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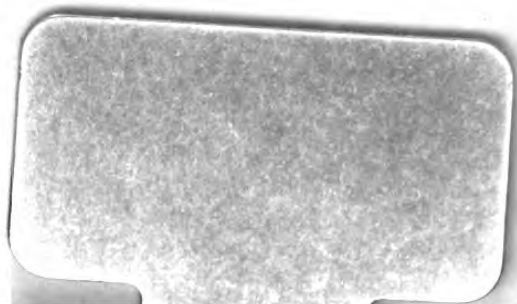
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39.

288.



THE
P O E T I C A L W O R K S
OF
P E R C Y B Y S S H E S H E L L E Y .



Percy B. Shelley.

FROM AN ORIGINAL PICTURE IN THE POSSESSION OF MRS. ...

London, Edward Moxon, Taver Street

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 FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

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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. 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 partizans 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 pas-

sion ; 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 who have resemblance to his own ; and the mystic subtlety of many of his thoughts will meet 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 héart-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 fortitude 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 shewed 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.

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QUEEN MAB.

VOL. I.

B

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 parted ;
 And as the car of magic they ascended,
 Again the speechless music swelled,
 Again the coursers 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
 Peep'd 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 horned 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 slightest 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
Look'd o'er the immense of Heaven.

The magic car no longer moved.
The Fairy and the Spirit
Enter'd 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 press'd 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 past 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.

III.

FAIRY ! the Spirit said,
And on the Queen of Spells
Fixed her ethereal eyes,
I thank thee. Thou hast given
A boon which I will not resign, and taught
A lesson not to be unlearned. I know
The past, and thence I will essay to glean
A warning for the future, so that man
May profit by his errors, and derive
Experience from his folly :
For, when the power of imparting joy
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other heaven.

MAB.

Turn thee, surpassing Spirit !
Much yet remains unscanned.
Thou knowest how great is man,
Thou knowest his imbecility :
Yet learn thou what he is ;
Yet learn the lofty destiny
Which restless Time prepares
For every living soul.

Behold a gorgeous palace, that, amid
Yon populous city, rears its thousand towers
And seems itself a city. Gloomy troops
Of sentinels, in stern and silent ranks,
Encompass it around : the dweller there
Cannot be free and happy ; hearest thou not
The curses of the fatherless, the groans
Of those who have no friend ? He passes on :
The King, the wearer of a gilded chain
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave
Even to the basest appetites—that man
Heeds not the shriek of penury ; he smiles
At the deep curses which the destitute
Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy
Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands groan
But for those morsels, which his wantonness
Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save
All that they love from famine : when he hears
The tale of horror, to some ready-made face
Of hypocritical assent he turns,
Smothering the glow of shame, that, spite of him,
Flushes his bloated cheek.

Now to the meal
Of silence, grandeur, and excess, he drags
His palled unwilling appetite. If gold,
Gleaming around, and numerous viands culled

From every clime, could force the loathing sense
 To overcome satiety,—if wealth
 The spring it draws from poisons not,—or vice,
 Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not
 Its food to deadliest venom ; then that king
 Is happy ; and the peasant who fulfils
 His unforced task, when he returns at even,
 And by the blazing faggot meets again
 Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,
 Tastes not a sweeter meal.

Behold him now
 Stretched on the gorgeous couch ; his fevered brain
 Reels dizzily awhile : but ah ! too soon
 The slumber of intemperance subsides,
 And conscience, that undying serpent, calls
 Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.
 Listen ! he speaks ! oh ! mark that frenzied eye—
 Oh ! mark that deadly visage.

KING.

No cessation !

Oh ! must this last for ever ! Awful death,
 I wish, yet fear to clasp thee !—Not one moment
 Of dreamless sleep ! O dear and blessed peace !
 Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity
 In penury and dungeons ! wherefore lurkest
 With danger, death, and solitude : yet shunn'st
 The palace I have built thee ! Sacred peace !

Oh visit me but once, but pitying shed
One drop of balm upon my withered soul.

Vain man ! that palace is the virtuous heart,
And peace defileth not her snowy robes
In such a shed as thine. Hark ! yet he mutters ;
His slumbers are but varied agonies,
They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.
There needeth not the hell that bigots frame
To punish those who err : earth in itself
Contains at once the evil and the cure ;
And all-sufficing nature can chastise
Those who transgress her law,—she only knows
How justly to proportion to the fault
The punishment it merits.

Is it strange
That this poor wretch should pride him in his woe ?
Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpion that consumes him ? Is it strange
That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,
Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured
Within a splendid prison, whose stern bounds
Shut him from all that's good or dear on earth,
His soul asserts not its humanity ?
That man's mild nature rises not in war
Against a king's employ ? No—'tis not strange.
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts and lives

Just as his father did ; the unconquered powers
 Of precedent and custom interpose
 Between a *king* and virtue. Stranger yet,
 To those who know not nature, nor deduce
 The future from the present, it may seem,
 That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes
 Of this unnatural being ; not one wretch,
 Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed
 Is earth's unpitying bosom, rears an arm
 To dash him from his throne !

Those gilded flies

That, basking in the sunshine of a court,
 Fatten on its corruption !—what are they ?
 —The drones of the community ; they feed
 On the mechanic's labour : the starved hind
 For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
 Its unshared harvests ; and yon squalid form,
 Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
 A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
 Drags out in labour a protracted death,
 To glut their grandeur ; many faint with toil,
 That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

Whence, thinkest thou, kings and parasites arose ?
 Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
 Toil and unvanquishable penury
 On those who build their palaces, and bring

Their daily bread?—From vice, black loathsome vice,
 From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong ;
 From all that genders misery, and makes
 Of earth this thorny wilderness ; from lust,
 Revenge, and murder. —And when reason's voice,
 Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked
 The nations ; and mankind perceive that vice
 Is discord, war, and misery ; that virtue
 Is peace, and happiness and harmony ;
 When man's maturer nature shall disdain
 The playthings of its childhood ;—kingly glare
 Will lose its power to dazzle ; its authority
 Will silently pass by ; the gorgeous throne
 Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
 Fast falling to decay ; whilst falsehood's trade
 Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
 As that of truth is now.

Where is the fame

Which the vain-glorious mighty of the earth
 Seek to eternize ? Oh ! the faintest sound
 From time's light footfall, the minutest wave
 That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing
 The unsubstantial bubble. Aye ! to-day
 Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
 That flashes desolation, strong the arm
 That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes !
 That mandate is a thunder-peal that died

In ages past ; that gaze, a transient flash
On which the midnight closed, and on that arm
The worm has made his meal.

The virtuous man,
Who, great in his humility, as kings
Are little in their grandeur ; he who leads
Invincibly a life of resolute good,
And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths
More free and fearless than the trembling judge,
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
To bind the impassive spirit ;—when he falls,
His mild eye beams benevolence no more :
Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve ;
Sunk reason's simple eloquence, that rolled
But to appal the guilty. Yes ! the grave
Hath quenched that eye, and death's relentless frost
Withered that arm : but the unfading fame
Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb ;
The deathless memory of that man, whom kings
Call to their mind and tremble ; the remembrance
With which the happy spirit contemplates
Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
Shall never pass away.

Nature rejects the monarch, not the man ;
The subject, not the citizen : for kings
And subjects, mutual foes, for ever play
A losing game into each other's hands,

Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
 Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
 Power, like a desolating pestilence,
 Pollutes whate'er it touches ; and obedience,
 Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
 Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame
 A mechanized automaton.

When Nero,
 High over flaming Rome, with savage joy
 Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
 The shrieks of agonising death, beheld
 The frightful desolation spread, and felt
 A new-created sense within his soul
 Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound ;
 Thinkest thou his grandeur had not overcome
 The force of human kindness ? and, when Rome,
 With one stern blow, hurled not the tyrant down,
 Crushed not the arm, red with her dearest blood,
 Had not submissive abjectness destroyed
 Nature's suggestions ?

Look on yonder earth :

The golden harvests spring ; the unfailing sun
 Sheds light and life ; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
 Arise in due succession ; all things speak
 Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,
 In nature's silent eloquence, declares
 That all fulfil the works of love and joy,—

All but the outcast, Man. He fabricates
 The sword which stabs his peace ; he cherisheth
 The snakes that gnaw his heart ; he raiseth up
 The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,
 Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
 Lights it the great alone ? Yon silver beams,
 Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch,
 Than on the dome of kings ? Is mother earth
 A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn
 Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil ;
 A mother only to those puling babes
 Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
 The playthings of their babyhood, and mar,
 In self-important childishness, that peace
 Which men alone appreciate ?

Spirit of Nature ! no !
 The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
 Alike in every human heart.
 Thou, aye, erectest there
 Thy throne of power unappealable :
 Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
 Man's brief and frail authority
 Is powerless as the wind
 That passeth idly by.
 Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
 The show of human justice,
 As God surpasses man.

Spirit of Nature ! thou
Life of interminable multitudes ;
Soul of those mighty spheres
Whose changeless paths through Heaven's deep
silence lie ;
Soul of that smallest being,
The dwelling of whose life
Is one faint April sun-gleam ;—
Man, like these passive things,
Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth :
Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
Which time is fast maturing,
Will swiftly, surely come ;
And the unbounded frame, which thou pervadest,
Will be without a flaw
Marring its perfect symmetry.

IV.

How beautiful this night! the balmiest sigh,
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
Were discord to the speaking quietude
That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,
Studded with stars unutterably bright,
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a canopy which love has spread
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;
Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend,
So stainless, that their white and glittering spires
Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep,
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace;—all form a scene
Where musing solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
Where silence undisturbed might watch alone,
So cold, so bright, so still.

The orb of day,
In southern climes, o'er ocean's waveless field
Sinks sweetly smiling: not the faintest breath

Steals o'er the unruffled deep ; the clouds of eve
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day ;
And vesper's image on the western main
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes :
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
Roll o'er the blackened waters ; the deep roar
Of distant thunder mutters awfully ;
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom
That shrouds the boiling surge ; the pitiless fiend,
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey ;
The torn deep yawns,—the vessel finds a grave
Beneath its jagged gulf.

Ah ! whence yon glare
That fires the arch 'of heaven ?—that dark red smoke
Blotting the silver moon ? The stars are quenched
In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round !
Hark to that roar, whose swift and deafening peals
In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
Startling pale midnight on her starry throne !
Now swells the intermingling din ; the jar
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb ;
The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
The ceaseless clangor, and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage :—loud, and more loud
The discord grows ; till pale death shuts the scene,
And o'er the conqueror and the conquer'd draws

His cold and bloody shroud.—Of all the men
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there
In proud and vigorous health ; of all the hearts
That beat with anxious life at sun-set there ;
How few survive, how few are beating now !
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause ;
Save when the frantic wail of widowed love
Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay
Wrapt round its struggling powers.

The grey morn

Dawns on the mournful scene ; the sulphurous smoke
Before the icy wind slow rolls away,
And the bright beams of frosty morning dance
Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
Even to the forest's depth, and scattered arms,
And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path
Of the outsallying victors : far behind,
Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
Within yon forest is a gloomy glen—
Each tree which guards its darkness from the day,
Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.

I see thee shrink,
Surpassing Spirit !—wert thou human else ?

I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet
Across thy stainless features : yet fear not ;
This is no unconnected misery,
Nor stands uncaused, and irretrievable.
Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch,
set up
For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall ;
And where its venom'd exhalations spread
Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay
Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
A garden shall arise, in loveliness
Surpassing fabled Eden.

Hath Nature's soul,
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust

With spirit, thought, and love ; on Man alone,
 Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
 Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery ; his soul
 Blasted with withering curses ; placed afar
 The meteor happiness, that shuns his grasp,
 But serving on the frightful gulf to glare,
 Rent wide beneath his footsteps ?

Nature !—no !

