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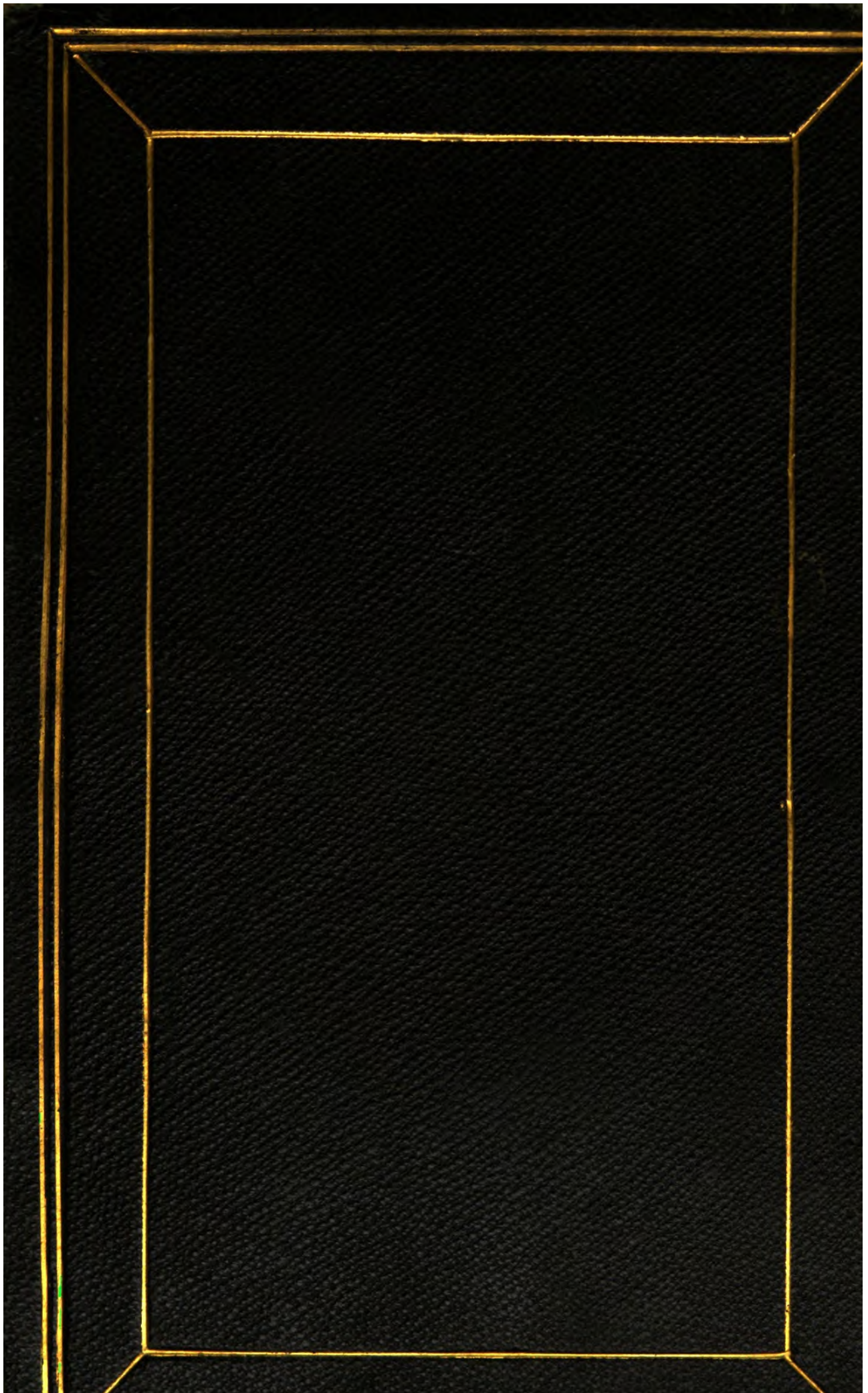
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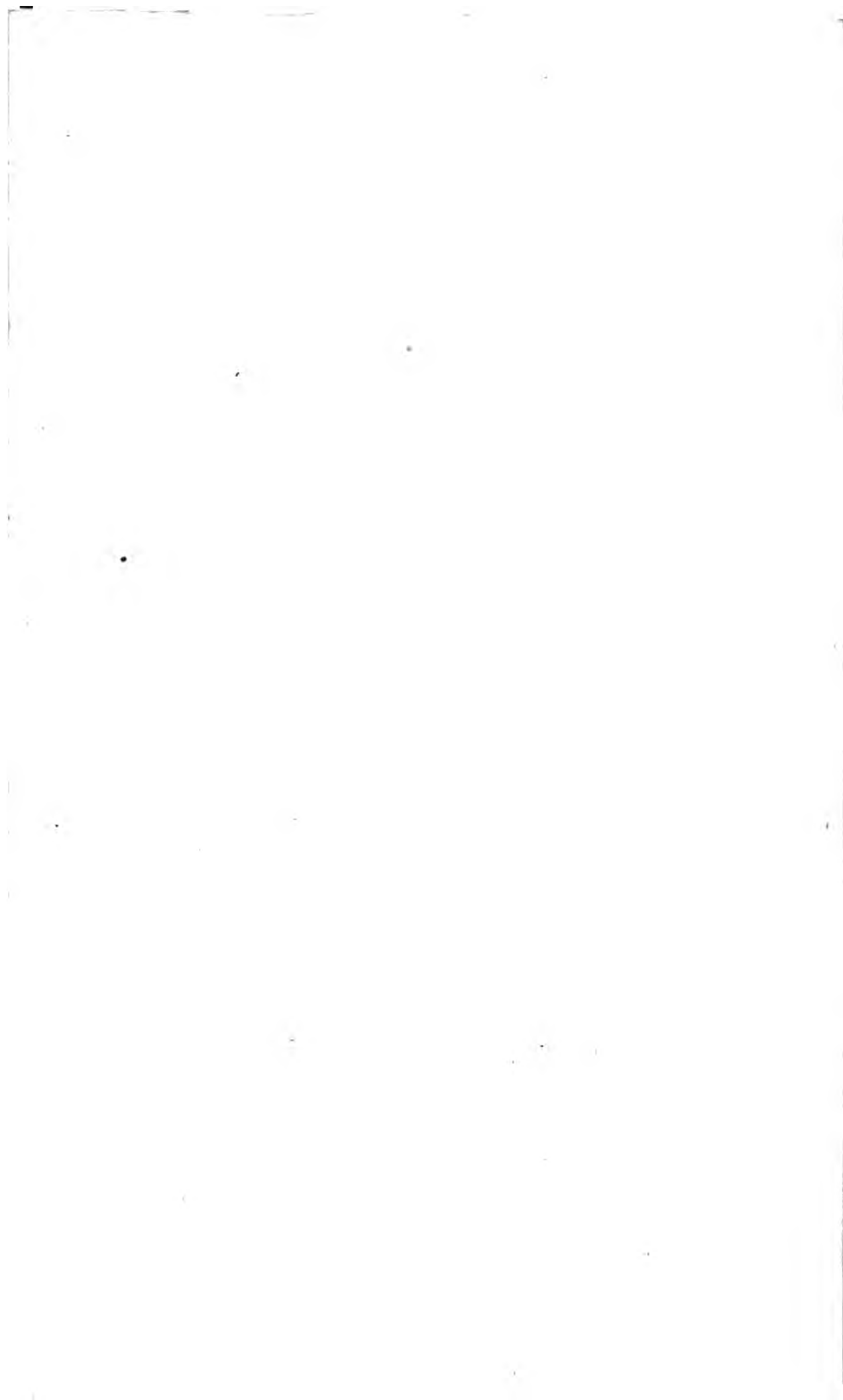
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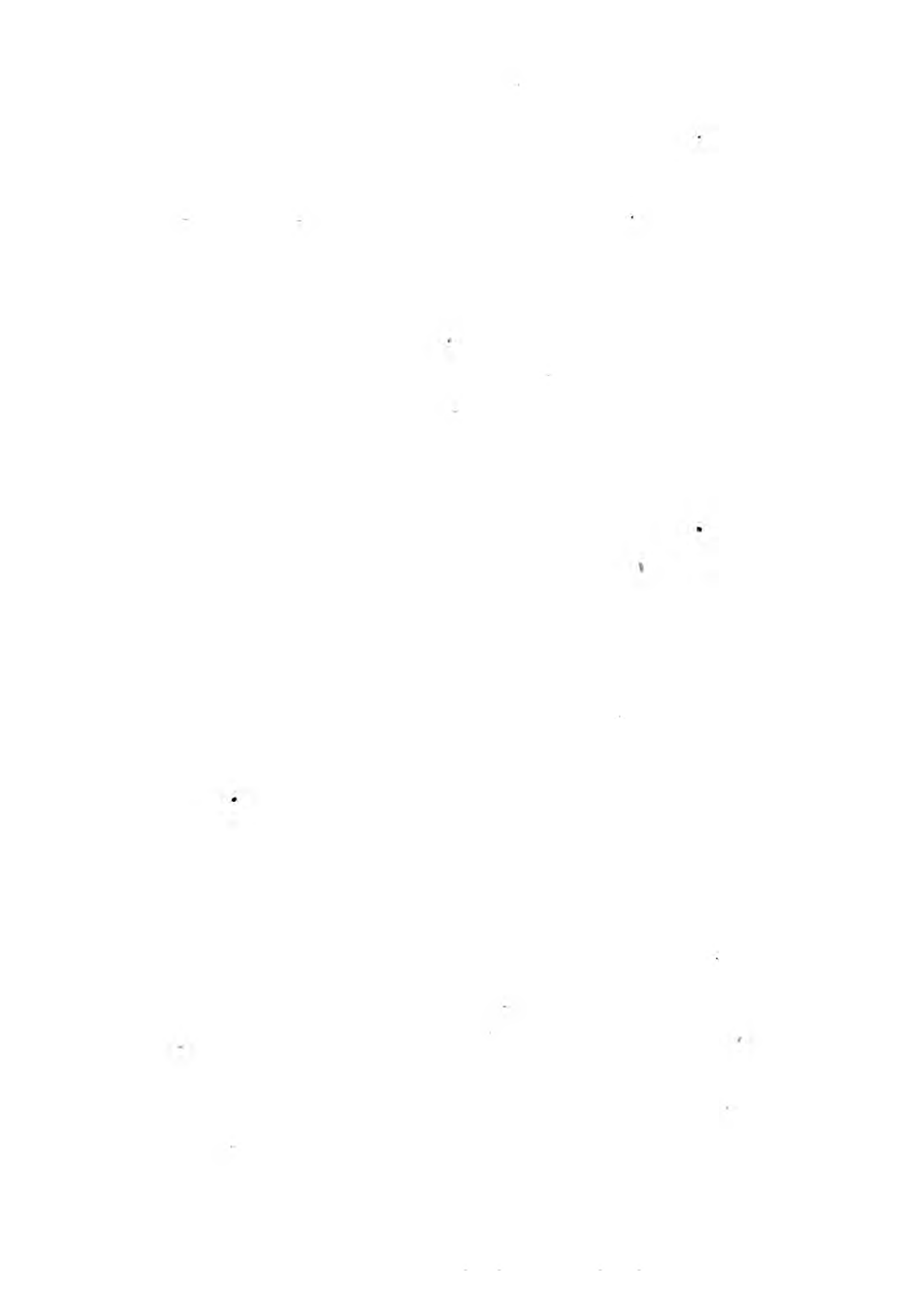
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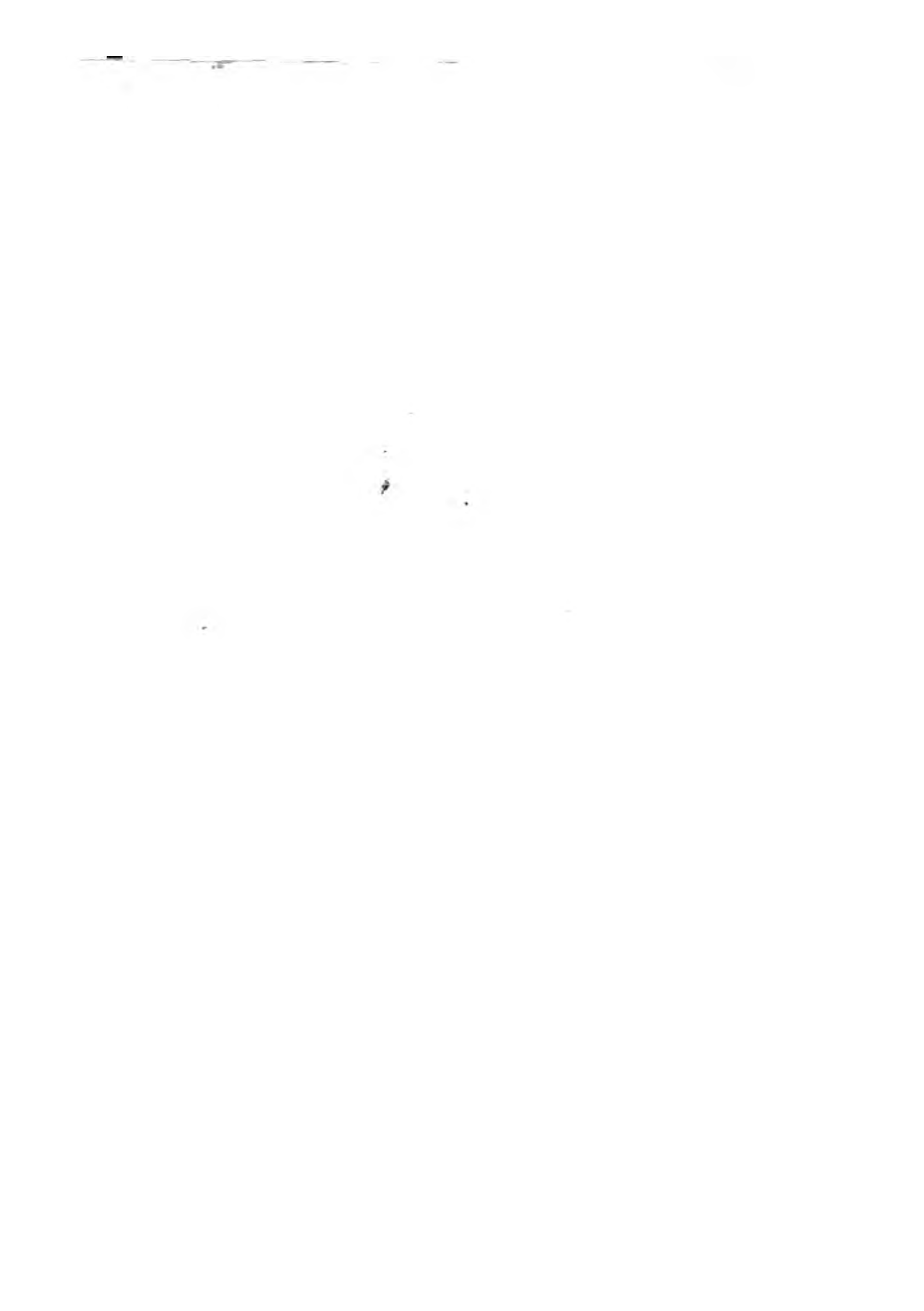
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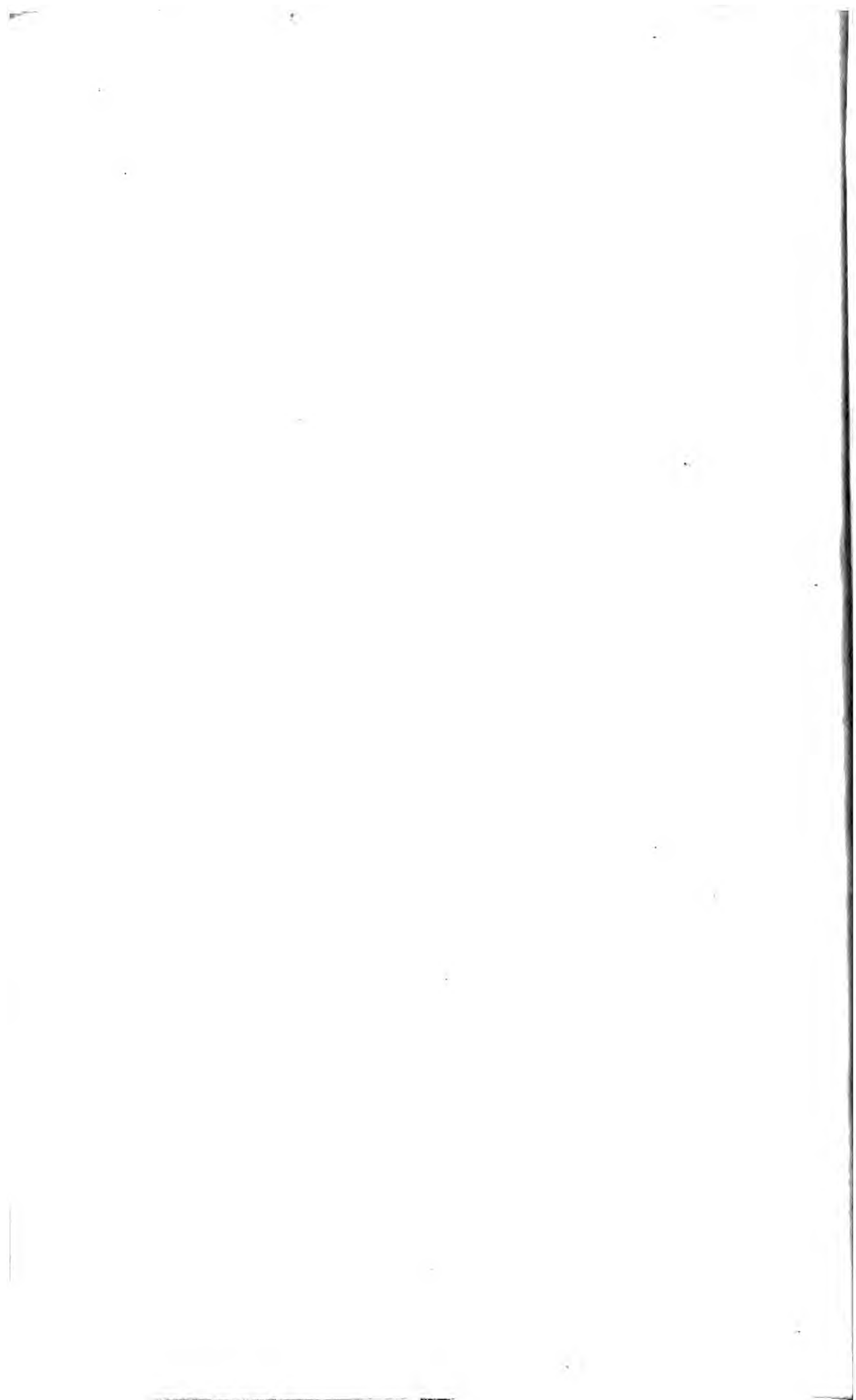


W. Finden, sc.

Percy B. Shelley.

FROM AN ORIGINAL ENGRAVING IN THE POSSESSION OF MRS. SHELLEY

London, Edward Moxon, 1840.



THE
POETICAL WORKS

OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

EDITED

BY MRS. SHELLEY.

Lui non trov' io, ma suoi santi vestigi
Tutti rivolti alla superna strada
Veggio, lunge da' laghi averni e stigi.—PETRARCA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

MDCCCXLVI.



LONDON :
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

TO
PERCY FLORENCE SHELLEY,

THE POETICAL WORKS

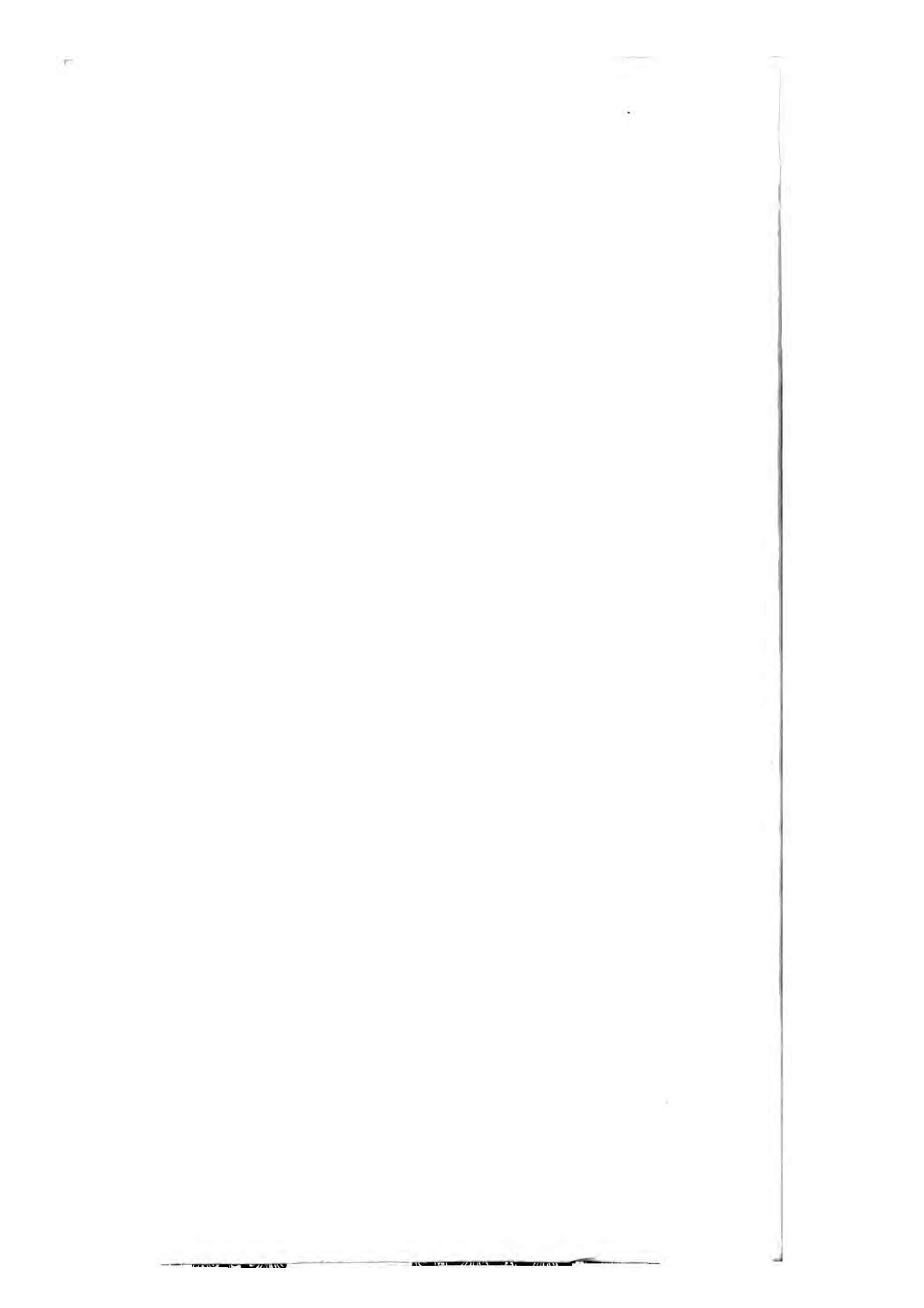
OF HIS ILLUSTRIOUS FATHER

ARE DEDICATED.

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE MOTHER,

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY.

LONDON,
20th January, 1839.



PREFACE.

BY THE EDITOR.

OBSTACLES have long existed to my presenting the public with a perfect edition of Shelley's Poems. These being at last happily removed, I hasten to fulfil an important duty,—that of giving the productions of a sublime genius to the world, with all the correctness possible, and of, at the same time, detailing the history of those productions, as they sprung, living and warm, from his heart and brain. I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his private life; except, inasmuch as the passions which they engendered, inspired his poetry. This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark, that the errors of action, committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly

avowed, by those who loved him, in the firm conviction, that were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary. Whatever faults he had, ought to find extenuation among his fellows, since they proved him to be human ; without them, the exalted nature of his soul would have raised him into something divine.

The qualities that struck any one newly introduced to Shelley, were, first, a gentle and cordial goodness that animated his intercourse with warm affection, and helpful sympathy. The other, the eagerness and ardour with which he was attached to the cause of human happiness and improvement ; and the fervent eloquence with which he discussed such subjects. His conversation was marked by its happy abundance, and the beautiful language in which he clothed his poetic ideas and philosophical notions. To defecate life of its misery and its evil, was the ruling passion of his soul : he dedicated to it every power of his mind, every pulsation of his heart. He looked on political freedom as the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind ; and thus any new-sprung hope of liberty inspired a joy and an exultation more intense and wild than he could have felt for any personal advantage. Those who have never experienced the workings of passion on general and unselfish subjects, cannot understand this ; and it must be difficult of comprehension to the younger generation rising around, since they cannot remember the scorn and hatred with which the partisans of reform were regarded some few

years ago, nor the persecutions to which they were exposed. He had been from youth the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution; and believing firmly in the justice and excellence of his views, it cannot be wondered that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems from which he had himself suffered. Many advantages attended his birth; he spurned them all when balanced with what he considered his duties. He was generous to imprudence, devoted to heroism.

These characteristics breathe throughout his poetry. The struggle for human weal; the resolution firm to martyrdom; the impetuous pursuit; the glad triumph in good; the determination not to despair. Such were the features that marked those of his works which he regarded with most complacency, as sustained by a lofty subject and useful aim.

In addition to these, his poems may be divided into two classes,—the purely imaginative, and those which sprung from the emotions of his heart. Among the former may be classed “The Witch of Atlas,” “Adonais,” and his latest composition, left imperfect, “The Triumph of Life.” In the first of these particularly, he gave the reins to his fancy, and luxuriated in every idea as it rose; in all, there is that sense of mystery which formed an essential portion of his perception of life—a clinging to the subtler inner spirit, rather than to the outward

form—a curious and metaphysical anatomy of human passion and perception.

The second class is, of course, the more popular, as appealing at once to emotions common to us all ; some of these rest on the passion of love ; others on grief and despondency ; others on the sentiments inspired by natural objects. Shelley's conception of love was exalted, absorbing, allied to all that is purest and noblest in our nature, and warmed by earnest passion ; such it appears when he gave it a voice in verse. Yet he was usually averse to expressing these feelings, except when highly idealised ; and many of his more beautiful effusions he had cast aside, unfinished, and they were never seen by me till after I had lost him. Others, as for instance, "Rosalind and Helen," and "Lines written among the Euganean Hills," I found among his papers by chance ; and with some difficulty urged him to complete them. There are others, such as the "Ode to the Sky Lark," and "The Cloud," which, in the opinion of many critics, bear a purer poetical stamp than any other of his productions. They were written as his mind prompted, listening to the carolling of the bird, aloft in the azure sky of Italy ; or marking the cloud as it sped across the heavens, while he floated in his boat on the Thames.

No poet was ever warmed by a more genuine and unforced inspiration. His extreme sensibility gave the intensity of passion to his intellectual pursuits ; and rendered his mind keenly alive to every perception of

outward objects, as well as to his internal sensations. Such a gift is, among the sad vicissitudes of human life, the disappointments we meet, and the galling sense of our own mistakes and errors, fraught with pain; to escape from such, he delivered up his soul to poetry, and felt happy when he sheltered himself from the influence of human sympathies, in the wildest regions of fancy. His imagination has been termed too brilliant, his thoughts too subtle. He loved to idealise reality; and this is a taste shared by few. We are willing to have our passing whims exalted into passions, for this gratifies our vanity; but few of us understand or sympathise with the endeavour to ally the love of abstract beauty, and adoration of abstract good, the *τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν* of the Socratic philosophers, with our sympathies with our kind. In this Shelley resembled Plato; both taking more delight in the abstract and the ideal, than in the special and tangible. This did not result from imitation; for it was not till Shelley resided in Italy that he made Plato his study; he then translated his *Symposium* and his *Ion*; and the English language boasts of no more brilliant composition, than Plato's *Praise of Love*, translated by Shelley. To return to his own poetry. The luxury of imagination, which sought nothing beyond itself, as a child burthens itself with spring flowers, thinking of no use beyond the enjoyment of gathering them, often showed itself in his verses: they will be only appreciated by minds which have resemblance to his own; and the mystic subtlety

of many of his thoughts will share the same fate. The metaphysical strain that characterises much of what he has written, was, indeed, the portion of his works to which, apart from those whose scope was to awaken mankind to aspirations for what he considered the true and good, he was himself particularly attached. There is much, however, that speaks to the many. When he would consent to dismiss these huntings after the obscure, which, entwined with his nature as they were, he did with difficulty, no poet ever expressed in sweeter, more heart-reaching, or more passionate verse, the gentler or more forcible emotions of the soul.

A wise friend once wrote to Shelley, "You are still very young, and in certain essential respects you do not yet sufficiently perceive that you are so." It is seldom that the young know what youth is, till they have got beyond its period; and time was not given him to attain this knowledge. It must be remembered that there is the stamp of such inexperience on all he wrote; he had not completed his nine-and-twentieth year when he died. The calm of middle life did not add the seal of the virtues which adorn maturity to those generated by the vehement spirit of youth. Through life also he was a martyr to ill health, and constant pain wound up his nerves to a pitch of susceptibility that rendered his views of life different from those of a man in the enjoyment of healthy sensations. Perfectly gentle and forbearing in manner, he suffered a good deal of internal irritability, or rather excitement, and his forti-

tude to bear was almost always on the stretch; and thus, during a short life, had gone through more experience of sensation, than many whose existence is protracted. "If I die to-morrow," he said, on the eve of his unanticipated death, "I have lived to be older than my father." The weight of thought and feeling burdened him heavily; you read his sufferings in his attenuated frame, while you perceived the mastery he held over them in his animated countenance and brilliant eyes.

He died, and the world showed no outward sign; but his influence over mankind, though slow in growth, is fast augmenting, and in the ameliorations that have taken place in the political state of his country, we may trace in part the operation of his arduous struggles. His spirit gathers peace in its new state from the sense that, though late, his exertions were not made in vain, and in the progress of the liberty he so fondly loved.

He died, and his place among those who knew him intimately, has never been filled up. He walked beside them like a spirit of good to comfort and benefit—to enlighten the darkness of life with irradiations of genius, to cheer it with his sympathy and love. Any one, once attached to Shelley, must feel all other affections, however true and fond, as wasted on barren soil in comparison. It is our best consolation to know that such a pure-minded and exalted being was once among us, and now exists where we hope one day to join him;—although the intolerant, in their blindness, poured down

anathemas, the Spirit of Good, who can judge the heart, never rejected him.

In the notes appended to the poems, I have endeavoured to narrate the origin and history of each. The loss of nearly all letters and papers which refer to his early life, renders the execution more imperfect than it would otherwise have been. I have, however, the liveliest recollection of all that was done and said during the period of my knowing him. Every impression is as clear as if stamped yesterday, and I have no apprehension of any mistake in my statements as far as they go. In other respects, I am, indeed, incompetent; but I feel the importance of the task, and regard it as my most sacred duty. I endeavour to fulfil it in a manner he would himself approve; and hope in this publication to lay the first stone of a monument due to Shelley's genius, his sufferings, and his virtues:

S' al seguir son tarda,
Forse avverrà che 'l bel nome gentile
Consacrerò con questa stanca penna.

POSTSCRIPT.



IN revising this new edition, and carefully consulting Shelley's scattered and confused papers, I found a few fragments which had hitherto escaped me, and was enabled to complete a few poems hitherto left unfinished. What at one time escapes the searching eye, dimmed by its own earnestness, becomes clear at a future period. By the aid of a friend I also present some poems complete and correct, which hitherto have been defaced by various mistakes and omissions. It was suggested that the Poem "To the Queen of my Heart," was falsely attributed to Shelley. I certainly find no trace of it among his papers, and as those of his intimate friends whom I have consulted never heard of it, I omit it.

Two Poems are added of some length, "Swellfoot the Tyrant," and "Peter Bell the Third." I have mentioned the circumstances under which they were written in the notes; and need only add, that they are

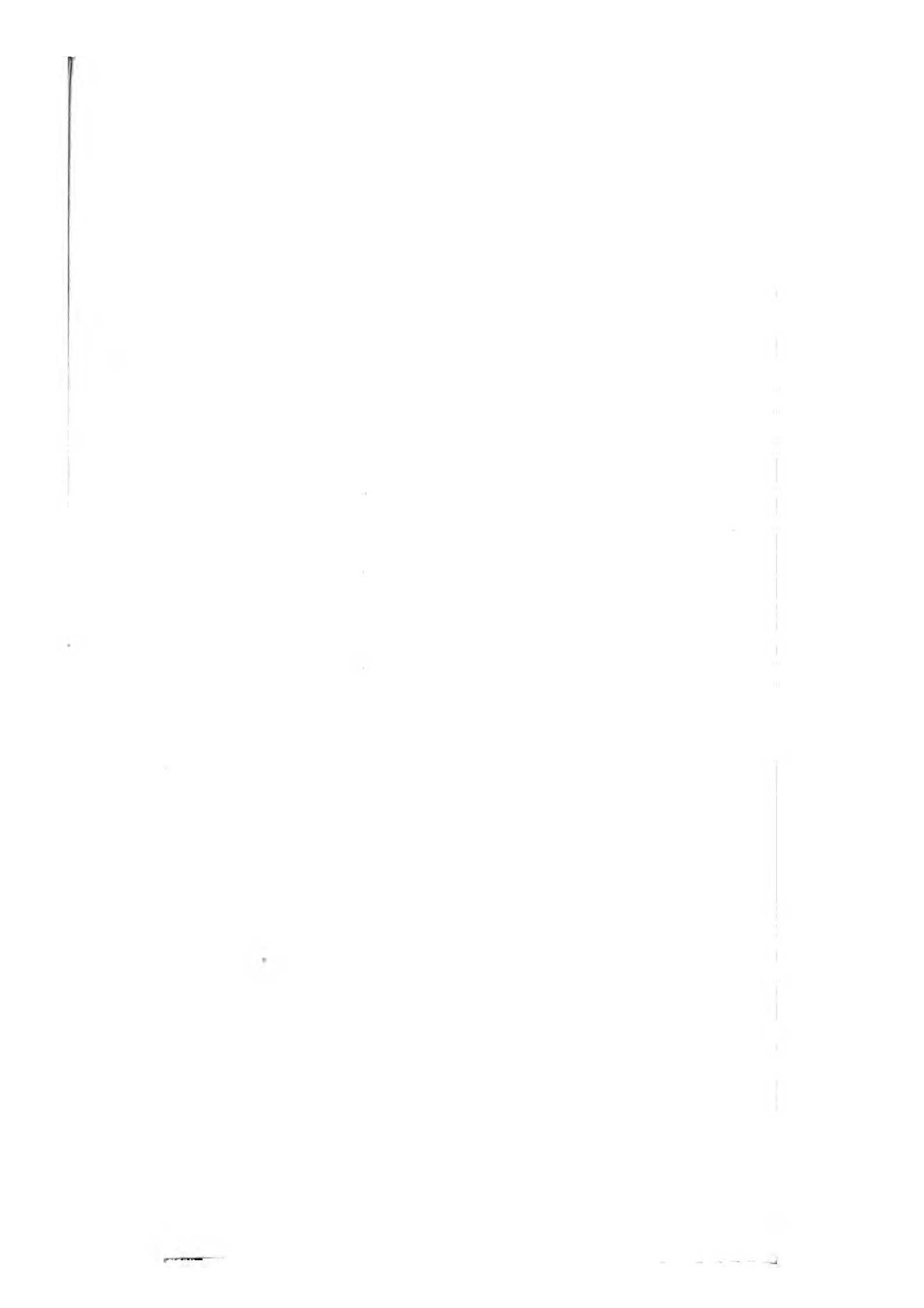
conceived in a very different spirit from Shelley's usual compositions. They are specimens of the burlesque and fanciful ; but although they adopt a familiar style and homely imagery, there shine through the radiance of the poet's imagination the earnest views and opinions of the politician and the moralist.

PUTNEY,

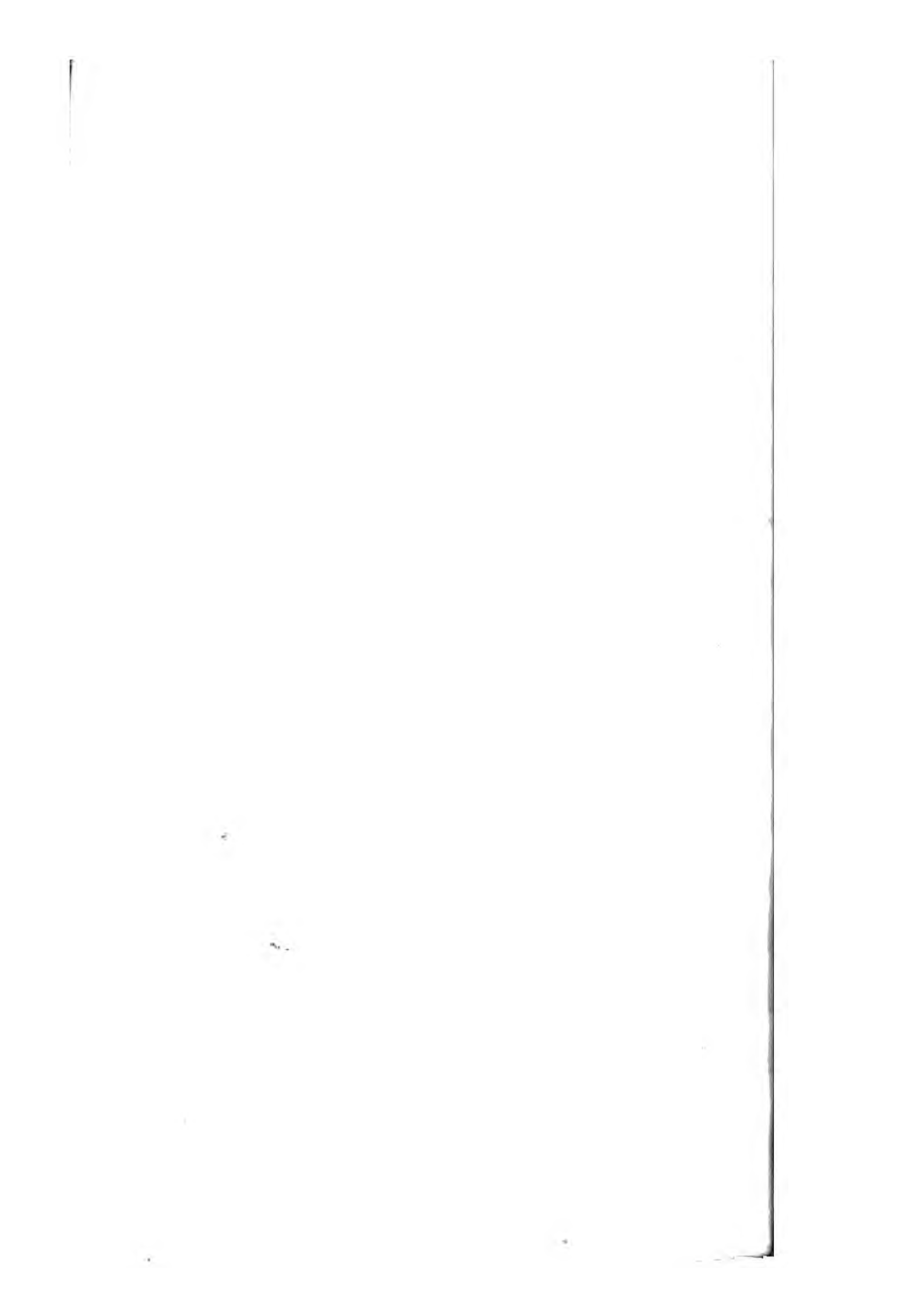
November 6th, 1839.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
TO HARRIET * * * * *	1
QUEEN MAB	2
NOTE BY THE EDITOR	19
ALASTOR; OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE	29
NOTE BY THE EDITOR	55
THE REVOLT OF ISLAM. A POEM IN TWELVE CANTOS	55
NOTE BY THE EDITOR	256
PROMETHEUS UNBOUND. A LYRICAL DRAMA, IN FOUR ACTS	267
NOTE BY THE EDITOR	369



QUEEN MAB.



POEMS.



TO HARRIET *****.



WHOSE is the love that, gleaming through the world,
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn ?
Whose is the warm and partial praise,
Virtue's most sweet reward ?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow ?
Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
And loved mankind the more ?

Harriet ! on thine :—thou wert my purer mind ;
Thou wert the inspiration of my song ;
 Thine are these early wilding flowers,
 Though garlanded by me.

Then press into thy breast this pledge of love,
And know, though time may change and years may roll,
 Each flow'ret gathered in my heart
 It consecrates to thine.

QUEEN MAB.



I.

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep !
One, pale as yonder waning moon,
With lips of lurid blue ;
The other, rosy as the morn
When throned on ocean's wave,
It blushes o'er the world :
Yet both so passing wonderful !

Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
Seized on her sinless soul ?
Must then that peerless form
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, those azure veins
Which steal like streams along a field of snow,
That lovely outline, which is fair
As breathing marble, perish ?
Must putrefaction's breath
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight
But loathsomeness and ruin ?
Spare nothing but a gloomy theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize ?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
Stealing o'er sensation,

Which the breath of roseate morning
 Chaseth into darkness ?
 Will Ianthe wake again,
 And give that faithful bosom joy
 Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
 Light, life, and rapture, from her smile ?

Yes ! she will wake again,
 Although her glowing limbs are motionless,
 And silent those sweet lips,
 Once breathing eloquence
 That might have soothed a tiger's rage,
 Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.

Her dewy eyes are closed,
 And on their lids, whose texture fine
 Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,
 The baby Sleep is pillowed :
 Her golden tresses shade
 The bosom's stainless pride,
 Curling like tendrils of the parasite
 Around a marble column.

Hark ! whence that rushing sound ?
 'Tis like the wondrous strain
 That round a lonely ruin swells,
 Which, wandering on the echoing shore,
 The enthusiast hears at evening :
 'Tis softer than the west wind's sigh ;
 'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
 Of that strange lyre whose strings
 The genii of the breezes sweep :
 Those lines of rainbow light
 Are like the moonbeams when they fall
 Through some cathedral window, but the tints

Are such as may not find
Comparison on earth.

Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen !
Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air ;
Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,
And stop obedient to the reins of light :
 These the Queen of Spells drew in,
 She spread a charm around the spot,
And leaning graceful from the ethereal car,
 Long did she gaze, and silently,
 Upon the slumbering maid.

Oh ! not the visioned poet in his dreams,
When silvery clouds float through the wildered brain,
When every sight of lovely, wild and grand,
 Astonishes, enraptures, elevates—
 When fancy at a glance combines
 The wond'rous and the beautiful,—
 So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
 Hath ever yet beheld,
As that which reined the coursers of the air,
And poured the magic of her gaze
 Upon the sleeping maid.

 The broad and yellow moon
 Shone dimly through her form—
That form of faultless symmetry ;
The pearly and pellucid car
 Moved not the moonlight's line :
 'Twas not an earthly pageant ;
Those who had look'd upon the sight,
 Passing all human glory,
 Saw not the yellow moon,
 Saw not the mortal scene,
 Heard not the night-wind's rush,

Heard not an earthly sound,
 Saw but the fairy pageant,
 Heard but the heavenly strains
 That filled the lonely dwelling.

