingdom's rule and government,
Not trenching on our actions personal.
Advised, not school'd, I would be; and henceforth
Spoken to in clear, plain, and open terms,
Not side-ways sermon'd at.

Glocester. Then in plain terms,
Once more for the fallen king—

Maud. Your pardon, Brother,
I would no more of that; for, as I said,
'Tis not for worldly pomp I wish to see
The rebel, but as dooming judge to give
A sentence something worthy of his guilt.

Glocester. If't must be so, I'll bring him to your
presence.

[*Exit GLOCESTER.*

Maud. A meaner summoner might do as well—
My Lord of Chester, is't true what I hear
Of Stephen of Boulogne, our prisoner,
That he, as a fit penance for his crimes,
Eats wholesome, sweet, and palatable food
Off Glocester's golden dishes—drinks pure wine,
Lodges soft?

Chester. More than that, my gracious Queen
Has anger'd me. The noble Earl, methinks,
Full soldier as he is, and without peer
In counsel, dreams too much among his books.
It may read well, but sure 'tis out of date
To play the Alexander with Darius.

Maud. Truth! I think so. By Heavens it shall
not last!

Chester. It would amaze your Highness now to mark
How Glocester overstrains his courtesy
To that crime-loving revel, that Boulogne—

Maud. That ingrate!

Chester. For whose vast ingratitude
To our late sovereign lord, your noble sire,
The generous Earl condoles in his mishaps,

And with a sort of lackeying friendliness,
Talks off the mighty frowning from his brow,
Woos him to hold a duet in a smile,
Or, if it please him, play an hour at chess—

Maud. A perjured slave !

Chester. And for his perjury,
Glocester has fit rewards—nay, I believe,
He sets his bustling household's wits at work
For flatteries to ease this Stephen's hours,
And make a heaven of his purgatory ;
Adorning bondage with the pleasant gloss
Of feasts and music, and all idle shows
Of indoor pageantry ; while syren whispers,
Predestined for his ear, 'scape as half-check'd
From lips the courtliest and the rubiest,
Of all the realm, admiring of his deeds.

Maud. A frost upon his summer !

Chester. A queen's no
Can make his June December. Here he comes.

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