Kings, priests, and statesmen blast the human flower,
 Even in its tender bud ; their influence darts
 Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
 Of desolate society. The child,
 Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,
 Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
 His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.
 This infant arm becomes the bloodiest scourge
 Of devastated earth ; whilst specious names
 Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
 Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims
 Bright reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword
 Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
 Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
 Inherits vice and misery, when force
 And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
 Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

Ah ! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps

From its new tenement, and looks abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how stern
And desolate a tract is this wide world !
How withered all the buds of natural good !
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms
Of pitiless power ! On its wretched frame,
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe
Heaped on the wretched parent, whence it sprung,
By morals, law, and custom, the pure winds
Of heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
May breathe not. The untainting light of day
May visit not its longings. It is bound
Ere it has life : yea, all the chains are forged
Long ere its being : all liberty and love
And peace is torn from its defencelessness ;
Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle doomed
To abjectness and bondage !

Throughout this varied and eternal world
Soul is the only element, the block
That for uncounted ages has remained.
The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
Is active living spirit. Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and part,
And the minutest atom comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds ; these beget
Evil and good : hence truth and falsehood spring ;
Hence will, and thought, and action, all the germs

Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
That variegate the eternal universe.
Soul is not more polluted than the beams
Of heaven's pure orb, ere round their rapid lines
The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

Man is of soul and body, form'd for deeds
Of high resolve ; on fancy's boldest wing
To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield.
Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,
To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,
To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
Of natural love in sensualism, to know
That hour as blest when on his worthless days
The frozen hand of death shall set its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.
The one is man that shall hereafter be ;
The other, man as vice has made him now.

War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade,
And, to those royal murderers, whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,
The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.
Guards, garbed in blood-red livery, surround
Their palaces, participate the crimes

That force defends, and from a nation's rage
Secure the crown, which all the curses reach
That famine, frenzy, woe and penury breathe.
These are the hired bravoës who defend
The tyrant's throne—the bullies of his fear :
These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,
The refuge of society, the dregs
Of all that is most vile : their cold hearts blend
Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,
All that is mean and villanous, with rage
Which hopelessness of good, and self-contempt,
Alone might kindle ; they are decked in wealth,
Honour and power, then are sent abroad
To do their work. The pestilence that stalks
In gloomy triumph through some Eastern land
Is less destroying. They cajole with gold,
And promises of fame, the thoughtless youth
Already crushed with servitude : he knows
His wretchedness too late, and cherishes
Repentance for his ruin, when his doom
Is sealed in gold and blood !
Those too the tyrant serve, who, skilled to snare
The feet of justice in the toils of law,
Stand, ready to oppress the weaker still ;
And, right or wrong, will vindicate for gold,
Sneering at public virtue, which beneath
Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled, where
Honour sits smiling at the sale of truth.

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These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
 Wiolds in his wrath, and as he wills, destroys,
 Omnipotent in wickedness : the while
 Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does
 His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
 Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.

They rise, they fall ; one generation comes
 Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
 It fades, another blossoms : yet behold !
 Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its bloom,
 Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.
 He has invented lying words and modes,
 Empty and vain as his own coreless heart ;
 Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
 To lure the heedless victim to the toils
 Spread round the valley of its paradise.

Look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince !
 Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
 Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
 With whom thy master was :—or thou delight'st
 In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,
 All misery weighing nothing in the scale

Against thy short-lived fame : or thou dost load
With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self!
Aye, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
Crawled on the loathing earth ? Are not thy days
Days of unsatisfying listlessness ?
Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,
When will the morning come ? Is not thy youth
A vain and feverish dream of sensualism ?
Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease ?
Are not thy views of unregretted death
Drear, comfortless, and horrible ? Thy mind,
Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
Incapable of judgment, hope, or love ?
And dost thou wish the errors to survive
That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
After the miserable interest
Thou hold'st in their protraction ? When the grave
Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,
Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
To twine its roots around thy confined clay,
Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,
That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die ?

V.

THUS do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb,
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world ; even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scatter'd on the forest soil, and heaped
For many seasons there, though long they choke,
Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,
All germs of promise. Yet when the tall trees
From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,
Lie level with the earth to moulder there,
They fertilize the land they long deform'd,
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
Of youth, integrity, and loveliness,
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.
Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights
The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil
Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
And judgment cease to wage unnatural war
With passion's unsubduable array.
Twin-sister of religion, selfishness !
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all

The wanton horrors of her bloody play ;
Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,
Shunning the light, and owning not its name :
Compelled, by its deformity, to screen
With flimsy veil of justice and of right,
Its unattractive lineaments, that scare
All, save the brood of ignorance : at once
The cause and the effect of tyranny ;
Unblushing, hardened, sensual, and vile ;
Dead to all love but of its abjectness,
With heart impassive by more noble powers
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame ;
Despising its own miserable being,
Which still it longs, yet fears, to disenthral.

Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange
Of all that human art or nature yield ;
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to supply
From the full fountain of its boundless love,
For ever stifled, drained, and tainted now.
Commerce! beneath whose poison-breathing shade
No solitary virtue dares to spring ;
But poverty and wealth with equal hand
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
The doors of premature and violent death,
To pining famine and full-fed disease,
To all that shares the lot of human life,

Which poisoned body and soul, scarce drags the chain
That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind.

Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
The signet of its all-enslaving power,
Upon a shining ore, and called it gold :
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,
And with blind feelings reverence the power
That grinds them to the dust of misery.
But in the temple of their hireling hearts
Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

Since tyrants, by the sale of human life,
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
Success has sanctioned to a credulous world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.
His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
The despot numbers ; from his cabinet
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,
Even as the slaves by force or famine driven
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery ;—
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pulleys of a dead machine,

Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth !

The harmony and happiness of man
Yield to the wealth of nations ; that which lifts
His nature to the heaven of its pride,
Is bartered for the poison of his soul ;
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes,
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprise and daring, even the pulse
That fancy kindles in the beating heart
To mingle with sensation, it destroys,—
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed
Even by hypocrisy.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth ! The wordy eloquence that lives
After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
The bitter poison of a nation's woe,
Can turn the worship of the servile mob
To their corrupt and glaring idol, Fame,
From Virtue, trampled by its iron tread,
Although its dazzling pedestal be raised
Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,

With desolated dwellings smoking round.
The man of ease, who, by his warm fire-side,
To deeds of charitable intercourse
And bare fulfilment of the common laws
Of decency and prejudice, confines
The struggling nature of his human heart,
Is duped by their cold sophistry ; he sheds
A passing tear perchance upon the wreck
Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
The frightful waves are driven,—when his son
Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man,
Whose life is misery, and fear, and care ;
Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil ;
Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream,
Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene
Of thousands like himself ;—he little heeds
The rhetoric of tyranny ; his hate
Is quenchless as his wrongs, he laughs to scorn
The vain and bitter mockery of words,
Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,
And unrestrained but by the arm of power,
That knows and dreads his enmity.

The iron rod of penury still compels
Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,

And poison, with unprofitable toil,
A life too void of solace to confirm
The very chains that bind him to his doom.
Nature, impartial in munificence,
Has gifted man with all-subduing will :
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.
How many a rustic Milton has passed by,
Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,
In unremitting drudgery and care !
How many a vulgar Cato has compelled
His energies, no longer tameless then,
To mould a pin, or fabricate a nail !
How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
Were only specks of tinsel, fixed in heaven
To light the midnights of his native town !

Yet every heart contains perfection's germ :
The wisest of the sages of the earth,
That ever from the stores of reason drew
Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,
Were but a weak and inexperienced boy,
Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued
With pure desire and universal love,
Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
Untainted passion, elevated will,

Which death (who even would linger long in awe
Within his noble presence, and beneath
His changeless eyebeam), might alone subdue.
Him, every slave now dragging through the filth
Of some corrupted city his sad life,
Pining with famine, swoln with luxury,
Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
Or madly rushing through all violent crime,
To move the deep stagnation of his soul,—
Might imitate and equal.

But mean lust
Has bound its chains so tight around the earth,
That all within it but the virtuous man
Is venal : gold or fame will surely reach
The price prefixed by selfishness, to all
But him of resolute and unchanging will ;
Whom, nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
To tyranny or falsehood, though they wield
With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

All things are sold : the very light of heaven
Is venal ; earth's unsparing gifts of love,
The smallest and most despicable things
That lurk in the abysses of the deep,

All objects of our life, even life itself,
And the poor pittance which the laws allow
Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
Those duties which his heart of human love
Should urge him to perform instinctively,
Are bought and sold as in a public mart
Of undisguising selfishness, that sets
On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
Even love is sold ; the solace of all woe
Is turned to deadliest agony, old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror from the blighting bane
Of commerce ; whilst the pestilence that springs
From unenjoying sensualism, has filled
All human life with hydra-headed woes.

Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience ; for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith :
A little passing pomp, some servile souls,
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,
Can make him minister to tyranny.
More daring crime requires a loftier meed :
Without a shudder, the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart,

When the dread eloquence of dying men,
Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature, whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of the patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
And for a cold world's good word,—viler still!

There is a nobler glory, which survives
Until our being fades, and, solacing
All human care, accompanies its change;
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,
And, in the precincts of the palace, guides
Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime;
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,
Even when, from power's avenging hand, he takes
Its sweetest, last and noblest title—death;
—The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,
Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain,
Whose ever-wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.

This commerce of sincerest virtue needs
No mediative signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,

No balancings of prudence, cold and long ;
 In just and equal measure all is weighed,
 One scale contains the sum of human weal,
 And one, the good man's heart.

How vainly seek

The selfish for that happiness denied
 To aught but virtue! Blind and hardened, they
 Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,
 Who covet power they know not how to use,
 And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give :—
 Madly they frustrate still their own designs ;
 And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy
 Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,
 Pining regrets, and vain repentances,
 Disease, disgust, and lassitude, pervade
 Their valueless and miserable lives.

But hoary-headed selfishness has felt
 Its death-blow, and is tottering to the grave : .
 A brighter morn awaits the human day,
 When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
 Shall be a commerce of good words and works ;
 When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,
 The fear of infamy, disease and woe,
 War with its million horrors, and fierce hell,
 Shall live but in the memory of time,
 Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
 Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

VI.

ALL touch, all eye, all ear,
The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.
O'er the thin texture of its frame,
The varying periods painted, changing glows ;
As on a summer even,
When soul-enfolding music floats around,
The stainless mirror of the lake
Re-images the eastern gloom,
Mingling convulsively its purple hues
With sunset's burnished gold.

Then thus the Spirit spoke :
It is a wild and miserable world !
Thorny, and full of care,
Which every fiend can make his prey at will.
O Fairy ! in the lapse of years,
Is there no hope in store ?
Will yon vast suns roll on
Interminably, still illuming
The night of so many wretched souls,
And see no hope for them ?
Will not the universal Spirit e'er
Revivify this withered limb of Heaven ?

The Fairy calmly smiled
In comfort, and a kindling gleam of hope
Suffused the Spirit's lineaments.
Oh! rest thee tranquil; chase those fearful doubts,
Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul,
That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.
Yes! crime and misery are in yonder earth,
Falsehood, mistake, and lust;
But the eternal world
Contains at once the evil and the cure.
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
Even in perversesest time:
The truths of their pure lips, that never die,
Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath
Of ever-living flame,
Until the monster sting itself to death.

How sweet a scene will earth become!
Of purest spirits, a pure dwelling-place,
Symphonious with the planetary spheres;
When man, with changeless nature coalescing,
Will undertake regeneration's work,
When its ungenial poles no longer point
To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.

Spirit, on yonder earth,
Falsehood now triumphs; deadly power

Has fixed its seal upon the lip of truth !
 Madness and misery are there !
 The happiest is most wretched ! Yet confide
 Until pure health-drops, from the cup of joy
 Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.

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VII.

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VIII.

THE present and the past thou hast beheld :
 It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn
 The secrets of the future.—Time !
 Unfold the brooding pinion of thy gloom,
 Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,
 And from the cradles of eternity,
 Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
 By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
 Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
 Thy glorious destiny !

 Joy to the Spirit came.
 Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,
 Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear :
 Earth was no longer hell ;
 Love, freedom, health, had given
 Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,
 And all its pulses beat
 Symphonious to the planetary spheres :
 Then dulcet music swelled
 Concordant with the life-strings of the soul ;
 It throbbed in sweet and languid beatings there,
 Catching new life from transitory death.—

Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea,
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits :
 Was the pure stream of feeling
 That sprung from these sweet notes,
And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies
With mild and gentle motion calmly flowed.