The fairy's frame was slight ; yon fibrous cloud,
 That catches but the palest tinge of even,
 And which the straining eye can hardly seize
 When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
 Were scarce so thin, so slight ; but the fair star
 That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
 Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
 As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
 Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
 Yet with an undulating motion,
 Swayed to her outline gracefully.

From her celestial car
 The Fairy Queen descended,
 And thrice she waved her wand
 Circled with wreaths of amaranth :
 Her thin and misty form
 Moved with the moving air,
 And the clear silver tones,
 As thus she spoke, were such
 As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

FAIRY.

Stars ! your balmiest influence shed !
 Elements ! your wrath suspend !
 Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
 That circle thy domain !
 Let not a breath be seen to stir
 Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,
 Let even the restless gossamer

Sleep on the moveless air !
 Soul of Ianthe ! thou,
 Judged alone worthy of the envied boon
 That waits the good and the sincere ; that waits
 Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
 Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains,
 The icy chains of custom, and have shone
 The day-stars of their age ;—Soul of Ianthe !
 Awake ! arise !

Sudden arose
 Ianthe's soul ; it stood
 All beautiful in naked purity,
 The perfect semblance of its bodily frame.
 Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,
 Each stain of earthliness
 Had passed away, it reassumed
 Its native dignity, and stood
 Immortal amid ruin.

Upon the couch the body lay,
 Wrapt in the depth of slumber :
 Its features were fixed and meaningless,
 Yet animal life was there,
 And every organ yet performed
 Its natural functions ; 'twas a sight
 Of wonder to behold the body and soul.
 The self-same lineaments, the same
 Marks of identity were there ;
 Yet, oh how different ! One aspires to heaven,
 Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
 And ever-changing, ever-rising still,
 Wantons in endless being.
 The other, for a time the unwilling sport
 Of circumstance and passion, struggles on ;

Fleets through its sad duration rapidly ;
Then like a useless and worn-out machine,
Rots, perishes and passes.

FAIRY.

Spirit! who hast dived so deep ;
Spirit! who hast soar'd so high ;
Thou the fearless, thou the mild,
Accept the boon thy worth hath earned,
Ascend the car with me.

SPIRIT.

Do I dream? Is this new feeling
But a visioned ghost of slumber?
If indeed I am a soul,
A free, a disembodied soul,
Speak again to me.

FAIRY.

I am the Fairy MAB : to me 'tis given
The wonders of the human world to keep.
The secrets of the immeasurable past,
In the unfailing consciences of men,
Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find :
The future, from the causes which arise
In each event, I gather : not the sting
Which retributive memory implants
In the hard bosom of the selfish man ;
Nor that ecstatic and exulting throb
Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day,
Are unforeseen, unregistered by me :
And it is yet permitted me, to rend
The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit,
Clothed in its changeless purity, may know

How soonest to accomplish the great end
 For which it hath its being, and may taste
 That peace, which in the end, all life will share.
 This is the meed of virtue ; happy Soul,
 Ascend the car with me !

The chains of earth's immurement
 Fell from Ianthe's spirit ;
 They shrank and brake like bandages of straw
 Beneath a wakened giant's strength.
 She knew her glorious change,
 And felt in apprehension uncontrolled
 New raptures opening round :
 Each day-dream of her mortal life,
 Each frenzied vision of the slumbers
 That closed each well-spent day,
 Seemed now to meet reality.

The Fairy and the Soul proceeded ;
 The silver clouds departed ;
 And as the car of magic they ascended,
 Again the speechless music swelled,
 Again the courses of the air
 Unfurled their azure pennons, and the Queen,
 Shaking the beamy reins,
 Bade them pursue their way.

The magic car moved on.
 The night was fair, and countless stars
 Studded heaven's dark blue vault,—
 Just o'er the eastern wave
 Peeped the first faint smile of morn :—
 The magic car moved on—
 From the celestial hoofs
 The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew,

And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak,
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now it flew far above a rock,
The utmost verge of earth,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Lowered o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous Ocean lay.
The mirror of its stillness showed
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds
That canopied the dawn.
Seemed it, that the chariot's way
Lay through the midst of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

The magic car moved on.
As they approached their goal,
The coursers seemed to gather speed ;
The sea no longer was distinguished ; earth
Appear'd a vast and shadowy sphere ;
The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave ;
Its rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell, like ocean's feathery spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven ;
 Whilst round the chariot's way
 Innumerable systems rolled,
 And countless spheres diffused
 An ever-varying glory.
It was a sight of wonder : some
Were hornèd like the crescent moon ;
Some shed a mild and silver beam
Like Hesperus o'er the western sea ;
Some dashed athwart with trains of flame,
Like worlds to death and ruin driven ;
Some shone like suns, and as the chariot passed,
 Eclipsed all other light.

Spirit of Nature ! here !
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose immensity
 Even soaring fancy staggers,
 Here is thy fitting temple.
 Yet not the lightest leaf
That quivers to the passing breeze
 Is less instinct with thee :
 Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead
 Less shares thy eternal breath.
 Spirit of Nature ! thou !
Imperishable as this scene,
 Here is thy fitting temple !

II.

IF solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the wild ocean's echoing shore,
And thou hast lingered there,
Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the burnished wave,
Thou must have marked the lines
Of purple gold, that motionless
Hung o'er the sinking sphere :
Thou must have marked the billowy clouds
Edged with intolerable radiancy,
Towering like rocks of jet
Crowned with a diamond wreath.
And yet there is a moment,
When the sun's highest point
Peeps like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery gold,
Shaded with deepest purple, gleam
Like islands on a dark blue sea ;
Then has thy fancy soared above the earth,
And furled its wearied wing
Within the Fairy's fane.

Yet not the golden islands
Gleaming in yon flood of light,
Nor the feathery curtains
Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch,
Nor the burnished ocean-waves,
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As Mab's ethereal palace could afford.

Yet likest evening's vault, that fairy Hall !
 As Heaven, low resting on the wave, it spread
 Its floors of flashing light,
 Its vast and azure dome,
 Its fertile golden islands
 Floating on a silver sea ;
 Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
 Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
 And pearly battlements around
 Looked o'er the immense of Heaven.

 The magic car no longer moved.
 The Fairy and the Spirit
 Entered the Hall of Spells :
 Those golden clouds
 That rolled in glittering billows
 Beneath the azure canopy,
 With the ethereal footsteps trembled not :
 The light and crimson mists,
 Floating to strains of thrilling melody
 Through that unearthly dwelling,
 Yielded to every movement of the will.
 Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned,
 And, for the varied bliss that pressed around,
 Used not the glorious privilege
 Of virtue and of wisdom.

 Spirit ! the Fairy said,
 And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
 This is a wondrous sight
 And mocks all human grandeur ;
 But, were it virtue's only meed, to dwell
 In a celestial palace, all resigned
 To pleasurable impulses, immured
 Within the prison of itself, the will

Of changeless nature would be unfulfilled.
 Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come !
 This is thine high reward :—the past shall rise ;
 Thou shalt behold the present ; I will teach
 The secrets of the future.

The Fairy and the Spirit
 Approached the overhanging battlement.—
 Below lay stretched the universe !
 There, far as the remotest line
 That bounds imagination's flight,
 Countless and unending orbs
 In mazy motion intermingled,
 Yet still fulfilled immutably
 Eternal Nature's law.
 Above, below, around
 The circling systems formed
 A wilderness of harmony ;
 Each with undeviating aim,
 In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
 Pursued its wondrous way.

There was a little light
 That twinkled in the misty distance :
 None but a spirit's eye
 Might ken that rolling orb ;
 None but a spirit's eye,
 And in no other place
 But that celestial dwelling, might behold
 Each action of this earth's inhabitants.
 But matter, space and time,
 In those aerial mansions cease to act ;
 And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps
 The harvest of its excellence, o'erbounds
 Those obstacles, of which an earthly soul
 Fears to attempt the conquest.

The Fairy pointed to the earth.
 The Spirit's intellectual eye
 Its kindred beings recognized.
 The thronging thousands, to a passing view,
 Seemed like an ant-hill's citizens.
 How wonderful! that even
 The passions, prejudices, interests,
 That sway the meanest being, the weak touch
 That moves the finest nerve,
 And in one human brain
 Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
 In the great chain of nature.

Behold, the Fairy cried,
 Palmyra's ruin'd palaces!—
 Behold! where grandeur frowned;
 Behold! where pleasure smiled;
 What now remains?—the memory
 Of senselessness and shame—
 What is immortal there?
 Nothing—it stands to tell
 A melancholy tale, to give
 An awful warning: soon
 Oblivion will steal silently
 The remnant of its fame.
 Monarchs and conquerors there
 Proud o'er prostrate millions trod—
 The earthquakes of the human race,—
 Like them, forgotten when the ruin
 That marks their shock is past.

Beside the eternal Nile
 The Pyramids have risen.
 Nile shall pursue his changeless way;
 Those Pyramids shall fall;

Yea! not a stone shall stand to tell
The spot whereon they stood;
Their very site shall be forgotten,
As is their builder's name!

Behold yon sterile spot;
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert-blast.

There once old Salem's haughty fane
Reared high to heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory.

Oh! many a widow, many an orphan cursed
The building of that fane; and many a father,
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,
And spare his children the detested task
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning
The choicest days of life,
To soothe a dotard's vanity.

There an inhuman and uncultured race
Howled hideous praises to their Demon-God;
They rushed to war, tore from the mother's womb
The unborn child,—old age and infancy
Promiscuous perished; their victorious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh! they were fiends:
But what was he who taught them that the God
Of nature and benevolence had given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?
His name and theirs are fading, and the tales
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing
Itself into forgetfulness.

Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now:

The mean and miserable huts,
 The yet more wretched palaces,
 Contrasted with those ancient fanes,
 Now crumbling to oblivion ;
 The long and lonely colonnades,
 Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks,
 Seem like a well-known tune,
 Which, in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
 Remembered now in sadness.
 But, oh ! how much more changed,
 How gloomier is the contrast
 Of human nature there !

Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,
 A coward and a fool, spreads death around—
 Then, shuddering, meets his own.

Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,
 A cowed and hypocritical monk
 Prays, curses, and deceives.

Spirit! ten thousand years
 Have scarcely passed away,
 Since, in the waste where now the savage drinks
 His enemy's blood, and aping Europe's sons,
 Wakes the unholy song of war,
 Arose a stately city,

Metropolis of the western continent :
 There, now, the mossy column-stone,
 Indented by time's unrelaxing grasp,
 Which once appeared to brave
 All, save its country's ruin ;
 There the wide forest scene,
 Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
 Of gardens long run wild,
 Seems, to the unwilling sojourner, whose steps
 Chance in that desert has delayed,

Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.
 Yet once it was the busiest haunt,
 Whither, as to a common centre, flocked
 Strangers, and ships, and merchandize :
 Once peace and freedom blest
 The cultivated plain :
 But wealth, that curse of man,
 Blighted the bud of its prosperity :
 Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,
 Fled, to return not, until man shall know
 That they alone can give the bliss
 Worthy a soul that claims
 Its kindred with eternity.

There's not one atom of yon earth
 But once was living man ;
 Nor the minutest drop of rain,
 That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
 But flowed in human veins :
 And from the burning plains
 Where Lybian monsters yell,
 From the most gloomy glens
 Of Greenland's sunless clime,
 To where the golden fields
 Of fertile England spread
 Their harvest to the day,
 Thou canst not find one spot
 Whereon no city stood.

How strange is human pride !
 I tell thee that those living things,
 To whom the fragile blade of grass,
 That springeth in the morn
 And perisheth ere noon,
 Is an unbounded world ;

I tell thee that those viewless beings,
Whose mansion is the smallest particle
Of the impassive atmosphere,
Think, feel and live like man ;
That their affections and antipathies,
Like his, produce the laws
Ruling their moral state ;
And the minutest throb
That through their frame diffuses
The slightest, faintest motion,
Is fixed and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule yon rolling orbs.

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
In ecstasy of admiration, felt
All knowledge of the past revived ; the events
Of old and wondrous times,
Which dim tradition interruptedly
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded
In just perspective to the view ;
Yet dim from their infinitude.

The Spirit seemed to stand
High on an isolated pinnacle ;
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Nature's unchanging harmony.

NOTE ON QUEEN MAB.

BY THE EDITOR.

SHELLEY was eighteen when he wrote "Queen Mab:" he never published it. When it was written, he had come to the decision that he was too young to be a "judge of controversies;" and he was desirous of acquiring "that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism." But he never doubted the truth or utility of his opinions; and in printing and privately distributing "Queen Mab" he believed that he should further their dissemination, without occasioning the mischief either to others or himself that might arise from publication. It is doubtful whether he would himself have admitted it into a collection of his works. His severe classical taste, refined by the constant study of the Greek poets, might have discovered defects that escape the ordinary reader, and the change his opinions underwent in many points, would have prevented him from putting forth the speculations of his boyish days. But the poem is too beautiful in itself, and far too remarkable as the production of a boy of eighteen, to allow of its being passed over. It is to be found entire in the edition of his poems published in one volume; in the present instance it is deemed advisable only to reprint the first two cantos, which he himself appended to "Alastor."

The opening of "Queen Mab" is the most striking part of the poem. It is the boy's dream of beauty and love. The gentle loveliness of the sleeping Ianthe, the fairy elegance of Queen Mab, the sublime description of the voyage through the universe, with the final view from the battlements of the skiey palace, form a poem in themselves of surpassing beauty. They bear the impress of earnest, daring, fearless youth. Shelley's angelic nature breathes in every line, and these cantos must always be pre-eminently valued by those happy few who understand and love him.

A series of articles was published in the "New Monthly Magazine," during the autumn of the year 1832, written by a man of great talent, a fellow-collegian and warm friend of Shelley: they describe admirably the state of his mind during his collegiate life. Inspired with ardour for the acquisition of knowledge; endowed with the keenest sensibility, and with the fortitude of a martyr, Shelley came among his fellow-creatures, congregated for the purposes of education, like a spirit from another sphere, too delicately organised for the rough treatment man uses towards man, especially in the season of youth; and too resolute in carrying out his own sense of good and justice not to become a victim. To a devoted attachment to those he loved, he added a determined resistance to oppression. Refusing to fag at Eton, he was treated with revolting cruelty by masters and boys: this roused, instead of taming his spirit, and he rejected the duty of obedience, when it was enforced by menaces and punishment. To aversion to the society of his fellow-creatures, such as he found them when collected together in societies, where one egged on the other to acts of tyranny, was joined the deepest sympathy and compassion; while the attachment

he felt for individuals and the admiration with which he regarded their powers and their virtues, led him to entertain a high opinion of the perfectibility of human nature, and he believed that all could reach the highest grade of moral improvement, did not the customs and prejudices of society foster evil passions, and excuse evil actions.

The oppression which, trembling at every nerve yet resolute to heroism, it was his ill fortune to encounter at school and at college, led him to dissent in all things from those whose arguments were blows, whose faith appeared to engender blame and hatred. "During my existence," he wrote to a friend in 1812, "I have incessantly speculated, thought, and read." His readings were not always well chosen; among them were the works of the French philosophers; as far as metaphysical argument went, he temporarily became a convert. At the same time, it was the cardinal article of his faith, that if men were but taught and induced to treat their fellows with love, charity, and equal rights, this earth would realise Paradise. He looked upon religion as it is professed, and, above all, practised, as hostile, instead of friendly, to the cultivation of those virtues, which would make men brothers.

Can this be wondered at? At the age of seventeen, fragile in health and frame, of the purest habits in morals, full of devoted generosity and universal kindness, glowing with ardour to attain wisdom, resolved at every personal sacrifice to do right, burning with a desire for affection and sympathy, —he was treated as a reprobate, cast forth as a criminal.

The cause was, that he was sincere; that he believed the opinions which he entertained, to be true; and he loved truth with a martyr's love: he was ready to sacrifice station and fortune, and his dearest affections, at its shrine. The

sacrifice was demanded from, and made by, a youth of seventeen. It is a singular fact in the history of society in the civilised nations of modern times, that no false step is so irretrievable as one made in early youth. Older men, it is true, when they oppose their fellows, and transgress ordinary rules, carry a certain prudence or hypocrisy as a shield along with them. But youth is rash; nor can it imagine, while asserting what it believes to be true, and doing what it believes to be right, that it should be denounced as vicious, and pursued as a criminal.

Shelley possessed a quality of mind which experience has shown me to be of the rarest occurrence among human beings: this was his *unworldliness*. The usual motives that rule men, prospects of present or future advantage, the rank and fortune of those around, the taunts and censures, or the praise of those who were hostile to him, had no influence whatever over his actions, and apparently none over his thoughts. It is difficult even to express the simplicity and directness of purpose that adorned him. Some few might be found in the history of mankind, and some one at least among his own friends, equally disinterested and scornful, even to severe personal sacrifices, of every baser motive. But no one, I believe, ever joined this noble but passive virtue to equal active endeavours, for the benefit of his friends and mankind in general, and to equal power to produce the advantages he desired. The world's brightest gauds, and its most solid advantages, were of no worth in his eyes, when compared to the cause of what he considered truth, and the good of his fellow-creatures. Born in a position which, to his inexperienced mind, afforded the greatest facilities to practise the tenets he espoused, he

boldly declared the use he would make of fortune and station, and enjoyed the belief that he should materially benefit his fellow-creatures by his actions ; while, conscious of surpassing powers of reason and imagination, it is not strange that he should, even while so young, have believed that his written thoughts would tend to disseminate opinions, which he believed conducive to the happiness of the human race.

If man were a creature devoid of passion, he might have said and done all this with quietness. But he was too enthusiastic, and too full of hatred of all the ills he witnessed, not to scorn danger. Various disappointments tortured, but could not tame, his soul. The more enmity he met, the more earnestly he became attached to his peculiar views, and hostile to those of the men who persecuted him.

He was animated to greater zeal by compassion for his fellow-creatures. His sympathy was excited by the misery with which the world is bursting. He witnessed the sufferings of the poor, and was aware of the evils of ignorance. He desired to induce every rich man to despoil himself of superfluity, and to create a brotherhood of property and service, and was ready to be the first to lay down the advantages of his birth. He was of too uncompromising a disposition to join any party. He did not in his youth look forward to gradual improvement : nay, in those days of intolerance, now almost forgotten, it seemed as easy to look forward to the sort of millennium of freedom and brotherhood, which he thought the proper state of mankind, as to the present reign of moderation and improvement. Ill health made him believe that his race would soon be run ; that a year or two was all he had of life. He desired that these years should be useful and illustrious. He saw, in a fervent call on his

fellow-creatures to share alike the blessings of the creation, to love and serve each other, the noblest work that life and time permitted him. In this spirit he composed "Queen Mab."

He was a lover of the wonderful and wild in literature; but had not fostered these tastes at their genuine sources—the romances and chivalry of the middle ages; but in the perusal of such German works as were current in those days. Under the influence of these, he, at the age of fifteen, wrote two short prose romances of slender merit. The sentiments and language were exaggerated, the composition imitative and poor. He wrote also a poem on the subject of Ahasuerus—being led to it by a German fragment he picked up, dirty and torn, in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. This fell afterwards into other hands—and was considerably altered before it was printed. Our earlier English poetry was almost unknown to him. The love and knowledge of nature developed by Wordsworth—the lofty melody and mysterious beauty of Coleridge's poetry—and the wild fantastic machinery and gorgeous scenery adopted by Southey, composed his favourite reading; the rhythm of "Queen Mab" was founded on that of "Thalaba," and the first few lines bear a striking resemblance in spirit, though not in idea, to the opening of that poem. His fertile imagination, and ear, tuned to the finest sense of harmony, preserved him from imitation. Another of his favourite books was the poem of "Gebir," by Walter Savage Landor. From his boyhood he had a wonderful facility of versification which he carried into another language, and his Latin school verses were composed with an ease and correctness that procured for him prizes—and caused him to be resorted to by all his friends for help. He was, at the period of writing "Queen Mab," a great traveller within the limits of England, Scotland, and Ireland. His

time was spent among the loveliest scenes of these countries. Mountain and lake and forest were his home ; the phenomena of Nature were his favourite study. He loved to inquire into their causes, and was addicted to pursuits of natural philosophy and chemistry, as far as they could be carried on, as an amusement. These tastes gave truth and vivacity to his descriptions, and warmed his soul with that deep admiration for the wonders of Nature which constant association with her inspired.

He never intended to publish "Queen Mab" as it stands ; but a few years after, when printing "Alastor," he extracted a small portion which he entitled "The Dæmon of the World ;" in this he changed somewhat the versification—and made other alterations scarcely to be called improvements.

I extract the invocation of "Queen Mab" to the Soul of Ianthe, as altered in "The Dæmon of the World." I give it as a specimen of the alterations made. It well characterises his own state of mind :

INVOCATION.

Maiden, the world's supremest spirit
 Beneath the shadow of her wings
 Folds all thy memory doth inherit
 From ruin of divinest things,
 Feelings that lure thee to betray,
 And light of thoughts that pass away.

For thou hast earned a mighty boon ;
 The truths which wisest poets see
 Dimly, thy mind may make its own,
 Rewarding its own majesty,
 Entranced in some diviner mood
 Of self-oblivious solitude.

Custom and faith and power thou spurnest,
 From hate and fear thy heart is free ;
 Ardent and pure as day thou burnest
 For dark and cold mortality ;
 A living light to cheer it long,
 The watch-fires of the world among.

Therefore, from nature's inner shrine,
 Where gods and fiends in worship bend,
 Majestic Spirit, be it thine
 The flame to seize, the veil to rend,
 Where the vast snake Eternity
 In charmed sleep doth ever lie.

All that inspires thy voice of love,
 Or speaks in thy unclosing eyes,
 Or through thy frame doth burn and move,
 Or think, or feel, awake, arise !
 Spirit, leave for mine and me
 Earth's unsubstantial mimicry !

Some years after, when in Italy, a bookseller published an edition of "Queen Mab" as it originally stood. Shelley was hastily written to by his friends, under the idea that, deeply injurious as the mere distribution of the Poem had proved, the publication might awaken fresh persecutions. At the suggestion of these friends he wrote a letter on the subject, printed in "The Examiner" newspaper—with which I close this history of his earliest work.

" TO THE EDITOR OF ' THE EXAMINER. '

" Sir,

" Having heard that a poem, entitled ' Queen Mab, ' has been surreptitiously published in London, and that legal proceedings have been instituted against the publisher, I request the favour of

your insertion of the following explanation of the affair, as it relates to me.

“ A poem, entitled ‘ Queen Mab,’ was written by me, at the age of eighteen, I dare say in a sufficiently intemperate spirit—but even then was not intended for publication, and a few copies only were struck off, to be distributed among my personal friends. I have not seen this production for several years ; I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition ; and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression ; and I regret this publication not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom. I have directed my solicitor to apply to Chancery for an injunction to restrain the sale ; but after the precedent of Mr. Southey’s ‘ Wat Tyler,’ (a poem, written, I believe, at the same age, and with the same unreflecting enthusiasm,) with little hope of success.

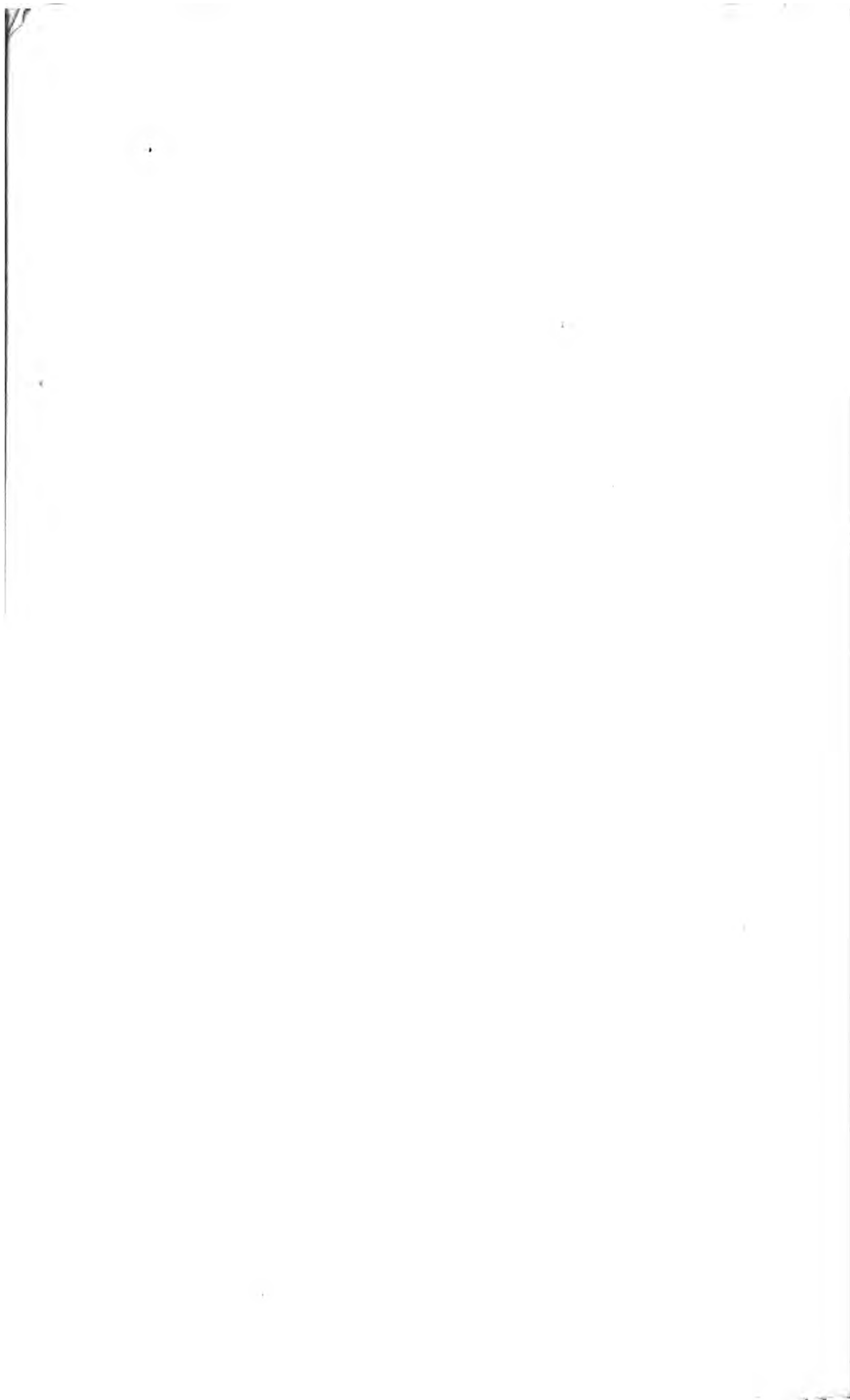
“ Whilst I exonerate myself from all share in having divulged opinions hostile to existing sanctions, under the form, whatever it may be, which they assume in this poem ; it is scarcely necessary for me to protest against the system of inculcating the truth of Christianity or the excellence of Monarchy, however true or however excellent they may be, by such equivocal arguments as confiscation and imprisonment, and invective and slander, and the insolent violation of the most sacred ties of nature and society.

“ Sir,

“ I am your obliged and obedient servant,

“ PERCY B. SHELLEY.

“ *Pisa, June 22, 1821.*”



ALASTOR ;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem amans
amare. *Confess. St. August.*



PREFACE.

THE poem entitled "Alastor," may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius, led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened, and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations, unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover, could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious, as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings, live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as summer's dust
Burn to the socket !

December 14, 1815.

ALASTOR ;
OR,
THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

EARTH, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood !
If our great Mother have imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine ;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness ;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs ;
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me ;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred ;—then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now !

Mother of this unfathomable world !
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only ; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth

Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchymist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears,
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge: and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary;
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness;
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,

The lone couch of his everlasting sleep :
 Gentle, and brave, and generous, no lorn bard
 Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh :
 He lived, he died, he sang in solitude.
 Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
 And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
 And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
 The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
 And Silence too, enamoured of that voice,
 Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision and bright silver dream,
 His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
 And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
 Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
 The fountains of divine philosophy
 Fled not his thirsting lips ; and all of great,
 Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
 In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
 And knew. When early youth had past, he left
 His cold fireside and alienated home,
 To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
 Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
 Has lured his fearless steps ; and he has bought
 With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
 His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
 He, like her shadow, has pursued, where'er
 The red volcano overcanopies
 Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
 With burning smoke : or where bitumen lakes,
 On black bare pointed islets ever beat
 With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves,
 Rugged and dark, winding among the springs,
 Of fire and poison, inaccessible
 To avarice or pride, their starry domes

Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder ; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old :
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Ethiopia on her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble demons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon

Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps :—
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love :—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose : then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home,
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aerial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way ;
Till in the vale of Cachmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought ; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web

Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Himself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire : wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos : her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen : at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind ; her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sank and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs, and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom :—she drew back awhile,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision ; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock, he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade ;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas ! alas !
Were limbs and breath and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape ! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart,
The insatiate hope which it awakened, stung
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,

Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide aëry wilderness : thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on,
Till vast Aornos, seen from Petra's steep,
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud ;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean ; his scattered hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind ; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin ;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind

With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In his career: the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after times; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight:—"Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?" A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,

Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts, he looked around :
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste ;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny : sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.

Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
 Of wave running on wave, and blast on blast
 Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
 With dark obliterating course, he sate :
 As if their genii were the ministers
 Appointed to conduct him to the light
 Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
 Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
 The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
 High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
 That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;
 Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
 Entwined in duskiere wreaths her braided locks
 O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;
 Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
 More horribly the multitudinous streams
 Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
 Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
 The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
 Still fled before the storm ; still fled, like foam
 Down the steep cataract of a wintry river ;
 Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave ;
 Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
 That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
 As if that frail and wasted human form
 Had been an elemental god.

At midnight

The moon arose : and lo ! the ethereal cliffs
 Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
 Among the stars like sunlight, and around
 Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves,
 Bursting and eddying irresistibly,
 Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save ?—
 The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—

The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed. "Vision and Love!"
The Poet cried aloud, "I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long."

The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern. Day-light shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarled roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm,
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,

The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
 Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
 Is left, the boat paused shuddering. Shall it sink
 Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
 Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
 Now shall it fall? A wandering stream of wind,
 Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
 And, lo! with gentle motion between banks
 Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
 Beneath a woven grove, it sails, and, hark!
 The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
 With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
 Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
 A little space of green expanse, the cove
 Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
 For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
 Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
 Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
 Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
 Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
 Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
 To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
 But on his heart its solitude returned,
 And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
 In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame
 Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
 Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
 Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
 Of night close over it.

The noonday sun

Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
 Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
 A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
 Scooped in the dark base of those aëry rocks

Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate—the oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starr'd with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
Uniting their close union ; the woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute, yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half-seen ; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,

And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms ;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect, floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain ; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrow'd from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery ;—
But undulating woods, and silent well,
And rippling rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was,—only—when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness,—two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light

That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
 The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
 Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
 Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
 Among the moss, with hollow harmony
 Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
 It danced ; like childhood laughing as it went :
 Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
 Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
 That overhung its quietness.—“ O stream !
 Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
 Whither do thy mysterious waters tend ?
 Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
 Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
 Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course
 Have each their type in me : And the wide sky,
 And measureless ocean may declare as soon
 What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
 Contains thy waters, as the universe
 Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
 Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
 I' the passing wind ! ”

Beside the grassy shore

Of the small stream he went ; he did impress
 On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
 Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
 Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
 Of fever, he did move ; yet, not like him,
 Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
 Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
 He must descend. With rapid steps he went
 Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
 Of the wild babbling rivulet ; and now

The forest's solemn canopies were changed
 For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
 Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
 The struggling brook : tall spires of windlestrae
 Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
 And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines
 Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
 The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
 Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
 The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
 And white ; and where irradiate dewy eyes
 Had shone, gleam stony orbs : so from his steps
 Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
 Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
 And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
 The stream, that with a larger volume now
 Rolled through the labyrinthine dell ; and there
 Fretted a path through its descending curves
 With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
 Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
 Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
 In the light of evening, and its precipice
 Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
 'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs, and yawning caves,
 Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
 To the loud stream. Lo ! where the pass expands
 Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
 And seems, with its accumulated crags,
 To overhang the world : for wide expand
 Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
 Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
 Dim tracks and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
 Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
 Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
 Of the remote horizon. The near scene,



In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response, at each pause,
In most familiar cadence, with the howl
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the grey precipice, and solemn pine
And torrent, were not all ;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves forever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor, and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,
Rival the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude :—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes ;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms

To make their wild haunts the depository
 Of all the grace and beauty that endued
 Its motions, render up its majesty,
 Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
 And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
 Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
 Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
 That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and horned moon hung low, and poured
 A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
 That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
 Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
 Wan moonlight even to fulness: not a star
 Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
 Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
 Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of death!
 Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night:
 And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
 Guiding its irresistible career
 In thy devastating omnipotence,
 Art king of this frail world, from the red field
 Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
 The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
 Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
 A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
 His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
 He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
 Glutted with which thou may'st repose, and men
 Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
 Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
 The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
 The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death

Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm;—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
The torturers, slept: no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling:—his last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night:—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,

As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchymy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou has fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled—

Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas !
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.
It is a woe "too deep for tears," when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind nor sobs nor groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope ;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

NOTE ON ALASTOR.

BY THE EDITOR.

“ALASTOR” is written in a very different tone from “Queen Mab.” In the latter, Shelley poured out all the cherished speculations of his youth—all the irrepressible emotions of sympathy, censure, and hope, to which the present suffering, and what he considers the proper destiny of his fellow-creatures, gave birth. “Alastor,” on the contrary, contains an individual interest only. A very few years, with their attendant events, had checked the ardour of Shelley’s hopes, though he still thought them well grounded, and that to advance their fulfilment was the noblest task man could achieve.

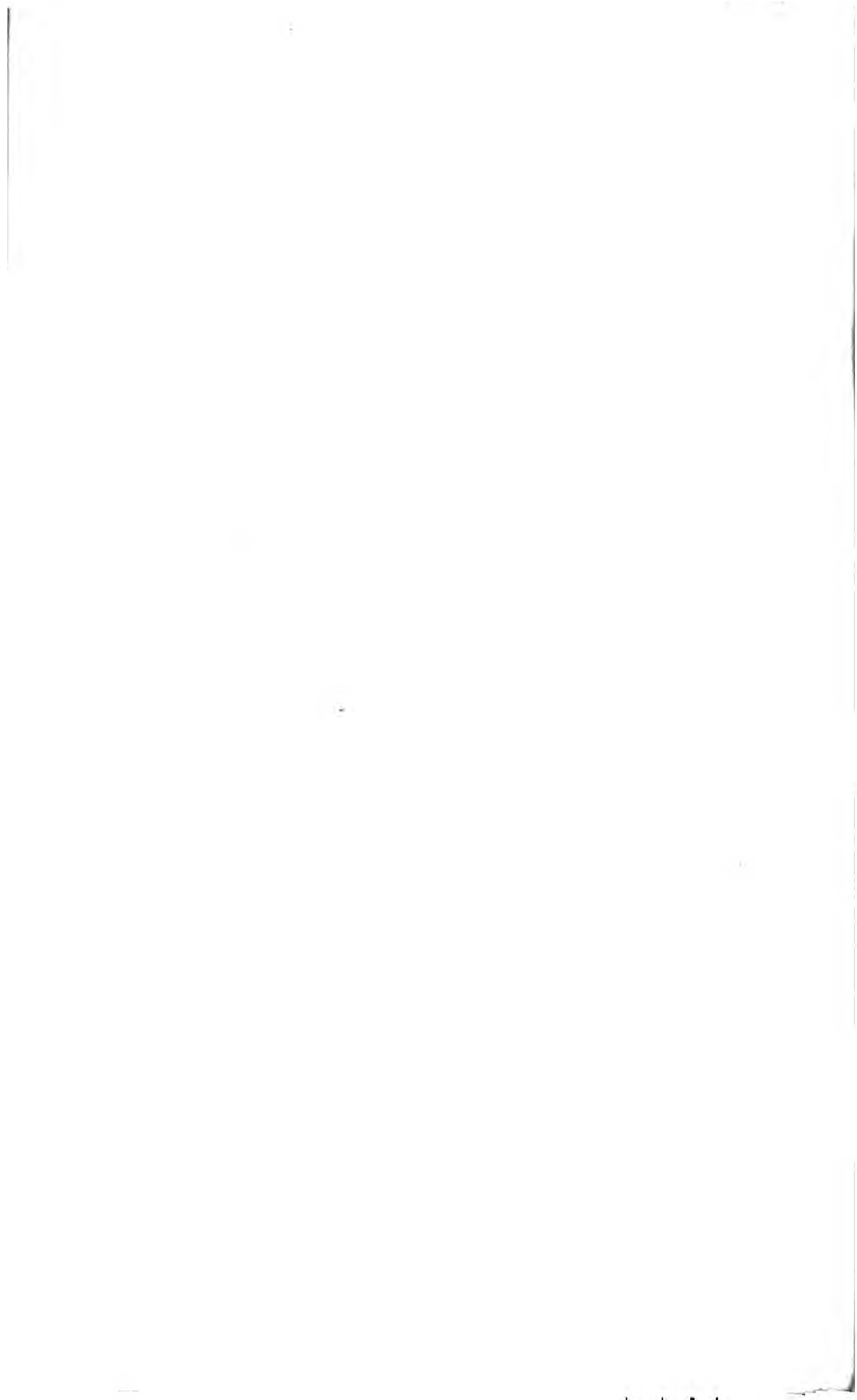
This is neither the time nor place to speak of the misfortunes that chequered his life. It will be sufficient to say, that in all he did, he at the time of doing it believed himself justified to his own conscience ; while the various ills of poverty and loss of friends brought home to him the sad realities of life. Physical suffering had also considerable influence in causing him to turn his eyes inward ; inclining him rather to brood over the thoughts and emotions of his own soul, than to glance abroad, and to make, as in “Queen Mab,” the whole universe the object and subject of his song.

In the spring of 1815, an eminent physician pronounced that he was dying rapidly of a consumption; abscesses were formed on his lungs, and he suffered acute spasms. Suddenly a complete change took place; and though through life he was a martyr to pain and debility, every symptom of pulmonary disease vanished. His nerves, which nature had formed sensitive to an unexampled degree, were rendered still more susceptible by the state of his health.

As soon as the peace of 1814 had opened the Continent, he went abroad. He visited some of the more magnificent scenes of Switzerland, and returned to England from Lucerne, by the Reuss and the Rhine. This river navigation enchanted him. In his favourite poem of "Thalaba," his imagination had been excited by a description of such a voyage. In the summer of 1815, after a tour along the southern coast of Devonshire and a visit to Clifton, he rented a house on Bishopgate Heath, on the borders of Windsor Forest, where he enjoyed several months of comparative health and tranquil happiness. The later summer months were warm and dry. Accompanied by a few friends, he visited the source of the Thames, making a voyage in a wherry from Windsor to Crichlade. His beautiful stanzas in the churchyard of Lechlade were written on that occasion. "Alastor" was composed on his return. He spent his days under the oak-shades of Windsor Great Park; and the magnificent woodland was a fitting study to inspire the various descriptions of forest scenery we find in the poem.

None of Shelley's poems is more characteristic than this. The solemn spirit that reigns throughout, the worship of the majesty of nature, the broodings of a poet's heart in solitude—the mingling of the exulting joy which the various aspect

of the visible universe inspires, with the sad and struggling pangs which human passion imparts, give a touching interest to the whole. The death which he had often contemplated during the last months as certain and near, he here represented in such colours as had, in his lonely musings, soothed his soul to peace. The versification sustains the solemn spirit which breathes throughout: it is peculiarly melodious. The poem ought rather to be considered didactic than narrative: it was the out-pouring of his own emotions, embodied in the purest form he could conceive, painted in the ideal hues which his brilliant imagination inspired, and softened by the recent anticipation of death.



THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

A Poem.

IN TWELVE CANTOS.

Οσαις δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαίαις ἀπτόμεσθα
Περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
Πλῶν· ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πίζος ἰὼν ἂν εὖροις
Ἐς ὑπερβορείων ἀγῶνα θαυματὰν ὁδόν.

Πινδ. Πυθ. x.



PREFACE.

THE Poem which I now present to the world, is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a Poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality ; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers, a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose, I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the

world. The Poem, therefore, (with the exception of the first Canto, which is purely introductory,) is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind ; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses ; its impatience at “all the oppressions which are done under the sun ;” its tendency to awaken public hope and to enlighten and improve mankind ; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency ; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom ; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission ; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy ; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers ; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity ; the faithlessness of tyrants ; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World, and the restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms ; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power ; the consequences of legitimate despotism, civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections ; the judicial murder of the advocates of Liberty ; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall ; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the Poem consists. And if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story, shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong, such as belongs to no meaner desires—let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings, in the vivid presence of which within his own mind, consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution, is gradually giving place to sanity. It has ceased to be believed, that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery, because a nation of men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries, were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness, is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven, after the storms are past. Methinks, those who now live have survived an age of despair.

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilized mankind, produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected, as it was impossible to realise. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilized world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state, according to the provisions of which, one man riots in luxury whilst another

famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave, suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleapt the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good have been morally ruined, by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored, appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics,* and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those† of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest

* I ought to except Sir W. Drummond's "Academical Questions;" a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.

† It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr. Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of population. This concession answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the "ESSAY ON POPULATION," to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of "POLITICAL JUSTICE."

contemporary Poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character, designing that even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words, to divert the attention of the reader from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust them according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a Poet, without which, genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education indeed can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes, I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes, and the sea, and the solitude of forests : Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war, cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds.

I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense, and have read the Poets and the Historians, and the Metaphysicians* whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer, do not in themselves constitute men Poets, but only prepare them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live, though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic Poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakspeare, Spenser, the Dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon†; the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded;—all resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can

* In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.

† Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.

no more be called the imitator of Shakspeare, than Shakspeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men, than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler, nor the sublimest genius of any era, can escape ; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakspeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity : you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed, also, by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts, can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt, and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left most inadvertently an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this, as in every other respect, I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age, that its Writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of Reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when Poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own : it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded, the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest Poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakspeare, and Milton wrote,

in utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavour to extract from the midst of insult, and contempt, and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the Public. If certain Critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the Public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality, and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was led captive, and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigoted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which, arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The

latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps, would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The Poem now presented to the Public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and earnest criticism on my work as it grew under my hands. I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed fresh from my mind. And although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage entertain of the Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature, which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to Revenge, or Envy, or Prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.



THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

DEDICATION.

There is no danger to a Man, that knows
What life and death is : there 's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge : neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law.

CHAPMAN.

TO MARY — —.

I.

So now my summer-task is ended, Mary,
And I return to thee, mine own heart's home ;
As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome ;
Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become
A star among the stars of mortal night,
If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy beloved name, thou Child of love and light.

II.

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour
 Is ended—and the fruit is at thy feet!
 No longer where the woods to frame a bower
 With interlaced branches mix and meet,
 Or where with sound like many voices sweet,
 Water-falls leap among wild islands green,
 Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
 Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen:
 But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

III.

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
 The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
 I do remember well the hour which burst
 My spirit's sleep: a fresh May-dawn it was,
 When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
 And wept, I knew not why: until there rose
 From the near school-room, voices, that, alas!
 Were but one echo from a world of woes—
 The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

IV.