 Joy to the Spirit came,—
 Such joy as when a lover sees
The chosen of his soul in happiness,
 And witnesses her peace
Whose woe to him were bitterer than death ;
 Sees her unfaded cheek
Glow mantling in first luxury of health,
 Thrills with her lovely eyes,
Which like two stars amid the heaving main
 Sparkle through liquid bliss.

Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen :
I will not call the ghost of ages gone
To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore ;
 The present now is past,
And those events that desolate the earth
Have faded from the memory of Time,
Who dares not give reality to that
Whose being I annul. To me is given

The wonders of the human world to keep,
Space, matter, time, and mind. Futurity
Exposes now its treasure ; let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
O human Spirit ! spur thee to the goal
Where virtue fixes universal peace,
And, midst the ebb and flow of human things,
Show somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
A light-house o'er the wild of dreary waves.

The habitable earth is full of bliss ;
Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled
By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,
Where matter dared not vegetate nor live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed ;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves,
And melodize with man's blest nature there.

Those deserts of immeasurable sand,
Whose age-collected fervours scarce allowed
A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,
Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love
Broke on the sultry silentness alone,

Now teem with countless rills and shady woods,
Corn-fields and pastures and white cottages ;
And where the startled wilderness beheld
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
A tigress sating with the flesh of lambs
The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,
While shouts and howlings through the desert rang ;
Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sun-rise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door,
 Sharing his morning's meal
 With the green and golden basilisk
 That comes to lick his feet.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
Has seen above the illimitable plain,
Morning on night, and night on morning rise,
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind
In melancholy loneliness, and swept
The desert of those ocean solitudes,
But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm ;
Now to the sweet and many mingling sounds
Of kindest human impulses respond.
Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,

And fertile valleys, resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
To meet the kisses of the flowrets there.

All things are recreated, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life :
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
Rewarding her with their pure perfectness :
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad :
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glowing in the fruits, and mantles on the stream :
No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the ever-verdant trees ;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint, and blushes into love.

The lion now forgets to thirst for blood :
There might you see him sporting in the sun
Beside the dreadless kid ; his claws are sheathed,
His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made
His nature as the nature of a lamb.
Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting bane

Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows :
All bitterness is past ; the cup of joy
Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim,
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.

But chief, ambiguous man, he that can know
More misery, and dream more joy than all ;
Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast
To mingle with a loftier instinct there,
Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,
Yet raising, sharpening, and refining each ;
Who stands amid the ever-varying world,
The burthen or the glory of the earth ;
He chief perceives the change ; his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.

Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
Lowers o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost
Basks in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night ;
His chilled and narrow energies, his heart,
Insensible to courage, truth, or love,
His stunted stature and imbecile frame,
Marked him for some abortion of the earth,
Fit compeer of the bears that roamed around,
Whose habits and enjoyments were his own :

His life a feverish dream of stagnant woe,
Whose meagre wants, but scantily fulfilled,
Apprised him ever of the joyless length
Which his short being's wretchedness had reached ;
His death a pang which famine, cold, and toil,
Long on the mind, whilst yet the vital spark
Clung to the body stubbornly, had brought :
All was inflicted here that earth's revenge
Could wreak on the infringers of her law.

Nor, where the tropics bound the realms of day
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest, and disease,
Was man a nobler being ; slavery
Had crushed him to his country's blood-stained dust ;
Or he was bartered for the fame of power,
Which, all internal impulses destroying,
Makes human will an article of trade ;
Or he was changed with Christians for their gold,
And dragged to distant isles, where to the sound
Of the flesh-mangling scourge, he does the work
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth,
Which doubly visits on the tyrants' heads
The long-protracted fulness of their woe ;
Or he was led to legal butchery,

To turn to worms beneath that burning sun
Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,
And priests first traded with the name of God.

Even where the milder zone afforded man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,
Spread like a quenchless fire ; nor truth till late
Availed to arrest its progress, or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime :
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind ;
Blest from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.
Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which from the exhaustless store of human weal
Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age,
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene

Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth : no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which, still avenging nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.
No longer now the winged habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man ; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror : man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals : happiness
And science dawn, though late, upon the earth ;
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame ;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
Reason and passion cease to combat there ;
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extends
Its all-subduing energies, and wields
The sceptre of a vast dominion there ;
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth
To decorate its paradise of peace.

IX.

O HAPPY Earth ! reality of Heaven !
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe, aspire ;
Thou consummation of all mortal hope !
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will !
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point and blend for ever there :
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place !
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Languor, disease, and ignorance, dare not come :
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven !

Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams ;
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss,
Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.
Thou art the end of all desire and will,
The product of all action ; and the souls
That by the paths of an aspiring change
Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace,
There rest from the eternity of toil
That framed the fabric of thy perfectness.

Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear ;
That hoary giant, who, in lonely pride,
So long had ruled the world, that nations fell
Beneath his silent footstep. Pyramids,
That for millenniums had withstood the tide
Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand
Across that desert where their stones survived
The name of him whose pride had heaped them
there.

Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Was but the mushroom of a summer day,
That his light-winged footstep pressed to dust :
Time was the king of earth : all things gave way
Before him, but the fixed and virtuous will,
The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,
That mocked his fury and prepared his fall.

Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love ;
Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,
Till from its native heaven they rolled away :
First, crime triumphant o'er all hope careered
Unblushing, undisguising, bold and strong ;
Whilst falsehood, tricked in virtue's attributes,
Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
Till, done by her own venomous sting to death,
She left the moral world without a law,
No longer fettering passion's fearless wing.
Then steadily the happy ferment worked ;

Reason was free ; and wild though passion went
Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed meads,
Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,
Yet, like the bee returning to her queen,
She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
Who meek and sober, kiss'd the sportive child,
No longer trembling at the broken rod.

Mild was the slow necessity of death :
The tranquil Spirit failed beneath its grasp.
Without a groan, almost without a fear,
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
The deadly germs of languor and disease
Died in the human frame, and purity
Blest with all gifts her earthly worshippers.
How vigorous then the athletic form of age !
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow !
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, nor care,
Had stamped the seal of grey deformity
On all the mingling lineaments of time.
How lovely the intrepid front of youth !
Which meek-eyed courage decked with freshest
 grace ;
Courage of soul, that dreaded not a name,
And elevated will, that journeyed on
Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,
With virtue, love, and pleasure, hand in hand.

Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's self,
And rivets with sensation's softest tie
The kindred sympathies of human souls,
Needed no fetters of tyrannic law.
Those delicate and timid impulses
In nature's primal modesty arose,
And with undoubting confidence disclosed
The growing longings of its dawning love,
Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,
That virtue of the cheaply virtuous,
Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.
No longer prostitution's venom'd bane
Poisoned the springs of happiness and life ;
Woman and man, in confidence and love,
Equal and free and pure, together trod
The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more
Were stained with blood from many a pilgrim's feet.

Then, where, through distant ages, long in pride
The palace of the monarch-slave had mocked
Famine's faint groan, and penury's silent tear,
A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw
Year after year their stones upon the field,
Wakening a lonely echo ; and the leaves
Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower
Usurped the royal ensign's grandeur, shook
In the stern storm that swayed the topmost tower,
And whispered strange tales in the whirlwind's ear.

Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung :
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal !
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.
A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
To-day, the breathing marble glows above
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life : to-morrow, worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
Fearless and free the ruddy children played,
Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom ;
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,
There rusted amid heaps of broken stone,
That mingled slowly with their native earth :
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness :
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
Pealed through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
And merriment were resonant around.

These ruins soon left not a wreck behind :
Their elements, wide scattered o'er the globe,
To happier shapes were moulded, and became
Ministrant to all blissful impulses :
Thus human things were perfected, and earth,
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
Was strengthened in all excellence, and grew
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past
Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done :
Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own,
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
My spells are past : the present now recurs.
Ah me ! a pathless wilderness remains
Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

Yet, human Spirit ! bravely hold thy course,
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
The gradual paths of an aspiring change :
For birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found its home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal.
For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense

Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend ;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe ;
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies,
And happy regions of eternal hope.
Therefore, O Spirit ! fearlessly bear on :
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,
To feed with kindest dews its favourite flower,
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,
Lighting the greenwood with its sunny smile.

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand ;
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns ;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
Death is no foe to virtue : earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed ?
Whose stings bade thy heart look further still,

When to the moonlight walk, by Henry led,
Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death?
And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
Whose iron thongs are red with human gore?
Never: but bravely bearing on, thy will
Is destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
Watching its wanderings, as a friend's disease:
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish
 thee,
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received: virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one! and give that bosom joy

Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

The Fairy waves her wand of charm.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked,
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew :
The vast and fiery globes that rolled
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.

Earth floated then below :
The chariot paused a moment there ;
The Spirit then descended :
The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,
Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand done,
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then ;
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame :

Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed ;
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained :
She looked around in wonder, and beheld
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
 And the bright beaming stars
 That through the casement shone.

NOTES.

P. 12, l. 24.

*The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave.*

BEYOND our atmosphere the sun would appear a rayless orb of fire in the midst of a black concave. The equal diffusion of its light on earth is owing to the refraction of the rays by the atmosphere, and their reflection from other bodies. Light consists either of vibrations propagated through a subtle medium, or of numerous minute particles repelled in all directions from the luminous body. Its velocity greatly exceeds that of any substance with which we are acquainted: observations on the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites have demonstrated that light takes up no more than 8' 7" in passing from the sun to the earth, a distance of 95,000,000 miles.—Some idea may be gained of the immense distance of the fixed stars, when it is computed that many years would elapse before light could reach this earth from the nearest of them; yet in one year light travels 5,422,400,000,000 miles, which is a distance 5,707,600 times greater than that of the sun from the earth.

P. 45, l. 1.

*Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave and issue from the womb.*

“One generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirlleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whence the rivers come, thither shall they return again.”—*Ecclesiastes*, chap. i.

P. 45, l. 4.

*Even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil.*

Οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοιήδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
Φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἀνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
Τηλεθόωσα φύει· ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη.
*Ὡς ἀνδρῶν γενεή, ἣ μὲν φύει, ἣ δ' ἀπολήγει.

ΙΛΙΑΔ. Ζ'. l. 146.

P. 47, l. 8.

The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings.

Suave, mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis,
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem :
Non, quia vexari quemquam 'st jocunda voluptas,
Sed, quibus ipse malis careas, quia cernere suave 'st.
Per campos instructa, tua sine parte pericli,
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri :
Sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere,
Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena ;
Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
Errare, atque viam palanteis quærere vitæ ;
Certare ingenio ; contendere nobilitate,
Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore
Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.
O miseras hominum menteis ! O pectora cæca !

Lucret. lib. ii.

P. 48, l. 18.

*And statesmen boast
Of wealth !*

There is no real wealth but the labour of man. Were the mountains of gold and the valleys of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer ; no one comfort would be added to the human race. In consequence of our consideration for the precious metals, one man is enabled to heap to himself luxuries at the expense of the necessaries of his neighbour ; a system admirably fitted to produce all the varieties of disease and crime, which never fail to characterise the two extremes of opulence and penury. A speculator takes pride to himself as the promoter of his country's prosperity, who employs a number of hands in the manufacture of articles avowedly destitute of use, or subservient only to the unhallowed cravings of luxury and ostentation. The noble-


man who employs the peasants of his neighbourhood in building his palaces, until "*jam pauca aratro jugera, regiæ moles relinquent,*" flatters himself that he has gained the title of a patriot by yielding to the impulses of vanity. The show and pomp of courts adduce the same apology for their continuance; and many a fête has been given, many a woman has eclipsed her beauty by her dress, to benefit the labouring poor and to encourage trade. Who does not see that this is a remedy which aggravates, whilst it palliates, the countless diseases of society? The poor are set to labour,—for what? Not the food for which they famish: not the blankets for want of which their babes are frozen by the cold of their miserable hovels: not those comforts of civilisation without which civilised man is far more miserable than the meanest savage; oppressed as he is by all its insidious evils, within the daily and taunting prospect of its innumerable benefits assiduously exhibited before him:—no; for the pride of power, for the miserable isolation of pride, for the false pleasures of the hundredth part of society. No greater evidence is afforded of the wide-extended and radical mistakes of civilised man than this fact: those arts which are essential to his very being are held in the greatest contempt; employments are lucrative in an inverse ratio to their usefulness*: the jeweller, the toyman, the actor, gains fame and wealth by the exercise of his useless and ridiculous art; whilst the cultivator of the earth, he without whom society must cease to subsist, struggles through contempt and penury, and perishes by that famine which, but for his unceasing exertion, would annihilate the rest of mankind.

I will not insult common sense by insisting on the doctrine of the natural equality of man. The question is not concerning its desirableness, but its practicability; so far as it is practicable, it is desirable. That state of human society which approaches nearer to an equal partition of its benefits and evils should, *cæteris paribus*, be preferred; but so long as we conceive that a wanton expenditure of human labour, not for the necessities, not even for the luxuries, of the mass of society, but for the egotism and ostentation of a few of its members, is defensible on the ground of public justice, so long we neglect to approximate to the redemption of the human race.

Labour is required for physical, and leisure for moral improvement: from the former of these advantages the rich, and from the latter the poor, by the inevitable conditions of

* See Rousseau, "De l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes," note 7.

their respective situations, are precluded. A state which should combine the advantages of both would be subjected to the evils of neither. He that is deficient in firm health, or vigorous intellect, is but half a man; hence it follows, that, to subject the labouring classes to unnecessary labour, is wantonly to deprive them of any opportunities of intellectual improvement: and that the rich are heaping up for their own mischief, the disease, lassitude, and ennui, by which their existence is rendered an intolerable burthen.

English reformers exclaim against sinecures,—but the true pension list is the rent-roll of the landed proprietors: wealth is a power usurped by the few, to compel the many to labour for their benefit. The laws which support this system derive their force from the ignorance and credulity of its victims: they are the result of a conspiracy of the few against the many, who are themselves obliged to purchase this pre-eminence by the loss of all real comfort. 

The commodities that substantially contribute to the subsistence of the human species form a very short catalogue: they demand from us but a slender portion of industry. If these only were produced, and sufficiently produced, the species of man would be continued. If the labour necessarily required to produce them were equitably divided among the poor, and, still more, if it were equitably divided among all, each man's share of labour would be light, and his portion of leisure would be ample. There was a time when this leisure would have been of small comparative value: it is to be hoped that the time will come, when it will be applied to the most important purposes. Those hours, which are not required for the production of the necessaries of life, may be devoted to the cultivation of the understanding, the enlargement of our stock of knowledge, the refinement of our taste, and thus open to us new and more exquisite sources of enjoyment.

* * * * *

It was perhaps necessary that a period of monopoly and oppression should subsist, before a period of cultivated equality could subsist. Savages perhaps would never have been excited to the discovery of truth and the invention of art, but by the narrow motives which such a period affords. But, surely, after the savage state has ceased, and men have set out in the glorious career of discovery and invention, monopoly and oppression cannot be necessary to prevent them from returning to a state of barbarism.—*Godwin's Enquirer, Essay II. See also Pol. Jus. book viii. chap. 11.*

It is a calculation of this admirable author, that all the conveniences of civilised life might be produced, if society would divide the labour equally among its members, by each individual being employed in labour two hours during the day.

P. 56, l. 23.


*To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.*

The north polar star, to which the axis of the earth, in its present state of obliquity, points. It is exceedingly probable, from many considerations, that this obliquity will gradually diminish, until the equator coincides with the ecliptic: the nights and days will then become equal on the earth throughout the year, and probably the seasons also. There is no great extravagance in presuming that the progress of the perpendicularity of the poles may be as rapid as the progress of intellect; or that there should be a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species. It is certain that wisdom is not compatible with disease, and that, in the present state of the climates of the earth, health, in the true and comprehensive sense of the word, is out of the reach of civilised man. Astronomy teaches us that the earth is now in its progress, and that the poles are every year becoming more and more perpendicular to the ecliptic. The strong evidence afforded by the history of mythology and geological researches, that some event of this nature has taken place already, affords a strong presumption that this progress is not merely an oscillation, as has been surmised by some late astronomers*. Bones of animals peculiar to the torrid zone have been found in the north of Siberia, and on the banks of the river Ohio. Plants have been found in the fossil state in the interior of Germany, which demand the present climate of Hindostan for their production†. The researches of M. Bailly‡ establish the existence of a people who inhabited a tract in Tartary 49° north latitude, of greater antiquity than either the Indians, the Chinese, or the Chaldeans, from whom these nations derived their sciences and theology. We find, from the testimony of ancient writers, that Britain, Germany, and France, were much colder than at present, and that their great rivers were annually frozen over. Astronomy teaches

* Laplace, *Système du Monde*.

† Cabanis, *Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme*, vol. ii. page 406.

‡ *Letters sur les Sciences*, à Voltaire.—*Bailly*.

us also, that since this period the obliquity of the earth's position has been considerably diminished. 

P. 65, l. 20.

*Him (still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing
Which, from the exhaustless store of human weal
Dawns on the virtuous mind) the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, &c.*

Time is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind. Vivid sensation, of either pain or pleasure, makes the time seem long, as the common phrase is, because it renders us more acutely conscious of our ideas. If a mind be conscious of a hundred ideas during one minute by the clock, and of two hundred during another, the latter of these spaces would actually occupy so much greater extent in the mind as two exceed one in quantity. If, therefore, the human mind, by any future improvement of its sensibility, should become conscious of an infinite number of ideas in a minute, that minute would be eternity. I do not hence infer that the actual space between the birth and death of a man will ever be prolonged; but that his sensibility is perfectible, and that the number of ideas which his mind is capable of receiving is indefinite. One man is stretched on the rack during twelve hours, another sleeps soundly in his bed: the difference of time perceived by these two persons is immense; one hardly will believe that half-an-hour has elapsed, the other could credit that centuries had flown during his agony. Thus the life of a man of virtue and talent, who should die in his thirtieth year, is, with regard to his own feelings, longer than that of a miserable priest-ridden slave, who dreams out a century of dulness. The one has perpetually cultivated his mental faculties, has rendered himself master of his thoughts, can abstract and generalise amid the lethargy of every-day business;—the other can slumber over the brightest moments of his being, and is unable to remember the happiest hour of his life. Perhaps the perishing ephemeron enjoys a longer life than the tortoise.

Dark flood of time!

Roll as it listeth thee—I measure not
By months or moments thy ambiguous course.
Another may stand by me on the brink,
And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken
That pauses at my feet. The sense of love,
The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought,
Prolong my being: if I wake no more,

My life more actual living will contain
 Than some grey veterans' of the world's cold school,
 Whose listless hours unprofitably roll,
 By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed.

*See Godwin's Pol. Just. vol. i. page 411; and Condorcet,
 Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de
 l'Esprit Humain, époque ix.*

P. 66, l. 1.

*No longer now
 He slays the lamb that looks him in the face.*

I hold that the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life. The origin of man, like that of the universe of which he is a part, is enveloped in impenetrable mystery. His generations either had a beginning, or they had not. The weight of evidence in favour of each of these suppositions seems tolerably equal; and it is perfectly unimportant to the present argument which is assumed. The language spoken however by the mythology of nearly all religions seems to prove, that at some distant period man forsook the path of nature, and sacrificed the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites. The date of this event seems to have also been that of some great change in the climates of the earth, with which it has an obvious correspondence. The allegory of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of evil, and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God and the loss of everlasting life, admits of no other explanation than the disease and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet. Milton was so well aware of this, that he makes Raphael thus exhibit to Adam the consequence of his disobedience.

—————Immediately a place
 Before his eyes appear'd, sad, noisome, dark,
 A lazar-house it seem'd, wherein were laid
 Numbers of all diseased, all maladies
 Of ghastly spasm or racking torture, qualms
 Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
 Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
 Intestine stone and ulcer, cholic pangs,
 Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
 And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
 Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
 Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.

And how many thousands more might not be added to this
 frightful catalogue!

The story of Prometheus is one likewise which, although universally admitted to be allegorical, has never been satisfactorily explained. Prometheus stole fire from heaven, and was chained for this crime to Mount Caucasus, where a vulture continually devoured his liver, that grew to meet its hunger. Hesiod says, that, before the time of Prometheus, mankind were exempt from suffering; that they enjoyed a vigorous youth, and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes. Again, so general was this opinion, that Horace, a poet of the Augustan age, writes—

Audax omnia perpeti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas.
Audax Iapeti genus
Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit:
Post ignem ætheria domo
Subductum, macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors,
Semotique prius tarda necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum.

How plain a language is spoken by all this! Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence.—Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality, were then first known, when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. I conclude this part of the subject with an abstract from Mr. Newton's Defence of Vegetable Regimen, from whom I have borrowed this interpretation of the fable of Prometheus.

“Making allowance for such transposition of the events of the allegory as time might produce after the important truths were forgotten, which this portion of the ancient mythology was intended to transmit, the drift of the fable seems to be this:—Man at his creation was endowed with the gift of perpetual youth; that is, he was not formed to be a sickly suffering creature as we now see him, but to enjoy health, and to sink by slow degrees into the bosom of his parent earth without disease or pain. Prometheus first taught the use of animal food (*primus bovem occidit Prometheus* *) and of fire,

* Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. vii. sect. 57.

with which to render it more digestible and pleasing to the taste. Jupiter, and the rest of the gods, foreseeing the consequences of these inventions, were amused or irritated at the short-sighted devices of the newly-formed creature, and left him to experience the sad effects of them. Thirst, the necessary concomitant of a flesh diet, (perhaps of all diet vitiated by culinary preparation,) ensued; water was resorted to, and man forfeited the inestimable gift of health which he had received from heaven: he became diseased, the partaker of a precarious existence, and no longer descended slowly to his grave.”*

But just disease to luxury succeeds;
 And every death its own avenger breeds,
 The fury passions from that blood began,
 And turned on man a fiercer savage—man.

Man, and the animals whom he has infected with his society or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased. The wild hog, the mouflon, the bison, and the wolf, are perfectly exempt from malady, and invariably die either from external violence or natural old age. But the domestic hog, the sheep, the cow, and the dog, are subject to an incredible variety of distempers; and, like the corrupters of their nature, have physicians who thrive upon their miseries. The supereminence of man is like Satan's, a supereminence of pain; and the majority of his species, doomed to penury, disease, and crime, have reason to curse the untoward event, that, by enabling him to communicate his sensations, raised him above the level of his fellow-animals. But the steps that have been taken are irrevocable. The whole of human science is comprised in one question:—How can the advantages of intellect and civilisation be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits, and reject the evils, of the system which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being?—I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors would in a great measure capacitate us for the solution of this important question.

It is true, that mental and bodily derangement is attributable in part to other deviations from rectitude and nature than those which concern diet. The mistakes cherished by society respecting the connexion of the sexes, whence the misery and diseases of unsatisfied celibacy, unenjoying prostitution, and the premature arrival of puberty, necessarily spring; the putrid atmosphere of crowded cities; the exhala-

* Return to Nature. Cadell, 1811.

tions of chemical processes ; the muffling of our bodies in superfluous apparel ; the absurd treatment of infants ;—all these, and innumerable other causes, contribute their mite to the mass of human evil.

Comparative anatomy teaches us that man resembles frugivorous animals in everything, and carnivorous in nothing ; he has neither claws wherewith to seize his prey, nor distinct and pointed teeth to tear the living fibre. A Mandarin of the first class, with nails two inches long, would probably find them alone inefficient to hold even a hare. After every subterfuge of gluttony, the bull must be degraded into the ox, and the ram into the wether, by an unnatural and inhuman operation, that the flaccid fibre may offer a fainter resistance to rebellious nature. It is only by softening and disguising dead flesh by culinary preparation, that it is rendered susceptible of mastication or digestion ; and that the sight of its bloody juices and raw horror does not excite intolerable loathing and disgust. Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and, as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth, and, plunging his head into its vitals, slake his thirst with the steaming blood ; when fresh from the deed of horror, let him revert to the irresistible instinct of nature that would rise in judgment against it, and say, Nature formed me for such work as this. Then, and then only, would he be consistent.