And then I clasped my hands and looked around,
 But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
 Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground—
 So without shame, I spake:—"I will be wise,
 And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
 Such power, for I grow weary to behold
 The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
 Without reproach or check." I then controlled
 My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

v.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind ;
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

vi.

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one !—
Such once I sought in vain ; then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone :—
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine, that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clog, until revived by thee.

vii.

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain,
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walked as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long.

VIII.

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
 Although I trod the paths of high intent,
 I journeyed now : no more companionless,
 Where solitude is like despair, I went.—
 There is the wisdom of a stern content
 When Poverty can blight the just and good,
 When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
 And cherished friends turn with the multitude
 To trample : this was ours, and we unshaken stood !

IX.

Now has descended a serener hour,
 And with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
 Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
 Which says :—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
 And from thy side two gentle babes are born
 To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
 Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn :
 And these delights, and thou, have been to me
 The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

X.

Is it, that now my inexperienced fingers
 But strike the prelude of a loftier strain ?
 Or, must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
 Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again,
 Though it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
 And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway,
 Holier than was Amphion's ? I would fain
 Reply in hope—but I am worn away,
 And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey.

XI.

And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak :
 Time may interpret to his silent years.
 Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
 And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
 And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
 And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
 Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears :
 And through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
 A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

XII.

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
 Of glorious parents thou aspiring Child :
 I wonder not—for One then left this earth
 Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
 Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
 Of its departing glory ; still her fame
 Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
 Which shake these latter days ; and thou canst claim
 The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

XIII.

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
 Which was the echo of three thousand years ;
 And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,
 As some lone man who in a desert hears
 The music of his home :—unwonted fears
 Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
 And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares,
 Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
 Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

xiv.

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind !
 If there must be no response to my cry—
 If men must rise and stamp with fury blind
 On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I,
 Sweet Friend ! can look from our tranquillity
 Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,—
 Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
 Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's
 sight,
 That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

 CANTO I.

i.

WHEN the last hope of trampled France had failed
 Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
 From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
 The peak of an aërial promontory,
 Whose caverned base with the vexed surge was
 hoary ;
 And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken
 Each cloud, and every wave :—but transitory
 The calm : for sudden, the firm earth was shaken,
 As if by the last wreck its frame were overtaken.

II.

So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
When, gathering fast, around, above, and under,
Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,
Until their complicating lines did steep
The orient sun in shadow:—not a sound
Was heard; one horrible repose did keep
The forests and the floods, and all around
Darkness more dread than night was poured upon the ground.

III.

Hark! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps
Earth and the ocean. See! the lightnings yawn
Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lashed deeps
Glitter and boil beneath: it rages on,
One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,
Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by,
There is a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth to spy
What calm has fall'n on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV.

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen
Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven
Most delicately, and the ocean green,
Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
Quivered like burning emerald: calm was spread
On all below; but far on high, between
Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled,
Countless and swift as leaves on autumn's tempest shed.

v.

For ever as the war became more fierce
Between the whirlwinds and the rack on high,
That spot grew more serene ; blue light did pierce
The woof of those white clouds, which seemed to lie
Far, deep, and motionless ; while through the sky
The pallid semicircle of the moon
Past on, in slow and moving majesty ;
Its upper horn arrayed in mists, which soon
But slowly fled, like dew beneath the beams of noon.

vi.

I could not choose but gaze ; a fascination
Dwelt in that moon, and sky, and clouds, which drew
My fancy thither, and in expectation
Of what I knew not, I remained :—the hue
Of the white moon, amid that heaven so blue,
Suddenly stained with shadow did appear ;
A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching grew,
Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear—

vii.

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains,
Dark, vast, and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its fountains,
Comes forth, whilst with the speed its frame doth quiver,
Sails, oars, and stream, tending to one endeavour ;
So, from that chasm of light a winged Form
On all the winds of heaven approaching ever
Floated, dilating as it came : the storm
Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and warm.

VIII.

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed,
 Suspending thought and breath; a monstrous sight!
 For in the air do I behold indeed
 An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight:—
 And now, relaxing its impetuous flight
 Before the aërial rock on which I stood,
 The Eagle, hovering, wheeled to left and right,
 And hung with lingering wings over the flood,
 And startled with its yells the wide air's solitude.

IX.

A shaft of light upon its wings descended,
 And every golden feather gleamed therein—
 Feather and scale inextricably blended.
 The Serpent's mailed and many-coloured skin
 Shone through the plumes; its coils were twined within
 By many a swollen and knotted fold, and high
 And far, the neck receding lithe and thin,
 Sustained a crested head, which warily
 Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's steadfast eye.

X.

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
 With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sailed
 Incessantly—sometimes on high concealing
 Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it failed,
 Drooped through the air; and still it shrieked and wailed,
 And casting back its eager head, with beak
 And talon unremittingly assailed
 The wreathed Serpent, who did ever seek
 Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

XI.

What life, what power, was kindled and arose
Within the sphere of that appalling fray!
For, from the encounter of those wond'rous foes,
A vapour like the sea's suspended spray
Hung gathered: in the void air, far away,
Floated the shattered plumes; bright scales did leap,
Where'er the Eagle's talons made their way,
Like sparks into the darkness;—as they sweep,
Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultuous deep.

XII.

Swift chances in that combat—many a check,
And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil;
Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck
Locked in stiff rings his adamantine coil,
Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil,
Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea
Languidly fluttered, hopeless so to foil
His adversary, who then reared on high
His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII.

Then on the white edge of the bursting surge,
Where they had sunk together, would the Snake
Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge
The wind with his wild writhings; for to break
That chain of torment, the vast bird would shake
The strength of his unconquerable wings
As in despair, and with his sinewy neck
Dissolve in sudden shock those linked rings,
Then soar—as swift as smoke from a volcano springs.

XIV.

Wile baffled wile, and strength encountered strength,
 Thus long, but unprevailing:—the event
 Of that portentous fight appeared at length:
 Until the lamp of day was almost spent
 It had endured, when lifeless, stark, and rent,
 Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at last
 Fell to the sea, while o'er the continent,
 With clang of wings and scream the Eagle past,
 Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

XV.

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
 And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere—
 Only, it was strange to see the red commotion
 Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere
 Of sunset sweep, and their fierce roar to hear
 Amid the calm: down the steep path I wound
 To the sea-shore—the evening was most clear
 And beautiful, and there the sea I found
 Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

XVI.

There was a Woman, beautiful as morning,
 Sitting beneath the rocks upon the sand
 Of the waste sea—fair as one flower adorning
 An icy wilderness—each delicate hand
 Lay crossed upon her bosom, and the band
 Of her dark hair had fallen, and so she sate
 Looking upon the waves; on the bare strand
 Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait,
 Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate.

XVII.

It seemed that this fair Shape had looked upon
That unimaginable fight, and now
That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
As brightly it illustrated her woe ;
For in the tears which silently to flow
Paused not, its lustre hung : she watching eye
The foam-wreaths which the faint tide wove below
Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily,
And after every groan looked up over the sea.

XVIII.

And when she saw the wounded Serpent make
His path between the waves, her lips grew pale,
Parted, and quivered ; the tears ceased to break
From her immovable eyes ; no voice of wail
Escaped her ; but she rose, and on the gale
Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy hair,
Poured forth her voice ; the caverns of the vale
That opened to the ocean, caught it there,
And filled with silver sounds the overflowing air.

XIX.

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I heard, alone,
What made its music more melodious be,
The pity and the love of every tone ;
But to the Snake those accents sweet were known,
His native tongue and hers : nor did he beat
The hoar spray idly then, but winding on
Through the green shadows of the waves that meet
Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

XX.

Then on the sands the Woman sate again,
 And wept and clasped her hands, and all between,
 Renewed the unintelligible strain
 Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien ;
 And she unveiled her bosom, and the green
 And glancing shadows of the sea did play
 O'er its marmoreal depth :—one moment seen,
 For ere the next, the Serpent did obey
 Her voice, and, coiled in rest, in her embrace it lay.

XXI.

Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes
 Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet fair,
 While yet the day-light lingereth in the skies
 Which cleaves with arrowy beams the dark-red air,
 And said : To grieve is wise, but the despair
 Was weak and vain which led thee here from sleep :
 This shalt thou know, and more, if thou dost dare
 With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep,
 A voyage divine and strange, companionship to keep.

XXII.

Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone,
 Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago.
 I wept. Shall this fair woman all alone
 Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go ?
 His head is on her heart, and who can know
 How soon he may devour his feeble prey ?
 Such were my thoughts, when the tide 'gan to flow ;
 And that strange boat, like the moon's shade did sway
 Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay.

XXIII.

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
 But its own curved prow of thin moonstone,
 Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
 To catch those gentlest winds which are not known
 To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
 With which it cleaves the sparkling sea ; and now
 We are embarked, the mountains hang and frown
 Over the starry deep that gleams below
 A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

XXIV.

And as we sailed, a strange and awful tale
 That Woman told, like such mysterious dream
 As makes the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale !
 'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless stream,
 Wide ocean rolled, when that majestic theme
 Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent
 Her looks on mine ; those eyes a kindling beam
 Of love divine into my spirit sent,
 And, ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

XXV.

Speak not to me, but hear ! much shalt thou learn,
 Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
 In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn :
 Know then, that from the depth of ages old
 Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold,
 Ruling the world with a divided lot,
 Immortal, all-pervading, manifold,
 Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought
 Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential Nought.

XXVI.

The earliest dweller of the world alone
 Stood on the verge of chaos : Lo ! afar
 O'er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone,
 Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous jar :
 A blood-red Comet and the Morning Star
 Mingling their beams in combat—as he stood
 All thoughts within his mind waged mutual war,
 In dreadful sympathy—when to the flood
 That fair star fell, he turned and shed his brother's blood.

XXVII.

Thus evil triumphed, and the Spirit of evil,
 One Power of many shapes which none may know,
 One Shape of many names ; the Fiend did revel
 In victory, reigning o'er a world of woe,
 For the new race of man went to and fro,
 Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
 And hating good—for his immortal foe,
 He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
 To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

XXVIII.

The darkness lingering o'er the dawn of things,
 Was Evil's breath and life : this made him strong
 To soar aloft with overshadowing wings ;
 And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
 The nations of mankind, and every tongue
 Cursed, and blasphemed him as he past ; for none
 Knew good from evil, though their names were hung
 In mockery o'er the fane where many a groan,
 As King, and Lord, and God, the conquering Fiend did own.

XXIX.

The Fiend, whose name was Legion; Death, Decay,
 Earthquake, and Blight, and Want, and Madness pale,
 Winged and wan diseases, an array
 Numerous as leaves that strew the autumnal gale;
 Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the veil
 Of food and mirth, hiding his mortal head;
 And, without whom all these might nought avail,
 Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who spread
 Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead.

XXX.

His spirit is their power, and they his slaves
 In air, and light, and thought, and language dwell;
 And keep their state from palaces to graves,
 In all resorts of men—invisible,
 But when, in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell,
 To tyrant or impostor bids them rise,
 Black winged demon forms—whom, from the hell,
 His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies,
 He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

XXXI.

In the world's youth his empire was as firm
 As its foundations—soon the Spirit of Good,
 Though in the likeness of a loathsome worm,
 Sprang from the billows of the formless flood,
 Which shrank and fled; and with that fiend of blood
 Renewed the doubtful war—thrones then first shook,
 And earth's immense and trampled multitude,
 In hope on their own powers began to look,
 And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook.

XXXII.

Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages,
 In dream, the golden-pinioned Genii came,
 Even where they slept amid the night of ages
 Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame
 Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name !
 And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
 New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame
 Upon the combat shone—a light to save,
 Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

XXXIII.

Such is this conflict—when mankind doth strive
 With its oppressors in a strife of blood,
 Or when free thoughts, like lightnings, are alive ;
 And in each bosom of the multitude
 Justice and truth, with custom's hydra brood,
 Wage silent war ;—when priests and kings dissemble
 In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude,
 When round pure hearts, a host of hopes assemble,
 The Snake and Eagle meet—the world's foundations
 tremble !

XXXIV.

Thou hast beheld that fight—when to thy home
 Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears ;
 Though thou may'st hear that earth is now become
 The tyrant's garbage, which to his compeers,
 The vile reward of their dishonoured years,
 He will dividing give.—The victor Fiend
 Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears
 His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend
 An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end.

XXXV.

List, stranger, list ! mine is a human form,
 Like that thou wearest—touch me—shrink not now !
 My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but warm
 With human blood.—'Twas many years ago,
 Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
 The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep
 My heart was pierced with sympathy, for woe
 Which could not be mine own—and thought did keep
 In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep.

XXXVI.

Woe could not be mine own, since far from men
 I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child,
 By the sea-shore, in a deep mountain glen ;
 And near the waves, and through the forests wild,
 I roamed, to storm and darkness reconciled,
 For I was calm while tempest shook the sky :
 But, when the breathless heavens in beauty smiled,
 I wept sweet tears, yet too tumultuously
 For peace, and clasped my hands aloft in ecstasy.

XXXVII.

These were forebodings of my fate.—Before
 A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast,
 It had been nurtured in divinest lore :
 A dying poet gave me books, and blest
 With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest
 In which I watched him as he died away—
 A youth with hoary hair—a fleeting guest
 Of our lone mountains—and this lore did sway
 My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

XXXVIII.

Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold,
 I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
 For they weep not ; and Wisdom had unrolled
 The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe :
 To few can she that warning vision show,
 For I loved all things with intense devotion ;
 So that when Hope's deep source in fullest flow,
 Like earthquake did uplift the stagnant ocean
 Of human thoughts—mine shook beneath the wide emotion.

XXXIX.

When first the living blood through all these veins
 Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth
 And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains
 Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.
 I saw, and started from my cottage hearth ;
 And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness
 Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable mirth—
 And laughed in light and music : soon sweet madness
 Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

XL.

Deep slumber fell on me ;—my dreams were fire,
 Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover
 Like shadows o'er my brain ; and strange desire,
 The tempest of a passion, raging over
 My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover,
 Which past ; and calm, and darkness, sweeter far
 Came—then I loved ; but not a human lover !
 For when I rose from sleep, the Morning Star
 Shone through the woodbine wreaths which round my case-
 ment were.

XLI.

'Twas like an eye which seemed to smile on me.
 I watched till, by the sun made pale, it sank
 Under the billows of the heaving sea ;
 But from its beams deep love my spirit drank,
 And to my brain the boundless world now shrank
 Into one thought—one image—yea, for ever !
 Even like the day's-spring, poured on vapours dank,
 The beams of that one star did shoot and quiver
 Through my benighted mind—and were extinguished never.

XLII.

The day past thus : at night, methought in dream
 A shape of speechless beauty did appear ;
 It stood like light on a careering stream
 Of golden clouds which shook the atmosphere ;
 A winged youth, his radiant brow did wear
 The Morning Star : a wild dissolving bliss
 Over my frame he breathed, approaching near,
 And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness
 Near mine, and on my lips impressed a lingering kiss,

XLIII.

And said : A Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden,
 How wilt thou prove thy worth ? Then joy and sleep
 Together fled ; my soul was deeply laden,
 And to the shore I went to muse and weep ;
 But as I moved over my heart did creep
 A joy less soft, but more profound and strong
 Than my sweet dream ; and it forbade to keep
 The path of the sea-shore : that Spirit's tongue
 Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along.

XLIV.

How, to that vast and peopled city led,
 Which was a field of holy warfare then,
 I walked among the dying and the dead,
 And shared in fearless deeds with evil men,
 Calm as an angel in the dragon's den—
 How I braved death for liberty and truth,
 And spurned at peace, and power, and fame ; and when
 Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth,
 How sadly I returned—might move the hearer's ruth :

XLV.

Warm tears throng fast ! the tale may not be said—
 Know then, that when this grief had been subdued,
 I was not left, like others, cold and dead ;
 The Spirit whom I loved in solitude
 Sustained his child : the tempest-shaken wood,
 The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night—
 These were his voice, and well I understood
 His smile divine when the calm sea was bright
 With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with delight.

XLVI.

In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers,
 When the dim nights were moonless, have I known
 Joys which no tongue can tell ; my pale lip quivers
 When thought revisits them :—know thou alone,
 That after many wondrous years were flown,
 I was awakened by a shriek of woe ;
 And over me a mystic robe was thrown,
 By viewless hands, and a bright star did glow
 Before my steps—the Snake then met his mortal foe.

XLVII.

Thou fear'st not then the Serpent on thy heart?
 Fear it! she said with brief and passionate cry,
 And spake no more: that silence made me start—
 I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly,
 Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky,
 Beneath the rising moon seen far away;
 Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high
 Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
 On the still waters,—these we did approach alway.

XLVIII.

And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion,
 So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain—
 Wild music woke me: we had past the ocean
 Which girds the pole, Nature's remotest reign—
 And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain
 Of waters, azure with the noon-tide day.
 Ethereal mountains shone around—a Fane
 Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which lay
 On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

XLIX.

It was a Temple, such as mortal hand
 Has never built, nor ecstasy, or dream,
 Reared in the cities of enchanted land:
 'Twas likest Heaven, ere yet day's purple streak
 Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the gleam
 Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
 Is gathering—when with many a golden beam
 The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
 Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods.

L.

Like what may be conceived of this vast dome,
 When from the depths which thought can seldom pierce
 Genius beholds it rise, his native home,
 Girt by the deserts of the Universe,
 Yet, nor in painting's light, or mightier verse,
 Or sculpture's marble language, can invest
 That shape to mortal sense—such glooms immerse
 That incommunicable sight, and rest
 Upon the labouring brain and over-burthened breast.

LI.

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
 Whose bloomy forests starred the shadowy deep,
 The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair
 Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep,
 Encircling that vast Fane's aërial heap :
 We disembarked, and through a portal wide
 We passed—whose roof of moonstone carved, did keep
 A glimmering o'er the forms on every side,
 Sculptures like life and thought ; immovable, deep-eyed.

LII.

We came to a vast hall, whose glorious roof
 Was diamond, which had drunk the lightning's sheen
 In darkness, and now poured it through the woof
 Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to screen
 Its blinding splendour—through such veil was seen
 That work of subtlest power, divine and rare ;
 Orb above orb, with starry shapes between,
 And horned moons, and meteors strange and fair,
 On night-black columns poised—one hollow hemisphere !

LIII.

Ten thousand columns in that quivering light
Distinct—between whose shafts wound far away
The long and labyrinthine aisles—more bright
With their own radiance than the Heaven of Day ;
And on the jasper walls around, there lay
Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought,
Which did the Spirit's history display ;
A tale of passionate change, divinely taught,
Which, in their winged dance, unconscious Genii wrought.

LIV.

Beneath, there sate on many a sapphire throne,
The great, who had departed from mankind,
A mighty Senate ; some whose white hair shone
Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and blind.
Some, female forms, whose gestures beamed with mind ;
And ardent youths, and children bright and fair ;
And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined
With pale and clinging flames, which ever there
Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the crystal air.

LV.

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne,
Reared on a pyramid like sculptured flame,
Distinct with circling steps which rested on
Their own deep fire—soon as the woman came
Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's name
And fell ; and vanished slowly from the sight.
Darkness arose from her dissolving frame,
Which gathering, filled that dome of woven light,
Blotting its sphered stars with supernatural night.

LVI.

Then first two glittering lights were seen to glide
 In circles on the amethystine floor,
 Small serpent eyes trailing from side to side,
 Like meteors on a river's grassy shore,
 They round each other rolled, dilating more
 And more—then rose, commingling into one,
 One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er
 A cloud of deepest shadow, which was thrown
 Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline throne.

LVII.

The cloud which rested on that cone of flame
 Was cloven; beneath the planet sate a Form,
 Fairer than tongue can speak or thought may frame,
 The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and warm
 Flowed forth, and did with softest light inform
 The shadowy dome, the sculptures, and the state
 Of those assembled shapes—with clinging charm
 Sinking upon their hearts and mine—He sate
 Majestic yet most mild—calm, yet compassionate.

LVIII.

Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw
 Over my brow—a hand supported me,
 Whose touch was magic strength: an eye of blue
 Looked into mine, like moonlight, soothingly;
 And a voice said—Thou must a listener be
 This day—two mighty spirits now return,
 Like birds of calm, from the world's raging sea,
 They pour fresh light from Hope's immortal urn;
 A tale of human power—despair not—list and learn!

LIX.

I looked, and lo ! one stood forth eloquently,
His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow
Which shadowed them was like the morning sky,
The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when in their flow
Through the bright air, the soft winds as they blow
Wake the green world—his gestures did obey
The oracular mind that made his features glow,
And where his curved lips half open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous way.

LX.

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
He stood thus beautiful : but there was One
Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
And held his hand—far lovelier—she was known
To be thus fair, by the few lines alone
Which through her floating locks and gathered cloke,
Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone :—
None else beheld her eyes—in him they woke
Memories which found a tongue, as thus he silence broke.

CANTO II.



I.

THE star-light smile of children, the sweet looks
Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
And the green light which, shifting overhead,
Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,
The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
The lamp-light through the rafters cheerly spread,
And on the twining flax—in life's young hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded powers.

II.

In Argolis beside the echoing sea,
Such impulses within my mortal frame
Arose, and they were dear to memory,
Like tokens of the dead :—but others came
Soon, in another shape : the wondrous fame
Of the past world, the vital words and deeds
Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame,
Traditions dark and old, whence evil creeds
Start forth, and whose dim shade a stream of poison feeds.

III.

I heard, as all have heard, the various story
 Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
 Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
 False disputants on all its hopes and fears,
 Victims who worshipped ruin,—chroniclers
 Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state ;
 Yet flattering power had given its ministers
 A throne of judgment in the grave—'twas fate,
 That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

IV.

The land in which I lived, by a fell bane
 Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side,
 And stabled in our homes,—until the chain
 Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide
 That blasting curse men had no shame—all vied
 In evil, slave and despot ; fear with lust
 Strange fellowship through mutual hate had tied,
 Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,
 Which on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

V.

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters,
 And the ethereal shapes which are suspended
 Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters,
 The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended
 The colours of the air since first extended
 It cradled the young world, none wandered forth
 To see or feel : a darkness had descended
 On every heart : the light which shows its worth,
 Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take its birth.

VI.

This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
 Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind,
 All that despair from murdered hope inherits
 They sought, and in their helpless misery blind,
 A deeper prison and heavier chains did find,
 And stronger tyrants :—a dark gulf before,
 The realm of a stern Ruler, yawned ; behind,
 Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore
 On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore.

VII.

Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe
 Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,
 And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
 Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
 The worship thence which they each other taught.
 Well might men loathe their life, well might they turn
 Even to the ills again from which they sought
 Such refuge after death !—well might they learn
 To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern !

VIII.

For they all pined in bondage ; body and soul,
 Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent
 Before one Power, to which supreme control
 Over their will by their own weakness lent,
 Made all its many names omnipotent ;
 All symbols of things evil, all divine ;
 And hymns of blood or mockery, which rent
 The air from all its fane's, did intertwine
 Imposture's impious toils round each discordant shrine.

IX.

I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,
And in no careless heart transcribed the tale ;
But, from the sneers of men who had grown hoary
In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and pale
With the heart's warfare ; did I gather food
To feed my many thoughts :—a tameless multitude.

X.

I wandered through the wrecks of days departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even
O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise ; in the northern Heaven,
Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
The mountains lay beneath one planet pale ;
Around me broken tombs and columns riven
Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale
Waked in those ruins grey its everlasting wail !

XI.

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
Nor had I heard the story of their deeds ;
But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds
Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
The language which they speak ; and now, to me
The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds,
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

XII.

Such man has been, and such may yet become !
 Aye, wiser, greater, gentler, even than they
 Who on the fragments of yon shattered dome
 Have stamped the sign of power—I felt the sway
 Of the vast stream of ages bear away
 My floating thoughts—my heart beat loud and fast—
 Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray
 Of the still moon, my spirit onward past
 Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult cast.

XIII.

It shall be thus no more ! too long, too long,
 Sons of the glorious dead ! have ye lain bound
 In darkness and in ruin.—Hope is strong,
 Justice and Truth their winged child have found—
 Awake ! arise ! until the mighty sound
 Of your career shall scatter in its gust
 The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
 Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
 Whose Idol has so long betrayed your impious trust.

XIV.

It must be so—I will arise and waken
 The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill,
 Which on a sudden from its snows had shaken
 The swoon of ages, it shall burst, and fill
 The world with cleansing fire ; it must, it will—
 It may not be restrained !—and who shall stand
 Amid the rocking earthquake stedfast still,
 But Laon ? on high Freedom's desert land
 A tower whose marble walls the leagued storms withstand !

xv.

One summer night, in commune with the hope
Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins grey
I watched, beneath the dark sky's starry cope ;
And ever from that hour upon me lay
The burthen of this hope, and night or day,
In vision or in dream, clove to my breast :
Among mankind, or when gone far away
To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a guest,
Which followed where I fled, and watched when I did rest.

xvi.

These hopes found words through which my spirit sought
To weave a bondage of such sympathy
As might create some response to the thought
Which ruled me now—and as the vapours lie
Bright in the outspread morning's radiancy,
So were these thoughts invested with the light
Of language ; and all bosoms made reply
On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it might
Thro' darkness wide and deep those tranced spirits smite.

xvii.

Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim,
And oft I thought to clasp my own heart's brother,
When I could feel the listener's senses swim,
And hear his breath its own swift gaspings smother
Even as my words evoked them—and another,
And yet another, I did fondly deem,
Felt that we all were sons of one great mother ;
And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem,
As to awake in grief from some delightful dream.

XVIII.

Yes, oft beside the ruined labyrinth
 Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep,
 Did Laon and his friend on one grey plinth,
 Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap,
 Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep :
 And that his friend was false, may now be said
 Calmly—that he like other men could weep
 Tears which are lies, and could betray and spread
 Snares for that guileless heart which for his own had bled.

XIX.

Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow,
 I must have sought dark respite from its stress
 In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow—
 For to tread life's dismaying wilderness
 Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
 Amid the snares and scoffs of human kind,
 Is hard—but I betrayed it not, nor less
 With love that scorned return, sought to unbind
 The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX.

With deathless minds, which leave where they have past
 A path of light, my soul communion knew ;
 Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
 As from a mine of magic store, I drew
 Words which were weapons ;—round my heart there grew
 The adamantine armour of their power,
 And from my fancy wings of golden hue
 Sprang forth—yet not alone from wisdom's tower,
 A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore.

XXI.

An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes
 Were load-stars of delight, which drew me home
 When I might wander forth; nor did I prize
 Aught human thing beneath Heaven's mighty dome
 Beyond this child: so when sad hours were come,
 And baffled hope like ice still clung to me,
 Since kin were cold, and friends had now become
 Heartless and false, I turned from all, to be,
 Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee.

XXII.

What wert thou then? A child most infantine,
 Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age
 In all but its sweet looks and mien divine;
 Even then, methought, with the world's tyrant rage
 A patient warfare thy young heart did wage,
 When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious thought,
 Some tale, or thine own fancies, would engage
 To overflow with tears, or converse fraught
 With passion, o'er their depths its fleeting light had wrought.

XXIII.

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
 A power, that from its objects scarcely drew
 One impulse of her being—in her lightness
 Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew
 Which wanders through the waste air's pathless blue,
 To nourish some far desert; she did seem
 Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
 Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
 Which walks, when tempest sleeps, the wave of life's dark
 stream.

XXIV.

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second self, far dearer and more fair;
Which clothed in undissolving radiancy
All those steep paths which languor and despair
Of human things had made so dark and bare,
But which I trod alone—nor, till bereft
Of friends, and overcome by lonely care,
Knew I what solace for that loss was left,
Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart was cleft.

XXV.

Once she was dear, now she was all I had
To love in human life—this playmate sweet,
This child of twelve years old—so she was made
My sole associate, and her willing feet
Wandered with mine where earth and ocean meet,
Beyond the aërial mountains whose vast cells
The unreposing billows ever beat,
Through forests wide and old, and lawny dells,
Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald wells.

XXVI.

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
When twined in mine: she followed where I went,
Through the lone paths of our immortal land.
It had no waste, but some memorial lent
Which strung me to my toil—some monument
Vital with mind: then Cythna by my side,
Until the bright and beaming day were spent,
Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

XXVII.

And soon I could not have refused her—thus
 For ever, day and night, we two were ne'er
 Parted, but when brief sleep divided us :
 And, when the pauses of the lulling air
 Of noon beside the sea had made a lair
 For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept,
 And I kept watch over her slumbers there,
 While, as the shifting visions over her swept,
 Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept.

XXVIII.

And, in the murmur of her dreams, was heard
 Sometimes the name of Laon :—suddenly
 She would arise, and, like the secret bird
 Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky
 With her sweet accents—a wild melody !
 Hymns which my soul had woven to Freedom, strong
 The source of passion, whence they rose to be
 Triumphant strains, which, like a spirit's tongue,
 To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung.

XXIX.

Her white arms lifted through the shadowy stream
 Of her loose hair—oh, excellently great
 Seemed to me then my purpose, the vast theme
 Of those impassioned songs, when Cynthia sate
 Amid the calm which rapture doth create
 After its tumult, her heart vibrating,
 Her spirit o'er the ocean's floating state
 From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing
 Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring.

xxx.

For, before Cythna loved it, had my song
 Peopled with thoughts the boundless universe,
 A mighty congregation, which were strong
 Where'er they trod the darkness to disperse
 The cloud of that unutterable curse
 Which clings upon mankind :—all things became
 Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,
 Earth, sea, and sky, the planets, life, and fame,
 And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's wondrous frame.

xxxI.

And this beloved child thus felt the sway
 Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud
 The very wind on which it rolls away :
 Hers too were all my thoughts, ere yet, endowed
 With music and with light, their fountains flowed
 In poesy ; and her still and earnest face,
 Pallid with feelings which intensely glowed
 Within, was turned on mine with speechless grace,
 Watching the hopes which there her heart had learned to
 trace.

xxxII.

In me, communion with this purest being
 Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
 In knowledge, which in hers mine own mind seeing,
 Left in the human world few mysteries :
 How without fear of evil or disguise
 Was Cythna !—what a spirit strong and mild,
 Which death, or pain, or peril, could despise,
 Yet melt in tenderness ! what genius wild,
 Yet mighty, was inclosed within one simple child !

XXXIII.

New lore was this—old age with its grey hair,
And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
And icy sneers, is nought: it cannot dare
To burst the chains which life for ever flings
On the entangled soul's aspiring wings,
So is it cold and cruel, and is made
The careless slave of that dark power which brings
Evil, like blight on man, who, still betrayed,
Laughs o'er the grave in which his living hopes are laid.

XXXIV.

Nor are the strong and the severe to keep
The empire of the world: thus Cythna taught
Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep,
Unconscious of the power through which she wrought
The woof of such intelligible thought,
As from the tranquil strength which cradled lay
In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit sought
Why the deceiver and the slave has sway
O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

XXXV.

Within that fairest form, the female mind
Untainted by the poison clouds which rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find:
But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,
Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed
All native power, had those fair children torn,
And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest,
And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
Till they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI.

This misery was but coldly felt, till she
 Became my only friend, who had indued
 My purpose with a wider sympathy ;
 Thus, Cythna mourned with me the servitude
 In which the half of humankind were mewed,
 Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves :
 She mourned that grace and power were thrown as food
 To the hyena lust, who, among graves,
 Over his loathed meal, laughing in agony, raves.

XXXVII.

And I, still gazing on that glorious child,
 Even as these thoughts flushed o'er her :—“ Cythna
 Well with the world art thou unreconciled ; [sweet,
 Never will peace and human nature meet,
 Till free and equal man and woman greet
 Domestic peace ; and ere this power can make
 In human hearts its calm and holy seat,
 This slavery must be broken ”—as I spake,
 From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII.

She replied earnestly :—“ It shall be mine,
 This task, mine, Laon !—thou hast much to gain ;
 Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna's pride repine,
 If she should lead a happy female train
 To meet thee over the rejoicing plain,
 When myriads at thy call shall throng around
 The Golden City.”—Then the child did strain
 My arm upon her tremulous heart, and wound
 Her own about my neck, till some reply she found.

XXXIX.

I smiled, and spake not.—“ Wherefore dost thou smile
 At what I say? Laon, I am not weak,
 And, though my cheek might become pale the while,
 With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
 Through their array of banded slaves to wreak
 Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
 It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek
 To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot
 And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XL.

“ Whence came I what I am? Thou, Laon, knowest
 How a young child should thus undaunted be ;
 Methinks, it is a power which thou bestowest,
 Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,
 So to become most good, and great, and free ;
 Yet far beyond this Ocean’s utmost roar
 In towers and huts are many like to me,
 Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore
 As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more.

XLI.

“ Thinkest thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
 And none will heed me? I remember now,
 How once, a slave in tortures doomed to die,
 Was saved, because in accents sweet and low
 He sang a song his Judge loved long ago,
 As he was led to death.—All shall relent
 Who hear me—tears as mine have flowed, shall flow,
 Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent
 As renovates the world ; a will omnipotent !

XLII.

" Yes, I will tread Pride's golden palaces,
 Through Penury's roofless huts and squalid cells
 Will I descend, where'er in abjectness
 Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells,
 There with the music of thine own sweet spells
 Will disenchant the captives, and will pour
 For the despairing, from the crystal wells
 Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore,
 And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more.

XLIII.

" Can man be free if woman be a slave ?
 Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air
 To the corruption of a closed grave !
 Can they whose mates are beasts, condemned to bear
 Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
 To trample their oppressors ? In their home
 Among their babes, thou knowest a curse would wear
 The shape of woman—hoary crime would come
 Behind, and fraud rebuild religion's tottering dome.

XLIV.

" I am a child :—I would not yet depart.
 When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp
 Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart,
 Millions of slaves from many a dungeon damp
 Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp
 Of ages leaves their limbs—no ill may harm
 Thy Cythna ever—truth its radiant stamp
 Has fixed, as an invulnerable charm
 Upon her children's brow, dark falsehood to disarm.

XLV.

" Wait yet awhile for the appointed day—
 Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand
 Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean grey ;
 Amid the dwellers of this lonely land
 I shall remain alone—and thy command
 Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance,
 And, multitudinous as the desert sand
 Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance,
 Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI.

" Then, like the forests of some pathless mountain,
 Which from remotest glens two warring winds
 Involve in fire, which not the loosened fountain
 Of broadest floods might quench, shall all the kinds
 Of evil catch from our uniting minds
 The spark which must consume them ;—Cythna then
 Will have cast off the impotence that binds
 Her childhood now, and through the paths of men
 Will pass, as the charmed bird that haunts the serpent's den.

XLVII.

" We part !—O Laon, I must dare, nor tremble,
 To meet those looks no more !—Oh, heavy stroke !
 Sweet brother of my soul ; can I dissemble
 The agony of this thought ?"—As thus she spoke
 The gathered sobs her quivering accents broke,
 And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
 I remained still for tears—sudden she woke
 As one awakes from sleep, and wildly prest
 My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possess.

XLVIII.

“ We part to meet again—but yon blue waste,
Yon desert wide and deep, holds no recess
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced
We might survive all ills in one caress :
Nor doth the grave—I fear 'tis passionless—
Nor yon cold vacant Heaven :—we meet again
Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless
Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain
When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain.”

XLIX.

I could not speak, though she had ceased, for now
The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep,
Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow ;
So we arose, and by the star-light steep
Went homeward—neither did we speak nor weep,
But pale, were calm.—With passion thus subdued,
Like evening shades that o'er the mountains creep,
We moved towards our home ; where, in this mood,
Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

CANTO III.

I.

WHAT thoughts had sway o'er Cythna's lonely slumber
That night, I know not; but my own did seem
As if they might ten thousand years outnumber
Of waking life, the visions of a dream,
Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled stream
Of mind; a boundless chaos wild and vast,
Whose limits yet were never memory's theme:
And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds past,
Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

II.

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
More time than might make grey the infant world,
Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space:
When the third came, like mist on breezes curled,
From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled:
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna; drooping briony, pearled
With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered wave,
Hung, where we sate, to taste the joys which Nature gave.

III.

We lived a day as we were wont to live,
 But nature had a robe of glory on,
 And the bright air o'er every shape did weave
 Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone,
 The leafless bough among the leaves alone,
 Had being clearer than its own could be,
 And Cythna's pure and radiant self was shown
 In this strange vision, so divine to me,
 That if I loved before, now love was agony.

IV.

Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night descended,
 And we prolonged calm talk beneath the sphere
 Of the calm moon—when, suddenly was blended
 With our repose a nameless sense of fear;
 And from the cave behind I seemed to hear
 Sounds gathering upwards!—accents incomplete,
 And stifled shrieks,—and now, more near and near,
 A tumult and a rush of thronging feet
 The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth did beat.

V.

The scene was changed, and away, away, away!
 Through the air and over the sea we sped,
 And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
 And the winds bore me;—through the darkness spread
 Around, the gaping earth then vomited
 Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung
 Upon my flight; and ever as we fled,
 They plucked at Cythna—soon to me then clung
 A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among.

VI.

And I lay struggling in the impotence
Of sleep, while outward life had burst its bound,
Though, still deluded, strove the tortured sense
To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
Which in the light of morn was poured around
Our dwelling—breathless, pale, and unaware
I rose, and all the cottage crowded found
With armed men, whose glittering swords were bare,
And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb did wear.

VII.

And ere with rapid lips and gathered brow
I could demand the cause—a feeble shriek—
It was a feeble shriek, faint, far, and low,
Arrested me—my mien grew calm and meek,
And, grasping a small knife, I went to seek
That voice among the crowd—'twas Cythna's cry!
Beneath most calm resolve did agony wreak
Its whirlwind rage:—so I past quietly
Till I beheld, where bound, that dearest child did lie.

VIII.

I started to behold her, for delight
And exultation, and a joyance free,
Solemn, serene, and lofty, filled the light
Of the calm smile with which she looked on me:
So that I feared some brainless ecstasy,
Wrought from that bitter woe, had wildered her—
“Farewell! farewell!” she said, as I drew nigh.
“At first my peace was marred by this strange stir,
Now I am calm as truth—its chosen minister.

IX.

“ Look not so, Laon—say farewell in hope :
 These bloody men are but the slaves who bear
 Their mistress to her task—it was my scope
 The slavery where they drag me now, to share,
 And among captives willing chains to wear
 Awhile—the rest thou knowest—return, dear friend !
 Let our first triumph trample the despair
 Which would ensnare us now, for in the end,
 In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend.”

X.

These words had fallen on my unheeding ear,
 Whilst I had watched the motions of the crew
 With seeming careless glance ; not many were
 Around her, for their comrades just withdrew
 To guard some other victim—so I drew
 My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly
 All unaware three of their number slew,
 And grasped a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry
 My countrymen invoked to death or liberty !

XI.

What followed then, I know not—for a stroke
 On my raised arm and naked head came down,
 Filling my eyes with blood—when I awoke,
 I felt that they had bound me in my swoon,
 And up a rock which overhangs the town,
 By the steep path were bearing me : below
 The plain was filled with slaughter,—overthrown
 The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow
 Of blazing roofs shone far o'er the white Ocean's flow.

XII.

Upon that rock a mighty column stood,
Whose capital seemed sculptured in the sky,
Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
Of distant seas, from ages long gone by,
Had many a landmark; o'er its height to fly
Scarcely the cloud, the vulture, or the blast,
Has power—and when the shades of evening lie
On Earth and Ocean, its carved summits cast
The sunken day-light far through the aërial waste.

XIII.

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
Beneath that column, and unbound me there:
And one did strip me stark; and one did fill
A vessel from the putrid pool; one bare
A lighted torch, and four with friendless care
Guided my steps the cavern-paths along,
Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair
We wound, until the torches' fiery tongue
Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

XIV.

They raised me to the platform of the pile,
That column's dizzy height:—the grate of brass
Through which they thrust me, open stood the while,
As to its ponderous and suspended mass,
With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!
With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound:
The grate, as they departed to repass,
With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom was drowned.

xv.

The noon was calm and bright :—around that column
 The overhanging sky and circling sea
 Spread forth in silentness profound and solemn
 The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me,
 So that I knew not my own misery :
 The islands and the mountains in the day
 Like clouds reposed afar ; and I could see
 The town among the woods below that lay,
 And the dark rocks which bound the bright and glassy bay.

xvi.

It was so calm, that scarce the feathery weed
 Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone
 Swayed in the air :—so bright, that noon did breed
 No shadow in the sky beside mine own—
 Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone.
 Below the smoke of roofs involved in flame
 Rested like night, all else was clearly shown
 In the broad glare, yet sound to me none came,
 But of the living blood that ran within my frame.

xvii.

The peace of madness fled, and ah, too soon !
 A ship was lying on the sunny main ;
 Its sails were flagging in the breathless noon—
 Its shadow lay beyond—that sight again
 Waked, with its presence, in my tranced brain
 The stings of a known sorrow, keen and cold :
 I knew that ship bore Cythna o'er the plain
 Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold,
 And watched it with such thoughts as must remain untold.

XVIII.

I watched, until the shades of evening wrapt
 Earth like an exhalation—then the bark
 Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapt.
 It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark :
 Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark
 Its path no more ! I sought to close mine eyes,
 But, like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark ;
 I would have risen, but, ere that I could rise,
 My parched skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX.

I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever
 Its adamantine links, that I might die :
 O Liberty ! forgive the base endeavour,
 Forgive me, if, reserved for victory,
 The Champion of thy faith e'er sought to fly.—
 That starry night, with its clear silence, sent
 Tameless resolve which laughed at misery
 Into my soul—linked remembrance lent
 To that such power, to me such a severe content.

XX.

To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair
 And die, I questioned not ; nor, though the Sun
 Its shafts of agony kindling through the air
 Moved over me, nor though in evening dun,
 Or when the stars their visible courses run,
 Or morning, the wide universe was spread
 In dreary calmness round me, did I shun
 Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead
 From one faint hope whose flower a dropping poison shed.

XXI.

Two days thus past—I neither raved nor died—
 Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest
 Built in mine entrails ; I had spurned aside
 The water-vessel, while despair possest
 My thoughts, and now no drop remained ! The uprest
 Of the third sun brought hunger—but the crust
 Which had been left, was to my craving breast
 Fuel, not food. I chewed the bitter dust,
 And bit my bloodless arm, and licked the brazen rust.

XXII.

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
 Burst o'er the golden isles—a fearful sleep,
 Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn
 Of the riven soul, sent its foul dreams to sweep
 With whirlwind swiftness—a fall far and deep,—
 A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness—
 These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep
 Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness,
 A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless !

XXIII.

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
 I well remember—like a quire of devils,
 Around me they involved a giddy dance ;
 Legions seemed gathering from the misty levels
 Of ocean, to supply those ceaseless revels,
 Foul, ceaseless shadows :—thought could not divide
 The actual world from these entangling evils,
 Which so bemocked themselves, that I descried
 All shapes like mine own self, hideously multiplied.

XXIV.

The sense of day and night, of false and true,
Was dead within me. Yet two visions burst
That darkness—one, as since that hour I knew,
Was not a phantom of the realms accurst,
Where then my spirit dwelt—but of the first
I know not yet, was it a dream or no.
But both, though not distincter, were immersed
In hues which, when through memory's waste they flow,
Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

XXV.

Methought that gate was lifted, and the seven
Who brought me thither, four stiff corpses bare,
And from the frieze to the four winds of Heaven
Hung them on high by the entangled hair:
Swarthy were three—the fourth was very fair:
As they retired, the golden moon upsprung,
And eagerly, out in the giddy air,
Leaning that I might eat, I stretched and clung
Over the shapeless depth in which those corpses hung.