Man resembles no carnivorous animal. There is no exception, unless man be one, to the rule of herbivorous animals having cellulated colons.

The orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and number of his teeth. The orang-outang is the most anthropomorphous of the ape tribe, all of which are strictly frugivorous. There is no other species of animals, which live on different food, in which this analogy exists*. In many frugivorous animals, the canine teeth are more pointed and distinct than those of man. The resemblance also of the human stomach to that of the orang-outang is greater than to that of any other animal.

The intestines are also identical with those of herbivorous animals, which present a larger surface for absorption, and have ample and cellulated colons. The cæcum also, though short, is larger than that of carnivorous animals ; and even here the orang-outang retains its accustomed similarity.

The structure of the human frame then is that of one fitted

* Cuvier, *Leçons d'Anat. Comp.* tom. iii. pages 169, 373, 448, 465, 480. Rees's *Cyclopædia*, article "Man."

to a pure vegetable diet, in every essential particular. It is true, that the reluctance to abstain from animal food, in those who have been long accustomed to its stimulus, is so great in some persons of weak minds, as to be scarcely overcome ; but this is far from bringing any argument in its favour. A lamb, which was fed for some time on flesh by a ship's crew, refused its natural diet at the end of the voyage. There are numerous instances of horses, sheep, oxen, and even wood-pigeons, having been taught to live upon flesh, until they have loathed their natural aliment. Young children evidently prefer pastry, oranges, apples, and other fruit, to the flesh of animals ; until, by the gradual depravation of the digestive organs, the free use of vegetables has for a time produced serious inconveniences ; *for a time* I say, since there never was an instance wherein a change, from spirituous liquors and animal food to vegetables and pure water, has failed ultimately to invigorate the body, by rendering its juices bland and consentaneous, and to restore to the mind that cheerfulness and elasticity which not one in fifty possesses on the present system. A love of strong liquors is also with difficulty taught to infants. Almost every one remembers the wry faces which the first glass of port produced. Unsophisticated instinct is invariably unerring ; but, to decide on the fitness of animal food from the perverted appetites which its constrained adoption produces, is to make the criminal a judge of his own cause ; it is even worse ; it is appealing to the infatuated drunkard in a question of the salubrity of brandy.

What is the cause of morbid action in the animal system ? Not the air we breathe, for our fellow-denizens of nature breathe the same uninjured ; not the water we drink, (if remote from the pollutions of man and his inventions*,) for the animals drink it too ; not the earth we tread upon ; not the unobscured sight of glorious nature, in the wood, the field, or the expanse of sky and ocean ; nothing that we are or do in common with the undiseased inhabitants of the forest ; but something then wherein we differ from them ; our habit of altering our food by fire, so that our appetite is no longer a just criterion for the fitness of its gratification. Except in children, there remain no traces of that instinct

* The necessity of resorting to some means of purifying water, and the diseases which arise from its adulteration in civilised countries, are sufficiently apparent.—See Dr. Lambe's Reports on Cancer. I do not assert that the use of water is in itself unnatural, but that the unperverted palate would swallow no liquid capable of occasioning disease.

which determines, in all other animals, what aliment is natural or otherwise; and so perfectly obliterated are they in the reasoning adults of our species, that it has become necessary to urge considerations drawn from comparative anatomy to prove that we are naturally frugivorous.

Crime is madness. Madness is disease. Whenever the cause of disease shall be discovered, the root, from which all vice and misery have so long overshadowed the globe, will lie bare to the axe. All the exertions of man, from that moment, may be considered as tending to the clear profit of his species. No sane mind in a sane body resolves upon a real crime. It is a man of violent passions, blood-shot eyes, and swollen veins, that alone can grasp the knife of murder. The system of a simple diet promises no Utopian advantages. It is no mere reform of legislation, whilst the furious passions and evil propensities of the human heart, in which it had its origin, are still unassuaged. It strikes at the root of all evil, and is an experiment which may be tried with success, not alone by nations, but by small societies, families, and even individuals. In no cases has a return to vegetable diet produced the slightest injury; in most it has been attended with changes undeniably beneficial. Should ever a physician be born with the genius of Locke, I am persuaded that he might trace all bodily and mental derangements to our unnatural habits, as clearly as that philosopher has traced all knowledge to sensation. What prolific sources of disease are not those mineral and vegetable poisons that have been introduced for its extirpation! How many thousands have become murderers and robbers, bigots and domestic tyrants, dissolute and abandoned adventurers, from the use of fermented liquors! who, had they slaked their thirst only with pure water, would have lived but to diffuse the happiness of their own unperverted feelings! How many groundless opinions and absurd institutions have received a general sanction from the sottishness and the intemperance of individuals! Who will assert that, had the populace of Paris satisfied their hunger at the ever-furnished table of vegetable nature, they would have lent their brutal suffrage to the proscription-list of Robespierre? Could a set of men, whose passions were not perverted by unnatural stimuli, look with coolness on an *auto da fé*? Is it to be believed that a being of gentle feelings, rising from his meal of roots, would take delight in sports of blood? Was Nero a man of temperate life? Could you read calm health in his cheek, flushed with ungovernable propensities of hatred for the human race? Did Muley Ismael's pulse beat evenly, was his skin transparent, did his

eyes beam with healthfulness, and its invariable concomitants, cheerfulness and benignity? Though history has decided none of these questions, a child could not hesitate to answer in the negative. Surely the bile-suffused cheek of Buonaparte, his wrinkled brow, and yellow eye, the ceaseless inquietude of his nervous system, speak no less plainly the character of his unresting ambition than his murders and his victories. It is impossible, had Buonaparte descended from a race of vegetable feeders, that he could have had either the inclination or the power to ascend the throne of the Bourbons. The desire of tyranny could scarcely be excited in the individual, the power to tyrannise would certainly not be delegated by a society neither frenzied by inebriation nor rendered impotent and irrational by disease. Pregnant indeed with inexhaustible calamity is the renunciation of instinct, as it concerns our physical nature; arithmetic cannot enumerate, nor reason perhaps suspect, the multitudinous sources of disease in civilised life. Even common water, that apparently innoxious pabulum, when corrupted by the filth of populous cities, is a deadly and insidious destroyer*.

There is no disease, bodily or mental, which adoption of vegetable diet and pure water has not infallibly mitigated, wherever the experiment has been fairly tried. Debility is gradually converted into strength, disease into healthfulness; madness, in all its hideous variety, from the ravings of the fettered maniac to the unaccountable irrationalities of ill temper, that make a hell of domestic life, into a calm and considerate evenness of temper, that alone might offer a certain pledge of the future moral reformation of society. On a natural system of diet, old age would be our last and our only malady; the term of our existence would be protracted; we should enjoy life, and no longer preclude others from the enjoyment of it; all sensational delights would be infinitely more exquisite and perfect; the very sense of being would then be a continued pleasure, such as we now feel it in some few and favoured moments of our youth. By all that is sacred in our hopes for the human race, I conjure those who love happiness and truth to give a fair trial to the vegetable system. Reasoning is surely superfluous on a subject whose merits an experience of six months would set for ever at rest. But it is only among the enlightened and benevolent that so great a sacrifice of appetite and prejudice can be expected, even though its ultimate excellence should not admit of dispute. It is found easier, by the short-sighted

* Lambe's Reports on Cancer.

victims of disease, to palliate their torments by medicine, than to prevent them by regimen. The vulgar of all ranks are invariably sensual and indocile; yet I cannot but feel myself persuaded that, when the benefits of vegetable diet are mathematically proved; when it is as clear, that those who live naturally are exempt from premature death, as that one is not nine, the most sottish of mankind will feel a preference towards a long and tranquil, contrasted with a short and painful, life. On the average, out of sixty persons, four die in three years. Hopes are entertained that, in April, 1814, a statement will be given, that sixty persons, all having lived more than three years on vegetables and pure water, are then *in perfect health*. More than two years have now elapsed; *not one of them has died*; no such example will be found in any sixty persons taken at random. Seventeen persons of all ages (the families of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton) have lived for seven years on this diet without a death, and almost without the slightest illness. Surely, when we consider that some of these were infants, and one a martyr to asthma, now nearly subdued, we may challenge any seventeen persons taken at random in this city to exhibit a parallel case. Those, who may have been excited to question the rectitude of established habits of diet by these loose remarks, should consult Mr. Newton's luminous and eloquent essay*.

When these proofs come fairly before the world, and are clearly seen by all who understand arithmetic, it is scarcely possible that abstinence from aliment demonstrably pernicious should not become universal.—In proportion to the number of proselytes, so will be the weight of evidence; and, when a thousand persons can be produced, living on vegetables and distilled water, who have to dread no disease but old age, the world will be compelled to regard animal flesh and fermented liquors as slow but certain poisons. The change which would be produced by simpler habits on political economy is sufficiently remarkable. The monopolizing eater of animal flesh would no longer destroy his constitution by devouring an acre at a meal, and many loaves of bread would cease to contribute to gout, madness, and apoplexy, in the shape of a pint of porter, or a dram of gin, when appeasing the long-protracted famine of the hard-working peasant's hungry babes. The quantity of nutritious vegetable matter, consumed in fattening the carcase of an ox, would afford ten times the sustenance, undepraving indeed, and incapable of generating disease, if gathered immediately from the bosom of the earth.

* Return to Nature, or Defence of Vegetable Regimen. Cadell, 1811.

The most fertile districts of the habitable globe are now actually cultivated by men for animals, at a delay and waste of aliment absolutely incapable of calculation. It is only the wealthy that can, to any great degree, even now, indulge the unnatural craving for dead flesh, and they pay for the greater license of the privilege by subjection to supernumerary diseases. Again, the spirit of the nation, that should take the lead in this great reform, would insensibly become agricultural; commerce, with all its vice, selfishness, and corruption, would gradually decline; more natural habits would produce gentler manners, and the excessive complication of political relations would be so far simplified, that every individual might feel and understand why he loved his country, and took a personal interest in its welfare. How would England, for example, depend on the caprices of foreign rulers, if she contained within herself all the necessaries, and despised whatever they possessed of the luxuries, of life? How could they starve her into compliance with their views? Of what consequence would it be that they refused to take her woollen manufactures, when large and fertile tracts of the island ceased to be allotted to the waste of pasturage? On a natural system of diet, we should require no spices from India; no wines from Portugal, Spain, France, or Madeira; none of those multitudinous articles of luxury, for which every corner of the globe is rifled, and which are the causes of so much individual rivalry, such calamitous and sanguinary national disputes. In the history of modern times, the avarice of commercial monopoly, no less than the ambition of weak and wicked chiefs, seems to have fomented the universal discord, to have added stubbornness to the mistakes of cabinets, and indocility to the infatuation of the people. Let it ever be remembered, that it is the direct influence of commerce to make the interval between the richest and the poorest man wider and more unconquerable. Let it be remembered, that it is a foe to everything of real worth and excellence in the human character. The odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth is built upon the ruins of all that is good in chivalry or republicanism; and luxury is the forerunner of a barbarism scarce capable of cure. Is it impossible to realise a state of society, where all the energies of man shall be directed to the production of his solid happiness? Certainly, if this advantage (the object of all political speculation) be in any degree attainable, it is attainable only by a community which holds no factitious incentives to the avarice and ambition of the few, and which is internally organised for the liberty, security, and comfort, of the many. None must be intrusted with

power (and money is the completest species of power) who do not stand pledged to use it exclusively for the general benefit. But the use of animal flesh and fermented liquors directly militates with this equality of the rights of man. The peasant cannot gratify these fashionable cravings without leaving his family to starve. Without disease and war, those sweeping curtailers of population, pasturage would include a waste too great to be afforded. The labour requisite to support a family is far lighter* than is usually supposed. The peasantry work, not only for themselves, but for the aristocracy, the army, and the manufacturers.