XXVI.

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue,
The dwelling of the many-coloured worm,
Hung there, the white and hollow cheek I drew
To my dry lips—what radiance did inform
Those horny eyes? whose was that withered form?
Alas, alas! it seemed that Cythna's ghost
Laughed in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
Within my teeth!—a whirlwind keen as frost
Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit tost.

XXVII.

Then seemed it that a tameless hurricane
 Arose, and bore me in its dark career
 Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane
 On the verge of formless space—it languished there,
 And, dying, left a silence lone and drear,
 More horrible than famine:—in the deep
 The shape of an old man did then appear,
 Stately and beautiful; that dreadful sleep
 His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and weep.

XXVIII.

And, when the blinding tears had fallen, I saw
 That column, and those corpses, and the moon,
 And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw
 My vitals, I rejoiced, as if the boon
 Of senseless death would be accorded soon;—
 When from that stony gloom a voice arose,
 Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune
 The midnight pines; the grate did then uncloze,
 And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

XXIX.

He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled:
 As they were loosened by that Hermit old,
 Mine eyes were of their madness half beguiled,
 To answer those kind looks.—He did enfold
 His giant arms around me to uphold
 My wretched frame, my scorched limbs he wound
 In linen moist and balmy, and as cold
 As dew to drooping leaves:—the chain, with sound
 Like earthquake, through the chasm of that steep stair did
 bound

xxx.

As, lifting me, it fell!—What next I heard,
 Were billows leaping on the harbour bar,
 And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly stirred
 My hair;—I looked abroad, and saw a star
 Shining beside a sail, and distant far
 That mountain and its column, the known mark
 Of those who in the wide deep wandering are,
 So that I feared some Spirit, fell and dark,
 In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish bark.

xxxI.

For now, indeed, over the salt sea billow
 I sailed: yet dared not look upon the shape
 Of him who ruled the helm, although the pillow
 For my light head was hollowed in his lap,
 And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap,
 Fearing it was a fiend: at last, he bent
 O'er me his aged face; as if to snap
 Those dreadful thoughts the gentle grandsire bent,
 And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he sent.

xxxII.

A soft and healing potion to my lips
 At intervals he raised—now looked on high,
 To mark if yet the starry giant dips
 His zone in the dim sea—now cheeringly,
 Though he said little, did he speak to me.
 “It is a friend beside thee—take good cheer,
 Poor victim, thou art now at liberty!”
 I joyed as those a human tone to hear,
 Who in cells deep and lone have languished many a year.

XXXIII.

A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft
Were quenched in a relapse of wildering dreams,
Yet still methought we sailed, until aloft
The stars of night grew pallid, and the beams
Of morn descended on the ocean-streams,
And still that aged man, so grand and mild,
Tended me, even as some sick mother seems
To hang in hope over a dying child,
Till in the azure East darkness again was piled.

XXXIV.

And then the night-wind, steaming from the shore,
Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,
And the swift boat the little waves which bore,
Were cut by its keen keel, though slantingly ;
Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
The myrtle-blossoms starring the dim grove,
As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
On sidelong wing into a silent cove,
Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

CANTO IV.

I.

THE old man took the oars, and soon the bark
Smote on the beach beside a tower of stone ;
It was a crumbling heap whose portal dark
With blooming ivy trails was overgrown ;
Upon whose floor the spangling sands were strown,
And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood,
Slave to the mother of the months, had thrown
Within the walls of that great tower, which stood
A changeling of man's art, nursed amid Nature's brood.

II.

When the old man his boat had anchored,
He wound me in his arms with tender care,
And very few but kindly words he said,
And bore me through the tower adown a stair,
Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear
For many a year had fallen.— We came at last
To a small chamber, which with mosses rare
Was tapestried, where me his soft hands placed
Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves interlaced.

III.

The moon was darting through the lattices
 Its yellow light, warm as the beams of day—
 So warm, that to admit the dewy breeze,
 The old man opened them ; the moonlight lay
 Upon a lake whose waters wove their play
 Even to the threshold of that lonely home :
 Within was seen in the dim wavering ray,
 The antique sculptured roof, and many a tome
 Whose lore had made that sage all that he had become.

IV.

The rock-built barrier of the sea was past,—
 And I was on the margin of a lake,
 A lonely lake, amid the forests vast
 And snowy mountains :—did my spirit wake
 From sleep, as many-coloured as the snake
 That girds eternity ? in life and truth,
 Might not my heart its cravings ever slake ?
 Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
 And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth ?

V.

Thus madness came again,—a milder madness,
 Which darkened nought but time's unquiet flow
 With supernatural shades of clinging sadness ;
 That gentle Hermit, in my helpless woe,
 By my sick couch was busy to and fro,
 Like a strong spirit ministrant of good :
 When I was healed, he led me forth to show
 The wonders of his sylvan solitude,
 And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

VI.

He knew his soothing words to weave with skill
 From all my madness told : like mine own heart,
 Of Cythna would he question me, until
 That thrilling name had ceased to make me start,
 From his familiar lips—it was not art,
 Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke—
 When 'mid soft looks of pity, there would dart
 A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
 When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

VII.

Thus slowly from my brain the darkness rolled,
 My thoughts their due array did re-assume
 Through the enchantments of that Hermit old ;
 Then I bethought me of the glorious doom
 Of those who sternly struggle to relume
 The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewildered lot,
 And, sitting by the waters, in the gloom
 Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my thought—
 That heart which had grown old, but had corrupted not.

VIII.

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
 In converse with the dead, who leave the stamp
 Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
 When they are gone into the senseless damp
 Of graves !—his spirit thus became a lamp
 Of splendour, like to those on which it fed.
 Through peopled haunts, the City and the Camp,
 Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,
 And all the ways of men among mankind he read.

IX.

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
 The loftiest hearts :—he had beheld the woe
 In which mankind was bound, but deemed that fate
 Which made them abject would preserve them so ;
 And in such faith, some stedfast joy to know,
 He sought this cell : but, when fame went abroad
 That one in Argolis did undergo
 Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
 High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood,

X.

And that the multitude was gathering wide,
 His spirit leaped within his aged frame ;
 In lonely peace he could no more abide,
 But to the land on which the victor's flame
 Had fed, my native land, the Hermit came ;
 Each heart was there a shield, and every tongue
 Was as a sword of truth—young Laon's name
 Rallied their secret hopes, though tyrants sung
 Hymns of triumphant joy our scattered tribes among.

XI.

He came to the lone column on the rock,
 And with his sweet and mighty eloquence
 The hearts of those who watched it did unlock,
 And made them melt in tears of penitence.
 They gave him entrance free to bear me thence.
 “ Since this,” the old man said, “ seven years are spent,
 While slowly truth on thy benighted sense
 Has crept ; the hope which wildered it has lent,
 Meanwhile, to me the power of a sublime intent.

XII.

" Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
 And from the lore of bards and sages old,
 From whatso'er my wakened thoughts create
 Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
 Have I collected language to unfold
 Truth to my countrymen ; from shore to shore
 Doctrines of human power my words have told ;
 They have been heard, and men aspire to more
 Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

XIII.

" In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
 My writings to their babes, no longer blind ;
 And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
 And vows of faith each to the other bind ;
 And marriageable maidens, who have pined
 With love, till life seemed melting through their look,
 A warmer zeal, a nobler hope, now find ;
 And every bosom thus is wrapt and shook,
 Like autumn's myriad leaves in one swoln mountain brook.

XIV.

" The tyrants of the Golden City tremble
 At voices which are heard about the streets ;
 The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble
 The lies of their own heart ; but when one meets
 Another at the shrine, he inly weets,
 Though he says nothing, that the truth is known ;
 Murderers are pale upon the judgment-seats,
 And gold grows vile even to the wealthy crone,
 And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake the Throne.

xv.

“ Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds
 Abound, for fearless love, and the pure law
 Of mild equality and peace succeeds
 To faiths which long have held the world in awe,
 Bloody, and false, and cold :—as whirlpools draw
 All wrecks of Ocean to their chasm, the sway
 Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw
 This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
 Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array.

xvi.

“ For I have been thy passive instrument ”—
 (As thus the old man spake, his countenance
 Gleamed on me like a spirit’s)—“ thou hast lent
 To me, to all, the power to advance
 Towards this unforeseen deliverance
 From our ancestral chains—ay, thou didst rear
 That lamp of hope on high, which time, nor chance,
 Nor change may not extinguish, and my share
 Of good was o’er the world its gathered beams to bear.

xvii.

“ But I, alas ! am both unknown and old,
 And though the woof of wisdom I know well
 To dye in hues of language, I am cold
 In seeming, and the hopes which inly dwell
 My manners note that I did long repel ;
 But Laon’s name to the tumultuous throng
 Were like the star whose beams the waves compel
 And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue
 Were as a lance to quell the mailed crest of wrong.

XVIII.

“ Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at length
 Wouldst rise ; perchance the very slaves would spare
 Their brethren and themselves ; great is the strength
 Of words—for lately did a maiden fair,
 Who from her childhood has been taught to bear
 The tyrant’s heaviest yoke, arise, and make
 Her sex the law of truth and freedom hear ;
 And with these quiet words—‘ for thine own sake
 I prithee spare me,’—did with ruth so take

XIX.

“ All hearts, that even the torturer, who had bound
 Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet impaled,
 Loosened her weeping then ; nor could be found
 One human hand to harm her—unassailed
 Therefore she walks through the great City, veiled
 In virtue’s adamantine eloquence,
 ’Gainst scorn, and death, and pain, thus trebly mailed,
 And blending in the smiles of that defence,
 The Serpent and the Dove, Wisdom and Innocence,

XX.

“ The wild-eyed women throng around her path :
 From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
 Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor’s wrath,
 Or the caresses of his sated lust,
 They congregate :—in her they put their trust ;
 The tyrants send their armed slaves to quell
 Her power ;—they, even like a thunder gust
 Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
 Of that young maiden’s speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

XXI.

“ Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
To woman, outraged and polluted long ;
Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
For those fair hands now free, while armed wrong
Trembles before her look, though it be strong ;
Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins bright,
And matrons with their babes, a stately throng !
Lovers renew the vows which they did plight
In early faith, and hearts long parted now unite.

XXII.

“ And homeless orphans find a home near her,
And those poor victims of the proud, no less,
Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world with stir,
Thrusts the redemption of its wickedness :—
In squalid huts, and in its palaces
Sits Lust alone, while o'er the land is borne
Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth repress
All evil, and her foes relenting turn,
And cast the vote of love in hope's abandoned urn.

XXIII.

“ So in the populous City, a young maiden
Has baffled Havoc of the prey which he
Marks as his own, whene'er with chains o'erladen
Men make them arms to hurl down tyranny,
False arbiter between the bound and free ;
And o'er the land, in hamlets and in towns
The multitudes collect tumultuously,
And throng in arms ; but tyranny disowns
Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling
 thrones.

XXIV.

“ Blood soon, although unwillingly, to shed
 The free cannot forbear—the Queen of Slaves,
 The hood-winked Angel of the blind and dead,
 Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
 Where her own standard desolately waves
 Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.
 Many yet stand in her array—‘ she paves
 Her path with human hearts,’ and o’er it flings
 The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

XXV.

“ There is a plain beneath the City’s wall,
 Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast ;
 Millions there lift at Freedom’s thrilling call
 Ten thousand standards wide ; they load the blast
 Which bears one sound of many voices past,
 And startles on his throne their sceptred foe :
 He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,
 And that his power hath past away, doth know—
 Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow ?

XXVI.

“ The tyrant’s guards resistance yet maintain :
 Fearless, and fierce, and hard as beasts of blood ;
 They stand a speck amid the peopled plain ;
 Carnage and ruin have been made their food
 From infancy—ill has become their good,
 And for its hateful sake their will has wove
 The chains which eat their hearts—the multitude
 Surrounding them, with words of human love,
 Seek from their own decay their stubborn minds to move.

XXVII.

“Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
 As night and day those ruthless bands around
 The watch of love is kept:—a trance which awes
 The thoughts of men with hope—as when the sound
 Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds
 Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear [confound,
 Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound,
 The conqueror’s pause, and oh! may freemen ne’er
 Clasp the relentless knees of Dread, the murderer!

XXVIII.

“If blood be shed, ’tis but a change and choice
 Of bonds,—from slavery to cowardice
 A wretched fall!—uplift thy charmed voice,
 Pour on those evil men the love that lies
 Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes—
 Arise, my friend, farewell!”—As thus he spake,
 From the green earth lightly I did arise,
 As one out of dim dreams that doth awake,
 And looked upon the depth of that reposing lake.

XXIX.

I saw my countenance reflected there;—
 And then my youth fell on me like a wind
 Descending on still waters—my thin hair
 Was prematurely grey, my face was lined
 With channels, such as suffering leaves behind,
 Not age; my brow was pale, but in my cheek
 And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find
 Their food and dwelling; though mine eyes might speak
 A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus weak.

XXX.

And though their lustre now was spent and faded,
 Yet in my hollow looks and withered mien
 The likeness of a shape for which was braided
 The brightest woof of genius, still was seen—
 One who, methought, had gone from the world's scene,
 And left it vacant—'twas her lover's face—
 It might resemble her—it once had been
 The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace
 Which her mind's shadow cast, left there a lingering trace.

XXXI.

What then was I? She slumbered with the dead.
 Glory and joy and peace, had come and gone.
 Doth the cloud perish, when the beams are fled
 Which steeped its skirts in gold? or dark, and lone,
 Doth it not through the paths of night unknown,
 On outspread wings of its own wind upborne
 Pour rain upon the earth? the stars are shown,
 When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn
 Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

XXXII.

Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged man
 I left, with interchange of looks and tears,
 And lingering speech, and to the Camp began
 My way. O'er many a mountain chain which rears
 Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit bears
 My frame; o'er many a dale and many a moor,
 And gaily now me seems serene earth wears
 The bloomy spring's star-bright investiture,
 A vision which aught sad from sadness might allure.

XXXIII.

My powers revived within me, and I went
As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass,
Through many a vale of that broad continent.
At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass
Before my pillow;—my own Cythna was
Not like a child of death, among them ever;
When I arose from rest, a woeful mass
That gentlest sleep seemed from my life to sever,
As if the light of youth were not withdrawn for ever.

XXXIV.

Aye, as I went, that maiden, who had reared
The torch of Truth afar, of whose high deeds
The Hermit in his pilgrimage had heard,
Haunted my thoughts.—Ah, Hope its sickness feeds
With whatso'er it finds, or flowers or weeds!
Could she be Cythna?—Was that corpse a shade
Such as self-torturing thought from madness breeds?
Why was this hope not torture? yet it made
A light around my steps which would not ever fade.

CANTO V.



I.

OVER the utmost hill at length I sped,
A snowy steep :—the moon was hanging low
Over the Asian mountains, and outspread
The plain, the City, and the Camp, below,
Skirted the midnight Ocean's glimmering flow,
The City's moon-lit spires and myriad lamps,
Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow,
And fires blazed far amid the scattered camps,
Like springs of flame, which burst where'er swift Earth-
quake stamps.

II.

All slept but those in watchful arms who stood,
And those who sate tending the beacon's light,
And the few sounds from that vast multitude
Made silence more profound—Oh, what a might
Of human thought was cradled in that night !
How many hearts impenetrably veiled
Beat underneath its shade, what secret fight
Evil and good, in woven passions mailed,
Waged through that silent throng, a war that never failed !

III.

And now the Power of Good held victory,
 So, through the labyrinth of many a tent,
 Among the silent millions who did lie
 In innocent sleep, exultingly I went ;
 The moon had left Heaven desert now, but lent
 From eastern morn the first faint lustre showed
 An armed youth—over his spear he bent
 His downward face.—“ A friend ! ” I cried aloud,
 And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

IV.

I sate beside him while the morning beam
 Crept slowly over Heaven, and talked with him
 Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme !
 Which led us forth, until the stars grew dim :
 And all the while, methought, his voice did swim,
 As if it drowned in remembrance were
 Of thoughts which make the moist eyes overbrim :
 At last, when daylight 'gan to fill the air,
 He looked on me, and cried in wonder, “ Thou art here ! ”

V.

Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth
 In whom its earliest hopes my spirit found ;
 But envious tongues had stained his spotless truth,
 And thoughtless pride his love in silence bound,
 And shame and sorrow mine in toils had wound,
 Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded.
 The truth now came upon me, on the ground
 Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded,
 Fell fast, and o'er its peace our mingling spirits brooded.

VI.

Thus, while with rapid lips and earnest eyes
 We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict spread,
 As from the earth did suddenly arise ;
 From every tent, roused by that clamour dread,
 Our bands outsprung and seized their arms ; we sped
 Towards the sound : our tribes were gathering far,
 Those sanguine slaves amid ten thousand dead
 Stabbed in their sleep, trampled in treacherous war,
 The gentle hearts whose power their lives had sought to
 spare.

VII.

Like rabid snakes, that sting some gentle child
 Who brings them food, when winter false and fair
 Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so wild
 They rage among the camp ;—they overbear
 The patriot hosts—confusion, then despair
 Descends like night—when “ Laon ! ” one did cry :
 Like a bright ghost from Heaven that shout did scare
 The slaves, and, widening through the vaulted sky,
 Seemed sent from Earth to Heaven in sign of victory.

VIII.

In sudden panic those false murderers fled,
 Like insect tribes before the northern gale :
 But, swifter still, our hosts encompassed
 Their shattered ranks, and in a craggy vale,
 Where even their fierce despair might nought avail,
 Hemmed them around !—and then revenge and fear
 Made the high virtue of the patriots fail :
 One pointed on his foe the mortal spear—
 I rushed before its point, and cried, “ Forbear, forbear ! ”

IX.

The spear transfix'd my arm that was uplifted
 In swift expostulation, and the blood
 Gushed round its point: I smiled, and—" Oh! thou gifted
 With eloquence which shall not be withstood,
 Flow thus!"—I cried in joy, " thou vital flood,
 Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause
 For which thou wert aught worthy be subdued—
 Ah, ye are pale,—ye weep,—your passions pause,—
 'Tis well! ye feel the truth of love's benignant laws.

X.

" Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain.
 Ye murdered them, I think, as they did sleep!
 Alas, what have ye done? The slightest pain
 Which ye might suffer, there were eyes to weep;
 But ye have quenched them—there were smiles to steep
 Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe;
 And those whom love did set his watch to keep
 Around your tents truth's freedom to bestow,
 Ye stabbed as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now.

XI.

" O wherefore should ill ever flow from ill,
 And pain still keener pain for ever breed?
 We all are brethren—even the slaves who kill
 For hire, are men; and to avenge misdeed
 On the misdoer, doth but Misery feed
 With her own broken heart! O Earth, O Heaven!
 And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed
 And all that lives, or is to be, hath given,
 Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven.

XII.

"Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past
 Be as a grave which gives not up its dead
 To evil thoughts."—A film then overcast
 My sense with dimness, for the wound, which bled
 Freshly, swift shadows o'er mine eyes had shed.
 When I awoke, I lay 'mid friends and foes,
 And earnest countenances on me shed
 The light of questioning looks, whilst one did close
 My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed me to repose ;

XIII.

And one, whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside
 With quivering lips and humid eyes ;—and all
 Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
 Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall
 In a strange land, round one whom they might call
 Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
 Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
 Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array
 Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

XIV.

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation
 Towards the City, then the multitude,
 And I among them, went in joy—a nation
 Made free by love ;—a mighty brotherhood
 Linked by a jealous interchange of good ;
 A glorious pageant, more magnificent
 Than kingly slaves, arrayed in gold and blood ;
 When they return from carnage, and are sent
 In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement.

xv.

Afar, the City walls were thronged on high,
And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
And to each spire far lessening in the sky,
Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung ;
As we approached, a shout of joyance sprung
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
And peopled Earth its boundless skies among
The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
When from before its face some general wreck had past.

xvi.

Our armies through the City's hundred gates
Were poured, like brooks which to the rocky lair
Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits,
Throng from the mountains when the storms are there ;
And, as we passed through the calm sunny air,
A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed,
The token flowers of truth and freedom fair,
And fairest hands bound them on many a head,
Those angels of love's heaven, that over all was spread.

xvii.

I trod as one tranced in some rapturous vision :
Those bloody bands so lately reconciled,
Were, ever as they went, by the contrition
Of anger turned to love from ill beguiled,
And every one on them more gently smiled,
Because they had done evil :—the sweet awe
Of such mild looks made their own hearts grow mild,
And did with soft attraction ever draw
Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

XVIII.

And they, and all, in one loud symphony
 My name with Liberty commingling, lifted,
 "The friend and the preserver of the free!
 The parent of this joy!" and fair eyes, gifted
 With feelings caught from one who had uplifted
 The light of a great spirit, round me shone;
 And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted
 Like restless clouds before the stedfast sun,—
 Where was that Maid? I asked, but it was known of none.

XIX.

Laone was the name her love had chosen,
 For she was nameless, and her birth none knew:
 Where was Laone now?—The words were frozen
 Within my lips with fear; but to subdue
 Such dreadful hope, to my great task was due,
 And when at length one brought reply, that she
 To-morrow would appear, I then withdrew
 To judge what need for that great throng might be,
 For now the stars came thick over the twilight sea.

XX.

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
 Even though that multitude was passing great,
 Since each one for the other did prepare
 All kindly succour—Therefore to the gate
 Of the Imperial House, now desolate,
 I passed, and there was found aghast, alone,
 The fallen Tyrant!—Silently he sate
 Upon the footstool of his golden throne,
 Which, starred with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

XXI.

Alone, but for one child, who led before him
 A graceful dance: the only living thing
 Of all the crowd, which thither to adore him
 Flocked yesterday, who solace sought to bring
 In his abandonment!—She knew the King
 Had praised her dance of yore, and now she wove
 Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring
 'Mid her sad task of unregarded love,
 That to no smiles it might his speechless sadness move.

XXII.

She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet
 When human steps were heard:—he moved nor spoke,
 Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet
 The gaze of strangers.—Our loud entrance woke
 The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
 The calm of its recesses,—like a tomb
 Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
 Of footfalls answered, and the twilight's gloom
 Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII.

The little child stood up when we came nigh;
 Her lips and cheeks seemed very pale and wan,
 But on her forehead and within her eye
 Lay beauty, which makes hearts that feed thereon
 Sick with excess of sweetness;—on the throne
 She leaned. The King, with gathered brow and lips
 Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer and frown
 With hue like that when some great painter dips
 His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

XXIV.

She stood beside him like a rainbow braided
 Within some storm, when scarce its shadows vast
 From the blue paths of the swift sun have faded.
 A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's, cast
 One moment's light, which made my heart beat fast
 O'er that child's parted lips—a gleam of bliss,
 A shade of vanished days,—as the tears past
 Which wrapt it, even as with a father's kiss
 I pressed those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

XXV.

The sceptred wretch then from that solitude
 I drew, and of his change compassionate,
 With words of sadness soothed his rugged mood.
 But he, while pride and fear held deep debate,
 With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate
 Glared on me as a toothless snake might glare :
 Pity, not scorn, I felt, though desolate
 The desolator now, and unaware
 The curses which he mocked had caught him by the hair.

XXVI.

I led him forth from that which now might seem
 A gorgeous grave : through portals sculptured deep
 With imagery beautiful as dream
 We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
 Over its unregarded gold to keep
 Their silent watch.—The child trod faintingly,
 And, as she went, the tears which she did weep
 Glanced in the star-light ; wildered seemed she,
 And when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII.

At last the tyrant cried, "She hungers, slave!
 Stab her, or give her bread!"—It was a tone
 Such as sick fancies in a new-made grave
 Might hear. I trembled, for the truth was known,
 He with this child had thus been left alone,
 And neither had gone forth for food,—but he
 In mingled pride and awe cowered near his throne,
 And she, a nursling of captivity,
 Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what such change
 might be.

XXVIII.

And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn
 Thus suddenly; that sceptres ruled no more—
 That even from gold the dreadful strength was gone
 Which once made all things subject to its power—
 Such wonder seized him, as if hour by hour
 The past had come again; and the swift fall
 Of one so great and terrible of yore
 To desolateness, in the hearts of all
 Like wonder stirred, who saw such awful change befall.

XXIX.

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours
 Once in a thousand years, now gathered round
 The fallen tyrant;—like the rush of showers
 Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground,
 Their many footsteps fell, else came no sound
 From the wide multitude: that lonely man
 Then knew the burthen of his change, and found,
 Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
 Refuge from the keen looks which thro' his bosom ran.

xxx.

And he was faint withal. I sate beside him
 Upon the earth, and took that child so fair
 From his weak arms, that ill might none betide him
 Or her;—when food was brought to them, her share
 To his averted lips the child did bear;
 But when she saw he had enough, she ate
 And wept the while;—the lonely man's despair
 Hunger then overcame, and of his state
 Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sate.

xxxI.

Slowly the silence of the multitudes
 Past, as when far is heard in some lone dell
 The gathering of a wind among the woods—
 And he is fallen! they cry; he who did dwell
 Like famine or the plague, or aught more fell,
 Among our homes, is fallen! the murderer
 Who slaked his thirsting soul as from a well
 Of blood and tears with ruin! He is here!
 Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may him rear!

xxxII.

Then was heard—He who judged let him be brought
 To judgment! Blood for blood cries from the soil
 On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought!
 Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?
 Shall they, who by the stress of grinding toil
 Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries,
 Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil,
 Or creep within his veins at will?—Arise!
 And to high justice make her chosen sacrifice.

XXXIII.

“What do ye seek? what fear ye?” then I cried,
 Suddenly starting forth, “that ye should shed
 The blood of Othman—if your hearts are tried
 In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
 This one poor lonely man—beneath Heaven shed
 In purest light above us all, through earth,
 Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles spread
 For all, let him go free; until the worth
 Of human nature win from these a second birth.

XXXIV.

“What call ye *justice*? Is there one who ne'er
 In secret thought has wished another's ill?—
 Are ye all pure? Let those stand forth who hear,
 And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill,
 If such they be? their mild eyes can they fill
 With the false anger of the hypocrite?
 Alas, such were not pure—the chastened will
 Of virtue sees that justice is the light
 Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite.”

XXXV.

The murmur of the people, slowly dying,
 Paused as I spake; then those who near me were,
 Cast gentle looks where the lone man was lying
 Shrouding his head, which now that infant fair
 Clasped on her lap in silence;—through the air
 Sobs were then heard, and many kissed my feet
 In pity's madness, and, to the despair
 Of him whom late they cursed, a solace sweet
 His very victims brought—soft looks and speeches meet.

XXXVI.

Then to a home, for his repose assigned,
 Accompanied by the still throng he went
 In silence, where, to soothe his rankling mind,
 Some likeness of his ancient state was lent ;
 And, if his heart could have been innocent
 As those who pardoned him, he might have ended
 His days in peace ; but his straight lips were bent,
 Men said, into a smile which guile portended,
 A sight with which that child like hope with fear was blended.

XXXVII.

'Twas midnight now, the eve of that great day,
 Whereon the many nations at whose call
 The chains of earth like mist melted away,
 Decreed to hold a sacred Festival,
 A rite to attest the equality of all
 Who live. So to their homes, to dream or wake
 All went. The sleepless silence did recal
 Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make
 The flood recede from which their thirst they seek to slake.

XXXVIII.

The dawn flowed forth, and from its purple fountains
 I drank those hopes which make the spirit quail,
 As to the plain between the misty mountains
 And the great City, with a countenance pale
 I went :—it was a sight which might avail
 To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
 Now first from human power the reverend veil
 Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb
 Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom :

XXXIX.

To see, far glancing in the misty morning,
 The signs of that innumerable host,
 To hear one sound of many made, the warning
 Of Earth to Heaven from its free children tost,
 While the eternal hills, and the sea lost
 In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky
 The city's myriad spires of gold, almost
 With human joy made mute society
 Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be.

XL.

To see, like some vast island from the Ocean,
 The Altar of the Federation rear
 Its pile i' the midst; a work, which the devotion
 Of millions in one night created there,
 Sudden, as when the moonrise makes appear
 Strange clouds in the east; a marble pyramid
 Distinct with steps: that mighty shape did wear
 The light of genius; its still shadow hid
 Far ships: to know its height the morning mists forbid!

XLI.

To hear the restless multitudes for ever
 Around the base of that great Altar flow,
 As on some mountain islet burst and shiver
 Atlantic waves; and solemnly and slow
 As the wind bore that tumult to and fro,
 To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim
 Like beams through floating clouds on waves below,
 Falling in pauses from that Altar dim
 As silver-sounding tongues breathed an aërial hymn.

XLII.

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
 Lethean joy! so that all those assembled
 Cast off their memories of the past outworn :
 Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
 And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled ;
 So with a beating heart I went, and one,
 Who having much, covets yet more, resembled ;
 A lost and dear possession, which not won,
 He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII.

To the great Pyramid I came : its stair
 With female quires was thronged : the loveliest
 Among the free, grouped with its sculptures rare.
 As I approached, the morning's golden mist,
 Which now the wonder-stricken breezes kist
 With their cold lips, fled, and the summit shone
 Like Athos seen from Samothracia, drest
 In earliest light by vintagers, and one
 Sate there, a female shape upon an ivory throne.

XLIV.

A Form most like the imagined habitant
 Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
 By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to enchant
 The faiths of men : all mortal eyes were drawn,
 As famished mariners through strange seas gone,
 Gaze on a burning watch-tower, by the light
 Of those divinest lineaments—alone
 With thoughts which none could share, from that fair sight
 I turned in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance
 bright.

XLV.

And, neither did I hear the acclamations
 Which, from brief silence bursting, filled the air,
 With her strange name and mine, from all the nations
 Which we, they said, in strength had gathered there
 From the sleep of bondage; nor the vision fair
 Of that bright pageantry beheld,—but blind
 And silent, as a breathing corpse did fare,
 Leaning upon my friend, till, like a wind
 To fevered cheeks, a voice flowed o'er my troubled mind.

XLVI.

Like music of some minstrel heavenly-gifted,
 To one whom fiends enthral, this voice to me;
 Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
 I was so calm and joyous.—I could see
 The platform where we stood, the statues three
 Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine,
 The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea;
 As when eclipse hath passed, things sudden shine
 To men's astonished eyes most clear and crystalline.

XLVII.

At first Laone spoke most tremulously:
 But soon her voice that calmness which it shed
 Gathered, and—"Thou art whom I sought to see,
 And thou art our first votary here," she said:
 "I had a dear friend once, but he is dead!—
 And of all those on the wide earth who breathe,
 Thou dost resemble him alone—I spread
 This veil between us two, that thou beneath
 Should'st image one who may have been long lost in death.

XLVIII.

" For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me ?
 Yes, but those joys which silence well requite
 Forbid reply : why men have chosen me
 To be the Priestess of this holiest rite
 I scarcely know, but that the floods of light
 Which flow over the world, have borne me hither
 To meet thee, long most dear ; and now unite
 Thine hand with mine, and may all comfort wither
 From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now beats together,

XLIX.

" If our own will as others' law we bind,
 If the foul worship trampled here we fear ;
 If as ourselves we cease to love our kind !"—
 She paused, and pointed upwards—sculptured there
 Three shapes around her ivory throne appear ;
 One was a Giant, like a child asleep
 On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as it were
 In dream, sceptres and crowns ; and one did keep
 Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep ;

L.

A Woman sitting on the sculptured disk
 Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast
 A human babe and a young basilisk ;
 Her looks were sweet as Heaven's when loveliest
 In Autumn eves.—The third Image was drest
 In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies.
 Beneath his feet, 'mongst ghestliest forms, repress
 Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to rise,
 While calmly on the Sun he turned his diamond eyes.

LI.

Beside that Image then I sate, while she
 Stood, 'mid the throngs which ever ebb'd and flow'd
 Like light amid the shadows of the sea
 Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd
 That touch, which none who feels forgets, bestowed ;
 And whilst the sun returned the stedfast gaze
 Of the great Image as o'er Heaven it glode,
 That rite had place ; it ceased when sunset's blaze
 Burn'd o'er the isles ; all stood in joy and deep amaze ;

LII.

When in the silence of all spirits there
 Laone's voice was felt, and through the air
 Her thrilling gestures spok'd, most eloquently fair.

1.

“ Calm art thou as yon sunset ! swift and strong
 As new-fledged Eagles, beautiful and young,
 That float among the blinding beams of morning ;
 And underneath thy feet writhe Faith, and Folly,
 Custom, and Hell, and mortal Melancholy—
 Hark ! the Earth starts to hear the mighty warning
 Of thy voice sublime and holy ;
 Its free spirits here assembled,
 See thee, feel thee, know thee now :
 To thy voice their hearts have trembled,
 Like ten thousand clouds which flow
 With one wide wind as it flies !
 Wisdom ! thy irresistible children rise
 To hail thee, and the elements they chain
 And their own will to swell the glory of thy train.

2.

" O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven !
 Mother and soul of all to which is given
 The light of life, the loveliness of being,
 Lo ! thou dost re-ascend the human heart,
 Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert,
 In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
 The shade of thee :—now, millions start
 To feel thy lightnings through them burning :
 Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure,
 Or Sympathy, the sad tears turning
 To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,
 Descends amidst us ;—Scorn and Hate,
 Revenge and Selfishness, are desolate—
 A hundred nations swear that there shall be
 Pity and Peace and Love, among the good and free !

3.

" Eldest of things, divine Equality !
 Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,
 The Angels of thy sway, who pour around thee
 Treasures from all the cells of human thought,
 And from the Stars, and from the Ocean brought,
 And the last living heart whose beatings bound thee :
 The powerful and the wise had sought
 Thy coming ; thou in light descending
 O'er the wide land which is thine own,
 Like the spring whose breath is blending
 All blasts of fragrance into one,
 Comest upon the paths of men !
 Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken,
 And all her children here in glory meet
 To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet.

4.

“ My brethren, we are free ! the plains and mountains,
 The grey sea-shore, the forests, and the fountains,
 Are haunts of happiest dwellers ; man and woman,
 Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
 From lawless love a solace for their sorrow !
 For oft we still must weep, since we are human.

 A stormy night's serenest morrow,
 Whose showers are pity's gentle tears,
 Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
 Like infants, without hopes or fears,
 And whose beams are joys that lie
 In blended hearts, now holds dominion ;
 The dawn of mind, which, upwards on a pinion
 Borne, swift as sun-rise, far illumines space,
 And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace !

5.

“ My brethren, we are free ! the fruits are glowing
 Beneath the stars, and the night-winds are flowing
 O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming—
 Never again may blood of bird or beast
 Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
 To the pure skies in accusation steaming ;
 Avenging poisons shall have ceased
 To feed disease and fear and madness,
 The dwellers of the earth and air
 Shall throng around our steps in gladness,
 Seeking their food or refuge there.
 Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
 To make this earth, our home, more beautiful,
 And Science, and her sister Poesy,
 Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free !

6.

" Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations !
 Bear witness, Night, and ye, mute Constellations,
 Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars !
 Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more !
 Victory ! Victory ! Earth's remotest shore,
 Regions which groan beneath the Antarctic stars,
 The green lands cradled in the roar
 Of western waves, and wildernesses
 Peopled and vast, which skirt the oceans
 Where morning dyes her golden tresses,
 Shall soon partake our high emotions :
 Kings shall turn pale ! Almighty Fear,
 The Fiend-God, when our charmed name he hear,
 Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes,
 While Truth with Joy enthroned o'er his lost empire reigns ! "

LIII.

Ere she had ceased, the mists of night entwining
 Their dim woof, floated o'er the infinite throng ;
 She like a spirit through the darkness shining,
 In tones whose sweetness silence did prolong,
 As if to lingering winds they did belong,
 Poured forth her inmost soul : a passionate speech
 With wild and thrilling pauses woven among,
 Which whoso heard, was mute, for it could teach
 To rapture like her own all listening hearts to reach.

LIV.

Her voice was as a mountain stream which sweeps
 The withered leaves of Autumn to the lake,
 And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps
 In the shadow of the shores ; as dead leaves wake

Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make
Those green depths beautiful when skies are blue,
The multitude so moveless did partake
Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

LV.

Over the plain the throngs were scattered then
In groups around the fires, which from the sea
Even to the gorge of the first mountain glen
Blazed wide and far : the banquet of the free
Was spread beneath many a dark cypress tree,
Beneath whose spires, which swayed in the red light
Reclining as they ate, of Liberty,
And Hope, and Justice, and Laone's name,
Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.

LVI.

Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,
Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
In the embrace of Autumn ;—to each other
As when some parent fondly reconciles
Her warring children, she their wrath beguiles
With her own sustenance ; they relenting weep :
Such was this Festival, which from their isles,
And continents, and winds, and oceans deep,
All shapes might throng to share, that fly, or walk, or creep.

LVII.

Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
Or poison none this festal did pollute,
But piled on high, an overflowing store
Of pomegranates, and citrons, fairest fruit,

Melons and dates, and figs, and many a root
 Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
 Accursed fire their mild juice could transmute
 Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
 In baskets ; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet

LVIII.

Laone had descended from the shrine,
 And every deepest look and holiest mind
 Fed on her form, though now those tones divine
 Were silent as she past ; she did unwind
 Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
 She mixed ; some impulse made my heart refrain
 From seeking her that night, so I reclined
 Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
 A festal watch-fire burned beside the dusky main.

LIX.

And joyous was our feast ; pathetic talk,
 And wit, and harmony of choral strains,
 While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
 That flow among the isles, held us in chains
 Of sweet captivity, which none disdains
 Who feels : but, when his zone grew dim in mist
 Which clothes the Ocean's bosom, o'er the plains
 The multitudes went homeward, to their rest,
 Which that delightful day with its own shadow blest.

CANTO VI.

I.

BESIDE the dimness of the glimmering sea,
Weaving swift language from impassioned themes,
With that dear friend I lingered, who to me
So late had been restored, beneath the gleams
Of the silver stars ; and ever in soft dreams
Of future love and peace sweet converse lapt
Our willing fancies, till the pallid beams
Of the last watch-fire fell, and darkness wrapt
The waves, and each bright chain of floating fire was snapt.

II.

And till we came even to the City's wall
And the great gate, then, none knew whence or why,
Disquiet on the multitudes did fall :
And first, one pale and breathless past us by,
And stared and spoke not ; then with piercing cry
A troop of wild-eyed women, by the shrieks
Of their own terror driven,—tumultuously
Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks,
Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge seeks—

III.

Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
Resounded : and—" They come ! to arms ! to arms !
The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name ! to arms !"
In vain : for Panic, the pale fiend who charms
Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept
Like waves before the tempest—these alarms
Came to me, as to know their cause I leapt
On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept !

IV.

For to the North I saw the town on fire,
And its red light made morning pallid now,
Which burst over wide Asia.—Louder, higher,
The yells of victory and the screams of woe
I heard approach, and saw the throng below
Stream through the gates like foam-wrought waterfalls
Fed from a thousand storms—the fearful glow
Of bombs flares overhead—at intervals
The red artillery's bolt mangling among them falls.

V.

And now the horsemen come—and all was done
Swifter than I have spoken—I beheld
Their red swords flash in the unrisen sun.
I rushed among the rout to have repelled
That miserable flight—one moment quelled
By voice, and looks, and eloquent despair,
As if reproach from their own hearts withheld
Their steps, they stood ; but soon came pouring there
New multitudes, and did those rallied bands o'erbear.

VI.

I strove, as drifted on some cataract
 By irresistible streams, some wretch might strive
 Who hears its fatal roar : the files compact
 Whelmed me, and from the gate availed to drive
 With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive
 Their ranks with bloodier chasm : into the plain
 Disgorged at length the dead and the alive,
 In one dread mass, were parted, and the stain
 Of blood from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

VII.

For now the despot's blood-hounds with their prey
 Unarmed and unaware, were gorging deep
 Their gluttony of death ; the loose array
 Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep,
 And with loud laughter for their tyrant reap
 A harvest sown with other hopes ; the while,
 Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep
 A killing rain of fire :—when the waves smile
 As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano isle.

VIII.

Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread
 For the carrion fowls of Heaven.—I saw the sight—
 I moved—I lived—as o'er the heaps of dead,
 Whose stony eyes glared in the morning light,
 I trod ; to me there came no thought of flight,
 But with loud cries of scorn which whoso heard
 That dreaded death, felt in his veins the might
 Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirred,
 And desperation's hope in many hearts recurred.

IX.

A band of brothers gathering round me, made,
 Although unarmed, a stedfast front, and still
 Retreating, with stern looks beneath the shade
 Of gathered eyebrows, did the victors fill
 With doubt even in success ; deliberate will
 Inspired our growing troop ; not overthrown
 It gained the shelter of a grassy hill,
 And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
 And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown.

X.

Immoveably we stood—in joy I found,
 Beside me then, firm as a giant pine
 Among the mountain vapours driven around,
 The old man whom I loved—his eyes divine
 With a mild look of courage answered mine,
 And my young friend was near, and ardently
 His hand grasped mine a moment—now the line
 Of war extended, to our rallying cry,
 As myriads flocked in love and brotherhood to die.

XI.

For ever while the sun was climbing Heaven
 The horsemen hewed our unarmed myriads down
 Safely, though when by thirst of carnage driven
 Too near, those slaves were swiftly overthrown
 By hundreds leaping on them : flesh and bone
 Soon made our ghastly ramparts ; then the shaft
 Of the artillery from the sea was thrown
 More fast and fiery, and the conquerors laughed
 In pride to hear the wind our screams of torment waft.

XII.

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
So vast that phalanx of unconquered men,
And there the living in their blood did welter
Of the dead and dying, which, in that green glen,
Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
Under the feet—thus was the butchery waged
While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern steep—but when
It 'gan to sink, a fiercer combat raged,
For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

XIII.

Within a cave upon the hill were found
A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument
Of those who war but on their native ground
For natural rights: a shout of joyance sent
Even from our hearts the wide air pierced and rent,
As those few arms the bravest and the best
Seized; and each sixth, thus armed, did now present
A line which covered and sustained the rest,
A confident phalanx, which the foes on every side invest.

XIV.

That onset turned the foes to flight almost;
But soon they saw their present strength, and knew
That coming night would to our resolute host
Bring victory; so dismounting close they drew
Their glittering files, and then the combat grew
Unequal but most horrible;—and ever
Our myriads, whom the swift bolt overthrew,
Or the red sword, failed like a mountain river
Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands for ever.

xv.

Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind
 Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood
 To mutual ruin armed by one behind,
 Who sits and scoffs!—That friend so mild and good
 Who like its shadow near my youth had stood,
 Was stabbed!—my old preserver's hoary hair,
 With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strewed
 Under my feet! I lost all sense or care,
 And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

xvi.

The battle became ghastlier, in the midst
 I paused, and saw, how ugly and how fell,
 O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shedd'st
 For love. The ground in many a little dell
 Was broken, up and down whose steeps befell
 Alternate victory and defeat, and there
 The combatants with rage most horrible
 Strove, and their eyes started with cracking stare,
 And impotent their tongues they lolled into the air,

xvii.

Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hanging;
 Want, and Moon-madness, and the Pest's swift bane
 When its shafts smite—while yet its bow is twanging—
 Have each their mark and sign—some ghastly stain;
 And this was thine, O War! of hate and pain
 Thou loathed slave. I saw all shapes of death,
 And minister'd to many, o'er the plain
 While carnage in the sunbeam's warmth did seethe,
 Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

XVIII.

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm,
 Around me fought. At the decline of day,
 Winding above the mountain's snowy term,
 New banners shone: they quivered in the ray
 Of the sun's unseen orb—ere night the array
 Of fresh troops hemmed us in—of those brave bands
 I soon survived alone—and now I lay
 Vanquished and faint, the grasp of bloody hands
 I felt, and saw on high the glare of falling brands;

XIX.