The advantage of a reform in diet is obviously greater than that of any other. It strikes at the root of the evil. To remedy the abuses of legislation, before we annihilate the propensities by which they are produced, is to suppose, that, by taking away the effect, the cause will cease to operate. But the efficacy of this system depends entirely on the proselytism of individuals, and grounds its merits, as a benefit to the community, upon the total change of the dietetic habits in its members. It proceeds securely from a number of particular cases to one that is universal, and has this advantage over the contrary mode, that one error does not invalidate all that has gone before.

Let not too much however be expected from this system. The healthiest among us is not exempt from hereditary disease. The most symmetrical, athletic, and long-lived, is a being inexpressibly inferior to what he would have been, had not the unnatural habits of his ancestors accumulated for him a certain portion of malady and deformity. In the most perfect specimen of civilised man, something is still found wanting by the physiological critic. Can a return to nature, then, instantaneously eradicate predispositions that have been slowly taking root in the silence of innumerable ages?—Indubitably not. All that I contend for is, that, from the moment of relinquishing all unnatural habits, no new disease is generated; and that the predisposition to hereditary maladies gradually perishes for want of its accustomed supply. In cases of consumption,

* It has come under the author's experience, that some of the workmen on an embankment in North Wales, who, in consequence of the inability of the proprietor to pay them, seldom received their wages, have supported large families by cultivating small spots of sterile ground by moonlight. In the notes to Pratt's poem, "Bread, or the Poor," is an account of an industrious labourer, who, by working in a small garden, before and after his day's task, attained to an enviable state of independence.

cancer, gout, asthma, and scrofula, such is the invariable tendency of a diet of vegetables and pure water.

Those who may be induced by these remarks to give the vegetable system a fair trial should, in the first place, date the commencement of their practice from the moment of their conviction. All depends upon breaking through a pernicious habit resolutely and at once. Dr. Trotter* asserts, that no drunkard was ever reformed by gradually relinquishing his dram. Animal flesh, in its effects on the human stomach, is analogous to a dram. It is similar to the kind, though differing in the degree, of its operation. The proselyte to pure diet must be warned to expect a temporary diminution of muscular strength. The subtraction of a powerful stimulus will suffice to account for this event. But it is only temporary, and is succeeded by an equable capability for exertion, far surpassing his former various and fluctuating strength. Above all, he will acquire an easiness of breathing, by which such exertion is performed, with a remarkable exemption from that painful and difficult panting now felt by almost every one after hastily climbing an ordinary mountain. He will be equally capable of bodily exertion, or mental application, after as before his simple meal. He will feel none of the narcotic effects of ordinary diet. Irritability, the direct consequence of exhausting stimuli, would yield to the power of natural and tranquil impulses. He will no longer pine under the lethargy of ennui, that unconquerable weariness of life more to be dreaded than death itself. He will escape the epidemic madness which broods over its own injurious notions of the Deity, and "realises the hell that priests and beldams feign." Every man forms as it were his god from his own character; to the divinity of one of simple habits no offering would be more acceptable than the happiness of his creatures. He would be incapable of hating or persecuting others for the love of God. He will find, moreover, a system of simple diet to be a system of perfect epicurism. He will no longer be incessantly occupied in blunting and destroying those organs from which he expects his gratification. The pleasures of taste to be derived from a dinner of potatoes, beans, peas, turnips, lettuces, with a dessert of apples, gooseberries, strawberries, currants, raspberries, and, in winter, oranges, apples, and pears, is far greater than is supposed. Those who wait until they can eat this plain fare with the sauce of appetite will scarcely join with the hypocritical sensualist at a lord-mayor's feast, who declaims against the pleasures of the table. Solomon kept a thousand

* See Trotter on the Nervous Temperament.

concubines, and owned in despair that all was vanity. The man, whose happiness is constituted by the society of one amiable woman, would find some difficulty in sympathising with the disappointment of this venerable debauchee.

I address myself not to the young enthusiast only, the ardent devotee of truth and virtue, the pure and passionate moralist, yet unvitiated by the contagion of the world. He will embrace a pure system from its abstract truth, its beauty, its simplicity, and its promise of wide-extended benefit ; unless custom has turned poison into food, he will hate the brutal pleasures of the chase by instinct ; it will be a contemplation full of horror and disappointment to his mind, that beings, capable of the gentlest and most admirable sympathies, should take delight in the death-pangs and last convulsions of dying animals. The elderly man, whose youth has been poisoned by intemperance, or who has lived with apparent moderation, and is afflicted with a variety of painful maladies, would find his account in a beneficial change produced without the risk of poisonous medicines. The mother, to whom the perpetual restlessness of disease, and unaccountable deaths incident to her children, are the causes of incurable unhappiness, would on this diet experience the satisfaction of beholding their perpetual health and natural playfulness*. The most valuable lives are daily destroyed by diseases that it is dangerous to palliate, and impossible to cure, by medicine. How much longer will man continue to pimp for the gluttony of death, his most insidious, implacable, and eternal, foe ?

Ἄλλα δράκοντας ἀγρίους καλεῖτε καὶ παρδάλεις καὶ λέοντας,
αὐτοὶ δὲ μαφονεῖτε εἰς ὤμότητα καταλιπόντες ἐκείνοις οὐδέν.
ἐκείνοις μὲν ὁ φόνος τροφή, ἡμῖν δὲ ὄψον ἐστίν.

* * * * *

Ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνθρώπῳ κατὰ φύσιν τὸ σαρκοφαγεῖν, πρῶτον

* See Mr. Newton's book. His children are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive ; the girls are perfect models for a sculptor ; their dispositions are also the most gentle and conciliating ; the judicious treatment which they experience in other points may be a correlative cause of this. In the first five years of their life, of 18,000 children that are born, 7500 die of various diseases ; and how many more of those that survive are rendered miserable by maladies not immediately mortal ! The quality and quantity of a woman's milk are materially injured by the use of dead flesh. In an island near Iceland, where no vegetables are to be got, the children invariably die of tetanus before they are three weeks old, and the population is supplied from the main land.—*Sir G. Mackenzie's History of Iceland*. See also *Emile*, chap. i. pages 53, 54, 56.

μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων δηλοῦται τῆς κατασκευῆς. Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔοικε τὸ ἀνθρώπου σῶμα τῶν ἐπὶ σαρκοφαγία γεγονότων, οὐ χρωπότης χεῖλους, οὐκ ὀξύτης ὄνυχος, οὐ τραχύτης ὀδόντων πρόσεστιν, οὐ κοιλίας εὐτονία καὶ πνεύματος θερμότης, τρέψαι καὶ κατεργάσασθαι δυνατὴ τὸ βαρὺ καὶ κρεῶδες ; ἀλλ' αὐτόθεν ἢ φύσις τῇ λειότητι τῶν ὀδόντων, καὶ τῇ σμικρότητι τοῦ στόματος, καὶ τῇ μαλακότητι τῆς γλώσσης, καὶ τῇ πρὸς πέψιν ἀμβλύτητι τοῦ πνεύματος, ἐξόμνυται τὴν σαρκοφαγίαν. Εἰ δὲ λέγεις πεφυκέναι σεαυτὸν ἐπὶ τοιαύτην ἐδωδὴν, ὃ βούλει φαγεῖν, πρῶτον αὐτὸς ἀπόκτεινον. Ἄλλ' αὐτὸς διὰ σεαυτοῦ, μὴ χρησάμενος κοπίδι, μηδὲ τυμπάνῳ, μηδὲ πελέκει· ἀλλὰ ὡς λύκοι καὶ ἄρκτοι καὶ λέοντες αὐτοὶ ὡς ἐσθίουσι φονεύουσιν, ἄνελε δῆγματι βοῦν, ἢ σώματα οὔν, ἢ ἄρνα ἢ λαγῶν διάβρηξον, καὶ φάγε προσπεσῶν ἔτι ζῶντος ὡς ἐκεῖνα.

* * * * *

Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὕτως ἐν τῷ μαιφόνῳ τρυφῶμεν, ὥστε ὕψον τὸ κρέας προσαγορεύομεν, εἶτα ὕψον πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ κρέας δεόμεθα, ἀναμιγνύντες ἔλαιον, οἶνον, μέλι, γάρον, ὄξος, ἢ δύσμασι Συριακοῖς. Ἀραβικοῖς, ὥσπερ ὕντως νεκρὸν, ἐνταφιάζοντες. Καὶ γὰρ οὕτως αὐτῶν διαλυθέντων καὶ μαλαχθέντων καὶ τρόπον τινὰ κρευσαπέυντων ἔργον ἐστὶ τὴν πέψιν κρατῆσαι καὶ διακρατηθείσης δὲ δεινὰς βαρύτητος ἐμποιεῖ καὶ νοσῶδεις ἀπεψίας.

Οὕτω τὸ πρῶτον ἄγριόν τι ζῶν ἐβρώθη καὶ κακοῦργον εἶτα ὕρνις τις ἢ ἰχθύς εἴλκυστο· καὶ γευόμενον, οὕτω καὶ προμελετήσαν ἐν ἐκείνοις τὸ νικοῦν ἐπὶ βοῦν ἐργάτην ἦλθε, καὶ τὸ κόσμον πρόβατον καὶ τὸν οἰκουροῦν ἀλεκτρύονα· καὶ καταμικρὸν οὕτω τὴν ἀπληστίαν τονώσαντες, ἐπισφαγὰς ἀνθρώπων, καὶ φόνους καὶ πολέμους προῆλθον.

Πλούτ. περὶ τῆς σαρκοφαγίας.

NOTE ON QUEEN MAB.

BY THE EDITOR.

SHELLEY was eighteen when "Queen Mab" was written : he never published it. When he wrote it, 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. The poem has since been frequently reprinted ; and it is too well known, and the poetry is too beautiful, to allow of its being omitted, although 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. To a certain extent, the same motives influence me. Were the poem still in manuscript, even less might be given ;—as it is, such portions are omitted as support, in intemperate language, opinions to which at that age he was passionately attached.

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 so-

cieties, 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 execration. "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 no other human being as participating, in more than a very slight degree : 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. 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. 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 :

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 imma-

ture. 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 linger'd, 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 Arabia
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way ;
Till in the vale of Cachmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid

Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought ; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire : wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos : her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen : at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind ; her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips

Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart 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 génii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in dusker wreaths her braided locks

O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;
 Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
 More horribly the multitudinous streams
 Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
 Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
 The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
 Still fled before the storm ; still fled, like foam
 Down the steep cataract of a wintry river ;
 Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave ;
 Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
 That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
 As if that frail and wasted human form
 Had been an elemental god.

At midnight

The moon arose : and lo ! the ethereal cliffs
 Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
 Among the stars like sunlight, and around
 Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves,
 Bursting and eddying irresistibly,
 Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save ?—
 The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
 The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
 The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
 And faster still, beyond all human speed,
 Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
 The little boat was driven. A cavern there
 Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths

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. In the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,

Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering. Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless 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 seem'd 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 for ever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor, and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,
Rival the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude :—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes ;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and horned moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank

Wan moonlight even to fulness : not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard ; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasp'd 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 forever,
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchymy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn

Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.
It is a woe too “deep for tears,” when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,

Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, nor sobs nor groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope ;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

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 Bishop-

gate 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 the voyage in a wherry from Windsor to Criclade. 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.