When on my foes a sudden terror came,
 And they fled, scattering.—Lo! with reinless speed
 A black Tartarian horse of giant frame
 Comes trampling o'er the dead; the living bleed
 Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed,
 On which, like to an angel, robed in white,
 Sate one waving a sword; the hosts recede
 And fly, as through their ranks, with awful might,
 Sweeps in the shadow of eve that Phantom swift and bright;

XX.

And its path made a solitude.—I rose
 And marked its coming; it relaxed its course
 As it approached me, and the wind that flows
 Through night, bore accents to mine ear whose force
 Might create smiles in death.—The Tartar horse
 Paused, and I saw the shape its might which swayed,
 And heard her musical pants, like the sweet source
 Of waters in the desert, as she said,
 “Mount with me, Laon, now”—I rapidly obeyed.

XXI.

Then "Away! away!" she cried, and stretched her sword
 As 'twere a scourge over the courser's head,
 And lightly shook the reins.—We spake no word,
 But like the vapour of the tempest fled
 Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread,
 Like the pine's locks upon the lingering blast;
 Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread
 Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
 As o'er their glimmering forms the steed's broad shadow past;

XXII.

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust,
 His strong sides made the torrents rise in spray,
 And turbulence, as if a whirlwind's gust
 Surrounded us;—and still away! away!
 Through the desert night we sped, while she alway
 Gazed on a mountain which we neared, whose crest
 Crowned with a marble ruin, in the ray
 Of the obscure stars gleamed;—its rugged breast
 The steed strained up, and then his impulse did arrest.

XXIII.

A rocky hill which overhung the Ocean:—
 From that lone ruin, when the steed that panted
 Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion
 Of waters, as in spots for ever haunted
 By the choicest winds of Heaven, which are enchanted
 To music by the wand of Solitude,
 That wizard wild, and the far tents implanted
 Upon the plain, be seen by those who stood
 Thence marking the dark shore of Ocean's curved flood.

XXIV.

One moment these were heard and seen—another
Past ; and the two who stood beneath that night,
Each only heard, or saw, or felt, the other ;
As from the lofty steed she did alight,
Cythna (for, from the eyes whose deepest light
Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale
With influence strange of mournfullest delight,
My own sweet Cythna looked,) with joy did quail,
And felt her strength in tears of human weakness fail.

XXV.

And for a space in my embrace she rested,
Her head on my unquiet heart reposing,
While my faint arms her languid frame invested :
At length she looked on me, and half unclosing
Her tremulous lips, said : “ Friend, thy bands were losing
The battle, as I stood before the King
In bonds.—I burst them then, and swiftly choosing
The time, did seize a Tartar’s sword, and spring
Upon his horse, and swift as on the whirlwind’s wing,

XXVI.

“ Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer,
And we are here.”—Then, turning to the steed,
She pressed the white moon on his front with pure
And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed
From the green ruin plucked, that he might feed ;—
But I to a stone seat that Maiden led,
And kissing her fair eyes, said, “ Thou hast need
Of rest,” and I heaped up the courser’s bed
In a green mossy nook, with mountain flowers dispread.

XXVII.

Within that ruin, where a shattered portal
Looks to the eastern stars, abandoned now
By man, to be the home of things immortal,
Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go,
And must inherit all he builds below,
When he is gone, a hall stood ; o'er whose roof
Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow,
Clasping its grey rents with a verdurous woof,
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.

XXVIII.

The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
A natural couch of leaves in that recess,
Which seasons none disturbed, but in the shade
Of flowering parasites, did spring love to dress
With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars, whene'er
The wandering wind her nurslings might caress ;
Whose intertwining fingers ever there,
Made music wild and soft that filled the listening air.

XXIX.

We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
May pilot us through caverns strange and fair
Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
Of life our bark doth on its whirlpools bear,
Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air ;
Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion
Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there
Louder and louder from the utmost Ocean
Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

xxx.

To the pure all things are pure ! Oblivion wrapt
 Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
 Of public hope was from our being snapt,
 Though linked years had bound it there ; for now
 A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below
 All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere,
 Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever flow,
 Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
 Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air.

xxxI.

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
 The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
 When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses
 Of inexpressive speech :—the youthful years
 Which we together past, their hopes and fears,
 The blood itself which ran within our frames,
 That likeness of the features which endears
 The thoughts expressed by them, our very names,
 And all the winged hours which speechless memory claims,

xxxII.

Had found a voice :—and ere that voice did pass,
 The night grew damp and dim, and through a rent
 Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass,
 A wandering Meteor, by some wild wind sent,
 Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent
 A faint and pallid lustre ; while the song
 Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent,
 Strewed strangest sounds the moving leaves among ;
 A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

XXXIII.

The Meteor showed the leaves on which we sate,
 And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties
 Of her soft hair, which bent with gathered weight
 My neck near hers, her dark and deepening eyes,
 Which, as twin phantoms of one star that lies
 O'er a dim well, move, though the star reposes,
 Swam in our mute and liquid ecstacies,
 Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses,
 With their own fragrance pale, which spring but half un-
 closes.

XXXIV.

The Meteor to its far morass returned :
 The beating of our veins one interval
 Made still ; and then I felt the blood that burned
 Within her frame, mingle with mine, and fall
 Around my heart like fire ; and over all
 A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
 And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
 Two disunited spirits when they leap
 In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

XXXV.

Was it one moment that confounded thus
 All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
 Unutterable power, which shielded us
 Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone
 Into a wide and wild oblivion
 Of tumult and of tenderness ? or now
 Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
 The seasons and mankind, their changes know,
 Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below ?

XXXVI.

I know not. What are kisses whose fire clasps
The failing heart in languishment, or limb
Twined within limb? or the quick dying gasps
Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes swim
Through tears of a wide mist, boundless and dim,
In one caress? What is the strong control
Which leads the heart that dizzy steep to climb,
Where far over the world those vapours roll,
Which blend two restless frames in one reposing soul?

XXXVII.

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
Whose divine darkness fled not from that green
And lone recess, where lapt in peace did lie
Our linked frames, till, from the changing sky,
That night and still another day had fled;
And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread
Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

XXXVIII.

Cythna's sweet lips seemed lurid in the moon,
Her fairest limbs with the night wind were chill,
And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn
O'er her pale bosom:—all within was still,
And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill
The depth of her unfathomable look;—
And we sate calmly, though that rocky hill,
The waves contending in its caverns strook,
For they foreknew the storm, and the grey ruin shook.

XXXIX.

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
 Of interchanged vows, which, with a rite
 Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.—
 Few were the living hearts which could unite
 Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
 With such close sympathies, for they had sprung
 From linked youth, and from the gentle might
 Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long,
 Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest, strong.

XL.

And such is Nature's law divine, that those
 Who grow together cannot choose but love,
 If faith or custom do not interpose,
 Or common slavery mar what else might move
 All gentlest thoughts; as in the sacred grove
 Which shades the springs of Æthiopian Nile,
 That living tree, which, if the arrowy dove
 Strike with her shadow, shrinks in fear awhile,
 But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sunbeams smile;

XLI.

And clings to them, when darkness may dissever
 The close caresses of all duller plants
 Which bloom on the wide earth—thus we for ever
 Were linked, for love had nurst us in the haunts
 Where knowledge from its secret source enchants
 Young hearts with the fresh music of its springing,
 Ere yet its gathered flood feeds human wants,
 As the great Nile feeds Egypt; ever flinging
 Light on the woven boughs which o'er its waves are swinging.

XLII.

The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes were
Of those far murmuring streams ; they rose and fell,
Mixed with mine own in the tempestuous air,—
And so we sate, until our talk befel
Of the late ruin, swift and horrible,
And how those seeds of hope might yet be sown,
Whose fruit is evil's mortal poison : well
For us, this ruin made a watch-tower lone,
But Cythna's eyes looked faint, and now two days were gone

XLIII.

Since she had food :—therefore I did awaken
The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane,
Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
Following me obediently ; with pain
Of heart, so deep and dread, that one caress,
When lips and heart refuse to part again,
Till they have told their fill, could scarce express
The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness,

XLIV.

Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode
That willing steed—the tempest and the night,
Which gave my path its safety as I rode
Down the ravine of rocks, did soon unite
The darkness and the tumult of their might
Borne on all winds.—Far through the streaming rain
Floating at intervals the garments white
Of Cythna gleamed, and her voice once again
Came to me on the gust, and soon I reached the plain.

XLV.

I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he
Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and red
Turned on the lightning's cleft exultingly ;
And when the earth beneath his tameless tread,
Shook with the sullen thunder, he would spread
His nostrils to the blast, and joyously
Mock the fierce peal with neighings ;—thus we sped
O'er the lit plain, and soon I could descry
Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil of victory.

XLVI.

There was a desolate village in a wood,
Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
The hungry storm ; it was a place of blood,
A heap of hearthless walls ;—the flames were dead
Within those dwellings now,—the life had fled
From all those corpses now,—but the wide sky
Flooded with lightning was ribbed overhead
By the black rafters, and around did lie
Women, and babes, and men, slaughtered confusedly.

XLVII.

Beside the fountain in the market-place
Dismounting, I beheld those corpses stare
With horny eyes upon each other's face,
And on the earth and on the vacant air,
And upon me, close to the waters where
I stooped to slake my thirst ;—I shrank to taste,
For the salt bitterness of blood was there !
But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste
If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII.

No living thing was there beside one woman,
 Whom I found wandering in the streets, and she
 Was withered from a likeness of aught human
 Into a fiend, by some strange misery :
 Soon as she heard my steps she leaped on me,
 And glued her burning lips to mine, and laughed
 With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of glee,
 And cried, " Now, Mortal, thou hast deeply quaffed
 The Plague's blue kisses—soon millions shall pledge the
 draught !

XLIX.

" My name is Pestilence—this bosom dry
 Once fed two babes—a sister and a brother—
 When I came home, one in the blood did lie
 Of three death-wounds—the flames had ate the other !
 Since then I have no longer been a mother,
 But I am Pestilence ;—hither and thither
 I flit about, that I may slay and smother ;—
 All lips which I have kissed must surely wither,
 But Death's—if thou art he, we'll go to work together !

L.

" What seekest thou here ? the moonlight comes in flashes,—
 The dew is rising dankly from the dell ;
 'Twill moisten her ! and thou shalt see the gashes
 In my sweet boy—now full of worms—but tell
 First what thou seek'st."—" I seek for food."—" 'Tis well,
 Thou shalt have food ; Famine, my paramour,
 Waits for us at the feast—cruel and fell
 Is Famine, but he drives not from his door
 Those whom these lips have kissed, alone. No more, no
 more ! "

LI.

As thus she spake, she grasped me with the strength
 Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth
 She led, and over many a corpse :—at length
 We came to a lone hut, where on the earth
 Which made its floor, she in her ghastly mirth
 Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
 Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth
 Among the dead—round which she set in state
 A ring of cold, stiff babes ; silent and stark they sate.

LII.

She leaped upon a pile, and lifted high
 Her mad looks to the lightning, and cried : “ Eat !
 Share the great feast—to-morrow we must die ! ”
 And then she spurned the loaves with her pale feet,
 Towards her bloodless guests ;—that sight to meet,
 Mine eyes and my heart ached, and but that she
 Who loved me, did with absent looks defeat
 Despair, I might have raved in sympathy ;
 But now I took the food that woman offered me ;

LIII.

And vainly having with her madness striven
 If I might win her to return with me,
 Departed. In the eastern beams of Heaven
 The lightning now grew pallid—rapidly,
 As by the shore of the tempestuous sea
 The dark steed bore me, and the mountain grey
 Soon echoed to his hoofs, and I could see
 Cythna among the rocks, where she alway
 Had sate, with anxious eyes fixed on the lingering day.

LIV.

And joy was ours to meet : she was most pale,
Famished, and wet and weary, so I cast
My arms around her, lest her steps should fail
As to our home we went, and thus embraced,
Her full heart seemed a deeper joy to taste
Than e'er the prosperous know ; the steed behind
Trode peacefully along the mountain waste :
We reached our home ere morning could unbind
Night's latest veil, and on our bridal couch reclined.

LV.

Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom,
And sweetest kisses past, we two did share
Our peaceful meal :—as an autumnal blossom,
Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air,
After cold showers, like rainbows woven there,
Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit
Mantled, and in her eyes, an atmosphere
Of health, and hope ; and sorrow languished near it,
And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

CANTO VII.



I.

So we sate joyous as the morning ray
Which fed upon the wrecks of night and storm
Now lingering on the winds ; light airs did play
Among the dewy weeds, the sun was warm,
And we sate linked in the inwoven charm
Of converse and caresses sweet and deep,
Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm
Time, though he wield the darts of death and sleep,
And those thrice mortal barbs in his own poison steep.

II.

I told her of my sufferings and my madness,
And how, awakened from that dreamy mood
By Liberty's uprising, the strength of gladness
Came to my spirit in my solitude ;
And all that now I was, while tears pursued
Each other down her fair and listening cheek
Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood
From sunbright dales ; and when I ceased to speak,
Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

III.

She told me a strange tale of strange endurance,
Like broken memories of many a heart
Woven into one ; to which no firm assurance,
So wild were they, could her own faith impart.
She said that not a tear did dare to start
From the swoln brain, and that her thoughts were firm
When from all mortal hope she did depart,
Borne by those slaves across the Ocean's term,
And that she reached the port without one fear infirm.

IV.

One was she among many there, the thralls
Of the cold tyrant's cruel lust : and they
Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls ;
But she was calm and sad, musing alway
On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
The tyrant heard her singing to her lute
A wild and sad, and spirit-thrilling lay,
Like winds that die in wastes—one moment mute
The evil thoughts it made, which did his breast pollute.

V.

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,
One moment to great Nature's sacred power
He bent and was no longer passionless ;
But when he bade her to his secret bower
Be borne a loveless victim, and she tore
Her locks in agony, and her words of flame
And mightier looks availed not ; then he bore
Again his load of slavery, and became
A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

VI.

She told me what a loathsome agony
Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight,
Foul as in dreams most fearful imagery
To dally with the mowing dead—that night
All torture, fear, or horror, made seem light
Which the soul dreams or knows, and when the day
Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight
Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay
Struggling, aghast and pale the tyrant fled away.

VII.

Her madness was a beam of light, a power
Which dawned through the rent soul ; and words it gave,
Gestures and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore
Which might not be withstood, whence none could save
All who approached their sphere, like some calm wave
Vexed into whirlpools by the chasms beneath ;
And sympathy made each attendant slave
Fearless and free, and they began to breathe
Deep curses, like the voice of flames far underneath.

VIII.

The King felt pale upon his noon-day throne ;
At night two slaves he to her chamber sent,
One was a green and wrinkled eunuch, grown
From human shape into an instrument
Of all things ill—distorted, bowed and bent.
The other was a wretch from infancy
Made dumb by poison ; who nought knew or meant
But to obey : from the fire-isles came he,
A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

IX.

They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke
Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight seas,
Until upon their path the morning broke ;
They anchored then, where, be there calm or breeze,
The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
Shakes with the sleepless surge ;—the Æthiop there
Wound his long arms around her, and with knees
Like iron clasped her feet, and plunged with her
Among the closing waves out of the boundless air.

X.

“ Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain
Of morning light, into some shadowy wood,
He plunged through the green silence of the main,
Through many a cavern which the eternal flood
Had scooped, as dark lairs for its monster brood ;
And among mighty shapes which fled in wonder,
And among mightier shadows which pursued
His heels, he wound : until the dark rocks under
He touched a golden chain—a sound arose like thunder.

XI.

“ A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling
Beneath the deep—a burst of waters driven
As from the roots of the sea, raging and bubbling :
And in that roof of crags a space was riven
Thro' which there shone the emerald beams of heaven,
Shot through the lines of many waves inwoven,
Like sunlight through acacia woods at even,
Through which, his way the diver having cloven,
Past like a spark sent up out of a burning oven.

XII.

“ And then,” she said, “ he laid me in a cave
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,
A fountain round and vast, in which the wave
Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually,
Down which, one moment resting, he did flee,
Winning the adverse depth ; that spacious cell
Like an upaithric temple wide and high,
Whose aëry dome is inaccessible,
Was pierced with one round cleft through which the sun-
beams fell.

XIII.

“ Below, the fountain’s brink was richly paven
With the deep’s wealth, coral, and pearl, and sand
Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven
With mystic legends by no mortal hand,
Left there, when, thronging to the moon’s command,
The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate
Of mountains, and on such bright floor did stand
Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state
Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her heart create.

XIV.

“ The fiend of madness which had made its prey
Of my poor heart, was lulled to sleep awhile :
There was an interval of many a day,
And a sea-eagle brought me food the while,
Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle,
And who, to be the jailer, had been taught,
Of that strange dungeon ; as a friend whose smile
Like light and rest at morn and even is sought,
That wild bird was to me, till madness misery brought.

XV.

“ The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air,
And the white clouds of noon which oft were sleeping
In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,
Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there ;
And the sea-eagle looked a fiend who bore
Thy mangled limbs for food !—Thus all things were
Transformed into the agony which I wore,
Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom’s core.

XVI.

“ Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing,
The eagle and the fountain and the air ;
Another frenzy came—there seemed a being
Within me—a strange load my heart did bear,
As if some living thing had made its lair
Even in the fountains of my life :—a long
And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,
Then grew, like sweet reality among
Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

XVII.

“ Methought I was about to be a mother—
Month after month went by, and still I dreamed
That we should soon be all to one another,
I and my child ; and still new pulses seemed
To beat beside my heart, and still I deemed
There was a babe within—and when the rain
Of winter through the rifted cavern streamed,
Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain,
I saw that lovely shape, which near my heart had lain.

XVIII.

"It was a babe, beautiful from its birth,—
 It was like thee, dear love! its eyes were thine,
 Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth
 It laid its fingers, as now rest on mine
 Thine own, beloved!—'twas a dream divine;
 Even to remember how it fled, how swift,
 How utterly, might make the heart repine,—
 Though 'twas a dream."—Then Cythna did uplift
 Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to shift:

XIX.

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
 Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears;
 Which, having past, as one whom sobs oppress,
 She spoke: "Yes, in the wilderness of years
 Her memory, aye, like a green home appears.
 She sucked her fill even at this breast, sweet love,
 For many months I had no mortal fears;
 Methought I felt her lips and breath approve,—
 It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

XX.

"I watched the dawn of her first smiles, and soon
 When zenith-stars were trembling on the wave,
 Or when the beams of the invisible moon,
 Or sun, from many a prism within the cave
 Their gem-born shadows to the water gave,
 Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand,
 From the swift lights which might that fountain pave,
 She would mark one, and laugh, when that command
 Slighting, it lingered there, and could not understand.

XXI.

“ Methought her looks began to talk with me ;
 And no articulate sounds, but something sweet
 Her lips would frame,—so sweet it could not be,
 That it was meaningless ; her touch would meet
 Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and beat
 In response while we slept ; and on a day
 When I was happiest in that strange retreat,
 With heaps of golden shells we two did play,—
 Both infants, weaving wings for time’s perpetual way.

XXII.

“ Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown
 Weary with joy, and tired with our delight,
 We, on the earth, like sister twins lay down
 On one fair mother’s bosom :—from that night
 She fled ;—like those illusions clear and bright,
 Which dwell in lakes, when the red moon on high
 Pause ere it wakens tempest ;—and her flight,
 Though ’twas the death of brainless phantasy,
 Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

XXIII.

“ It seemed that in the dreary night, the diver
 Who brought me thither, came again, and bore
 My child away. I saw the waters quiver,
 When he so swiftly sunk, as once before :
 Then morning came—it shone even as of yore,
 But I was changed—the very life was gone
 Out of my heart—I wasted more and more,
 Day after day, and sitting there alone,
 Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXIV

" I was no longer mad, and yet methought
 My breasts were swoln and changed :—in every vein
 The blood stood still one moment, while that thought
 Was passing—with a gush of sickening pain
 It ebbd even to its withered springs again :
 When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned
 From that most strange delusion, which would fain
 Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearned
 With more than human love,—then left it unreturned.

XXV.

" So now my reason was restored to me,
 I struggled with that dream, which, like a beast
 Most fierce and beauteous, in my memory
 Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast ;
 But all that cave and all its shapes possest
 By thoughts which could not fade, renewed each one
 Some smile, some look, some gesture which had blest
 Me heretofore : I, sitting there alone,
 Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXVI.

" Time past, I know not whether months or years ;
 For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made
 Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears :
 And I became at last even as a shade,
 A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have preyed,
 Till it be thin as air ; until, one even,
 A Nautilus upon the fountain played,
 Spreading his azure sail where breath of Heaven
 Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

XXVII.

“ And when the Eagle came, that lovely thing,
Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat,
Fled near me as for shelter ; on slow wing,
The Eagle, hovering o'er his prey, did float ;
But when he saw that I with fear did note
His purpose, proffering my own food to him,
The eager plumes subsided on his throat—
He came where that bright child of sea did swim,
And o'er it cast in peace his shadow broad and dim.

XXVIII.

“ This wakened me, it gave me human strength ;
And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose,
But I resumed my ancient powers at length ;
My spirit felt again like one of those,
Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
Of humankind their prey—what was this cave ?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX.

“ And where was Laon ? might my heart be dead,
While that far dearer heart could move and be ?
Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread,
Which I had sworn to rend ? I might be free,
Could I but win that friendly bird to me,
To bring me ropes ; and long in vain I sought
By intercourse of mutual imagery
Of objects, if such aid he could be taught ;
But fruit, and flowers, and boughs, yet never ropes he brought.

xxx.

“ We live in our own world, and mine was made
 From glorious phantasies of hope departed :
 Aye, we are darkened with their floating shade,
 Or cast a lustre on them—time imparted
 Such power to me, I became fearless-hearted ;
 My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind,
 And piercing, like the morn, now it has darted
 Its lustre on all hidden things, behind
 Yon dim and fading clouds which load the weary wind.

xxxI.

“ My mind became the book through which I grew
 Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
 Which like a mine I rifled through and through,
 To me the keeping of its secrets gave—
 One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave
 Whose calm reflects all moving things that are,
 Necessity, and love, and life, the grave,
 And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear ;
 Justice, and truth, and time, and the world’s natural sphere.

xxxII.

“ And on the sand would I make signs to range
 These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought ;
 Clear elemental shapes, whose smallest change
 A subtler language within language wrought :
 The key of truths which once were dimly taught
 In old Crotona ;—and sweet melodies
 Of love, in that lone solitude I caught
 From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
 Shone through my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize.

XXXIII.

"Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at will,
 As in a winged chariot, o'er the plain
 Of crystal youth; and thou wert there to fill
 My heart with joy, and there we sate again
 On the grey margin of the glimmering main.
 Happy as then but wiser far, for we
 Smiled on the flowery grave in which were lain
 Fear, Faith, and Slavery; and mankind was free,
 Equal, and pure, and wise, in wisdom's prophecy.

XXXIV.

"For to my will my fancies were as slaves
 To do their sweet and subtle ministries;
 And oft from that bright fountain's shadowy waves
 They would make human throngs gather and rise
 To combat with my overflowing eyes,
 And voice made deep with passion—thus I grew
 Familiar with the shock and the surprise
 And war of earthly minds, from which I drew
 The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts
 anew.

XXXV.

"And thus my prison was the populous earth—
 Where I saw—even as misery dreams of morn
 Before the east has given its glory birth—
 Religion's pomp made desolate by the scorn
 Of Wisdom's faintest smile, and thrones uptorn,
 And dwellings of mild people interspersed
 With undivided fields of ripening corn,
 And love made free,—a hope which we have nurst
 Even with our blood and tears,—until its glory burst.

XXXVI.

“ All is not lost ! There is some recompense
For hope whose fountain can be thus profound,
Even throned Evil’s splendid impotence,
Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound
Of hymns to truth and freedom,—the dread bound
Of life and death passed fearlessly and well,
Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
Racks which degraded woman’s greatness tell,
And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII.

“ Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare
In storm-encompassed isles, we cherish yet
In this dark ruin—such were mine even there ;
As in its sleep some odorous violet,
While yet its leaves with nightly dews are wet,
Breathes in prophetic dreams of day’s uprising,
Or, as ere Scythian frost in fear has met
Spring’s messengers descending from the skies,
The buds foreknow their life—this hope must ever rise.

XXXVIII.

“ So years had past, when sudden earthquake rent
The depth of ocean, and the cavern crackt
With sound, as if the world’s wide continent
Had fallen in universal ruin wrackt ;
And through the cleft streamed in one cataract
The stifling waters :—when I woke, the flood,
Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sacked,
Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode
Before me yawned—a chasm desert, and bare, and broad.

XXXIX.

" Above me was the sky, beneath the sea :
 I stood upon a point of shattered stone,
 And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously
 With splash and shock into the deep—anon
 All ceased, and there was silence wide and lone.
 I felt that I was free ! The Ocean-spray
 Quivered beneath my feet, the broad Heaven shone
 Around, and in my hair the winds did play,
 Lingering as they pursued their unimpeded way.

XL.

" My spirit moved upon the sea like wind
 Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover,
 Though it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
 The strength of tempest : day was almost over,
 When through the fading light I could discover
 A ship approaching—its white sails were fed
 With the north wind—its moving shade did cover
 The twilight deep ;—the mariners in dread
 Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

XLI.

" And when they saw one sitting on a crag,
 They sent a boat to me ;—the sailors rowed
 In awe through many a new and fearful jag
 Of overhanging rock, through which there flowed
 The foam of streams that cannot make abode.
 They came and questioned me, but, when they heard
 My voice, they became silent, and they stood
 And moved as men in whom new love had stirred
 Deep thoughts : so to the ship we past without a word.

CANTO VIII.

I.

“ I SATÉ beside the steersman then, and, gazing
Upon the west, cried, ‘ Spread the sails! behold!
The sinking moon is like a watch-tower blazing
Over the mountains yet;—the City of Gold
Yon Cape alone does from the sight withhold;
The stream is fleet—the north breathes steadily
Beneath the stars; they tremble with the cold!
Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea;—
Haste, haste to the warm home of happier destiny!’

II.

“ The Mariners obeyed—the Captain stood
Aloof, and, whispering to the Pilot, said,
‘ Alas, alas! I fear we are pursued
By wicked ghosts: a Phantom of the Dead,
The night before we sailed, came to my bed
In dream, like that!’ The Pilot then replied,
‘ It cannot be—she is a human Maid—
Her low voice makes you weep—she is some bride.
Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside.’

III.

“ We past the islets, borne by wind and stream,
 And as we sailed, the Mariners came near
 And thronged around to listen ;—in the gleam
 Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear
 May not attaint, and my calm voice did rear :
 ‘ Ye are all human—yon broad moon gives light
 To millions who the self-same likeness wear.
 Even while I speak—beneath this very night,
 Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight.

IV.

“ ‘ What dream ye ? Your own hands have built a home.
 Even for yourselves on a beloved shore :
 For some, fond eyes are pining till they come,
 How they will greet him when his toils are o’er,
 And laughing babes rush from the well-known door !
 Is this your care ? ye toil for your own good—
 Ye feel and think—has some immortal power
 Such purposes ? or in a human mood,
 Dream ye some Power thus builds for man in solitude ?

V.

“ ‘ What is that Power ? Ye mock yourselves, and give
 A human heart to what ye cannot know :
 As if the cause of life could think and live !
 ’Twere as if man’s own works should feel, and show
 The hopes, and fears, and thoughts, from which they flow,
 And he be like to them. Lo ! Plague is free
 To waste, Blight, Poison, Earthquake, Hail, and Snow,
 Disease, and Want, and worse Necessity
 Of hate and ill, and Pride, and Fear, and Tyranny.

VI.

“ ‘ What is that Power ? Some moon-struck sophist stood
 Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
 Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
 The Form he saw and worshipped was his own,
 His likeness in the world’s vast mirror shown ;
 And ’twere an innocent dream, but that a faith
 Nursed by fear’s dew of poison, grows thereon,
 And that men say, that Power has chosen Death
 On all who scorn its laws, to wreak immortal wrath.

VII.

“ ‘ Men say that they themselves have heard and seen,
 Or known from others who have known such things,
 A Shade, a Form, which Earth and Heaven between
 Wields an invisible rod—that Priests and Kings,
 Custom, domestic sway, ay, all that brings
 Man’s free-born soul beneath the oppressor’s heel,
 Are his strong ministers, and that the stings
 Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel,
 Though truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold steel.

VIII.

“ ‘ And it is said, this Power will punish wrong ;
 Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to pain !
 And deepest hell, and deathless snakes among,
 Will bind the wretch on whom is fixed a stain,
 Which, like a plague, a burthen, and a bane,
 Clung to him while he lived ;—for love and hate,
 Virtue and vice, they say are difference vain—
 The will of strength is right—this human state
 Tyrants, that they may rule, with lies thus desolate.

IX.

“ ‘ Alas, what strength? Opinion is more frail
 Than yon dim cloud now fading on the moon
 Even while we gaze, though it awhile avail
 To hide the orb of truth—and every throne
 Of Earth or Heaven, though shadow rests thereon,
 One shape of many names :—for this ye plough
 The barren waves of ocean ; hence each one
 Is slave or tyrant ; all betray and bow,
 Command, or kill, or fear, or wreak, or suffer woe.

X.

“ ‘ Its names are each a sign which maketh holy
 All power—ay, the ghost, the dream, the shade,
 Of power—lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly ;
 The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made,
 A law to which mankind has been betrayed ;
 And human love, is as the name well known
 Of a dear mother, whom the murderer laid
 In bloody grave, and, into darkness thrown,
 Gathered her wildered babes around him as his own.

XI.

“ ‘ O love ! who to the hearts of wandering men
 Art as the calm to Ocean’s weary waves !
 Justice, or truth, or joy ! thou only can
 From slavery and religion’s labyrinth caves
 Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.
 To give to all an equal share of good,
 To track the steps of freedom, though through graves
 She pass, to suffer all in patient mood,
 To weep for crime, though stained with thy friend’s dearest
 blood.

XII.

“ ‘ To feel the peace of self-contentment’s lot,
 To own all sympathies, and outrage none,
 And, in the inmost bowers of sense and thought,
 Until life’s sunny day is quite gone down,
 To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone,
 To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of Woe ;
 To live, as if to love and live were one,—
 This is not faith or law, nor those who bow
 To thrones on Heaven or Earth, such destiny may know.

XIII.

“ ‘ But children near their parents tremble now,
 Because they must obey—one rules another,
 And as one Power rules both high and low,
 So man is made the captive of his brother,
 And Hate is throned on high with Fear her mother,
 Above the Highest—and those fountain-cells,
 Whence love yet flowed when faith had choked all other,
 Are darkened—Woman, as the bond-slave, dwells
 Of man, a slave ; and life is poisoned in its wells.

XIV.

“ ‘ Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave
 A lasting chain for his own slavery ;—
 In fear and restless care that he may live
 He toils for others, who must ever be
 The joyless thralls of like captivity ;
 He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin ;
 He builds the altar, that its idol’s fee
 May be his very blood ; he is pursuing,
 O, blind and willing wretch ! his own obscure undoing.

xv.

“ ‘ Woman !—she is his slave, she has become
 A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn,
 The outcast of a desolated home.
 Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves have worn
 Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn,
 As calm decks the false Ocean :—well ye know
 What Woman is, for none of Woman born
 Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
 Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

xvi.

“ ‘ This need not be ; ye might arise, and will
 That gold should lose its power, and thrones their glory ;
 That love, which none may bind, be free to fill
 The world, like light ; and evil faith, grown hoary
 With crime, be quenched and die.—Yon promontory
 Even now eclipses the descending moon !—
 Dungeons and palaces are transitory—
 High temples fade like vapour—Man alone
 Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

xvii.

“ ‘ Let all be free and equal !—From your hearts
 I feel an echo ; through my inmost frame
 Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it darts—
 Whence come ye, friends ? Alas, I cannot name
 All that I read of sorrow, toil, and shame,
 On your worn faces ; as in legends old
 Which make immortal the disastrous fame
 Of conquerors and impostors false and bold,
 The discord of your hearts I in your looks behold.

XVIII.

“ ‘ Whence come ye, friends? from pouring human blood
 Forth on the earth? or bring ye steel and gold,
 That Kings may dupe and slay the multitude?
 Or from the famished poor, pale, weak, and cold,
 Bear ye the earnings of their toil? unfold!
 Speak! are your hands in slaughter’s sanguine hue
 Stain’d freshly? have your hearts in guile grown old?
 Know yourselves thus? ye shall be pure as dew,
 And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

XIX.

“ ‘ Disguise it not—we have one human heart—
 All mortal thoughts confess a common home:
 Blush not for what may to thyself impart
 Stains of inevitable crime: the doom
 Is this, which has, or may, or must, become
 Thine, and all humankind’s. Ye are the spoil
 Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb,
 Thou and thy thoughts and they, and all the toil
 Wherewith ye twine the rings of life’s perpetual coil

XX.

“ ‘ Disguise it not—ye blush for what ye hate,
 And Enmity is sister unto Shame;
 Look on your mind—it is the book of fate—
 Ah! it is dark with many a blazoned name
 Of misery—all are mirrors of the same;
 But the dark fiend who with his iron pen,
 Dipped in scorn’s fiery poison, makes his fame
 Enduring there, would o’er the heads of men
 Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their hearts his den.

XXI.

“ ‘ Yes, it is Hate, that shapeless fiendly thing
 Of many names, all evil, some divine,
 Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal sting ;
 Which, when the heart its snaky folds entwine,
 Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine
 To gorge such bitter prey, on all beside
 It turns with ninefold rage, as with its twine
 When Amphisbæna some fair bird has tied,
 Soon o’er the putrid mass he threats on every side.

XXII.

“ ‘ Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself,
 Nor hate another’s crime, nor loathe thine own.
 It is the dark idolatry of self,
 Which, when our thoughts and actions once are gone,
 Demands that man should weep, and bleed, and groan ;
 O vacant expiation ! be at rest.—
 The past is Death’s, the future is thine own ;
 And love and joy can make the foulest breast
 A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest.’

XXIII.

“ ‘ Speak thou ! whence come ye ? ’—A Youth made reply,
 ‘ Wearily, wearily o’er the boundless deep
 We sail ;—thou readest well the misery
 Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep
 Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,
 Or dare not write on the dishonoured brow ;
 Even from our childhood have we learned to steep
 The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
 And never dreamed of hope or refuge until now.

XXIV.

“ ‘ Yes—I must speak—my secret would have perished
 Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
 Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherished,
 But that no human bosom can withstand
 Thee, wondrous Lady, and the mild command
 Of thy keen eyes :—yes, we are wretched slaves,
 Who from their wonted loves and native land
 Are reft, and bear o’er the dividing waves
 The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

XXV.

“ ‘ We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest
 Among the daughters of those mountains lone,
 We drag them there, where all things best and rarest
 Are stained and trampled :—years have come and gone
 Since, like the ship which bears me, I have known
 No thought ;—but now the eyes of one dear Maid
 On mine with light of mutual love have shone—
 She is my life,—I am but as the shade
 Of her,—a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to fade.

XXVI.

“ ‘ For she must perish in the tyrant’s hall—
 Alas, alas !’—He ceased, and by the sail
 Sate cowering—but his sobs were heard by all,
 And still before the ocean and the gale
 The ship fled fast till the stars ’gan to fail.
 All round me gathered with mute countenance,
 The Seamen gazed, the Pilot, worn and pale
 With toil, the Captain with grey locks, whose glance
 Met mine in restless awe—they stood as in a trance.

XXVII.

“ ‘Recede not! pause not now! thou art grown old,
 But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth
 Are children of one mother, even Love—behold!
 The eternal stars gaze on us!—is the truth
 Within your soul? care for your own, or ruth
 For other’s sufferings? do ye thirst to bear
 A heart which not the serpent custom’s tooth
 May violate?—Be free! and even here,
 Swear to be firm till death!’ They cried, ‘We swear! we
 swear!’

XXVIII.

“ The very darkness shook, as with a blast
 Of subterranean thunder at the cry;
 The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
 Into the night, as if the sea, and sky,
 And earth, rejoiced with new-born liberty,
 For in that name they swore! Bolts were undrawn,
 And on the deck, with unaccustomed eye
 The captives gazing stood, and every one
 Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her countenance shone.

XXIX.

“ They were earth’s purest children, young and fair,
 With eyes the shrines of unawakened thought,
 And brows as bright as spring or morning, ere
 Dark time had there its evil legend wrought
 In characters of cloud which wither not.—
 The change was like a dream to them; but soon
 They knew the glory of their altered lot,
 In the bright wisdom of youth’s breathless noon,
 Sweet talk, and smiles, and sighs, all bosoms did attune.

xxx.

“ But one was mute, her cheeks and lips most fair,
 Changing their hue like lilies newly blown,
 Beneath a bright acacia’s shadowy hair,
 Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
 Showed that her soul was quivering ; and full soon
 That Youth arose, and breathlessly did look
 On her and me, as for some speechless boon :
 I smiled, and both their hands in mine I took,
 And felt a soft delight from what their spirits shook.

CANTO IX.



i.

“ THAT night we anchored in a woody bay,
 And sleep no more around us dared to hover
 Than, when all doubt and fear has passed away,
 It shades the couch of some unresting lover,
 Whose heart is now at rest : thus night passed over
 In mutual joy :—around, a forest grew
 Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover
 The waning stars, pranked in the waters blue,
 And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew.

II.

“The joyous mariners, and each free maiden,
Now brought from the deep forest many a bough,
With woodland spoil most innocently laden ;
Soon wreaths of budding foliage seemed to flow
Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow
Were canopied with blooming boughs,—the while
On the slant sun’s path o’er the waves we go
Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle
Doomed to pursue those waves that cannot cease to smile.

III.

“The many ships spotting the dark blue deep
With snowy sails, fled fast as ours came nigh,
In fear and wonder ; and on every steep
Thousands did gaze, they heard the startling cry,
Like earth’s own voice lifted unconquerably
To all her children, the unbounded mirth,
The glorious joy of thy name—Liberty !
They heard !—As o’er the mountains of the earth
From peak to peak leap on the beams of morning’s birth :

IV.

“So from that cry over the boundless hills,
Sudden was caught one universal sound,
Like a volcano’s voice, whose thunder fills
Remotest skies,—such glorious madness found
A path through human hearts with stream which drowned
Its struggling fears and cares, dark custom’s brood ;
They knew not whence it came, but felt around
A wide contagion poured—they called aloud
On Liberty—that name lived on the sunny flood.

v.

“ We reached the port—alas ! from many spirits
 The wisdom which had waked that cry, was fled,
 Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits
 From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,
 Upon the night’s devouring darkness shed :
 Yet soon bright day will burst—even like a chasm
 Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead,
 Which wrap the world ; a wide enthusiasm,
 To cleanse the fevered world as with an earthquake’s spasms !

vi.

“ I walked through the great City then, but free
 From shame or fear ; those toil-worn Mariners
 And happy Maidens did encompass me ;
 And like a subterranean wind that stirs
 Some forest among caves, the hopes and fears
 From every human soul, a murmur strange
 Made as I past ; and many wept, with tears
 Of joy and awe, and winged thoughts did range,
 And half-extinguished words, which prophesied of change.

vii.

“ For, with strong speech I tore the veil that hid
 Nature, and Truth, and Liberty, and Love,—
 As one who from some mountain’s pyramid,
 Points to the unrisen sun !—the shades approve
 His truth, and flee from every stream and grove.
 Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom fill,—
 Wisdom the mail of tried affections wove
 For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill
 Thrice steeped in molten steel the unconquerable will.

VIII.

“ Some said I was a maniac wild and lost ;
 Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave
 The Prophet’s virgin bride, a heavenly ghost :—
 Some said I was a fiend from my weird cave,
 Who had stolen human shape, and o’er the wave,
 The forest, and the mountain, came ;—some said
 I was the child of God, sent down to save
 Women from bonds and death, and on my head
 The burthen of their sins would frightfully be laid.

IX.

“ But soon my human words found sympathy
 In human hearts : the purest and the best,
 As friend with friend made common cause with me,
 And they were few, but resolute ;—the rest,
 Ere yet success the enterprise had blest,
 Leagued with me in their hearts ;—their meals, their
 Their hourly occupations, were possest [slumber,
 By hopes which I had armed to outnumber
 Those hosts of meaner cares, which life’s strong wings
 encumber.

X.

“ But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken
 From their cold, careless, willing slavery,
 Sought me : one truth their dreary prison has shaken,
 They looked around, and lo ! they became free !
 Their many tyrants sitting desolately
 In slave-deserted halls, could none restrain ;
 For wrath’s red fire had withered in the eye,
 Whose lightning once was death,—nor fear, nor gain
 Could tempt one captive now to lock another’s chain.

XI.

“ Those who were sent to bind me, wept, and felt
 Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasped them round,
 Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt
 In the white furnace ; and a visioned swound,
 A pause of hope and awe, the City bound,
 Which, like the silence of a tempest’s birth,
 When in its awful shadow it has wound
 The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth,
 Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leapt forth.

XII.

“ Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky,
 By winds from distant regions meeting there,
 In the high name of truth and liberty,
 Around the City millions gathered were,
 By hopes which sprang from many a hidden lair ;
 Words, which the lore of truth in hues of grace
 Arrayed, thine own wild songs which in the air
 Like homeless odours floated, and the name
 Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst dipped in flame.

XIII.

“ The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear,
 The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event—
 That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
 And whatso’er, when force is impotent,
 To fraud the sceptre of the world has lent,
 Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway.
 Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent
 To curse the rebels.—To their gods did they
 For Earthquake, Plague, and Want, kneel in the public way.

xiv.

“ And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell
 From seats where law is made the slave of wrong,
 How glorious Athens in her splendour fell,
 Because her sons were free,—and that among
 Mankind, the many to the few belong,
 By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity.
 They said, that age was truth, and that the young
 Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
 With which old times and men had quelled the vain and free

xv.

“ And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips
 They breathed on the enduring memory
 Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse ;
 There was one teacher, whom necessity
 Had armed with strength and wrong against mankind,
 His slave and his avenger aye to be ;
 That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind,
 And that the will of one was peace, and we
 Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery.

xvi.

“ ‘ For thus we might avoid the hell hereafter.’
 So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and lied ;
 Alas, their sway was past, and tears and laughter
 Clung to their hoary hair, withering the pride
 Which in their hollow hearts dared still abide ;
 And yet obscener slaves with smoother brow,
 And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue, and wide,
 Said, that the rule of men was over now,
 And hence, the subject world to woman’s will must bow ;

XVII.

" And gold was scattered through the streets, and wine
 Flowed at a hundred feasts within the wall.
 In vain ! The steady towers in Heaven did shine
 As they were wont, nor at the priestly call
 Left Plague her banquet in the Æthiop's hall,
 Nor Famine from the rich man's portal came,
 Where at her ease she ever preys on all
 Who throng to kneel for food : nor fear, nor shame,
 Nor faith, nor discord, dimmed hope's newly-kindled flame.

XVIII.

" For gold was as a god whose faith began
 To fade, so that its worshippers were few,
 And Faith itself, which in the heart of man
 Gives shape, voice, name, to spectral Terror, knew
 Its downfall, as the altars lonelier grew,
 Till the Priests stood alone within the fane ;
 The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew,
 And the cold sneers of calumny were vain
 The union of the free with discord's brand to stain.

XIX.

" The rest thou knowest.—Lo !—we two are here—
 We have survived a ruin wide and deep—
 Strange thoughts are mine.—I cannot grieve nor fear,
 Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep
 I smile, though human love should make me weep.
 We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
 And I do feel a mighty calmness creep
 Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
 Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-morrow.

xx.

“ We know not what will come—yet, Laon, dearest,
 Cythna shall be the prophetess of love,
 Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou wearest,
 To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes which rove
 Within the homeless future’s wintry grove ;
 For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem
 Even with thy breath and blood to live and move,
 And violence and wrong are as a dream
 Which rolls from stedfast truth, an unreturning stream.

xxi.

“ The blasts of autumn drive the winged seeds
 Over the earth,—next come the snows, and rain,
 And frosts, and storms, which dreary winter leads
 Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train ;
 Behold ! Spring sweeps over the world again,
 Shedding soft dews from her ætherial wings ;
 Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain,
 And music on the waves and woods she flings,
 And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

xxii.

“ O Spring ! of hope, and love, and youth, and gladness,
 Wind-winged emblem ! brightest, best, and fairest !
 Whence comest thou, when, with dark winter’s sadness
 The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest ?
 Sister of joy ! thou art the child who wearest
 Thy mother’s dying smile, tender and sweet ;
 Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest
 Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet,
 Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding-sheet.

XXIII.

" Virtue, and Hope, and Love, like light and Heaven,
 Surround the world.—We are their chosen slaves.
 Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven
 Truth's deathless germs to thought's remotest caves ?
 Lo, Winter comes !—the grief of many graves,
 The frost of death, the tempest of the sword,
 The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine waves
 Stagnate like ice at Faith, the enchanter's word,
 And bind all human hearts in its repose abhorred.

XXIV.

" The seeds are sleeping in the soil : meanwhile
 The tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey ;
 Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
 Because they cannot speak ; and, day by day,
 The moon of wasting Science wanes away
 Among her stars, and in that darkness vast
 The sons of earth to their foul idols pray,
 And grey Priests triumph, and like blight or blast
 A shade of selfish care o'er human looks is cast.

XXV.

" This is the Winter of the world ;—and here
 We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade,
 Expiring in the frore and foggy air.—
 Behold ! Spring comes, though we must pass, who made
 The promise of its birth,—even as the shade
 Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings
 The future, a broad sunrise ; thus arrayed
 As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,
 From its dark gulf of chains, Earth like an eagle springs.

XXVI.

" O dearest love ! we shall be dead and cold
 Before this morn may on the world arise :
 Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold ?
 Alas ! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
 On thine own heart—it is a paradise
 Which everlasting spring has made its own,
 And while drear Winter fills the naked skies,
 Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh blown
 Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.

XXVII.

" In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
 Which made them great, the good will ever find ;
 And though some envious shade may interlope
 Between the effect and it, one comes behind,
 Who aye the future to the past will bind—
 Necessity, whose sightless strength for ever
 Evil with evil, good with good, must wind
 In bands of union, which no power may sever :
 They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never !

XXVIII.

" The good and mighty of departed ages
 Are in their graves, the innocent and free,
 Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,
 Who leave the vesture of their majesty
 To adorn and clothe this naked world ;—and we
 Are like to them—such perish, but they leave
 All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,
 Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive
 To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

XXIX.

“ So be the turf heaped over our remains
Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot
Whate'er it be, when in these mingling veins
The blood is still, be ours ; let sense and thought
Pass from our being, or be numbered not
Among the things that are ; let those who come
Behind, for whom our stedfast will has bought
A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
Insult with careless tread our undivided tomb.

XXX.

“ Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,
Our happiness, and all that we have been,
Immortally must live, and burn, and move,
When we shall be no more ; the world has seen
A type of peace ; and as some most serene
And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye,
After long years, some sweet and moving scene
Of youthful hope returning suddenly,
Quells his long madness—thus man shall remember thee.

XXXI.

“ And calumny meanwhile shall feed on us,
As worms devour the dead, and near the throne
And at the altar, most accepted thus
Shall sneers and curses be ;—what we have done
None shall dare vouch, though it be truly known ;
That record shall remain, when they must pass
Who built their pride on its oblivion ;
And fame, in human hope which sculptured was,
Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass.

XXXII.

“ The while we two, beloved, must depart,
 And Sense and Reason, those enchanters fair,
 Whose wand of power is hope, would bid the heart
 That gazed beyond the wormy grave despair :
 These eyes, these lips, this blood, seems darkly there
 To fade in hideous ruin ; no calm sleep
 Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant air,
 Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to steep
 In joy ;—but senseless death—a ruin dark and deep !

XXXIII.

“ These are blind fancies. Reason cannot know
 What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive ;
 There is delusion in the world—and woe,
 And fear, and pain—we know not whence we live,
 Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give
 Their being to each plant, and star, and beast,
 Or even these thoughts.—Come near me ! I do weave
 A chain I cannot break—I am possest
 With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human
 breast.

XXXIV.

“ Yes, yes—thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm—
 O ! willingly, beloved, would these eyes,
 Might they no more drink being from thy form,
 Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
 Close their faint orbs in death. I fear nor prize
 Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee—
 Yes, Love, when wisdom fails, makes Cythna wise ;
 Darkness and death, if death be true, must be
 Dearer than life and hope, if unenjoyed with thee.

XXXV.

“ Alas ! our thoughts flow on with stream, whose waters
Return not to their fountain—Earth and Heaven,
The Ocean and the Sun, the clouds their daughters,
Winter, and Spring, and Morn, and Noon, and Even,
All that we are or know, is darkly driven
Towards one gulf.—Lo ! what a change is come
Since I first spake—but time shall be forgiven,
Though it change all but thee !” She ceased—night’s gloom
Meanwhile had fallen on earth from the sky’s sunless dome.

XXXVI.

Though she had ceased, her countenance, uplifted
To heaven, still spake, with solemn glory bright ;
Her dark deep eyes, her lips, whose motions gifted
The air they breathed with love, her locks undight ;
“ Fair star of life and love,” I cried, “ my soul’s delight,
Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies ?
O that my spirit were yon Heaven of night,
Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes !”
She turned to me and smiled—that smile was Paradise !

CANTO X.

I.

WAS there a human spirit in the steed,
That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,
He broke our linked rest? or do indeed
All living things a common nature own,
And thought erect a universal throne,
Where many shapes one tribute ever bear?
And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan
To see her sons contend? and makes she bare
Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores may share?

II.

I have heard friendly sounds from many a tongue
Which was not human—the lone Nightingale
Has answered me with her most soothing song,
Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale
With grief, and sighed beneath; from many a dale
The Antelopes who flocked for food have spoken
With happy sounds, and motions, that avail
Like man's own speech; and such was now the token
Of waning night, whose calm by that proud neigh was broken.

III.

Each night, that mighty steed bore me abroad,
And I returned with food to our retreat,
And dark intelligence ; the blood which flowed
Over the fields, had stained the courser's feet ;—
Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew,—then meet
The vulture, and the wild-dog, and the snake,
The wolf, and the hyæna grey, and eat
The dead in horrid truce : their throngs did make
Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

IV.

For, from the utmost realms of earth, came pouring
The banded slaves whom every despot sent
At that throned traitor's summons ; like the roaring
Of fire, whose floods the wild deer circumvent
In the scorched pastures of the South ; so bent
The armies of the leagued kings around
Their files of steel and flame ;—the continent
Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound ;
Beneath their feet, the sea shook with their navies' sound.

V.

From every nation of the earth they came,
The multitude of moving heartless things,
Whom slaves call men : obediently they came,
Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings
To the stall, red with blood ; their many kings
Led them, thus erring, from their native home ;
Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings
Of Indian breezes lull, and many a band
The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand,

VI.

Fertile in prodigies and lies ;—so there
Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill.
The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear
His Asian shield and bow, when, at the will
Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would kill
Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure ;
But smiles of wondering joy his face would fill,
And savage sympathy : those slaves impure,
Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

VII.

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
His countenance in lies ;—even at the hour
When he was snatched from death, then o'er the globe,
With secret signs from many a mountain tower,
With smoke by day, and fire by night, the power
Of kings and priests, those dark conspirators
He called :—they knew his cause their own, and swore
Like wolves and serpents to their mutual wars
Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven
abhors.

VIII.

Myriads had come—millions were on their way ;
The Tyrant passed, surrounded by the steel
Of hired assassins, through the public way,
Choked with his country's dead ;—his footsteps reel
On the fresh blood—he smiles. “ Ay, now I feel
I am a King in truth ! ” he said, and took
His royal seat, and bade the torturing wheel
Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook,
And scorpions ! that his soul on its revenge might look.

IX.

“ But first, go slay the rebels.—Why return
 The victor bands ?” he said : “ millions yet live,
 Of whom the weakest with one word might turn
 The scales of victory yet ;—let none survive
 But those within the walls—each fifth shall give
 The expiation for his brethren here.—
 Go forth, and waste and kill ;”—“ O king, forgive
 My speech,” a soldier answered ;—“ but we fear
 The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near ;

X.

“ For we were slaying still without remorse,
 And now that dreadful chief beneath my hand
 Defenceless lay, when on a hell-black horse,
 An Angel bright as day, waving a brand [stand
 Which flashed among the stars, passed.”—“ Dost thou
 Parleying with me, thou wretch ?” the king replied ;
 “ Slaves, bind him to the wheel ; and of this band,
 Whoso will drag that woman to his side
 That scared him thus, may burn his dearest foe beside ;

XI.

“ And gold and glory shall be his.—Go forth !”
 They rushed into the plain.—Loud was the roar
 Of their career : the horsemen shook the earth ;
 The wheeled artillery’s speed the pavement tore ;
 The infantry, file after file, did pour
 Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five days they slew
 Among the wasted fields : the sixth saw gore
 Stream through the city ; on the seventh, the dew
 Of slaughter became stiff ; and there was peace anew :

XII.

Peace in the desert fields and villages,
 Between the gluttoned beasts and mangled dead !
 Peace in the silent streets ! save when the cries
 Of victims, to their fiery judgment led,
 Made pale their voiceless lips, who seemed to dread
 Even in their dearest kindred, lest some tongue
 Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed ;
 Peace in the Tyrant's palace, where the throng
 Waste the triumphal hours in festival and song !

XIII.

Day after day the burning Sun rolled on
 Over the death-polluted land ;—it came
 Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
 A lamp of Autumn, ripening with its flame
 The few lone ears of corn ;—the sky became
 Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast
 Languished and died ; the thirsting air did claim
 All moisture, and a rotting vapour past
 From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV.

First Want, then Plague, came on the beasts ; their food
 Failed, and they drew the breath of its decay.
 Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood
 Had lured, or who, from regions far away,
 Had tracked the hosts in festival array,
 From their dark deserts ; gaunt and wasting now,
 Stalked like fell shades among their perished prey ;
 In their green eyes a strange disease did glow,
 They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

xv.

The fish were poisoned in the streams ; the birds
 In the green woods perished ; the insect race
 Was withered up ; the scattered flocks and herds
 Who had survived the wild beasts' hungry chase
 Died moaning, each upon the other's face
 In helpless agony gazing ; round the City
 All night, the lean hyænas their sad case
 Like starving infants wailed—a woeful ditty !
 And many a mother wept, pierced with unnatural pity.

xvi.

Amid the aërial minarets on high,
 The Æthiopian vultures fluttering fell
 From their long line of brethren in the sky,
 Startling the concourse of mankind.—Too well
 These signs the coming mischief did foretell :—
 Strange panic first, a deep and sickening dread
 Within each heart, like ice, did sink and dwell,
 A voiceless thought of evil, which did spread
 With the quick glance of eyes, like withering lightnings shed.

xvii.

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
 Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare ;
 So on those strange and congregated hosts
 Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air
 Groaned with the burden of a new despair ;
 Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
 Feeds from her thousand breasts, though sleeping there
 With lidless eyes, lie Faith, and Plague, and Slaughter,
 A ghastly brood ; conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

XVIII.

There was no food ; the corn was trampled down,
The flocks and herds had perished ; on the shore
The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown :
The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
Creaked with the weight of birds, but, as before
Those winged things sprang forth, were void of shade ;
The vines and orchards, Autumn's golden store,
Were burned ; so that the meanest food was weighed
With gold, and Avarice died before the god it made.

XIX.

There was no corn—in the wide market-place
All loathliest things, even human flesh, was sold ;
They weighed it in small scales—and many a face
Was fixed in eager horror then : his gold
The miser brought ; the tender maid, grown bold
Through hunger, bared her scorned charms in vain ;
The mother brought her eldest-born, controlled
By instinct blind as love, but turned again
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

XX.

Then fell blue Plague upon the race of man.
“ O, for the sheathed steel, so late which gave
Oblivion to the dead, when the streets ran
With brothers' blood ! O, that the earthquake's grave
Would gape, or Ocean lift its stifling wave ! ”
Vain cries—throughout the streets, thousands pursued
Each by his fiery torture, howl and rave,
Or sit, in frenzy's unimagined mood,
Upon fresh heaps of dead—a ghastly multitude.

XXI.

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well
 Was choked with rotting corpses, and became
 A cauldron of green mist made visible
 At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
 Seeking to quench the agony of the flame
 Which raged like poison through their bursting veins ;
 Naked they were from torture, without shame,
 Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains,
 Childhood, and youth, and age, writhing in savage pains,

XXII.

It was not thirst but madness ! Many saw
 Their own lean image everywhere ; it went
 A ghastlier self beside them, till the awe
 Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent
 Those shrieking victims ; some, ere life was spent,
 Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed
 Contagion on the sound ; and others rent
 Their matted hair, and cried aloud, " We tread
 On fire ! the avenging Power his hell on earth has spread."

XXIII.

Sometimes the living by the dead were hid.
 Near the great fountain in the public square,
 Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid
 Under the sun, was heard one stifled prayer
 For life, in the hot silence of the air ;
 And strange 'twas, amid that hideous heap to see
 Some shrouded in their long and golden hair,
 As if not dead, but slumbering quietly,
 Like forms which sculptors carve, then love to agony.

XXIV.

Famine had spared the palace of the king :—
 He rioted in festival the while,
 He and his guards and priests ; but Plague did fling
 One shadow upon all. Famine can smile
 On him who brings it food, and pass, with guile
 Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier grey,
 The house-dog of the throne ; but many a mile
 Comes Plague, a winged wolf, who loathes alway
 The garbage and the scum that strangers make her prey.

XXV.

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
 Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight
 To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
 That lingered on his lips, the warrior's might
 Was loosened, and a new and ghastlier night
 In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes ; he fell
 Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright
 Among the guests, or raving mad, did tell
 Strange truths ; a dying seer of dark oppression's hell.

XXVI.

The Princes and the Priests were pale with terror ;
 That monstrous faith wherewith they ruled mankind
 Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error,
 On their own hearts : they sought and they could find
 No refuge—'twas the blind who led the blind !
 So, through the desolate streets to the high fane,
 The many-tongued and endless armies wind
 In sad procession : each among the train
 To his own Idol lifts his supplications vain.

XXVII.

“ O God ! ” they cried, “ we know our secret pride
 Has scorned thee, and thy worship, and thy name ;
 Secure in human power, we have defied
 Thy fearful might ; we bend in fear and shame
 Before thy presence ; with the dust we claim
 Kindred. Be merciful, O King of Heaven !
 Most justly have we suffered for thy fame
 Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven,
 Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be driven.

XXVIII.

“ O King of Glory ! Thou alone hast power !
 Who can resist thy will ? who can restrain
 Thy wrath, when on the guilty thou dost shower
 The shafts of thy revenge,—a blistering rain ?
 Greatest and best, be merciful again !
 Have we not stabbed thine enemies, and made
 The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a fane,
 Where thou wert worshipped with their blood, and laid
 Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works have
 weighed ?

XXIX.

“ Well didst thou loosen on this impious City
 Thine angels of revenge : recall them now ;
 Thy worshippers abased, here kneel for pity,
 And bind their souls by an immortal vow :
 We swear by thee ! And to our oath do thou
 Give sanction, from thine hell of fiends and flame,
 That we will kill with fire and torments slow,
 The last of those who mocked thy holy name,
 And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim.”

xxx.

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips
 Worshipped their own hearts' image, dim and vast,
 Scared by the shade wherewith they would eclipse
 The light of other minds ;—troubled they past
 From the great Temple. Fiercely still and fast
 The arrows of the plague among them fell,
 And they on one another gazed aghast,
 And through the hosts contention wild befell,
 As each of his own god the wondrous works did tell.

xxxI.

And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet,
 Moses, and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, and Foh,
 A tumult of strange names, which never met
 Before, as watch-words of a single woe,
 Arose. Each raging votary 'gan to throw
 Aloft his armed hands, and each did howl
 "Our God alone is God!" and slaughter now
 Would have gone forth, when, from beneath a cowl,
 A voice came forth, which pierced like ice through every soul.

xxxII.

'Twas an Iberian Priest from whom it came,
 A zealous man, who led the legioned west
 With words which faith and pride had steeped in flame,
 To quell the unbelievers ; a dire guest
 Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
 Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,
 Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest ;
 He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined
 To wreak his fear of Heaven in vengeance on mankind.

XXXIII.

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
 Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear,
 Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
 Even where his Idol stood ; for, far and near
 Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
 That faith and tyranny were trampled down ;
 Many a pale victim, doomed for truth to share
 The murderer's cell, or see, with helpless groan,
 The priests his children drag for slaves to serve their own.

XXXIV.

He dared not kill the infidels with fire
 Or steel, in Europe : the slow agonies
 Of legal torture mocked his keen desire :
 So he made truce with those who did despise
 The expiation, and the sacrifice,
 That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed
 Might crush for him those deadlier enemies ;
 For fear of God did in his bosom breed
 A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV.

“ Peace ! Peace ! ” he cried. “ When we are dead, the Day
 Of Judgment comes, and all shall surely know
 Whose God is God, each fearfully shall pay
 The errors of his faith in endless woe !
 But there is sent a mortal vengeance now
 On earth, because an impious race had spurned
 Him whom we all adore,—a subtile foe,
 By whom for ye this dread reward was earned,
 And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturned.

XXXVI.

“ Think ye, because we weep, and kneel, and pray,
 That God will lull the pestilence? It rose
 Even from beneath his throne, where, many a day
 His mercy soothed it to a dark repose :
 It walks upon the earth to judge his foes,
 And what art thou and I, that he should deign
 To curb his ghastly minister, or close
 The gates of death, ere they receive the twain
 Who shook with mortal spells his undefended reign ?

XXXVII.

“ Ay, there is famine in the gulf of hell,
 Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn,—
 Their lurid eyes are on us ! Those who fell
 By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn,
 Are in their jaws ! They hunger for the spawn
 Of Satan, their own brethren, who were sent
 To make our souls their spoil. See ! see ! they fawn
 Like dogs, and they will sleep with luxury spent,
 When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent !

XXXVIII.

“ Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep :—
 Pile high the pyre of expiation now !
 A forest’s spoil of boughs, and on the heap
 Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow,
 When touched by flame, shall burn, and melt, and flow,
 A stream of clinging fire,—and fix on high
 A net of iron, and spread forth below
 A couch of snakes, and scorpions, and the fry
 Of centipedes and worms, earth’s hellish progeny !

XXXIX.

“ Let Laon and Laone on that pyre,
 Linked tight with burning brass, perish!—then pray
 That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire
 Of Heaven may be appeased.” He ceased, and they
 A space stood silent, as far, far away
 The echoes of his voice among them died ;
 And he knelt down upon the dust, alway
 Muttering the curses of his speechless pride,
 Whilst shame, and fear, and awe, the armies did divide.

XL.

His voice was like a blast that burst the portal
 Of fabled hell ; and as he spake, each one
 Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal,
 And Heaven above seemed cloven, where, on a throne
 Girt round with storms and shadows, sate alone
 Their King and Judge. Fear killed in every breast
 All natural pity then, a fear unknown
 Before, and with an inward fire possest,
 They raged like homeless beasts whom burning woods invest.

XLI.

’Twas morn.—At noon the public crier went forth,
 Proclaiming through the living and the dead,
 “ The Monarch saith, that his great empire’s worth
 Is set on Laon and Laone’s head :
 He who but one yet living here can lead,
 Or who the life from both their hearts can wring,
 Shall be the kingdom’s heir,—a glorious meed !
 But he who both alive can hither bring,
 The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal King.”

XLII.

Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron
 Was spread above, the fearful couch below ;
 It overtopped the towers that did environ
 That spacious square ; for Fear is never slow
 To build the thrones of Hate, her mate and foe,
 So, she scourged forth the maniac multitude
 To rear this pyramid—tottering and slow,
 Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued
 By gad-flies, they have piled the heath, and gums, and wood.

XLIII.

Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom.
 Until the dawn, those hosts of many a nation
 Stood round that pile, as near one lover's tomb
 Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation ;
 And in the silence of that expectation,
 Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and crawl—
 It was so deep, save when the devastation
 Of the swift pest with fearful interval,
 Marking its path with shrieks, among the crowd would fall.

XLIV.

Morn came.—Among those sleepless multitudes,
 Madness, and Fear, and Plague, and Famine, still
 Heaped corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
 The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
 Earth's cold and sullen brooks. In silence still
 The pale survivors stood ; ere noon, the fear
 Of hell became a panic, which did kill
 Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear,
 As "Hush ! hark ! Come they yet ? Just Heaven ! thine
 hour is near !"

XLV.

And Priests rushed through their ranks, some counterfeiting
 The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed
 With their own lies. They said their god was waiting
 To see his enemies writhe, and burn, and bleed,—
 And that, till then, the snakes of Hell had need
 Of human souls.—Three hundred furnaces
 Soon blazed through the wide City, where, with speed,
 Men brought their infidel kindred to appease
 God's wrath, and while they burned, knelt round on qui-
 vering knees.

XLVI.

The noontide sun was darkened with that smoke,
 The winds of eve dispersed those ashes grey.
 The madness which these rites had lulled, awoke
 Again at sunset.—Who shall dare to say
 The deeds which night and fear brought forth, or weigh
 In balance just the good and evil there?
 He might man's deep and searchless heart display,
 And cast a light on those dim labyrinths, where
 Hope, near imagined chasms, is struggling with despair.

XLVII.

'Tis said, a mother dragged three children then,
 To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head,
 And laughed and died; and that unholy men,
 Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead,
 Looked from their meal, and saw an Angel tread
 The visible floor of Heaven, and it was she!
 And, on that night, one without doubt or dread
 Came to the fire, and said, "Stop, I am he!
 Kill me!"—They burned them both with hellish mockery.

XLVIII.

And, one by one, that night, young maidens came,
 Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living stone
 Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the flame
 Which shrank as overgorged, they laid them down,
 And sung a low sweet song, of which alone
 One word was heard, and that was Liberty;
 And that some kissed their marble feet, with moan
 Like love, and died, and then that they did die
 With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

CANTO XI.

I.

SHE saw me not—she heard me not—alone
 Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood;
 She spake not, breathed not, moved not—there was thrown
 Over her look, the shadow of a mood
 Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
 A thought of voiceless death.—She stood alone,
 Above, the Heavens were spread;—below, the flood
 Was murmuring in its caves;—the wind had blown
 Her hair apart, thro' which her eyes and forehead shone.

II.

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains ;
Before its blue and moveless depth were flying
Grey mists poured forth from the unresting fountains
Of darkness in the North :—the day was dying :—
Sudden, the sun shone forth ; its beams were lying
Like boiling gold on Ocean, strange to see,
And on the shattered vapours, which, defying
The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly
In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

III.

It was a stream of living beams, whose bank
On either side by the cloud's cleft was made ;
And where its chasms that flood of glory drank,
Its waves gushed forth like fire, and, as if swayed
By some mute tempest, rolled on *her*. The shade
Of her bright image floated on the river
Of liquid light, which then did end and fade—
Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver ;
Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

IV.

I stood beside her, but she saw me not—
She looked upon the sea, and skies, and earth.
Rapture, and love, and admiration, wrought
A passion deeper far than tears, or mirth,
Or speech, or gesture, or whate'er has birth
From common joy ; which, with the speechless feeling
That led her there, united, and shot forth
From her far eyes, a light of deep revealing,
All but her dearest self from my regard concealing.

v.

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
Was now heard there ;—her dark and intricate eyes
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
Absorbed the glories of the burning skies,
Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstacies,
Burst from her looks and gestures ;—and a light
Of liquid tenderness, like love, did rise
From her whole frame,—an atmosphere which quite
Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

vi.

She would have clasped me to her glowing frame ;
Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed
On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame
Which now the cold winds stole ;—she would have laid
Upon my languid heart her dearest head ;
I might have heard her voice, tender and sweet ;
Her eyes mingling with mine, might soon have fed
My soul with their own joy.—One moment yet
I gazed—we parted then, never again to meet !

vii.

Never but once to meet on earth again !
She heard me as I fled—her eager tone
Sank on my heart, and almost wove a chain
Around my will to link it with her own,
So that my stern resolve was almost gone.
“ I cannot reach thee ! whither dost thou fly ?
My steps are faint.—Come back, thou dearest one—
Return, ah me ! return ! ” The wind passed by
On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

VIII.

Woe! woe! that moonless midnight.—Want and Pest
 Were horrible, but one more fell doth rear,
 As in a hydra's swarming lair, its crest
 Eminent among those victims—even the Fear
 Of Hell: each girt by the hot atmosphere
 Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung
 By his own rage upon his burning bier
 Of circling coals of fire; but still there clung
 One hope, like a keen sword on starting threads uphung:

IX.

Not death—death was no more refuge or rest;
 Not life—it was despair to be!—not sleep,
 For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossessed
 All natural dreams; to wake was not to weep,
 But to gaze mad and pallid, at the leap
 To which the Future, like a snaky scourge,
 Or like some tyrant's eye, which aye doth keep
 Its withering beam upon its slaves, did urge
 Their steps:—they heard the roar of Hell's sulphureous
 surge.

X.

Each of that multitude alone, and lost
 To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew;
 As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tost,
 Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew
 Whilst now the ship is splitting through and through;
 Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard,
 Started from sick despair, or if there flew
 One murmur on the wind, or if some word
 Which none can gather yet, the distant crowd has stirred.

XI.

Why became cheeks, wan with the kiss of death,
 Paler from hope? they had sustained despair.
 Why watched those myriads with suspended breath
 Sleepless a second night? they are not here
 The victims, and hour by hour, a vision drear,
 Warm corpses fall upon the clay-cold dead;
 And even in death their lips are writhed with fear.—
 The crowd is mute and moveless—overhead
 Silent Arcturus shines—Ha! hear'st thou not the tread

XII.

Of rushing feet? laughter? the shout, the scream,
 Of triumph not to be contained? See! hark!
 They come, they come! give way! Alas, ye deem
 Falsely—'tis but a crowd of maniacs stark
 Driven, like a troop of spectres, through the dark
 From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung,
 A lurid earth-star, which dropped many a spark
 From its blue train, and spreading widely, clung
 To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines among.

XIII.

And many, from the crowd collected there,
 Joined that strange dance in fearful sympathies;
 There was the silence of a long despair,
 When the last echo of those terrible cries
 Came from a distant street, like agonies
 Stifled afar.—Before the Tyrant's throne
 All night his aged Senate sate, their eyes
 In stony expectation fixed; when one
 Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and alone.

xiv.

Dark Priests and haughty Warriors gazed on him
 With baffled wonder, for a hermit's vest
 Concealed his face ; but when he spake, his tone,
 Ere yet the matter did their thoughts arrest,
 Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast
 Void of all hate or terror, made them start ;
 For as with gentle accents he addressed
 His speech to them, on each unwilling heart
 Unusual awe did fall—a spirit-quelling dart.

xv.

“ Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast
 Amid the ruin which yourselves have made ;
 Yes, Desolation heard your trumpet's blast,
 And sprang from sleep !—dark Terror has obeyed
 Your bidding—Oh that I, whom ye have made
 Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free
 From pain and fear ! but evil casts a shade
 Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be
 The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

xvi.

“ Ye turn to Heaven for aid in your distress ;
 Alas, that ye, the mighty and the wise,
 Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less
 Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies
 Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
 To blind your slaves :—consider your own thought,
 An empty and a cruel sacrifice
 Ye now prepare, for a vain idol wrought
 Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brought.

XVII.

" Ye seek for happiness—alas the day !
 Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold,
 Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway
 For which, O willing slaves to Custom old,
 Severe task-mistress ! ye your hearts have sold.
 Ye seek for peace, and when ye die, to dream
 No evil dreams ; all mortal things are cold
 And senseless then. If aught survive, I deem
 It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem.

XVIII.

" Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
 Oh, could I win your ears to dare be now
 Glorious, and great, and calm ! that ye would cast
 Into the dust those symbols of your woe,
 Purple, and gold, and steel ! that ye would go
 Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came,
 That Want, and Plague, and Fear, from slavery flow ;
 And that mankind is free, and that the shame
 Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom's fame.

XIX.

" If thus 'tis well—if not, I come to say
 That Laon—." While the Stranger spoke, among
 The Council sudden tumult and affray
 Arose, for many of those warriors young
 Had on his eloquent accents fed and hung
 Like bees on mountain-flowers ! they knew the truth,
 And from their thrones in vindication sprung ;
 The men of faith and law then without ruth
 Drew forth their secret steel, and stabbed each ardent youth.

xx.

They stabbed them in the back and sneered. A slave
 Who stood behind the throne, those corpses drew
 Each to its bloody, dark, and secret grave ;
 And one more daring raised his steel anew
 To pierce the Stranger : “ What hast thou to do
 With me, poor wretch ? ”—Calm, solemn, and severe,
 That voice unstrung his sinews, and he threw
 His dagger on the ground, and pale with fear,
 Sate silently—his voice then did the Stranger rear.

xxi.

“ It doth avail not that I weep for ye—
 Ye cannot change, since ye are old and grey,
 And ye have chosen your lot—your fame must be
 A book of blood, whence in a milder day
 Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapt in clay :
 Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon’s friend,
 And him to your revenge will I betray,
 So ye concede one easy boon. Attend !
 For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend,

xxii.

“ There is a People mighty in its youth,
 A land beyond the Oceans of the West,
 Where, though with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
 Are worshipped ; from a glorious mother’s breast
 Who, since high Athens fell, among the rest
 Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe,
 By inbred monsters outraged and oppressed,
 Turns to her chainless child for succour now,
 And draws the milk of power in Wisdom’s fullest flow.

XXIII.

“ This land is like an Eagle, whose young gaze
 Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume
 Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
 Of sun-rise gleams when earth is wrapt in gloom ;
 An epitaph of glory for the tomb
 Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made,
 Great People ! As the sands shalt thou become ;
 Thy growth is swift as morn, when night must fade ;
 The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade.

XXIV.

“ Yes, in the desert then is built a home
 For Freedom. Genius is made strong to rear
 The monuments of man beneath the dome
 Of a new heaven ; myriads assemble there,
 Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,
 Drive from their wasted homes. The boon I pray
 Is this,—that Cythna shall be convoyed there,—
 Nay, start not at the name—America !
 And then to you this night Laon will I betray.

XXV.

“ With me do what ye will. I am your foe ! ”
 The light of such a joy as makes the stare
 Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow,
 Shone in a hundred human eyes.—“ Where, where
 Is Laon ? haste ! fly ! drag him swiftly here !
 We grant thy boon.”—“ I put no trust in ye,
 Swear by the Power ye dread.”—“ We swear, we swear ! ”
 The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
 And smiled in gentle pride, and said, “ Lo ! I am he ! ”

CANTO XII.

I.

THE transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness
 Spread through the multitudinous streets, fast flying
 Upon the winds of fear; from his dull madness
 The starveling waked, and died in joy; the dying,
 Among the corpses in stark agony lying,
 Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope
 Closed their faint eyes; from house to house replying
 With loud acclaim, the living shook Heaven's cope,
 And filled the startled Earth with echoes: morn did ope

II.

Its pale eyes then; and lo! the long array
 Of guards in golden arms, and priests beside,
 Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs betray
 The blackness of the faith it seems to hide;
 And see, the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide
 Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears—
 A shape of light is sitting by his side,
 A child most beautiful. I' the midst appears
 Laon—exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

III.

His head and feet are bare, his hands are bound
 Behind with heavy chains, yet none do wreak
 Their scoffs on him, though myriads throng around ;
 There are no sneers upon his lip which speak
 That scorn or hate has made him bold ; his cheek
 Resolve has not turned pale,—his eyes are mild
 And calm, and like the morn about to break,
 Smile on mankind—his heart seems reconciled
 To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

IV.

Tumult was in the soul of all beside,
 Ill joy, or doubt, or fear ; but those who saw
 Their tranquil victim pass, felt wonder glide
 Into their brain, and became calm with awe.—
 See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw.
 A thousand torches in the spacious square,
 Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
 Await the signal round : the morning fair
 Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare.

V.

And see ! beneath a sun-bright canopy,
 Upon a platform level with the pile,
 The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
 Girt by the chieftains of the host. All smile
 In expectation, but one child : the while
 I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
 Of fire, and look around. Each distant isle
 Is dark in the bright dawn ; towers far and near
 Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

VI.

There was such silence through the host, as when
An earthquake, trampling on some populous town,
Has crushed ten thousand with one tread, and men
Expect the second ; all were mute but one,
That fairest child, who, bold with love, alone
Stood up before the king, without avail,
Pleading for Laon's life—her stifled groan
Was heard—she trembled like an aspen pale
Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

VII.

What were his thoughts linked in the morning sun,
Among those reptiles, stingless with delay,
Even like a tyrant's wrath?—The signal-gun
Roared—hark, again ! In that dread pause he lay
As in a quiet dream—the slaves obey—
A thousand torches drop,—and hark, the last
Bursts on that awful silence. Far away
Millions, with hearts that beat both loud and fast,
Watch for the springing flame expectant and aghast.

VIII.

They fly—the torches fall—a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant !—they recede !
For ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed
Dark and gigantic, with a tempest's speed,
Bursts through their ranks : a woman sits thereon,
Fairer it seems than aught that earth can breed,
Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn,
A spirit from the caves of day-light wandering gone.

IX.

All thought it was God's Angel come to sweep
The lingering guilty to their fiery grave ;
The tyrant from his throne in dread did leap,—
Her innocence his child from fear did save.
Scared by the faith they feigned, each priestly slave
Knelt for his mercy whom they served with blood,
And, like the reflux of a mighty wave
Sucked into the loud sea, the multitude
With crushing panic, fled in terror's altered mood.

X.

They pause, they blush, they gaze ; a gathering shout
Bursts like one sound from the ten thousand streams
Of a tempestuous sea :—that sudden rout
One checked, who never in his mildest dreams
Felt awe from grace or loveliness, the seams
Of his rent heart so hard and cold a creed
Had seared with blistering ice—but he misdeems
That he is wise, whose wounds do only bleed
Inly for self ; thus thought the Iberian Priest indeed ;

XI.

And others, too, thought he was wise to see,
In pain, and fear, and hate, something divine ;
In love and beauty—no divinity.—
Now with a bitter smile, whose light did shine
Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and eyne,
He said, and the persuasion of that sneer
Rallied his trembling comrades—" Is it mine
To stand alone, when kings and soldiers fear
A woman ? Heaven has sent its other victim here."

XII.

“ Were it not impious,” said the King, “ to break
 Our holy oath ? ”—“ Impious to keep it, say ! ”
 Shrieked the exulting Priest :—“ Slaves, to the stake
 Bind her, and on my head the burthen lay
 Of her just torments :—at the Judgment Day
 Will I stand up before the golden throne
 Of Heaven, and cry, to thee I did betray
 An infidel ! but for me she would have known
 Another moment’s joy !—the glory be thine own.”

XIII.

They trembled, but replied not, nor obeyed,
 Pausing in breathless silence. Cythna sprung
 From her gigantic steed, who, like a shade
 Chased by the winds, those vacant streets among
 Fled tameless, as the brazen rein she flung
 Upon his neck, and kissed his moonèd brow.
 A piteous sight, that one so fair and young,
 The clasp of such a fearful death should woo
 With smiles of tender joy as beamed from Cythna now.

XIV.

The warm tears burst in spite of faith and fear,
 From many a tremulous eye, but, like soft dews
 Which feed spring’s earliest buds, hung gathered there,
 Frozen by doubt,—alas ! they could not choose
 But weep ; for when her faint limbs did refuse
 To climb the pyre, upon the mutes she smiled ;
 And with her eloquent gestures, and the hues
 Of her quick lips, even as a weary child
 Wins sleep from some fond nurse with its caresses mild,

xv.

She won them, though unwilling, her to bind
 Near me, among the stakes. When then had fled
 One soft reproach that was most thrilling kind,
 She smiled on me, and nothing then we said,
 But each upon the other's countenance fed
 Looks of insatiate love; the mighty veil
 Which doth divide the living and the dead
 Was almost rent, the world grew dim and pale,—
 All light in Heaven or Earth beside our love did fail.—

xvi.

Yet,—yet—one brief relapse, like the last beam
 Of dying flames, the stainless air around
 Hung silent and serene.—A blood-red gleam
 Burst upwards, hurling fiercely from the ground
 The globed smoke.—I heard the mighty sound
 Of its uprising, like a tempestuous ocean;
 And, through its chasms I saw, as in a swoon,
 The Tyrant's child fall without life or motion
 Before his throne, subdued by some unseen emotion.

xvii.

And is this death? The pyre has disappeared,
 The Pestilence, the Tyrant, and the throng;
 The flames grow silent—slowly there is heard
 The music of a breath-suspending song,
 Which, like the kiss of love when life is young,
 Steeps the faint eyes in darkness sweet and deep;
 With ever-changing notes it floats along,
 Till on my passive soul there seemed to creep
 A melody, like waves on wrinkled sands that leap.

XVIII.

The warm touch of a soft and tremulous hand
Wakened me then ; lo, Cythna sate reclined
Beside me, on the waved and golden sand
Of a clear pool, upon a bank o'ertwined
With strange and star-bright flowers, which to the wind
Breathed divine odour ; high above, was spread
The emerald heaven of trees of unknown kind,
Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit overhead
A shadow, which was light, upon the waters shed.

XIX.

And round about sloped many a lawny mountain
With incense-bearing forests, and vast caves
Of marble radiance to that mighty fountain ;
And where the flood its own bright margin laves,
Their echoes talk with its eternal waves,
Which, from the depths whose jagged caverns breed
Their unreposing strife, it lifts and heaves,
Till through a chasm of hills they roll, and feed
A river deep, which flies with smooth but arrowy speed.

XX.

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approached, borne by the musical air
Along the waves, which sung and sparkled under
Its rapid keel—a winged shape sate there,
A child with silver-shining wings, so fair,
That as her bark did through the waters glide,
The shadow of the lingering waves did wear
Light, as from starry beams ; from side to side,
While veering to the wind, her plumes the bark did guide.

XXI.

The boat was one curved shell of hollow pearl,
Almost translucent with the light divine
Of her within ; the prow and stern did curl,
Horned on high, like the young moon supine,
When, o'er dim twilight mountains dark with pine,
It floats upon the sunset's sea of beams,
Whose golden waves in many a purple line
Fade fast, till, borne on sunlight's ebbing streams,
Dilating, on earth's verge the sunken meteor gleams.

XXII.

Its keel has struck the sands beside our feet ;—
Then Cythna turned to me, and from her eyes
Which swam with unshed tears, a look more sweet
Than happy love, a wild and glad surprise,
Glanced as she spake : “ Ay, this is Paradise
And not a dream, and we are all united !
Lo, that is mine own child, who, in the guise
Of madness, came like day to one benighted
In lonesome woods : my heart is now too well requited ! ”

XXIII.

And then she wept aloud, and in her arms
Clasped that bright Shape, less marvellously fair
Than her own human hues and living charms ;
Which, as she leaned in passion's silence there,
Breathed warmth on the cold bosom of the air,
Which seemed to blush and tremble with delight ;
The glossy darkness of her streaming hair
Fell o'er that snowy child, and wrapt from sight
The fond and long embrace which did their hearts unite.

XXIV.

Then the bright child, the plumed Seraph, came,
 And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on mine,
 And said, " I was disturbed by tremulous shame
 When once we met, yet knew that I was thine
 From the same hour in which thy lips divine
 Kindled a clinging dream within my brain,
 Which ever waked when I might sleep, to twine
 Thine image with *her* memory dear—again
 We meet ; exempted now from mortal fear or pain.

XXV.

" When the consuming flames had wrapt ye round,
 The hope which I had cherished went away ;
 I fell in agony on the senseless ground,
 And hid mine eyes in dust, and far astray
 My mind was gone, when bright, like dawning day,
 The Spectre of the Plague before me flew,
 And breathed upon my lips, and seemed to say,
 ' They wait for thee, beloved ! '—then I knew
 The death-mark on my breast, and became calm anew.

XXVI.

" It was the calm of love—for I was dying.
 I saw the black and half-extinguished pyre
 In its own grey and shrunken ashes lying ;
 The pitchy smoke of the departed fire
 Still hung in many a hollow dome and spire
 Above the towers, like night ; beneath whose shade,
 Awed by the ending of their own desire,
 The armies stood ; a vacancy was made
 In expectation's depth, and so they stood dismayed.

XXVII.

“ The frightful silence of that altered mood,
 The tortures of the dying clove alone,
 Till one uprose among the multitude,
 And said—‘ The flood of time is rolling on,
 We stand upon its brink, whilst *they* are gone
 To glide in peace down death’s mysterious stream.
 Have ye done well? They moulder flesh and bone,
 Who might have made this life’s envenomed dream
 A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste, I deem.

XXVIII.

“ ‘ These perish as the good and great of yore
 Have perished, and their murderers will repent.
 Yes, vain and barren tears shall flow before
 Yon smoke has faded from the firmament
 Even for this cause, that ye, who must lament
 The death of those that made this world so fair,
 Cannot recall them now; but then is lent
 To man the wisdom of a high despair,
 When such can die, and he live on and linger here.

XXIX.

“ ‘ Ay, ye may fear not now the Pestilence,
 From fabled hell as by a charm withdrawn;
 All power and faith must pass, since calmly hence
 In pain and fire have unbelievers gone;
 And ye must sadly turn away, and moan
 In secret, to his home each one returning;
 And to long ages shall this hour be known;
 And slowly shall its memory, ever burning,
 Fill this dark night of things with an eternal morning.

XXX.

“ ‘ For me the world is grown too void and cold,
 Since hope pursues immortal destiny
 With steps thus slow—therefore shall ye behold
 How those who love, yet fear not, dare to die ;
 Tell to your children this ! ’ then suddenly
 He sheathed a dagger in his heart, and fell ;
 My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me
 There came a murmur from the crowd to tell
 Of deep and mighty change which suddenly befell.

XXXI.

“ Then suddenly I stood a winged Thought
 Before the immortal Senate, and the seat
 Of that star-shining spirit, whence is wrought
 The strength of its dominion, good and great,
 The better Genius of this world’s estate.
 His realm around one mighty Fane is spread,
 Elysian islands bright and fortunate,
 Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead,
 Where I am sent to lead ! ” These winged words she said,

XXXII.

And with the silence of her eloquent smile,
 Bade us embark in her divine canoe ;
 Then at the helm we took our seat, the while
 Above her head those plumes of dazzling hue
 Into the winds’ invisible stream she threw,
 Sitting beside the prow : like gossamer,
 On the swift breath of morn, the vessel flew
 O’er the bright whirlpools of that fountain fair,
 Whose shores receded fast, while we seemed lingering there ;

XXXIII.