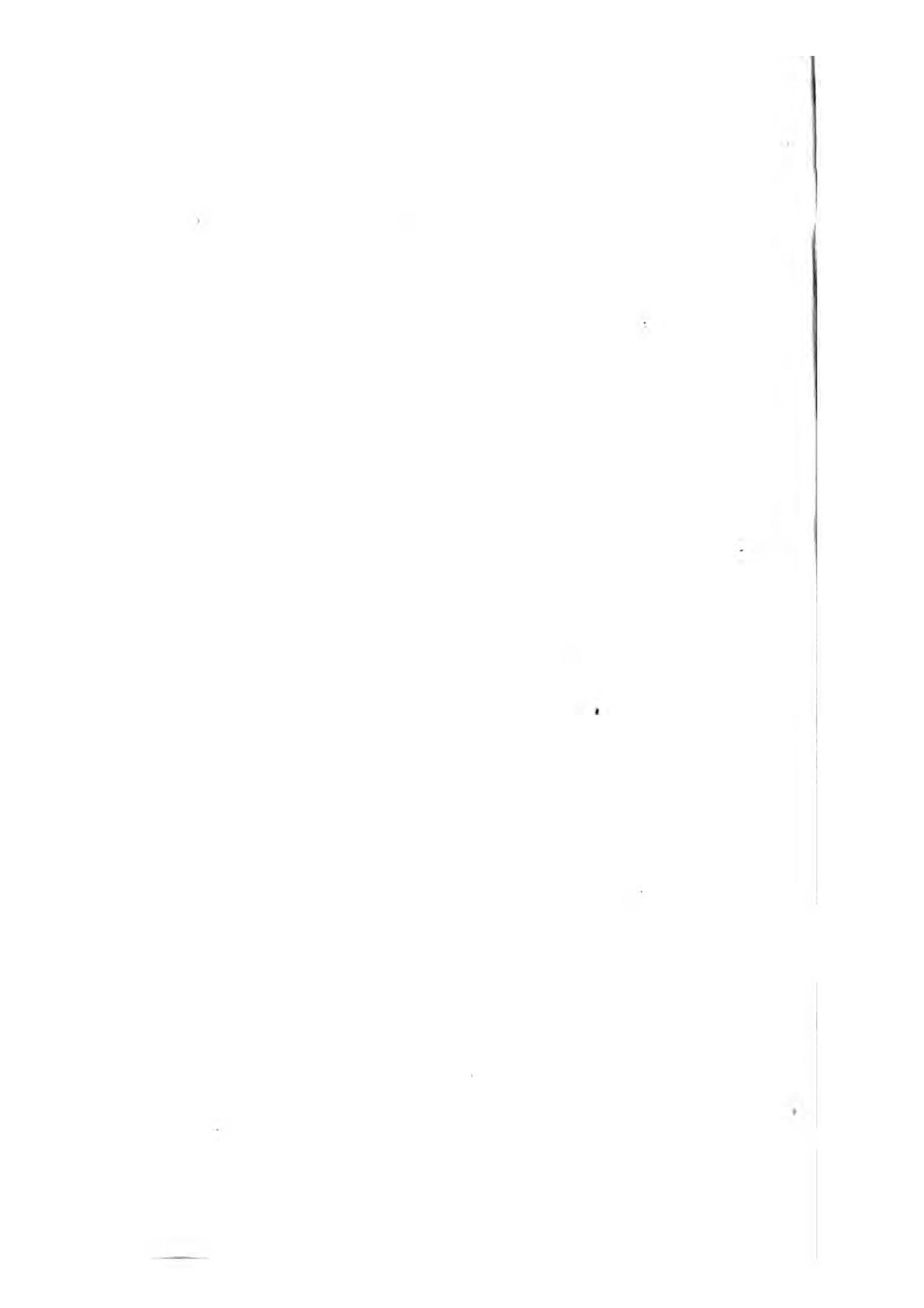
THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.

A Poem.

IN TWELVE CANTOS.

Οσαις δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαίαις ἀπτόμεσθα
Περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
Πλόον· ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν ἂν εὔροις
Ἐς ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυματοῦν 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 suc-

cession 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 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

* 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."

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 Metaphy-

sicians * 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 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.

* 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.

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, with an 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, bigotted 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.

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.

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM.



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 adamant 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 sun-set 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 aye
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
 Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay. [sway

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
 casement 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 fearest 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, nor dream,
Reared in the cities of enchanted land:
'Twas likest Heaven, ere yet day's purple stream
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 overburthened 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; immoveable, 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 fanes, 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 thro' 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
 The adamantine armour of their power, [grew
 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 Cythna 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 mourn'd 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.

XXIX.

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 possest.

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 swiftmess—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 unclose,
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 grey 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—aye, 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 confound,
 Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear
 Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound,
 The conquerors 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
 Gush'd 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 steadfast 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 [sight
 With thoughts which none could share, from that fair
 I turn'd 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 enthrall, 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 ghaftliest 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 steadfast 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 ;

When in the silence of all spirits there
 Laone's voice was felt, and through the air
 Her thrilling gestures spoke, 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 !”

LII.

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.

LIII.

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.

LIV.

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.

LV.

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.

LVI.

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.

LVII.

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.

LVIII.

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 steadfast 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 gain'd the shelter of a grassy hill,
And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown.

X.

Immovably 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 sun-beam'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 ’t were 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
 The battle, as I stood before the King [losing
 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 whirwind’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,
 Claspings 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, when'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 ecstasies,
Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses,
With their own fragrance pale, which spring but half
uncloses.

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 sun-beams
 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
 Trod 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 opprest,
 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 possess
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 har-
 monize.

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 attain, 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
 And he be like to them. Lo ! Plague is free [flow,
 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, aye, 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—aye, 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
 Stained 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
 ‘ Wearily, wearily o’er the boundless deep [reply,
 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 past away,
It shades the couch of some unresting lover,
Whose heart is now at rest : thus night past 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
 spasm !

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 overnumber
 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
Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt [round,
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 sunnys 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. “ Aye, 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

Which flashed among the stars, passed."—"Dost thou
stand
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 glutted 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 always
 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 are 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.

“Aye, 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 coun-
 terfeiting
 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
 quivering 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
 Over her look, the shadow of a mood [thrown
 Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
 A thought of voiceless depth.—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 his 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-firesprung,
 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 he 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 the 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 snakes. 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 : “ Aye, 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 required ! ”

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.

“ ‘ Aye, 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 moun-
 Within the vast ravine, whose rifts did pour [tains
 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 lace-makers, 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 unre-

serve ; 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 any thing approaching to faultless ; but when I considered 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 attri-

bute 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."

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON :
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN,
WHITEFRIARS

THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.



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 FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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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 conceive 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 Shakespeare 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 discharging 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,

IONE,

} *Oceanides.*

The PHANTASM OF JUPITER.

The SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

The SPIRIT OF THE MOON.

SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.

SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAWNS.

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 throng 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 throug
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 convuls'd 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 ; aye, 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 dead 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 undeciding 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 aerial 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 disenchanted 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 rock'd 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
wildernesses,
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,
unupbraiding,
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 : OH, 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 !

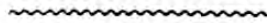
ECHOES.

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 steams 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.

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 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 adoreth : 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, aye, 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 aerial 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 uprising, 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!

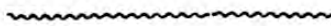
No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,

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.

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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 chaunt 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 rainbow-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, aye, 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.

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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 amphisbenic 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 sound,
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.

PANTHEA.

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-transparent, and they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
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 overtwin'd,
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
 Drain'd 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 wil-
derness.

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 over-
 whelm,
 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 shape-
 less 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 wierd 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
Glowing 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 trappings 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 ebb'd 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 !

END OF PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

NOTE ON THE PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

BY THE EDITOR.

ON the 12th 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.

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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 interpretations, 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' ὁδοὺς 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 *ῥοδοί* 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* *.”

* 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,

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.

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.

THE CENCI,

A Tragedy,

IN FIVE ACTS.

DEDICATION.



TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I INSCRIBE with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published, have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience ; they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor, and am content to paint, with such colours as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honourable, innocent and brave ; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and

think evil, and yet himself more free from evil ; one who knows better how to receive, and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive ; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners, I never knew : and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you !

Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ROME, *May* 29, 1819.

PREFACE.

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city, during the Pontificate of Clement VIII., in the year 1599. The story is, that an old man, having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children ; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden, who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being ; a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstances and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had, during his life, repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns ; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci, deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue*.

* The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration

Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome, I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest ; and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs, and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her, who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice, which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries, and among all ranks of people in a great city, where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact, it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained, as I imagined, but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, King Lear and the two plays in which the tale of Edipus is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakspeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous : anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual horror of the

of its own wickedness and weakness ; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes, may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching of the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself ; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant, and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well : but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another ; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner, she would have been wiser and better ; but she would never have been a tragic character : the few whom such an exhibition would have interested, could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification ; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge, that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true : thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and man which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion, with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days ; or a passport

which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit ; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion co-exists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration ; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge ; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act, Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci after having administered the opiate, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death ; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation ; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature*.

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty,

* An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in "El Purgatorio de San Patricio," of Calderon : the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects I have written more carelessly ; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect, I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert, that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men. And that our great ancestors, the ancient English poets, are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general, and not that of any particular class, to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted : I need not be assured that success is a very different matter ; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavoured whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is most admirable as a work of art : it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features : she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery, from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate ; the eye-brows are distinct and arched ; the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed, and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear ; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another : her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer, are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent ; and though in part

modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews, and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the chapel to St. Thomas), supported by granite columns and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of open work. One of the gates of the palace, formed of immense stones and leading through a passage dark and lofty, and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella, I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.

GIACOMO, }
BERNARDO, } *his Sons.*

CARDINAL CAMILLO.

ORSINO, *a Prelate.*

SAVELLA, *the Pope's Legate.*

OLIMPIO, }
MARZIO, } *Assassins.*

ANDREA, *Servant to CENCI.*

Nobles, Judges, Guards, Servants.

LUCRETIA, *Wife of CENCI, and step-mother of his children.*

BEATRICE, *his daughter.*

The SCENE lies principally in Rome, but changes during the Fourth Act to Petrella, a Castle among the Apulian Apennines.

TIME.—During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

THE CENCI.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the CENCI Palace.

Enter COUNT CENCI and CARDINAL CAMILLO.

CAMILLO.

THAT matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.—
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point : he said that you
Bought perilous impunity with your gold ;
That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live :
But that the glory and the interest
Of the high throne he fills, little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
So manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

CENCI.

The third of my possessions—let it go !
 Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
 Had sent his architect to view the ground,
 Meaning to build a villa on my vines
 The next time I compounded with his uncle :
 I little thought he should outwit me so !
 Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
 That which the vassal threatened to divulge,
 Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
 The deed he saw could not have rated higher
 Than his most worthless life :—it angers me !
 Respited from Hell !—So may the Devil
 Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope Clement,
 And his most charitable nephews, pray
 That the Apostle Peter and the saints
 Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
 Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
 Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
 Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
 To which they show no title.

CAMILLO.

Oh, Count Cenci !

So much that thou might'st honourably live,
 And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
 And with thy God, and with the offended world.
 How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
 Through those snow white and venerable hairs !

Your children should be sitting round you now,
 But that you fear to read upon their looks
 The shame and misery you have written there.
 Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?
 Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things
 else

Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
 Why is she barred from all society
 But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
 Talk with me, Count, you know I mean you well.
 I stood beside your dark and fiery youth
 Watching its bold and bad career, as men
 Watch meteors, but it vanished not—I marked
 Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
 Do I behold you, in dishonoured age,
 Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
 Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
 And in that hope have saved your life three times.

CENCI.

For which Aldobrandino owes you now
 My fief beyond the Pincian—Cardinal,
 One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
 And so we shall converse with less restraint.
 A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter,
 He was accustomed to frequent my house;
 So the next day *his* wife and daughter came
 And asked if I had seen him; and I smiled:
 I think they never saw him any more.

CAMILLO.

Thou execrable man, beware!—

CENCI.

Of thee?

Nay this is idle :—We should know each other.
As to my character for what men call crime,
Seeing I please my senses as I list,
And vindicate that right with force or guile,
It is a public matter, and I care not
If I discuss it with you. I may speak
Alike to you and my own conscious heart ;
For you give out that you have half reformed me,
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent
If fear should not ; both will, I do not doubt.
All men delight in sensual luxury,
All men enjoy revenge ; and most exult
Over the tortures they can never feel ;
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
When this shall be another's, and that mine.
And I have no remorse and little fear,
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish, and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know,
Is as my natural food and rest debarred
Until it be accomplished.

CAMILLO.

Art thou not

Most miserable ?

CENCI.