Till down that mighty stream dark, calm, and fleet,
Between a chasm of cedar mountains riven,
Chased by the thronging winds, whose viewless feet
As swift as twinkling beams, had, under Heaven,
From woods and waves wild sounds and odours driven,
The boat flew visibly—three nights and days,
Borne like a cloud through morn, and noon, and even,
We sailed along the winding watery ways
Of the vast stream, a long and labyrinthine maze.

XXXIV.

A scene of joy and wonder to behold
That river's shapes and shadows changing ever,
Where the broad sunrise filled with deepening gold
Its whirlpools, where all hues did spread and quiver,
And where melodious falls did burst and shiver
Among rocks clad with flowers, the foam and spray
Sparkled like stars upon the sunny river,
Or when the moonlight poured a holier day,
One vast and glittering lake around green islands lay.

XXXV.

Morn, noon, and even, that boat of pearl outran
The streams which bore it, like the arrowy cloud
Of tempest, or the speedier thought of man,
Which flieth forth and cannot make abode ;
Sometimes through forests, deep like night, we glode,
Between the walls of mighty mountains crowned
With Cyclopean piles, whose turrets proud,
The homes of the departed, dimly frowned
O'er the bright waves which girt their dark foundations round.

XXXVI.

Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows,
 Mile after mile we sailed, and 'twas delight
 To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
 Over the grass ; sometimes beneath the night
 Of wide and vaulted caves, whose roofs were bright
 With starry gems, we fled, whilst from their deep
 And dark green chasms, shades beautiful and white,
 Amid sweet sounds across our path would sweep
 Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.

XXXVII.

And ever as we sailed, our minds were full
 Of love and wisdom, which would overflow
 In converse wild, and sweet, and wonderful ;
 And in quick smiles whose light would come and go,
 Like music o'er wide waves, and in the flow
 Of sudden tears, and in the mute caress—
 For a deep shade was cleft, and we did know,
 That virtue, though obscured on Earth, not less
 Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness.

XXXVIII.

Three days and nights we sailed, as thought and feeling
 Number delightful hours—for through the sky
 The sphered lamps of day and night, revealing
 New changes and new glories, rolled on high,
 Sun, Moon, and moonlike lamps, the progeny
 Of a diviner Heaven, serene and fair :
 On the fourth day, wild as a wind-wrought sea,
 The stream became, and fast and faster bare
 The spirit-wingèd boat, steadily speeding there.

XXXIX.

Steadily and swift, where the waves rolled like mountains
 Within the vast ravine, whose rifts did pour
 Tumultuous floods from their ten thousand fountains,
 The thunder of whose earth-uplifting roar
 Made the air sweep in whirlwinds from the shore,
 Calm as a shade, the boat of that fair child
 Securely fled, that rapid stress before,
 Amid the topmost spray, and sunbows wild,
 Wreathed in the silver mist : in joy and pride we smiled.

XL.

The torrent of that wide and raging river
 Is passed, and our aërial speed suspended.
 We look behind ; a golden mist did quiver
 When its wild surges with the lake were blended :
 Our bark hung there, as one line suspended
 Between two heavens, that windless waveless lake ;
 Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
 By mists, aye feed, from rocks and clouds they break,
 And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

XLI.

Motionless resting on the lake awhile,
 I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains rear
 Their peaks aloft, I saw each radiant isle,
 And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere
 Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear
 The Temple of the Spirit ; on the sound
 Which issued thence, drawn nearer and more near,
 Like the swift moon this glorious earth around,
 The charmed boat approached, and there its haven found.

NOTE ON THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

BY THE EDITOR.

SHELLEY possessed two remarkable qualities of intellect—a brilliant imagination and a logical exactness of reason. His inclinations led him (he fancied) almost alike to poetry and metaphysical discussions. I say “he fancied,” because I believe the former to have been paramount, and that it would have gained the mastery even had he struggled against it. However, he said that he deliberated at one time whether he should dedicate himself to poetry or metaphysics, and resolving on the former, he educated himself for it, discarding in a great measure his philosophical pursuits, and engaging himself in the study of the poets of Greece, Italy, and England. To these may be added a constant perusal of portions of the Old Testament—the Psalms, the book of Job, the Prophet Isaiah, and others, the sublime poetry of which filled him with delight.

As a poet, his intellect and compositions were powerfully influenced by exterior circumstances, and especially by his place of abode. He was very fond of travelling, and ill health increased this restlessness. The sufferings occasioned by a cold English winter, made him pine, especially when our colder spring arrived, for a more genial climate. In 1816

he again visited Switzerland, and rented a house on the banks of the lake of Geneva; and many a day, in cloud or sunshine, was passed alone in his boat—sailing as the wind listed, or weltering on the calm waters. The majestic aspect of nature ministered such thoughts as he afterwards enwove in verse. His lines on the Bridge of the Arve, and his Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, were written at this time. Perhaps during this summer his genius was checked by association with another poet whose nature was utterly dissimilar to his own, yet who, in the poem he wrote at that time, gave tokens that he shared for a period the more abstract and etherialised inspiration of Shelley. The saddest events awaited his return to England; but such was his fear to wound the feelings of others, that he never expressed the anguish he felt, and seldom gave vent to the indignation roused by the persecutions he underwent; while the course of deep unexpressed passion, and the sense of injury, engendered the desire to embody themselves in forms defecated of all the weakness and evil which cling to real life.

He chose therefore for his hero a youth nourished in dreams of liberty, some of whose actions are in direct opposition to the opinions of the world; but who is animated throughout by an ardent love of virtue, and a resolution to confer the boons of political and intellectual freedom on his fellow-creatures. He created for this youth a woman such as he delighted to imagine—full of enthusiasm for the same objects; and they both, with will unvanquished and the deepest sense of the justice of their cause, met adversity and death. There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower-prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at

Eton, had often stood by to befriend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration.

During the year 1817, we were established at Marlow, in Buckinghamshire. Shelley's choice of abode was fixed chiefly by this town being at no great distance from London, and its neighbourhood to the Thames. The poem was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty. The chalk hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech; the wilder portion of the country is rendered beautiful by exuberant vegetation; and the cultivated part is peculiarly fertile. With all this wealth of nature which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourishes around, Marlow was inhabited (I hope it is altered now) by a very poor population. The women are lacemakers, and lose their health by sedentary labour, for which they were very ill paid. The poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. The changes produced by peace following a long war, and a bad harvest, brought with them the most heart-rending evils to the poor. Shelley afforded what alleviation he could. In the winter, while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthalmia, caught while visiting the poor cottages. I mention these things,—for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow-creatures gives a thousand-fold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race.

The poem, bold in its opinions and uncompromising in their expression, met with many censurers, not only among those who allow of no virtue but such as supports the cause they espouse, but even among those whose opinions were

similar to his own. I extract a portion of a letter written in answer to one of these friends ; it best details the impulses of Shelley's mind and his motives : it was written with entire unreserve ; and is therefore a precious monument of his own opinion of his powers, of the purity of his designs, and the ardour with which he clung, in adversity and through the valley of the shadow of death, to views from which he believed the permanent happiness of mankind must eventually spring.

Marlow, Dec. 11, 1817.

“ I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the Poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express. But I think you are mistaken in some points with regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of ‘ the Revolt of Islam ; ’ but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem ; and this reassured me, in some degree at least. The poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I engaged in this task, resolved to leave some record of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling, as real, though not so prophetic, as the communications of a dying man. I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless ; but when I consider contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I own I was filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind.

I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists ; in sympathy and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course, I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But when you advert to my chancery paper, a cold, forced, unimpassioned, insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument ; and to the little scrap about Mandeville, which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes' thought to express, as specimens of my powers, more favourable than that which grew as it were from 'the agony and bloody sweat' of intellectual travail ; surely I must feel that in some manner, either I am mistaken in believing that I have any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it. Yet after all, I cannot but be conscious in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquillity which is the attribute and accompaniment of power. This feeling alone would make your most kind and wise admonitions, on the subject of the economy of intellectual force, valuable to me. And if I live, or if I see any trust in coming years, doubt not but that I shall do something, whatever it may be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits."

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND;

A Lyrical Drama.

IN FOUR ACTS.

Audisne hæc Amphiaræ, sub terram abdite?



PREFACE.

THE Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation, or to imitate in story, as in title, their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar license. The "Prometheus Unbound" of Æschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus; an ambition, which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could con-

ceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan : and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling, it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever-winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakspeare are full of instances of the same kind : Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power ; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me), to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and, indeed, more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true, that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate ; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England, has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same ; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakspeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit : the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition, or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is dis-

charging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man, or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them : one great poet is a masterpiece of nature, which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe, as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest ; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others ; and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers ; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of nature and art ; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness ; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between *Æschylus* and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakspeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope ; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, "a passion for reforming the world : " what passion incited him to

write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part, I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence ; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence ; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life, which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take *Æschylus* rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid ; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them : if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient ; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts ; the pile they raise will betray his grave, which might otherwise have been unknown.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PROMETHEUS.
DEMOGORGON.
JUPITER.
The EARTH.
OCEAN.
APOLLO.
MERCURY.
HERCULES.

ASIA,
PANTHEA, } *Oceanides.*
IONE,
The PHANTASM OF JUPITER.
The SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
The SPIRIT OF THE MOON.
SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.
SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUNS.
FURIES.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

ACT I.

SCENE, *a Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS *is discovered bound to the Precipice.* PANTHEA and IONE *are seated at his feet.* Time, Night. *During the Scene, Morning slowly breaks.*

PROMETHEUS.

MONARCH of Gods and Dæmons, and all Spirits
But One, who throned those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes ! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire.
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God !

Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
 Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
 Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
 Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured ; without herb,
 Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
 Ah me, alas ! pain, pain ever, for ever !

No change, no pause, no hope ! Yet I endure.
 I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt ?
 I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
 Has it not seen ? The Sea, in storm or calm,
 Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
 Have its deaf waves not heard my agony ?
 Ah me ! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever !

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
 Of their moon-freezing crystals ; the bright chains
 Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
 Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips
 His beak in poison not his own, tears up
 My heart ; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
 The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
 Mocking me : and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
 To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
 When the rocks split and close again behind :
 While from their loud abysses howling throng
 The genii of the storm, urging the rage
 Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
 And yet to me welcome is day and night,
 Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
 Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
 The leaden-coloured east ; for then they lead
 The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
 —As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim—
 Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood

From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
 If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
 Disdain ! Ah no ! I pity thee. What ruin
 Will hunt thee undefended through the wide Heaven !
 How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
 Gape like a hell within ! I speak in grief,
 Not exultation, for I hate no more,
 As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
 Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
 Whose many-voiced Echoes, through the mist
 Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell !
 Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
 Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
 Shuddering through India ! Thou serenest Air,
 Through which the Sun walks burning without beams !
 And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poised wings
 Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
 As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
 The orb'd world ! If then my words had power,
 Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
 Is dead within ; although no memory be
 Of what is hate, let them not lose it now !
 What was that curse ? for ye all heard me speak.

FIRST VOICE : (*from the mountains.*)

Thrice three hundred thousand years
 O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood :
 Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
 We trembled in our multitude.

SECOND VOICE : (*from the springs.*)

Thunderbolts had parched our water,
 We had been stained with bitter blood,
 And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,
 Through a city and a solitude.

THIRD VOICE : (*from the air.*)

I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
 Its wastes in colours not their own ;
 And oft had my serene repose
 Been cloven by many a rending groan.

FOURTH VOICE : (*from the whirlwinds.*)

We had soared beneath these mountains
 Unresting ages ; nor had thunder,
 Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
 Nor any power above or under
 Ever made us mute with wonder.

FIRST VOICE.'

But never bowed our snowy crest
 As at the voice of thine unrest.

SECOND VOICE. '

Never such a sound before
 To the Indian waves we bore.
 A pilot asleep on the howling sea
 Leaped up from the deck in agony,
 And heard, and cried, " Ah, woe is me !"
 And died as mad as the wild waves be.

THIRD VOICE.

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
 My still realm was never riven :
 When its wound was closed, there stood
 Darkness o'er the day like blood.

FOURTH VOICE.

And we shrank back : for dreams of ruin
 To frozen caves our flight pursuing
 Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
 Though silence is as hell to us.

THE EARTH.

The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
 Cried, "Misery!" then; the hollow Heaven replied,
 "Misery!" And the Ocean's purple waves,
 Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
 And the pale nations heard it, "Misery!"

PROMETHEUS.

I hear a sound of voices: not the voice
 Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
 Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
 Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
 Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
 Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
 The Titan? He who made his agony
 The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
 Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,
 Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,
 Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
 With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
 Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
 To commune with me? me alone, who checked,
 As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
 The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
 Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
 Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses:
 Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!

THE EARTH.

They dare not.

PROMETHEUS.

Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.
 Ha! what an awful whisper rises up!
 'Tis scarce like sound: it tingles through the frame
 As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.

Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice
I only know that thou art moving near
And love. How cursed I him?

THE EARTH.

How canst thou hear,
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

PROMETHEUS.

Thou art a living spirit; speak as they.

THE EARTH.

I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good; and though the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God
Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now.

PROMETHEUS.

Obscurely through my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

THE EARTH.

No, thou canst not hear:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.

PROMETHEUS.

And what art thou,
O melancholy Voice?

THE EARTH.

I am the Earth,
Thy mother; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,

Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
 When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
 Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy!
 And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
 Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust,
 And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
 Grew pale, until his thunder chained thee here.
 Then, see those million worlds which burn and roll
 Around us: their inhabitants beheld
 My sphered light wane in wide Heaven; the sea
 Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
 From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
 Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown;
 Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains;
 Blue thistles bloomed in cities; foodless toads
 Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled;
 When Plague had fallen on man, and beast, and worm,
 And Famine; and black blight on herb and tree;
 And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
 Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
 Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
 With grief; and the thin air, my breath, was stained
 With the contagion of a mother's hate
 Breathed on her child's destroyer; ay, I heard
 Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
 Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
 Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
 And the inarticulate people of the dead,
 Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
 In secret joy and hope those dreadful words
 But dare not speak them.

PROMETHEUS.

Venerable mother!

All else who live and suffer take from thee
 Some comfort; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,

And love, though fleeting; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

THE EARTH.

They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster, my dear child,
Met his own image walking in the garden,
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know there are two worlds of life and death :
One that which thou beholdest; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more ;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains; all the gods
Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts ;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom ;
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin
Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
Ask, and they must reply : so the revenge
Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades,
As rainy wind through the abandoned gate
Of a fallen palace.

PROMETHEUS.

Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil, pass again

My lips, or those of aught resembling me.
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear !

IONE.

My wings are folded o'er mine ears :
My wings are crossed o'er mine eyes :
Yet through their silver shade appears,
And through their lulling plumes arise,
A Shape, a throng of sounds ;
May it be no ill to thee
O thou of many wounds !
Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,
Ever thus we watch and wake.

PANTHEA.

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven ;
The shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold
To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud
His veined hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

PHANTASM OF JUPITER.

Why have the secret powers of this strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direst storms ? What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness ? And, proud sufferer, who art thou ?

PROMETHEUS.

Tremendous Image ! as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,

The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

THE EARTH.

Listen! And though your echoes must be mute,
Grey mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

PHANTASM.

A spirit seizes me and speaks within:
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

PANTHEA.

See, how he lifts his mighty looks, the Heaven
Darkens above.

IONE.

He speaks! O shelter me!

PROMETHEUS.

I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll: yet speak: Oh, speak!

PHANTASM.

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Ay, do thy worst. Thou art omnipotent.
 O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
 And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
 To blast mankind, from yon ethereal tower.
 Let thy malignant spirit move
 In darkness over those I love :
 On me and mine I imprecate
 The utmost torture of thy hate ;
 And thus devote to sleepless agony,
 This undecending head while thou must reign on high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord : O, thou
 Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
 To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
 In fear and worship : all-prevailing foe !
 I curse thee ! let a sufferer's curse
 Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse !
 Till thine Infinity shall be
 A robe of envenomed agony ;
 And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
 To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this curse,
 Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good ;
 Both infinite as is the universe,
 And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
 An awful image of calm power
 Though now thou sittest, let the hour
 Come, when thou must appear to be
 That which thou art internally.
 And after many a false and fruitless crime,
 Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space and
 time.

PROMETHEUS.

Were these my words, O Parent ?

THE EARTH.

They were thine.

PROMETHEUS.

It doth repent me : words are quick and vain ;
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

THE EARTH.

Misery, Oh misery to me,
That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,
Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquished.

FIRST ECHO.

Lies fallen and vanquished ?

SECOND ECHO.

Fallen and vanquished !

IONE.

Fear not : 'tis but some passing spasm,
The Titan is unvanquished still.
But see, where through the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill
Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow
Under plumes of purple dye,
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

PANTHEA.

'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

IONE.

And who are those with hydra tresses
 And iron wings that climb the wind,
 Whom the frowning God represses
 Like vapours steaming up behind,
 Clanging loud, an endless crowd—

PANTHEA.

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
 Whom he gluts with groans and blood,
 When charioted on sulphurous cloud
 He bursts Heaven's bounds.

IONE.

Are they now led, from the thin dead
 On new pangs to be fed ?

PANTHEA.

The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

FIRST FURY.

Ha! I scent life !

SECOND FURY.

Let me but look into his eyes !

THIRD FURY.

The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
 Of corpses, to a death-bird after battle.

FIRST FURY.

Darest thou delay, O Herald ! take cheer, Hounds
 Of Hell : what if the Son of Maia soon
 Should make us food and sport—who can please long
 The Omnipotent ?

MERCURY.

Back to your towers of iron,
 And gnash beside the streams of fire, and wail

Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise ! and Gorgon,
 Chimæra, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends,
 Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
 Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate :
 These shall perform your task.

FIRST FURY.

Oh, mercy ! mercy !

We die with our desire : drive us not back !

MERCURY.

Crouch then in silence.

Awful Sufferer !

To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
 I come, by the Great Father's will driven down,
 To execute a doom of new revenge.
 Alas ! I pity thee, and hate myself
 That I can do no more : aye from thy sight
 Returning, for a season, heaven seems hell,
 So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
 Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,
 But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
 Against the Omnipotent ; as yon clear lamps
 That measure and divide the weary years
 From which there is no refuge, long have taught,
 And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms
 With the strange might of unimagined pains
 The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
 And my commission is to lead them here,
 Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
 People the abyss, and leave them to their task.
 Be it not so ! there is a secret known
 To thee, and to none else of living things,
 Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
 The fear of which perplexes the Supreme ;
 Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne

In intercession ; bend thy soul in prayer,
 And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
 Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart :
 For benefits and meek submission tame
 The fiercest and the mightiest.

PROMETHEUS.

Evil minds
 Change good to their own nature. I gave all
 He has ; and in return he chains me here
 Years, ages, night and day ; whether the Sun
 Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
 The crystal-winged snow cling round my hair :
 Whilst my beloved race is trampled down
 By his thought-executing ministers.
 Such is the tyrant's recompense : 'tis just :
 He who is evil can receive no good ;
 And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost,
 He can feel hate, fear, shame ; not gratitude :
 He but requites me for his own misdeed.
 Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
 With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
 Submission, thou dost know I cannot try ;
 For what submission but that fatal word,
 The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
 Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
 Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
 Or could I yield ? Which yet I will not yield.
 Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned
 In brief Omnipotence ; secure are they :
 For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
 Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
 Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
 Enduring thus, the retributive hour
 Which since we spake is even nearer now.

But hark, the hell-hounds clamour. Fear delay !
Behold ! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.

MERCURY.

Oh, that we might be spared : I to inflict,
And thou to suffer ! once more answer me :
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power ?

PROMETHEUS.

I know but this, that it must come.

MERCURY.

Alas !

Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain ?

PROMETHEUS.

They last while Jove must reign ; nor more, nor less
Do I desire or fear.

MERCURY.

Yet pause, and plunge

Into Eternity, where recorded time,
Even all that we imagine, age on age,
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
Flags, wearily in its unending flight,
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless ;
Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved ?

PROMETHEUS.

Perchance no thought can count them, yet they pass.

MERCURY.

If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the while,
Lapped in voluptuous joy ?

PROMETHEUS.

I would not quit

This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

MERCURY.

Alas ! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

PROMETHEUS.

Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
As light in the sun, throned : how vain is talk !
Call up the fiends.

IONE.

O, sister, look ! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar ;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind !

MERCURY.

I must obey his words and thine : alas !
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart !

PANTHEA.

See where the child of Heaven, with winged feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

IONE.

Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes
Lest thou behold and die : they come : they come
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.

FIRST FURY.

Prometheus !

SECOND FURY.

Immortal Titan !

THIRD FURY.

Champion of Heaven's slaves !

PROMETHEUS.

He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,
Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,

What and who are ye? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove ;
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

FIRST FURY.

We are the ministers of pain and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime ; and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

PROMETHEUS.

Oh ! many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye ; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings.
But why more hideous than your loathed selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep ?

SECOND FURY.

We knew not that : Sisters, rejoice, rejoice !

PROMETHEUS.

Can aught exult in its deformity ?

SECOND FURY.

The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,
Gazing on one another : so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aërial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

PROMETHEUS.

I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.

FIRST FURY.

Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone,
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?

PROMETHEUS.

Pain is my element, as hate is thine ;
Ye rend me now : I care not.

SECOND FURY.

Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes ?

PROMETHEUS.

I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

THIRD FURY.

Thou think'st we will live through thee, one by one,
Like animal life, and though we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men :
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony.

PROMETHEUS.

Why, ye are thus now ;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

CHORUS OF FURIES.

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,

Come, come, come!

Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,
When cities sink howling in ruin; and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck;

Come, come, come!

Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead;

Leave the hatred, as in ashes

Fire is left for future burning:

It will burst in bloodier flashes

When ye stir it, soon returning:

Leave the self-contempt implanted

In young spirits, sense-enchanted,

Misery's yet unkindled fuel:

Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted

To the maniac dreamer: cruel

More than ye can be with hate

Is he with fear.

Come, come, come!

We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate,
And we burthen the blasts of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

IONE.

Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

PANTHEA.

These solid mountains quiver with the sound
Even as the tremulous air: their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

FIRST FURY.

Your call was as a winged car,
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far ;
It rapt us from red gulfs of war.

SECOND FURY.

From wide cities, famine-wasted ;

THIRD FURY.

Groans half heard, and blood untasted ;

FOURTH FURY.

Kingly conclaves, stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold ;

FIFTH FURY.

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—

A FURY.

Speak not ; whisper not :
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought ;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

FURY.

Tear the veil !

ANOTHER FURY.

It is torn.

CHORUS.

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan ? We laugh thee to scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man ?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran

Those perishing waters ; a thirst of fierce fever,
 Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.

One came forth of gentle worth,
 Smiling on the sanguine earth :
 His words outlived him, like swift poison
 Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
 Look ! where round the wide horizon
 Many a million-peopled city
 Vomits smoke in the bright air.
 Mark that outcry of despair !
 'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
 Wailing for the faith he kindled :
 Look again ! the flames almost
 To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled :
 The survivors round the embers
 Gather in dread.

Joy, joy, joy !

Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers ;
 And the future is dark, and the present is spread
 Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

SEMICHORUS I.

Drops of bloody agony flow
 From his white and quivering brow.
 Grant a little respite now :
 See ! a disenchanting nation
 Springs like day from desolation ;
 To Truth its state is dedicate,
 And Freedom leads it forth, her mate ;
 A legioned band of linked brothers,
 Whom Love calls children—

SEMICHORUS II.

'Tis another's.

See how kindred murder kin !
 'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin.

Blood, like new wine, bubbles within :
 Till Despair smothers
 The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.
[All the FURIES vanish, except one.]

IONE.

Hark, sister ! what a low yet dreadful groan
 Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
 Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
 And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.
 Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him ?

PANTHEA.

Alas ! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

IONE.

What didst thou see ?

PANTHEA.

A woful sight : a youth
 With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

IONE.

What next ?

PANTHEA.

The heaven around, the earth below
 Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
 All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
 And some appeared the work of human hearts,
 For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles :
 And other sights too foul to speak and live
 Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
 By looking forth : those groans are grief enough.

FURY.

Behold an emblem : those who do endure
 Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
 Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.

PROMETHEUS.

Remit the anguish of that lighted stare ;
 Close those wan lips ; let that thorn-wounded brow
 Stream not with blood ; it mingles with thy tears !
 Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
 So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
 So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
 O, horrible ! Thy name I will not speak,
 It hath become a curse. I see, I see
 The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
 Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
 Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
 An early-chosen, late-lamented home,
 As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind ;
 Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells :
 Some—Hear I not the multitude laugh loud ?—
 Impaled in lingering fire : and mighty realms
 Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
 Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
 By the red light of their own burning homes.

FURY.

Blood thou canst see, and fire ; and canst hear groans :
 Worse things unheard, unseen, remain behind.

PROMETHEUS.

Worse ?

FURY.

In each human heart terror survives
 The ravin it has gorged : the loftiest fear
 All that they would disdain to think were true :
 Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
 The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
 They dare not devise good for man's estate,
 And yet they know not that they do not dare.

The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
 The powerful goodness want : worse need for them.
 The wise want love ; and those who love want wisdom ;
 And all best things are thus confused to ill.
 Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
 But live among their suffering fellow-men
 As if none felt : they know not what they do.

PROMETHEUS.

Thy words are like a cloud of winged snakes ;
 And yet I pity those they torture not.

FURY.

Thou pitiest them ? I speak no more ! [*Vanishes.*

PROMETHEUS.

Ah woe !

Ah woe ! Alas ! pain, pain ever, for ever !
 I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
 Thy works within my woe-illumined mind,
 Thou subtle tyrant ! Peace is in the grave.
 The grave hides all things beautiful and good :
 I am a God and cannot find it there,
 Nor would I seek it : for, though dread revenge,
 This is defeat, fierce king ! not victory.
 The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
 With new endurance, till the hour arrives
 When they shall be no types of things which are.

PANTHEA.

Alas ! what sawest thou ?

PROMETHEUS.

There are two woes :
 To speak and to behold ; thou spare me one.
 Names are there, Nature's sacred watch-words, they
 Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry ;

The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
 As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love!
 Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
 Among them : there was strife, deceit, and fear :
 Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
 This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

THE EARTH.

I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy
 As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
 I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,
 Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
 And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
 Its world-surrounding ether : they behold
 Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
 The future : may they speak comfort to thee !

PANTHEA.

Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,
 Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
 Thronging in the blue air !

IONE.

And see ! more come,
 Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
 That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
 And hark ! is it the music of the pines ?
 Is it the lake ? Is it the waterfall ?

PANTHEA.

'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

From unremembered ages we
 Gentle guides and guardians be
 Of heaven-oppressed mortality !

And we breathe, and sicken not,
 The atmosphere of human thought :
 Be it dim, and dank, and grey,
 Like a storm-extinguished day,
 Travelled o'er by dying gleams :
 Be it bright as all between
 Cloudless skies and windless streams,
 Silent, liquid, and serene ;
 As the birds within the wind,
 As the fish within the wave,
 As the thoughts of man's own mind
 Float through all above the grave :
 We make there our liquid lair,
 Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
 Through the boundless element :
 Thence we bear the prophecy
 Which begins and ends in thee !

IONE.

More yet come, one by one : the air around them
 Looks radiant as the air around a star.

FIRST SPIRIT.

On a battle-trumpet's blast
 I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
 'Mid the darkness upward cast.
 From the dust of creeds outworn,
 From the tyrant's banner torn,
 Gathering round me, onward borne,
 There was mingled many a cry—
 Freedom ! Hope ! Death ! Victory !
 Till they faded through the sky ;
 And one sound above, around,
 One sound beneath, around, above,
 Was moving ; 'twas the soul of love ;

'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

SECOND SPIRIT.

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
Which rocked beneath, immoveably ;
And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half :
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh :
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath a hell of death
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split,
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

THIRD SPIRIT.

I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed,
When a Dream with plumes of flame,
To his pillow hovering came,
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe ;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet :
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

FOURTH SPIRIT.

On a poet's lips I slept
 Dreaming like a love-adept
 In the sound his breathing kept ;
 Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
 But feeds on the aërial kisses
 Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
 He will watch from dawn to gloom
 The lake-reflected sun illumine
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
 Nor heed nor see, what things they be ;
 But from these create he can
 Forms more real than living man,
 Nurslings of immortality !
 One of these awakened me,
 And I sped to succour thee.

IONE.

Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
 Come, as two doves to one beloved nest,
 Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air,
 On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere ?
 And, hark ! their sweet sad voices ! 'tis despair
 Mingled with love and then dissolved in sound.

PANTHEA.

Canst thou speak, sister ? all my words are drowned.

IONE.

Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
 On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,
 Orange and azure deepening into gold :
 Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Hast thou beheld the form of Love ?

FIFTH SPIRIT.

As over wide dominions
 I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wil-
 dernesses,
 That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided
 pinions,
 Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses :
 His footsteps paved the world with light ; but as I past
 'twas fading,
 And hollow Ruin yawned behind : great sages bound in
 madness,
 And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished, unup-
 braiding,
 Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou, O King
 of sadness,
 Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

SIXTH SPIRIT.

Ah, sister ! Desolation is a delicate thing :
 It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
 But treads with silent footstep, and fans with silent wing
 The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest
 bear ;
 Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above,
 And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
 Dream visions of aërial joy, and call the monster, Love,
 And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we
 greet.

CHORUS.

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,
 Following him, destroyingly,
 On Death's white and winged steed,
 Which the fleetest cannot flee,
 Trampling down both flower and weed,

Man and beast, and foul and fair,
 Like a tempest through the air ;
 Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
 Woundless though in heart or limb.

PROMETHEUS.

Spirits ! how know ye this shall be ?

CHORUS.

In the atmosphere we breathe,
 As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
 From spring gathering up beneath,
 Whose mild winds shake the elder-brake,
 And the wandering herdsmen know
 That the white-thorn soon will blow :
 Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
 When they struggle to increase,
 Are to us as soft winds be
 To shepherd boys, the prophecy
 Which begins and ends in thee.

IONE.

Where are the Spirits fled ?

PANTHEA.

Only a sense
 Remains of them, like the omnipotence
 Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
 Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,
 Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
 Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.

PROMETHEUS.

How fair these air-born shapes ! and yet I feel
 Most vain all hope but love ; and thou art far,
 Asia ! who, when my being overflowed,
 Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine

Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still : alas ! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart ;
Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief,
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things :
There is no agony, and no solace left ;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.

PANTHEA.

Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her ?

PROMETHEUS.

I said all hope was vain but love : thou lovest.

PANTHEA.

Deeply in truth ; but the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale
The scene of her sad exile ; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine ;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the ether
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell !

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Morning. A lonely Vale in the Indian Caucasus.*

ASIA, *alone.*

ASIA.

From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended :
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,
Which should have learnt repose : thou hast descended
Cradled in tempests ; thou dost wake, O Spring !
O child of many winds ! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet ;
Like genius, or like joy which riseth up
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desert of our life.
This is the season, this the day, the hour ;
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,
Too long desired, too long delaying, come !
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl !
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains : through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it ; now it wanes ; it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads

Of woven cloud unravel in pale air :
 'Tis lost ! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
 The roseate sun-light quivers : hear I not
 The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
 Winnowing the crimson dawn ?

PANTHEA *enters.*

I feel, I see

Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,
 Like stars half-quenched in mists of silver dew.
 Beloved and most beautiful, who wearest
 The shadow of that soul by which I live,
 How late thou art ! the sphered sun had climbed
 The sea ; my heart was sick with hope, before
 The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

PANTHEA.

Pardon, great Sister ! but my wings were faint
 With the delight of a remembered dream,
 As are the noon-tide plumes of summer winds
 Sate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
 Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm
 Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy
 Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,
 Both love and woe familiar to my heart
 As they had grown to thine : erewhile I slept
 Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
 Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,
 Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
 Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
 While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
 The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom :
 But not as now, since I am made the wind
 Which fails beneath the music that I bear
 Of thy most wordless converse ; since dissolved
 Into the sense with which love talks, my rest

Was troubled and yet sweet ; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

ASIA.

Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.

PANTHEA.

As I have said,
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linked sleep.
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy :
“ Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me.”
I lifted them : the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love ; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire ; an atmosphere
Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm ether of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorbed, until it passed,
And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,

Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
 And tremulous as they, in the deep night
 My being was condensed ; and as the rays
 Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
 His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
 Like footsteps of weak melody : thy name
 Among the many sounds alone I heard
 Of what might be articulate ; though still
 I listened through the night when sound was none.
 Ione wakened then, and said to me :
 “ Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night ?
 I always knew what I desired before,
 Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
 But now I cannot tell thee what I seek ;
 I know not ; something sweet, since it is sweet
 Even to desire ; it is thy sport, false sister ;
 Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,
 Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
 And mingled it with thine : for when just now
 We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
 The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
 Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
 Quivered between our intertwining arms.”
 I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
 But fled to thee.

ASIA.

Thou speakest, but thy words
 Are as the air : I feel them not : Oh, lift
 Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul !

PANTHEA.

I lift them, though they droop beneath the load
 Of that they would express : what canst thou see
 But thine own fairest shadow imaged there ?

ASIA.

Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
 Contracted to two circles underneath
 Their long, fine lashes ; dark, far, measureless,
 Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.

PANTHEA.

Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed ?

ASIA.

There is a change ; beyond their inmost depth
 I see a shade, a shape : 'tis He, arrayed
 In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
 Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded morn.
 Prometheus, it is thine ! depart not yet !
 Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
 Within that bright pavilion which their beams
 Shall build on the waste world ? The dream is told.
 What shape is that between us ? Its rude hair
 Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
 Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air,
 For through its grey robe gleams the golden dew
 Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

DREAM.

Follow ! Follow !

PANTHEA.

It is mine other dream.

ASIA.

It disappears.

PANTHEA.

It passes now into my mind. Methought
 As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
 Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond tree,

When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
 A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost :
 I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down ;
 But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
 Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,
 O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

ASIA.

As you speak, your words
 Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
 With shapes. Methought among the lawns together
 We wandered, underneath the young grey dawn,
 And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
 Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
 Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind ;
 And the white dew on the new-bladed grass,
 Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently ;
 And there was more which I remember not :
 But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
 Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
 FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW ! As they vanished by,
 And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
 The like was stamped, as with a withering fire,
 A wind arose among the pines ; it shook
 The clinging music from their boughs, and then
 Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
 Were heard : O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME !
 And then I said, " Panthea, look on me."
 But in the depth of those beloved eyes
 Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

ECHO.

Follow, follow !

PANTHEA.

The crags, this clear spring morning, mock our voices,
 As they were spirit-tongued.

ASIA.

It is some being
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds! O, list!

ECHOES (*unseen*).

Echoes we : listen !
We cannot stay :
As dew-stars glisten
Then fade away—
Child of Ocean !

ASIA.

Hark ! Spirits, speak. The liquid responses
Of their aërial tongues yet sound.

PANTHEA.

I hear.

ECHOES.

O, follow, follow,
As our voice recedeth
Through the caverns hollow,
Where the forest spreadeth ;

(More distant.)

O, follow, follow !
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Through the noon-tide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night-flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean !

ASIA.

Shall we pursue the sound? It grows more faint
And distant.

PANTHEA.

List! the strain floats nearer now.

ECHOES.

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken;
Child of Ocean!

ASIA.

How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind!

ECHOES.

O, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noon-tide dew;
By the forests, lakes, and fountains,
Through the many-folded mountains;
To the rents, and gulfs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now;
Child of Ocean!

ASIA.

Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.

A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns. ASIA and PANTHEA pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock, listening.

SEMICHORUS I. OF SPIRITS.

The path through which that lovely twain
 Have past, by cedar, pine, and yew,
 And each dark tree that ever grew,
 Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue ;
 Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
 Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
 Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
 Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
 Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
 Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
 Of the green laurel, blown anew ;
 And bends, and then fades silently,
 One frail and fair anemone :
 Or when some star of many a one
 That climbs and wanders through steep night,
 Has found the cleft through which alone
 Beams fall from high those depths upon
 Ere it is borne away, away,
 By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
 It scatters drops of golden light,
 Like lines of rain that ne'er unite :
 And the gloom divine is all around ;
 And underneath is the mossy ground.

SEMICHORUS II.

There the voluptuous nightingales,
 Are awake through all the broad noon-day,
 When one with bliss or sadness fails,

And through the windless ivy-boughs,
 Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
 On its mate's music-panting bosom ;
 Another from the swinging blossom,
 Watching to catch the languid close
 Of the last strain, then lifts on high
 The wings of the weak melody,
 Till some new strain of feeling bear
 The song, and all the woods are mute ;
 When there is heard through the dim air
 The rush of wings, and rising there
 Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
 Sounds overflow the listener's brain
 So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

SEMICHORUS I.

There those enchanted eddies play
 Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
 By Demogorgon's mighty law,
 With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
 All spirits on that secret way ;
 As inland boats are driven to Ocean
 Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw ;
 And first there comes a gentle sound
 To those in talk or slumber bound,
 And wakes the destined, soft emotion
 Attracts, impels them ; those who saw
 Say from the breathing earth behind
 There streams a plume-uplifting wind
 Which drives them on their path, while they
 Believe their own swift wings and feet
 The sweet desires within obey :
 And so they float upon their way,
 Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
 The storm of sound is driven along,

Sucked up and hurrying : as they fleet
 Behind, its gathering billows meet
 And to the fatal mountain bear
 Like clouds amid the yielding air.

FIRST FAUN.

Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
 Which make such delicate music in the woods ?
 We haunt within the least frequented caves
 And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
 Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft :
 Where may they hide themselves ?

SECOND FAUN.

'Tis hard to tell :

I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
 The bubbles, which enchantment of the sun
 Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
 The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
 Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
 Under the green and golden atmosphere
 Which noon-tide kindles through the woven leaves ;
 And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
 The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
 Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
 They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
 And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
 Under the waters of the earth again.

FIRST FAUN.

If such live thus, have others other lives,
 Under pink blossoms or within the bells
 Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,
 Or on their dying odours, when they die,
 Or on the sunlight of the sphered dew ?

SECOND FAUN.

Ay, many more which we may well divine.
 But should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
 And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
 And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
 Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,
 And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom.
 And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
 One brotherhood : delightful strains which cheer
 Our solitary twilights, and which charm
 To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III.

A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains. ASIA and PANTHEA.

PANTHEA.

Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
 Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
 Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
 Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
 Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
 And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
 That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
 To deep intoxication ; and uplift,
 Like Mænads who cry loud, Evœ ! Evœ !
 The voice which is contagion to the world.

ASIA.

Fit throne for such a Power ! Magnificent !
 How glorious art thou, Earth ! and if thou be
 The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,

Though evil stain its work, and it should be
 Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
 I could fall down and worship that and thee.
 Even now my heart adareth : Wonderful !
 Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain :
 Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
 As a lake, paving in the morning sky,
 With azure waves which burst in silver light,
 Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
 Under the curdling winds, and islanding
 The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
 Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
 Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
 And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist ;
 And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains,
 From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
 The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,
 From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
 Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
 The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
 Of Cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines
 Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
 Awful as silence. Hark ! the rushing snow !
 The sun-awakened avalanche ! whose mass,
 Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
 Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
 As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
 Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
 Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

PANTHEA.

Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
 In crimson foam, even at our feet ! it rises
 As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon
 Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

ASIA.

The fragments of the cloud are scattered up ;
 The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair ;
 Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes ; my brain
 Grows dizzy ; I see shapes within the mist.

PANTHEA.

A countenance with beckoning smiles : there burns
 An azure fire within its golden locks !
 Another and another : hark ! they speak !

SONG OF SPIRITS.

To the deep, to the deep,
 Down, down !
 Through the shade of sleep,
 Through the cloudy strife
 Of Death and of Life ;
 Through the veil and the bar
 Of things which seem and are,
 Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
 Down, down !

While the sound whirls around,
 Down, down !
 As the fawn draws the hound,
 As the lightning the vapour,
 As a weak moth the taper ;
 Death, despair ; love, sorrow ;
 Time both ; to-day, to-morrow ;
 As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
 Down, down !

Through the grey, void abysm,
 Down, down !
 Where the air is no prism,

And the moon and stars are not,
 And the cavern-craggs wear not
 The radiance of Heaven,
 Nor the gloom to Earth given,
 Where there is one pervading, one alone,
 Down, down !

In the depth of the deep
 Down, down !
 Like veiled lightning asleep,
 Like the spark nursed in embers,
 The last look Love remembers,
 Like a diamond, which shines
 On the dark wealth of mines.
 A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
 Down, down !

We have bound thee, we guide thee ;
 Down, down !
 With the bright form beside thee ;
 Resist not the weakness,
 Such strength is in meekness
 That the Eternal, the Immortal,
 Must unloose through life's portal
 The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne
 By that alone.

SCENE IV.

The Cave of DEMOGORGON. ASIA and PANTHEA.

PANTHEA.

What veiled form sits on that ebon throne ?

ASIA.

The veil has fallen.

PANTHEA.

I see a mighty darkness
 Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
 Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
 Ungazed upon and shapeless ; neither limb,
 Nor form, nor outline ; yet we feel it is
 A living spirit.

DEMOGORGON.

Ask what thou wouldst know.

ASIA.

What canst thou tell ?

DEMOGORGON.

All things thou dar'st demand.

ASIA.

Who made the living world ?

DEMOGORGON.

GOD.

ASIA.

Who made all
 That it contains ? thought, passion, reason, will,
 Imagination ?

DEMOGORGON.

God : Almighty God.

ASIA.

Who made that sense which, when the winds of spring
 In rarest visitation, or the voice
 Of one beloved heard in youth alone,
 Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
 The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
 And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
 When it returns no more ?

DEMOGORGON.

Merciful God.

ASIA.

And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
 Which from the links of the great chain of things,
 To every thought within the mind of man
 Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
 Under the load towards the pit of death ;
 Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate ;
 And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood ;
 Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
 Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day ;
 And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell ?

DEMOGORGON.

He reigns.

ASIA.

Utter his name : a world pining in pain
 Asks but his name : curses shall drag him down.

DEMOGORGON.

He reigns.

ASIA.

I feel, I know it : who ?

DEMOGORGON.

He reigns.

ASIA.

Who reigns ? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
 And Light and Love ; then Saturn, from whose throne
 Time fell, an envious shadow : such the state
 Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
 As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
 Before the wind or sun has withered them
 And semi-vital worms ; but he refused
 The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,

The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love ;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, " Let man be free,"
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law ; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign ;
And Jove now reigned ; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell ; and the unseasonable seasons drove,
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves :
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death ; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart ;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man ; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe ;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,

Which shook, but fell not ; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song ;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound ;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine,
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars ; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea :
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-winged chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure æther shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain : but who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone ?
Not Jove : while yet his frown shook heaven, ay, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master ? Is he too a slave ?

DEMOGORGON.

All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil :
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

ASIA.

Whom called'st thou God ?

DEMOGORGON.

I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

ASIA.

Who is the master of the slave ?

DEMOGORGON.

If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets. But a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless ;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world ? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change ? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.

ASIA.

So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given ; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand ; and do thou answer me
As my own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world :
When shall the destined hour arrive ?

DEMOGORGON.

Behold !

ASIA.

The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds

Which trample the dim winds : in each there stands
 A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
 Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
 And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars :
 Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
 With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
 As if the thing they loved fled on before,
 And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
 Stream like a comet's flashing hair : they all
 Sweep onward.

DEMOGORGON.

These are the immortal Hours,
 Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

ASIA.

A spirit with a dreadful countenance
 Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf.
 Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
 Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak!

SPIRIT.

I am the shadow of a destiny
 More dread than is my aspect : ere yon planet
 Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
 Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

ASIA.

What meanest thou?

PANTHEA.

That terrible shadow floats
 Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
 Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
 Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
 Terrified : watch its path among the stars
 Blackening the night!

ASIA.

Thus I am answered : strange !

PANTHEA.

See, near the verge, another chariot stays ;
 An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
 Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
 Of delicate strange tracery ; the young spirit
 That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope ;
 How its soft smiles attract the soul ! as light
 Lures winged insects through the lampless air.

SPIRIT.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
 They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
 And when the red morning is bright'ning
 They bathe in the fresh sunbeam ;
 They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
 Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire : and their speed makes night kindle ;
 I fear : they outstrip the Typhoon ;
 Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
 We encircle the earth and the moon :
 We shall rest from long labours at noon :
 Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.

The Car pauses within a Cloud on the Top of a snowy Mountain.

ASIA, PANTHEA, and the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

SPIRIT.

On the brink of the night and the morning
 My coursers are wont to respire ;
 But the Earth has just whispered a warning
 That their flight must be swifter than fire :
 They shall drink the hot speed of desire !

ASIA.

Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.

SPIRIT.

Alas ! it could not.

PANTHEA.

Oh Spirit ! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills the cloud ? the sun is yet unrisen.

SPIRIT.

The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder ; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aërial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.

PANTHEA.

Yes, I feel—

ASIA.

What is it with thee, sister ? Thou art pale.

PANTHEA.

How thou art changed ! I dare not look on thee ;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veined shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
Among the Egean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name ; love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves

And all that dwells within them ; till grief cast
 Eclipse upon the soul from which it came :
 Such art thou now ; nor is it I alone,
 Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
 But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
 Hearest thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
 Of all articulate beings ? Feelest thou not
 The inanimate winds enamoured of thee ? List ! *[Music.*

ASIA.

Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
 Whose echoes they are : yet all love is sweet,
 Given or returned. Common as light is love,
 And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
 Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
 It makes the reptile equal to the God :
 They who inspire it most are fortunate,
 As I am now ; but those who feel it most
 Are happier still, after long sufferings,
 As I shall soon become.

PANTHEA.

List ! Spirits, speak.

VOICE (*in the air, singing*).

Life of Life ! thy lips enkindle
 With their love the breath between them ;
 And thy smiles before they dwindle
 Make the cold air fire ; then screen them
 In those looks, where whoso gazes
 Faints, entangled in their mazes.
 Child of Light ! thy limbs are burning
 Through the vest which seems to hide them ;
 As the radiant lines of morning
 Through the clouds, ere they divide them ;
 And this atmosphere divinest
 Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others ; none beholds thee,
 But thy voice sounds low and tender
 Like the fairest, for it folds thee
 From the sight, that liquid splendour,
 And all feel, yet see thee never,
 As I feel now, lost for ever !

Lamp of Earth ! where'er thou movest
 Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
 And the souls of whom thou lovest
 Walk upon the winds with lightness,
 Till they fail, as I am failing,
 Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing !

ASIA.

My soul is an enchanted boat,
 Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
 Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing ;
 And thine doth like an angel sit
 Beside the helm conducting it,
 Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
 It seems to float ever, for ever,
 Upon that many-winding river,
 Between mountains, woods, abysses,
 A paradise of wildernesses !
 Till, like one in slumber bound,
 Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
 Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound.

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
 In music's most serene dominions ;
 Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
 And we sail on, away, afar,
 Without a course, without a star,
 But, by the instinct of sweet music driven ;

Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnacle glided,
The boat of my desire is guided :
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds on the waves doth move,
Harmonising this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray :
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day ;
A paradise of vaulted bowers
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld ; somewhat like thee ;
Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously !

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Heaven.* JUPITER on his Throne ; THETIS and the other Deities assembled.

JUPITER.

Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice ! henceforth I am omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me ; alone
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear ;
And though my curses through the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it ; though under my wrath's night
It climb the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall :
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
To redescend, and trample out the spark.

Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,
 And let it fill the Dædal cups like fire,
 And from the flower-inwoven soil divine,
 Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
 As dew from earth under the twilight stars :
 Drink ! be the nectar circling through your veins
 The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
 Till exultation burst in one wide voice
 Like music from Elysian winds.

And thou

Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
 Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
 Thetis, bright image of eternity !
 When thou didst cry, " Insufferable might !
 God ! Spare me ! I sustain not the quick flames,
 The penetrating presence ; all my being,
 Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
 Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
 Sinking through its foundations : " even then
 Two mighty spirits, mingling made a third
 Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
 Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
 Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
 (Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
 Griding the winds ?) from Demogorgon's throne.
 Victory ! victory ! Feelest thou not, O world !
 The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
 Olympus ?

*[The Car of the Hour arrives. DEMOGORGON descends and
 moves towards the Throne of JUPITER.]*

Awful shape, what art thou ? Speak !

DEMOGORGON.

Eternity. Demand no direr name.
 Descend, and follow me down the abyss.

I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child ;
 Mightier than thee : and we must dwell together
 Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
 The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
 Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee :
 Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
 Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,
 Put forth thy might.

JUPITER.

Detested prodigy !
 Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
 I trample thee ! Thou lingerest ?
 Mercy ! mercy !

No pity, no release, no respite ! Oh,
 That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,
 Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
 On Caucasus ! he would not doom me thus.
 Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
 The monarch of the world ? What then art thou ?
 No refuge ! no appeal !

Sink with me then,
 We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
 Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
 Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
 Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
 Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
 And whelm on them into the bottomless void
 This desolated world, and thee, and me,
 The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
 Of that for which they combated.

Ai ! Ai !

The elements obey me not. I sink
 Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
 And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
 Darkens my fall with victory ! Ai, Ai !

SCENE II.

The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis. OCEAN is discovered reclining near the Shore ; APOLLO stands beside him.

OCEAN.

He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown ?

APOLLO.

Ay, when the strife was ended which made dim
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell :
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

OCEAN.

He sunk to the abyss ? To the dark void ?

APOLLO.

An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aërial ice clings over it.

OCEAN.

Henceforth the fields of Heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will heave, unstained with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
Swayed by the summer air ; my streams will flow

Round many peopled continents, and round
 Fortunate isles ; and from their glassy thrones
 Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark
 The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see
 The floating bark of the light laden moon
 With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
 Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea ;
 Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
 And desolation, and the mingled voice
 Of slavery and command ; but by the light
 Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
 And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
 That sweetest music, such as spirits love.

APOLLO.

And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make
 My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
 Darkens the sphere I guide ; but list, I hear
 The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
 That sits i' the morning star.

OCEAN.

Thou must away ;
 Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell :
 The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
 With azure calm out of the emerald urns
 Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
 Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
 Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
 Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
 With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
 Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.
 [A sound of waves is heard.]
 It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
 Peace, monster ; I come now. Farewell.

APOLLO.

Farewell.

SCENE III.

Caucasus. PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, *the* EARTH, SPIRITS, ASIA,
and PANTHEA, borne in the Car with the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends.*

HERCULES.

Most glorious among spirits ! thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
And thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.

PROMETHEUS.

Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of beauty unbeheld ; and ye,
Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, through your love and care ;
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veined emerald, and a fountain,
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears,
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light :
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees ; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass ;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own ;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,

As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability ?
And if ye sigh, then I will smile ; and thou,
Ione, shall chant fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence ;
And we will search with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits ; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be ;
And hither come, sped on the charmed winds,
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aërial Enna feeds,
At their known island-homes in Himera,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free ;
And lovely apparitions, dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright
From the embrace of beauty, whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms, casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality,
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of all that man becomes, the mediators

Of that best worship, love, by him and us
 Given and returned ; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
 More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
 And veil by veil, evil and error fall :
 Such virtue has the cave and place around.

[*Turning to the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.*

For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
 Give her that curved shell, which Proteus old,
 Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
 A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
 Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

IONE.

Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
 Than all thy sisters, this the mystic shell ;
 See the pale azure fading into silver
 Lining it with a soft yet glowing light :
 Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there ?

SPIRIT.

It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean :
 Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.

PROMETHEUS.

Go, borne over the cities of mankind
 On whirlwind-footed coursers : once again
 Outspeed the sun around the orb'd world ;
 And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
 Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
 Loosening its mighty music ; it shall be
 As thunder mingled with clear echoes : then
 Return ; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.

And thou, O Mother Earth !—

THE EARTH.

I hear, I feel ;

Thy lips are on me, and thy touch runs down
 Even to the adamantine central gloom
 Along these marble nerves ; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
 And, through my withered, old, and icy frame
 The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
 Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
 Folded in my sustaining arms ; all plants,
 And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
 And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
 Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
 Draining the poison of despair, shall take
 And interchange sweet nutriment ; to me
 Shall they become like sister-antelopes
 By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
 Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
 The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
 Under the stars like balm : night-folded flowers
 Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose :
 And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
 Strength for the coming day, and all its joy :
 And death shall be the last embrace of her
 Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother,
 Folding her child, says, " Leave me not again."

ASIA.

Oh, mother ! wherefore speak the name of death ?
 Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
 Who die ?

THE EARTH.

It would avail not to reply :
 Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
 But to the uncommunicating dead.
 Death is the veil which those who live call life :
 They sleep, and it is lifted : and meanwhile
 In mild variety the seasons mild
 With rain-bow skirted showers, and odorous winds,

And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
 And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
 All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
 Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
 Shall clothe the forests and the fields, ay, even
 The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,
 With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
 And thou! There is a cavern where my spirit
 Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
 Made my heart mad, and those that did inhale it
 Became mad too, and built a temple there,
 And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
 The erring nations round to mutual war,
 And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee;
 Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
 A violet's exhalation, and it fills
 With a serener light and crimson air
 Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around;
 It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,
 And the dark linked ivy tangling wild,
 And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
 Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
 As they rain through them, and bright golden globes
 Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven,
 And through their veined leaves and amber stems
 The flowers whose purple and translucent bowls
 Stand ever mantling with aërial dew,
 The drink of spirits: and it circles round,
 Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
 Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
 Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
 Arise! Appear!

[A SPIRIT rises in the likeness of a winged child.

This is my torch-bearer;
 Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing

On eyes from which he kindled it anew
 With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
 For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
 And guide this company beyond the peak
 Of Bacchic Nysa, Mænad-haunted mountain,
 And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
 Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
 With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
 And up the green ravine, across the vale,
 Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
 Where ever lies, on unerasing waves,
 The image of a temple, built above,
 Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
 And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
 And populous most with living imagery,
 Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
 Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
 It is deserted now, but once it bore
 Thy name, Prometheus; there the emulous youths
 Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom
 The lamp which was thine emblem; even as those
 Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
 Into the grave, across the night of life,
 As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
 To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
 Beside that temple is the destined cave.

 SCENE IV.

A Forest. In the Back-ground a Cave. PROMETHEUS, ASIA,
 PANTHEA, IONE, and the SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

IONE.

Sister, it is not earthly: how it glides
 Under the leaves! how on its head there burns

A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams
 Are twined with its fair hair ! how, as it moves,
 The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass !
 Knowest thou it ?

PANTHEA.

It is the delicate spirit
 That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
 The populous constellations call that light
 The loveliest of the planets ; and sometimes
 It floats along the spray of the salt sea,
 Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
 Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
 Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
 Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
 Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned
 It loved our sister Asia, and it came
 Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
 Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
 As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
 It made its childish confidence, and told her
 All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
 Yet idly reasoned what it saw ; and called her,
 For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I,
 Mother, dear mother.

THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH (*running to ASIA*).

Mother, dearest mother ;
 May I then talk with thee as I was wont ?
 May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
 After thy looks have made them tired of joy ?
 May I then play beside thee the long noons,
 When work is none in the bright silent air ?

ASIA.

I love thee, gentlest being ! and henceforth
 Can cherish thee unenvied. Speak, I pray :
 Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child
Cannot be wise like thee, within this day ;
And happier too ; happier and wiser both.
Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
A hindrance to my walks o'er the green world :
And that, among the haunts of humankind,
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man ;
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
(Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee),
When false or frowning made me sick at heart
To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen.
Well, my path lately lay through a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it :
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate :
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all ;
A long, long sound, as it would never end :
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves ; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain.

Past floating through the air, and fading still
 Into the winds that scattered them ; and those
 From whom they past seemed mild and lovely forms
 After some foul disguise had fallen, and all
 Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
 And greetings of delighted wonder, all
 Went to their sleep again : and when the dawn
 Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
 Could e'er be beautiful ? yet so they were,
 And that with little change of shape or hue :
 All things had put their evil nature off :
 I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake
 Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
 I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward
 And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
 With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
 Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky ;
 So with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
 We meet again, the happiest change of all.

ASIA.

And never will we part, till thy chaste sister,
 Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon,
 Will look on thy more warm and equal light
 Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow,
 And love thee.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

What ! as Asia loves Prometheus ?

ASIA.

Peace, wanton ! thou art yet not old enough.
 Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
 To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
 With sphered fires the interlunar air ?

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp
'Tis hard I should go darkling.

ASIA.

Listen ; look !

The SPIRIT OF THE HOUR enters.

PROMETHEUS.

We feel what thou hast heard and seen : yet speak.

SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change : the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love, dissolved in them,
Had folded itself round the sphered world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe :
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birth-place in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire.
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs, looking the love we feel ;
In memory of the tidings it has borne ;
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbænic snake
The likeness of those winged steeds will mock

The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear?
As I have said, I floated to the earth:
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change, as I had felt within,
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
"All hope abandon ye who enter here;"
None frown'd, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill;
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant forms,

From custom's evil taint exempt and pure ;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven ; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill-shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment seats, and prisons ; wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no more remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors : mouldering round
Those imaged to the pride of kings and priests,
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment ; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,
Which, under many a name and many a form,
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark, and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world ;
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
And slain among men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines :

The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimick'd, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside ;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself ; just, gentle, wise : but man
Passionless ; no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE,—*A part of the Forest near the Cave of PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA and IONE are sleeping : they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS.

The pale stars are gone !
 For the sun, their swift shepherd
 To their folds them compelling,
 In the depths of the dawn,
 Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee
 Beyond his blue dwelling,
 As fawns flee the leopard,
 But where are ye ?

A Train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly singing.

Here, oh ! here :
 We bear the bier
 Of the Father of many a cancelled year !
 Spectres we
 Of the dead Hours be,
 We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh ! strew
 Hair, not yew !
 Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew !
 Be the faded flowers
 Of Death's bare bowers
 Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours !

Haste, oh, haste !
 As shades are chased,
 Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
 We melt away,
 Like dissolving spray,
 From the children of a diviner day,
 With the lullaby
 Of winds that die
 On the bosom of their own harmony !

IONE.

What dark forms were they ?

PANTHEA.

The past Hours weak and grey,
 With the spoil which their toil
 Raked together
 From the conquest but One could foil.

IONE.

Have they past ?

PANTHEA.

They have past ;
 They outspeeded the blast,
 While 'tis said, they are fled :

IONE.

Whither, oh ! whither ?

PANTHEA.

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS.

Bright clouds float in heaven,
 Dew-stars gleam on earth,
 Waves assemble on ocean,
 They are gathered and driven

By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee !
 They shake with emotion,
 They dance in their mirth.
 But where are ye ?

The pine boughs are singing
 Old songs with new gladness,
 The billows and fountains
 Fresh music are flinging,
 Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea ;
 The storms mock the mountains
 With the thunder of gladness,
 But where are ye ?

IONE.

What charioteers are these ?

PANTHEA.

Where are their chariots ?

SEMICHORUS OF HOURS.

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
 Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep,
 Which covered our being and darkened our birth
 In the deep.

A VOICE.

In the deep ?

SEMICHORUS II.

Oh ! below the deep.

SEMICHORUS I.

A hundred ages we had been kept
 Cradled in visions of hate and care,
 And each one who waked as his brother slept,
 Found the truth—

SEMICHORUS II.

Worse than his visions were !

SEMICHORUS I.

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep ;
 We have known the voice of Love in dreams,
 We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

SEMICHORUS II.

As the billows leap in the morning beams !

CHORUS.

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
 Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
 Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
 To check its flight ere the cave of night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
 Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
 And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
 Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh ! weave the mystic measure
 Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
 Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
 Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A VOICE.

Unite.

PANTHEA.

See, where the Spirits of the human mind
 Wrapt in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

We join the throng
 Of the dance and the song,
 By the whirlwind of gladness borne along ;

As the flying-fish leap
 From the Indian deep,
 And mix with the sea-birds half-asleep.

CHORUS OF HOURS.

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
 For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
 And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
 And your eyes are as love which is veiled not ?

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

We come from the mind
 Of human kind,
 Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind ;
 Now 'tis an ocean
 Of clear emotion,
 A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
 Of wonder and bliss,
 Whose caverns are crystal palaces ;
 From those skiey towers
 Where Thought's crowned powers
 Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours !

From the dim recesses
 Of woven caresses,
 Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses ;
 From the azure isles,
 Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
 Delaying your ships with her syren wiles.

From the temples high
 Of Man's ear and eye,
 Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy ;

From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews his Dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears ;
We waded and flew,
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm ;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies,
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS AND HOURS.

Then weave the web of the mystic measure ;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony !

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run ;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We 'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize :

Death, Chaos, and Night,
 From the sound of our flight,
 Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
 And the Spirit of Might,
 Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight ;
 And Love, Thought, and Breath,
 The powers that quell Death,
 Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
 In the void's loose field
 A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield ;
 We will take our plan
 From the new world of man
 And our work shall be called the Promethean.

CHORUS OF HOURS.

Break the dance, and scatter the song ;
 Let some depart, and some remain.

SEMICHORUS I.

We, beyond heaven, are driven along :

SEMICHORUS II.

Us the enchantments of earth retain :

SEMICHORUS I.

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
 With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
 And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

SEMICHORUS II.

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
 Leading the Day, and outspeeding the Night,
 With the powers of a world of perfect light.

SEMICHORUS I.

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

SEMICHORUS II.

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

CHORUS OF HOURS AND SPIRITS.

Break the dance, and scatter the song,
Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like star-beams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

PANTHEA.

Ha ! they are gone !

IONE.

Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness ?

PANTHEA.

As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky !

IONE.

Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound ?

PANTHEA.

'Tis the deep music of the rolling world,
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Æolian modulations.

IONE.

Listen too,
 How every pause is filled with under-notes,
 Clear, silver, icy, keen awakening tones,
 Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
 As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
 And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

PANTHEA.

But see where, through two openings in the forest
 Which hanging branches overcanopy,
 And where two runnels of a rivulet,
 Between the close moss, violet inwoven,
 Have made their path of melody, like sisters
 Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
 Turning their dear disunion to an isle
 Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts ;
 Two visions of strange radiance float upon
 The ocean-like enchantment of strong squalor,
 Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet
 Under the ground and through the windless air.

IONE.

I see a chariot like that thinnest boat
 In which the mother of the months is borne
 By ebbing night into her western cave,
 When she upsprings from interlunar dreams,
 O'er which is curbed an orblike canopy
 Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods
 Distinctly seen through that dusk airy veil,
 Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass
 Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
 Such as the genii of the thunder-storm
 Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
 When the sun rushes under it ; they roll

And move and grow as with an inward wind ;
 Within it sits a winged infant, white
 Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
 Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
 Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
 Of its white robe, woof of ætherial pearl.
 Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
 Scattered in strings ; yet its two eyes are heavens
 Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
 Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
 From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
 Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
 With fire that is not brightness ; in its hand
 It sways a quivering moon-beam, from whose point
 A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
 Over its wheeled clouds, which as they roll
 Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
 Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

FANTHEA.

And from the other opening in the wood
 Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
 A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
 Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
 Flow, as through empty space, music and light :
 Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
 Purple and azure, white, green and golden,
 Sphere within sphere ; and every space between
 Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
 Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
 Yet each inter-transpicuous, and they whirl
 Over each other with a thousand motions,
 Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
 And with the force of self-destroying swiftmess,
 Intensely, slowly, solemnly, roll on,

Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
 Intelligible words and music wild.
 With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
 Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
 Of elemental subtlety, like light ;
 And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
 The music of the living grass and air,
 The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
 Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
 Seem kneaded into one aërial mass
 Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
 Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
 Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
 On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,
 The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,
 And you can see its little lips are moving,
 Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
 Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

IONE.

'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

PANTHEA.

And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,
 Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
 With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwined,
 Embleming heaven and earth united now,
 Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
 Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
 Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,
 And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
 Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,
 Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart ;
 Infinite mine of adamant and gold,
 Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,

And caverns on crystalline columns poised
With vegetable silver overspread ;
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water springs
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles ; anchors, beaks of ships ;
Planks turned to marble ; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythed chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin !
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human ; see, they lie
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes and fanes ; prodigious shapes
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard, black deep ; and over these,
The anatomies of unknown winged things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags ; and over these
The jagged alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapt deluge round it like a cloke, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished ; or some God

Whose throne was in a comet, past, and cried,
Be not! And like my words they were no more.

THE EARTH.

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!

Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

THE MOON.

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odour, and deep melody
Through me, through me!

THE EARTH.

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains,
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones,
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending.

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,

My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow, and fire;
 My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
 Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
 Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire.

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
 By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
 Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all ;
 And from beneath, around, within, above,
 Filling thy void annihilation, love
 Bursts in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

THE MOON.

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
 Is loosened into living fountains,
 My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine :
 A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
 It clothes with unexpected birth
 My cold bare bosom : Oh ! it must be thine
 On mine, on mine !

Gazing on thee I feel, I know,
 Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
 And living shapes upon my bosom move :
 Music is in the sea and air,
 Winged clouds soar here and there,
 Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of :
 'Tis love, all love !

THE EARTH.

It interpenetrates my granite mass,
 Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass,
 Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers ;
 Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
 It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
 They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
 With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
 Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being :
 With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
 Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
 Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
 Which could distort to many a shape of error,
 This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love ;
 Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven
 Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even
 Darting from starry depths radiance and light, doth move,

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
 Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
 Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is
 poured ;
 Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
 Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
 It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men ! a chain of linked thought,
 Of love and might to be divided not,
 Compelling the elements with adamant stress ;
 As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
 The unquiet republic of the maze
 Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
 Whose nature is its own divine control,
 Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea ;
 Familiar acts are beautiful through love ;
 Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
 Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be !

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
 And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
 A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
 Is as a tempest-winged ship, whose helm
 Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
 Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
 Of marble and of colour his dreams pass ;
 Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their
 children wear ;
 Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
 Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
 Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless
 were.

The lightning is his slave ; heaven's utmost deep
 Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
 They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on !
 The tempest is his steed, he strides the air ;
 And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
 Heaven, hast thou secrets ? Man unveils me ; I have none.

THE MOON.

The shadow of white death has past
 From my path in heaven at last,
 A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep ;
 And through my newly-woven bowers,
 Wander happy paramours,
 Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
 Thy vales more deep.

THE EARTH.

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
 A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,

And crystalline, till it becomes a winged mist,
 And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
 Outlives the noon, and on the sun's last ray
 Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

THE MOON.

Thou art folded, thou art lying
 In the light which is undying
 Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine ;
 All suns and constellations shower
 On thee a light, a life, a power
 Which doth array thy sphere ; thou pourest thine
 On mine, on mine !

THE EARTH.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
 Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,
 Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep ;
 As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
 Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
 Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

THE MOON.

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
 When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
 High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull ;
 So, when thy shadow falls on me,
 Then am I mute and still, by thee
 Covered ; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
 Full, oh, too full !

Thou art speeding round the sun,
 Brightest world of many a one ;
 Green and azure sphere which shinest
 With a light which is divinest

Among all the lamps of Heaven
 To whom life and light is given ;
 I, thy crystal paramour,
 Borne beside thee by a power
 Like the polar Paradise,
 Magnet-like, of lovers' eyes ;
 I, a most enamoured maiden,
 Whose weak brain is overladen
 With the pleasure of her love,
 Maniac-like around thee move
 Gazing, an insatiate bride,
 On thy form from every side,
 Like a Mænad, round the cup
 Which Agave lifted up
 In the weird Cadmæan forest.
 Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
 I must hurry, whirl and follow
 Through the heavens wide and hollow,
 Sheltered by the warm embrace
 Of thy soul from hungry space,
 Drinking from thy sense and sight
 Beauty, majesty, and might,
 As a lover or cameleon
 Grows like what it looks upon,
 As a violet's gentle eye
 Gazes on the azure sky
 Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
 As a grey and watery mist
 Glows like solid amethyst
 Athwart the western mountain it enfolds
 When the sunset sleeps
 Upon its snow.

THE EARTH.

And the weak day weeps
 That it should be so.

O gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
 Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
 Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night
 Through isles for ever calm ;
 O gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
 The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
 Charming the tiger joy, whose tramlings fierce
 Made wounds which need thy balm.

PANTHEA.

I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
 A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
 Out of the stream of sound.

IONE.

 Ah me ! sweet sister,
 The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
 And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
 Because your words fall like the clear soft dew
 Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

PANTHEA.

Peace, peace ! a mighty Power, which is as darkness,
 Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
 Is showered like night, and from within the air
 Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
 Into the pores of sunlight : the bright visions,
 Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,
 Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

IONE.

There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

PANTHEA.

A universal sound like words : Oh, list !

DEMOGORGON.

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
 Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
 Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
 The love which paves thy path along the skies :

THE EARTH.

I hear : I am as a drop of dew that dies.

DEMOGORGON.

Thou Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
 With wonder, as it gazes upon thee ;
 Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
 Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony :

THE MOON.

I hear : I am a leaf shaken by thee !

DEMOGORGON.

Ye kings of suns and stars ! Dæmons and Gods,
 Ætherial Dominations ! who possess
 Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
 Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness :

A VOICE FROM ABOVE.

Our great Republic hears ; we are blest, and bless.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye happy dead ! whom beams of brightest verse
 Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray,
 Whether your nature is that universe
 Which once ye saw and suffered—

A VOICE FROM BENEATH.

Or as they
 Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

DEMOGORGON.

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
 From man's high mind even to the central stone
 Of sullen lead; from Heaven's star-fretted domes
 To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on :

A CONFUSED VOICE.

We hear : thy words waken Oblivion.

DEMOGORGON.

Spirits ! whose homes are flesh : ye beasts and birds,
 Ye worms and fish ; ye living leaves and buds ;
 Lightning and wind ; and ye untameable herds,
 Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes.

A VOICE.

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

DEMOGORGON.

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave ;
 A dupe and a deceiver ; a decay ;
 A traveller from the cradle to the grave
 Through the dim night of this immortal day :

ALL.

Speak ! thy strong words may never pass away.

DEMOGORGON.

This the day, which down the void abysm
 At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
 And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep ;
 Love, from its awful throne of patient power
 In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
 Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
 And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
 And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength ;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length,
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;
To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates :
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent ;
This, like thy glory, Titan ! is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free ;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory !

NOTE ON THE PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

BY THE EDITOR.

ON the 12th of March, 1818, Shelley quitted England, never to return. His principal motive was the hope that his health would be improved by a milder climate; he suffered very much during the winter previous to his emigration, and this decided his vacillating purpose. In December, 1817, he had written from Marlow to a friend, saying :—

“My health has been materially worse. My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to such a state of unnatural and keen excitement, that only to instance the organ of sight, I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission, is my condition. The hours devoted to study are selected with vigilant caution from among these periods of endurance. It is not for this that I think of travelling to Italy, even if I knew that Italy would relieve me. But I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack, and although at present it has passed away without any considerable

vestige of its existence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumptive. It is to my advantage that this malady is in its nature slow, and, if one is sufficiently alive to its advances, is susceptible of cure from a warm climate. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, *it would be my duty* to go to Italy without delay. It is not mere health, but life, that I should seek, and that not for my own sake; I feel I am capable of trampling on all such weakness—but for the sake of those to whom my life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honour—and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse.”

In almost every respect his journey to Italy was advantageous. He left behind friends to whom he was attached, but cares of a thousand kinds, many springing from his lavish generosity, crowded round him in his native country: and, except the society of one or two friends, he had no compensation. The climate caused him to consume half his existence in helpless suffering. His dearest pleasure, the free enjoyment of the scenes of nature, was marred by the same circumstance.

He went direct to Italy, avoiding even Paris, and did not make any pause till he arrived at Milan. The first aspect of Italy enchanted Shelley; it seemed a garden of delight placed beneath a clearer and brighter heaven than any he had lived under before. He wrote long descriptive letters during the first year of his residence in Italy, which, as compositions, are the most beautiful in the world, and show how truly he appreciated and studied the wonders of nature and art in that divine land.

The poetical spirit within him speedily revived with all

the power and with more than all the beauty of his first attempts. He meditated three subjects as the groundwork for lyrical Dramas. One was the story of Tasso ; of this a slight fragment of a song of Tasso remains. The other was one founded on the book of Job, which he never abandoned in idea, but of which no trace remains among his papers. The third was the "Prometheus Unbound." The Greek tragedians were now his most familiar companions in his wanderings, and the sublime majesty of Æschylus filled him with wonder and delight. The father of Greek tragedy does not possess the pathos of Sophocles, nor the variety and tenderness of Euripides ; the interest on which he founds his dramas is often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and throes of gods and demigods—such fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley.

We spent a month at Milan, visiting the Lake of Como during that interval. Thence we passed in succession to Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Este, Rome, Naples, and back again to Rome, whither we returned early in March 1819. During all this time Shelley meditated the subject of his drama, and wrote portions of it. Other poems were composed during this interval, and while at the Bagni di Lucca he translated Plato's Symposium. But though he diversified his studies, his thoughts centred in the "Prometheus." At last, when at Rome, during a bright and beautiful spring, he gave up his whole time to the composition. The spot selected for his study was, as he mentions in his preface, the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. These are little known to the ordinary visitor at Rome. He describes them in a letter, with that poetry, and delicacy, and

truth of description, which render his narrated impressions of scenery of unequalled beauty and interest.

At first he completed the drama in three acts. It was not till several months after, when at Florence, that he conceived that a fourth act, a sort of hymn of rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophecies with regard to Prometheus, ought to be added to complete the composition.

The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was, that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity; God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

" Brought death into the world and all our woe."

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on, was the image of One warring with the Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it, but by all, even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity. A victim full of fortitude and hope, and the spirit of triumph emanating from a reliance in the ultimate omnipotence of good. Such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealized image of the same subject. He followed certain classical

authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulture to devour his still renewed heart. There was a prophecy afloat in heaven portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus; and the god offered freedom from torture on condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the vulture and set him free, and Thetis was married to Peleus, the father of Achilles.

Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his peculiar views. The son, greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone Evil, and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture, till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus—she was, according to other mythological interpreta-

tions, the same as Venus and Nature. When the Benefactor of Mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the Fourth Act, the Poet gives further scope to his imagination, and idealizes the forms of creation, such as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty Parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth—the guide of our Planet through the realms of sky—while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of Evil in the superior sphere.

Shelley develops, more particularly in the lyrics of this drama, his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the Creation. It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of Man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of mind and nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.

More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real—to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery.

I find in one of his manuscript books some remarks on a

line in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, which shows at once the critical subtlety of Shelley's mind, and explains his apprehension of those "minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us," which he pronounces, in the letter quoted in the note to the *Revolt of Islam*, to comprehend all that is sublime in man.

"In the Greek Shakspeare, Sophocles, we find the image,

Πολλὰς δ' ὁδοῦς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος πλάνοισ.

A line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry, yet how simple are the images in which it is arrayed,

Coming to many ways in the wanderings of careful thought.

If the words *ὁδοῦς* and *πλάνοισ* had not been used, the line might have been explained in a metaphorical, instead of an absolute sense, as we say 'ways and means,' and wanderings, for error and confusion; but they meant literally paths or roads, such as we tread with our feet; and wanderings, such as a man makes when he loses himself in a desert, or roams from city to city, as *Œdipus*, the speaker of this verse, was destined to wander, blind and asking charity. What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which is here made its symbol, a world within a world, which he, who seeks some knowledge with respect to what he ought to do, searches throughout, as he would search the external universe for some valued thing which was hidden from him upon its surface."

In reading Shelley's poetry, we often find similar verses, resembling, but not imitating, the Greek in this species of

imagery; for though he adopted the style, he gifted it with that originality of form and colouring which sprung from his own genius.

In the *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley fulfils the promise quoted from a letter in the Note on the Revolt of Islam*. The tone of the composition is calmer and more majestic, the poetry more perfect as a whole, and the imagination displayed at once more pleasingly beautiful and more varied and daring. The description of the Hours, as they are seen in the cave of Demogorgon, is an instance of this—it fills the mind as the most charming picture—we long to see an artist at work to bring to our view the

cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds,
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer, urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.

Through the whole Poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world.

* While correcting the proof-sheets of that Poem, it struck me that the Poet had indulged in an exaggerated view of the evils of restored despotism, which, however injurious and degrading, were less openly sanguinary than the triumph of anarchy, such as it appeared in France at the close of the last century. But at this time a book, "*Scenes of Spanish Life*," translated by Lieutenant Crawford from the German of Dr. Huber, of Rostock, fell into my hands. The account of the triumph of the priests and the serviles, after the French invasion of Spain in 1823, bears a strong and frightful resemblance to some of the descriptions of the massacre of the patriots in the Revolt of Islam.

England had been rendered a painful residence to Shelley, as much by the sort of persecution with which in those days all men of liberal opinions were visited, and by the injustice he had lately endured in the Court of Chancery, as by the symptoms of disease which made him regard a visit to Italy as necessary to prolong his life. An exile, and strongly impressed with the feeling that the majority of his countrymen regarded him with sentiments of aversion, such as his own heart could experience towards none, he sheltered himself from such disgusting and painful thoughts in the calm retreats of poetry, and built up a world of his own, with the more pleasure, since he hoped to induce some one or two to believe that the earth might become such, did mankind themselves consent. The charm of the Roman climate helped to clothe his thoughts in greater beauty than they had ever worn before. And as he wandered among the ruins, made one with nature in their decay, or gazed on the Praxitelean shapes that throng the Vatican, the Capitol, and the palaces of Rome, his soul imbibed forms of loveliness which became a portion of itself. There are many passages in the "Prometheus" which show the intense delight he received from such studies, and give back the impression with a beauty of poetical description peculiarly his own. He felt this, as a poet must feel when he satisfies himself by the result of his labours, and he wrote from Rome, "My Prometheus Unbound is just finished, and in a month or two I shall send it. It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted, and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts."

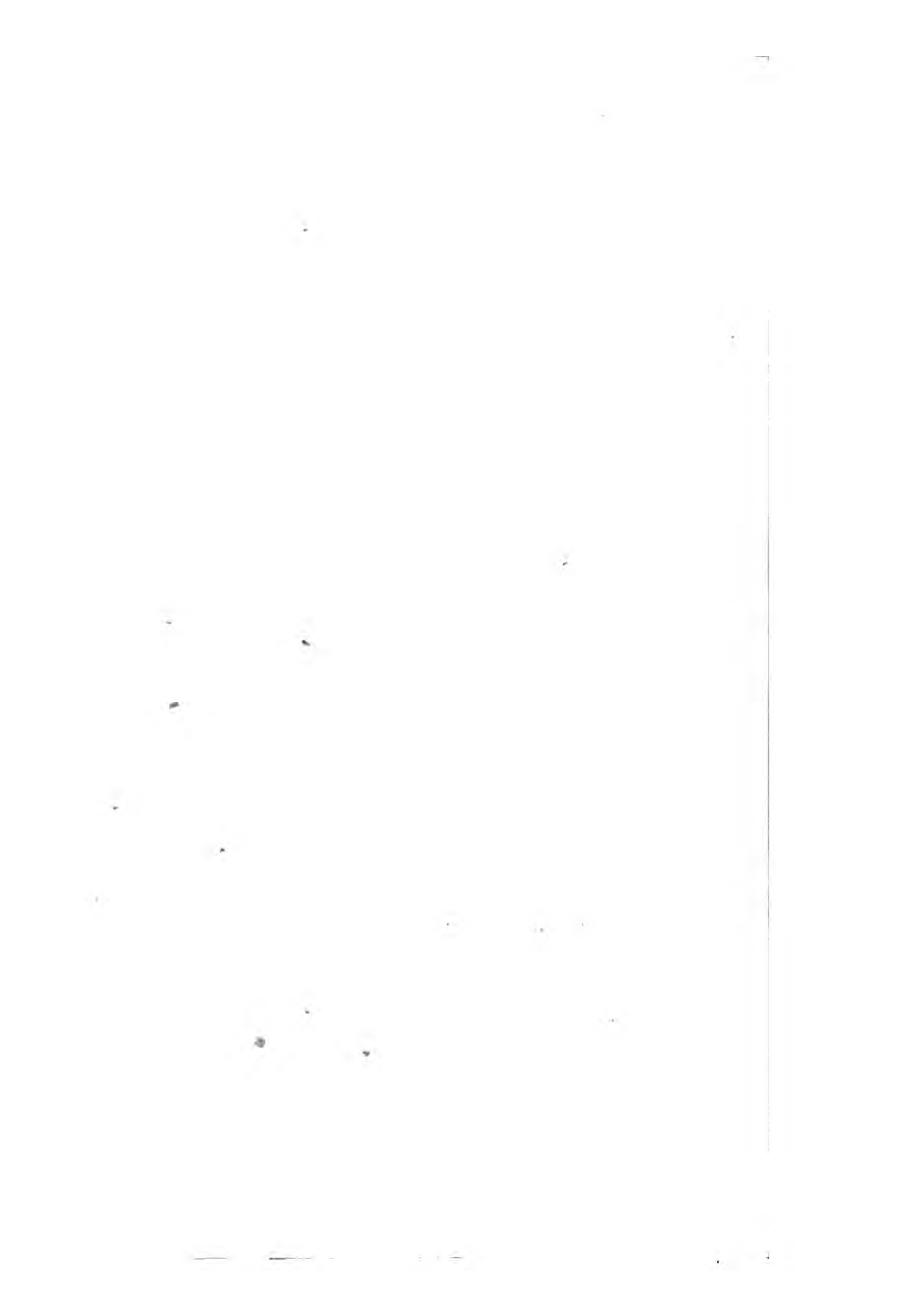
I may mention, for the information of the more critical reader, that the verbal alterations in this edition of Prometheus are made from a list of errata, written by Shelley himself.

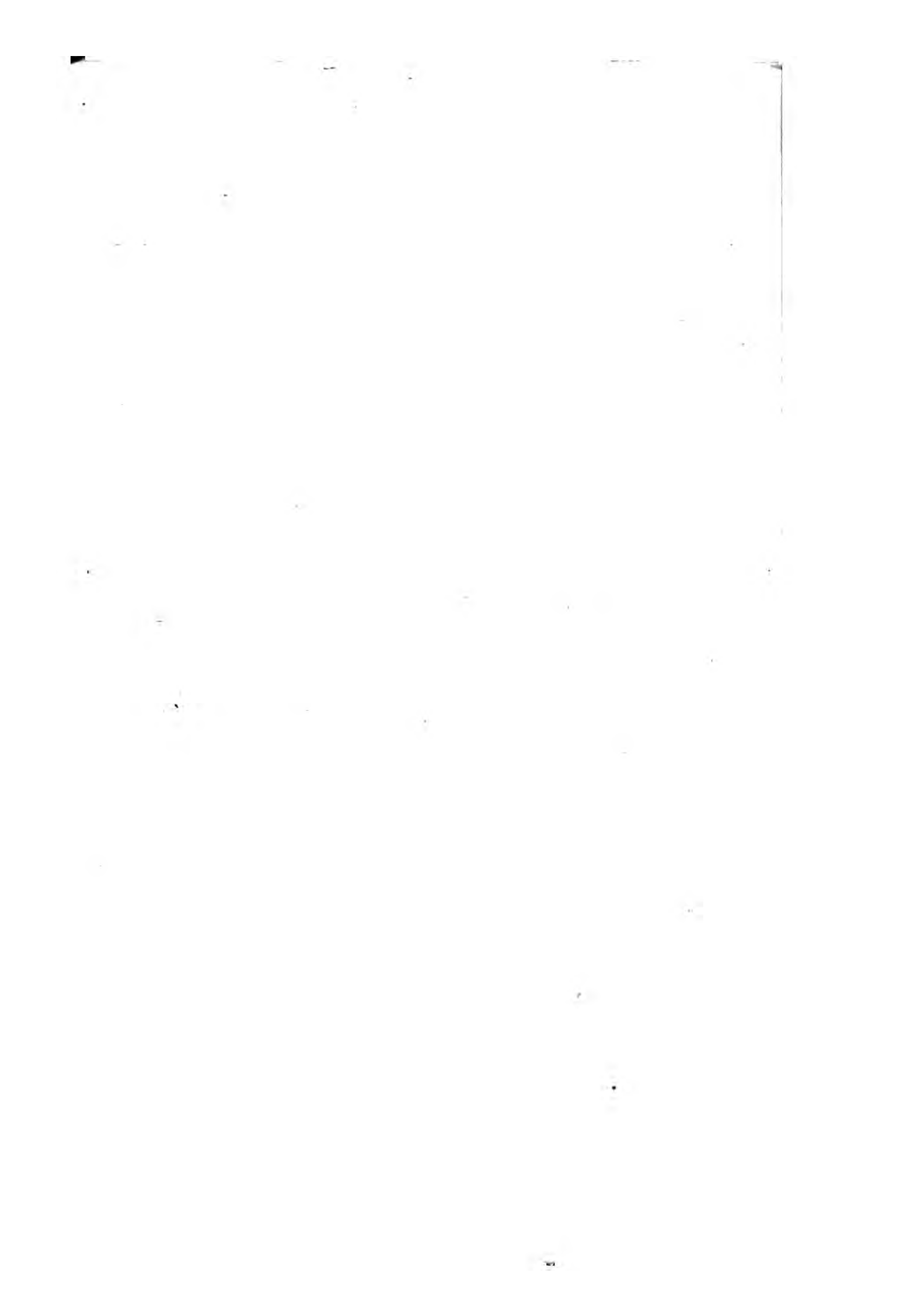
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The first part of the report discusses the current state of the world economy and the impact of the Asian financial crisis. It notes that the crisis has led to a sharp decline in global growth and has had significant implications for developing countries. The report also examines the role of international organizations in addressing the crisis and the need for coordinated action.

The second part of the report focuses on the impact of the crisis on the environment. It highlights the increased risk of natural disasters and the potential for environmental degradation as a result of the crisis. The report also discusses the need for sustainable development and the role of the private sector in addressing environmental challenges.

The third part of the report discusses the impact of the crisis on the labor market. It notes that the crisis has led to a significant increase in unemployment and has had a negative impact on wages and working conditions. The report also examines the need for labor market reforms and the role of social safety nets in protecting workers.

The fourth part of the report discusses the impact of the crisis on the financial system. It notes that the crisis has led to a sharp decline in global financial markets and has had significant implications for the stability of the financial system. The report also examines the need for financial reforms and the role of international organizations in addressing the crisis.

The fifth part of the report discusses the impact of the crisis on the social sector. It notes that the crisis has led to a significant increase in poverty and has had a negative impact on social services. The report also examines the need for social reforms and the role of the private sector in addressing social challenges.

The sixth part of the report discusses the impact of the crisis on the political system. It notes that the crisis has led to a significant increase in political instability and has had a negative impact on the political system. The report also examines the need for political reforms and the role of international organizations in addressing the crisis.

The seventh part of the report discusses the impact of the crisis on the cultural sector. It notes that the crisis has led to a significant increase in cultural poverty and has had a negative impact on the cultural sector. The report also examines the need for cultural reforms and the role of the private sector in addressing cultural challenges.

The eighth part of the report discusses the impact of the crisis on the health sector. It notes that the crisis has led to a significant increase in health poverty and has had a negative impact on the health sector. The report also examines the need for health reforms and the role of the private sector in addressing health challenges.

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