Why miserable ?—

No. I am what your theologians call
 Hardened ; which they must be in impudence,
 So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
 True, I was happier than I am, while yet
 Manhood remained to act the thing I thought ;
 While lust was sweeter than revenge ; and now
 Invention palls ; Ay, we must all grow old :
 But that there yet remains a deed to act
 Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
 Duller than mine—I'd do,—I know not what.
 When I was young I thought of nothing else
 But pleasure ; and I fed on honey sweets :
 Men, by St. Thomas ! cannot live like bees,
 And I grew tired : yet, till I killed a foe,
 And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
 Knew I not what delight was else on earth,
 Which now delights me little. I the rather
 Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals ;
 The dry, fixed eye-ball ; the pale, quivering lip,
 Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
 ears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
 I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
 Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,

Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

CAMILLO.

Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me ;
I thank my God that I believe you not.

Enter ANDREA.

ANDREA.

My Lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

CENCI.

Bid him attend me in the grand saloon.

[*Exit* ANDREA.]

CAMILLO.

Farewell ; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false, impious words
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee.

[*Exit* CAMILLO.]

CENCI.

The third of my possessions ! I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursed sons ;
Whom I have sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off ;
And meaning, if I could, to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them !

Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned :—then, as to Beatrice—

[Looking around him suspiciously.]

I think they cannot hear me at that door ;
What if they should ? And yet I need not speak,
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O, thou most silent air, that shall not hear
What now I think ! Thou, pavement, which I tread
Towards her chamber,—let your echoes talk
Of my imperious step, scorning surprise,
But not of my intent !—Andrea !

Enter ANDREA.

ANDREA.

My lord !

CENCI.

Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening :—no, at midnight, and alone.

[Exeunt.]

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SCENE II.

*A Garden of the Cenci Palace.*

*Enter BEATRICE and ORSINO, as in conversation.*

BEATRICE.

Pervert not truth,  
Orsino. You remember where we held  
That conversation ;—nay, we see the spot  
Even from this cypress ;—two long years are past

Since, on an April midnight, underneath  
The moon-light ruins of Mount Palatine,  
I did confess to you my secret mind.

ORSINO.

You said you loved me then.

BEATRICE.

                                          You are a priest :  
Speak to me not of love.

ORSINO.

                                          I may obtain  
The dispensation of the Pope to marry,  
Because I am a priest, do you believe  
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,  
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep ?

BEATRICE.

As I have said, speak to me not of love ;  
Had you a dispensation, I have not ;  
Nor will I leave this home of misery  
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady  
To whom I owe life, and these virtuous thoughts,  
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.  
Alas, Orsino ! All the love that once  
I felt for you, is turned to bitter pain.  
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first  
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.  
And thus I love you still, but holily,  
Even as a sister or a spirit might ;  
And so I swear a cold fidelity.

And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.  
 You have a sly, equivocating vein  
 That suits me not.—Ah, wretched that I am !  
 Where shall I turn ? Even now you look on me  
 As you were not my friend, and as if you  
 Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles  
 Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.  
 Ah ! No, forgive me ; sorrow makes me seem  
 Sterner than else my nature might have been ;  
 I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,  
 And they forebode,—but what can they forebode  
 Worse than I now endure ?

ORSINO.

All will be well.

Is the petition yet prepared ? You know  
 My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice ;  
 Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill  
 So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

BEATRICE.

Your zeal for all I wish ?—Ah me, you are cold !  
 Your utmost skill—speak but one word—

*(Aside.)* Alas !

Weak and deserted creature that I am,  
 Here I stand bickering with my only friend !

*(To ORSINO.)*

This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,  
 Orsino ; he has heard some happy news  
 From Salamanca, from my brothers there,



And with this outward show of love he mocks  
 His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,  
 For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,  
 Which I have heard him pray for on his knees :  
 Great God ! that such a father should be mine !—  
 But there is mighty preparation made,  
 And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,  
 And all the chief nobility of Rome.  
 And he has bidden me and my pale mother  
 Attire ourselves in festival array.  
 Poor lady ! She expects some happy change  
 In his dark spirit from this act ; I none.  
 At supper I will give you the petition :  
 Till when—farewell.

ORSINO.

Farewell.

[*Exit* BEATRICE.]

I know the Pope

Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow  
 But by absolving me from the revenue  
 Of many a wealthy see ; and, Beatrice,  
 I think to win thee at an easier rate.  
 Nor shall he read her eloquent petition :  
 He might bestow her on some poor relation  
 Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,  
 And I should be debarred from all access.  
 Then as to what she suffers from her father,  
 In all this there is much exaggeration :

Old men are testy and will have their way;  
 A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,  
 And live a free life as to wine or women,  
 And with a peevish temper may return  
 To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;  
 Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.  
 I shall be well content, if on my conscience  
 There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer  
 From the devices of my love—A net  
 From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear  
 Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,  
 Whose beams anatomise me, nerve by nerve,  
 And lay me bare, and make me blush to see  
 My hidden thoughts.—Ah, no! a friendless girl  
 Who clings to me, as to her only hope:—  
 I were a fool, not less than if a panther  
 Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,  
 If she escape me.

[*Exit.*

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 SCENE III.

A magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace.

*A Banquet. Enter CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO, CAMILLO,
 NOBLES.*

CENCI.

Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome ye,
 Princes and Cardinals, Pillars of the church,
 Whose presence honours our festivity.

I have too long lived like an anchorite,
 And, in my absence from your merry meetings,
 An evil word is gone abroad of me ;
 But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
 When you have shared the entertainment here,
 And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
 And we have pledged a health or two together,
 Will think me flesh and blood as well as you ;
 Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
 But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

FIRST GUEST.

In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
 Too sprightly and companionable a man,
 To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.

[To his companion.]

I never saw such blithe and open cheer
 In any eye !

SECOND GUEST.

Some most desired event,
 In which we all demand a common joy,
 Has brought us hither ; let us hear it, Count.

CENCI.

It is indeed a most desired event.
 If, when a parent, from a parent's heart,
 Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
 A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep
 And when he rises up from dreaming it ;
 One supplication, one desire, one hope,

That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
 Even all that he demands in their regard—
 And suddenly, beyond his dearest hope,
 It is accomplished, he should then rejoice,
 And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
 And task their love to grace his merriment,
 Then honour me thus far—for I am he.

BEATRICE (*to* LUCRETIA).

Great God! How horrible! Some dreadful ill
 Must have befallen my brothers.

LUCRETIA.

He speaks too frankly. Fear not, child,

BEATRICE.

Ah! My blood runs cold.
 I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
 Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

CENCI.

Here are the letters brought from Salamanca;
 Beatrice, read them to your mother. God,
 I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
 By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
 My disobedient and rebellious sons
 Are dead!—Why dead!—What means this change of
 cheer?

You hear me not, I tell you they are dead;
 And they will need no food or raiment more:
 The tapers that did light them the dark way

Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
 Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
 Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous glad.

BEATRICE. (*LUCRETIA sinks, half fainting; BEATRICE
 supports her.*)

It is not true!—Dear lady, pray look up.
 Had it been true, there is a God in Heaven,
 He would not live to boast of such a boon.
 Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

CENCI.

Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call
 To witness that I speak the sober truth;—
 And whose most favouring providence was shown
 Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
 Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
 When the Church fell and crushed him to a mummy,
 The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
 Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
 Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival;
 All in the self-same hour of the same night;
 Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
 I beg those friends who love me, that they mark
 The day a feast upon their calendars.
 It was the twenty-seventh of December:
 Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.

[*The assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.*]

FIRST GUEST.

Oh, horrible! I will depart.—

SECOND GUEST.

And I.—

THIRD GUEST.

No, stay!

I do believe it is some jest ; though faith,
 'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.
 I think his son has married the Infanta,
 Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado :
 'Tis but to season some such news ; stay, stay !
 I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.

CENCI (*filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up*).

Oh, thou bright wine, whose purple splendour leaps
 And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl
 Under the lamp-light, as my spirits do,
 To hear the death of my accursed sons !
 Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
 Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
 And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell ;
 Who, if a father's curses, as men say,
 Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,
 And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
 Now triumphs in my triumph !—But thou art
 Superfluous ; I have drunken deep of joy,
 And I will taste no other wine to-night.
 Here, Andrea ! Bear the bowl around.

A GUEST (*rising*).

Thou wretch !

Will none among this noble company
Check the abandoned villain ?

CAMILLO.

For God's sake,
Let me dismiss the guests ! You are insane,
Some ill will come of this.

SECOND GUEST.

Seize, silence him !

FIRST GUEST.

I will !

THIRD GUEST.

And I !

CENCI (*addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture*).
Who moves ? Who speaks ?

[*Turning to the Company.*

'Tis nothing,

Enjoy yourselves.—Beware ! for my revenge
Is as the sealed commission of a king,
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

[*The Banquet is broken up ; several of the Guests are departing.*

BEATRICE.

I do entreat you, go not, noble guests ;
What although tyranny and impious hate
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair ?
What if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them, and triumphs ? What, if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound

To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find
 No refuge in this merciless wide world?
 Oh, think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
 First love, then reverence in a child's prone mind,
 Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! Oh, think!
 I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
 Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
 Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!
 Have excused much, doubted; and when no doubt
 Remained, have sought by patience, love and tears,
 To soften him; and when this could not be,
 I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights,
 And lifted up to God, the father of all,
 Passionate prayers: and when these were not heard,
 I have still borne;—until I meet you here,
 Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
 Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
 His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,
 Ye may soon share such merriment again
 As fathers make over their children's graves.
 Oh! Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman;
 Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain;
 Camillo, thou art chief justiciary;
 Take us away!

CENCI. (*He has been conversing with CAMILLO during
 the first part of BEATRICE'S speech; he hears the
 conclusion, and now advances.*)

I hope my good friends here

Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps
Of their own throats—before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

BEATRICE (*not noticing the words of CENCI.*)

Dare no one look on me?
None answer? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit?
Oh, God! that I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed spring
Were fading on my grave! And that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all!

CAMILLO.

A bitter wish for one so young and gentle;
Can we do nothing?—

COLONNA.

Nothing that I see.
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy:
Yet I would second any one.

A CARDINAL.

And I.

CENCI.

Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!

BEATRICE.

Retire thou, impious man! Ay, hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience

Who art a torturer? Father, never dream,
 Though thou mayst overbear this company,
 But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me!
 Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
 My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
 Cover thy face from every living eye,
 And start if thou but hear a human step:
 Seek out some dark and silent corner, there,
 Bow thy white head before offended God,
 And we will kneel around, and fervently
 Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

CENCI.

My friends, I do lament this insane girl
 Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.
 Good night, farewell; I will not make you longer
 Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.
 Another time.—

[Exeunt all but CENCI and BEATRICE.]

My brain is swimming round;
 Give me a bowl of wine!

(*To BEATRICE.*) Thou painted viper!
 Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!
 I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
 Now get thee from my sight!

[Exit BEATRICE.]

Here, Andrea,
 Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
 I would not drink this evening, but I must;

For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do.

[Drinking the wine.]

Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villany ;
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink. The charm works well ;
It must be done, it shall be done, I swear !

[Exit.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.

Enter LUCRETIA and BERNARDO.

LUCRETIA.

Weep not, my gentle boy ; he struck but me,
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
Oh, God Almighty, do thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only thee !
Yet weep not ; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.

BERNARDO.

Oh, more, more
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me ! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep ?

LUCRETIA.

Alas ! poor boy, what else couldst thou have done !

Enter BEATRICE.

BEATRICE (*in a hurried voice*).

Did he pass this way ? Have you seen him, brother ?
Ah ! no, that is his step upon the stairs ;

'Tis nearer now ; his hand is on the door ;
 Mother, if I to thee have ever been
 A duteous child, now save me ? Thou, great God,
 Whose image upon earth a father is,
 Dost thou indeed abandon me ! He comes ;
 The door is opening now ; I see his face ;
 He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
 Even as he did after the feast last night.

Enter a Servant.

Almighty God, how merciful thou art !
 'Tis but Orsino's servant.—Well, what news ?

SERVANT.

My master bids me say, the Holy Father
 Has sent back your petition thus unopened.

[Giving a Paper.]

And he demands at what hour 'twere secure
 To visit you again ?

LUCRETIA.

At the Ave Mary.

[Exit Servant.]

So, daughter, our last hope has failed ; Ah me,
 How pale you look ; you tremble, and you stand
 Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation,
 As if one thought were over strong for you :
 Your eyes have a chill glare ; oh, dearest child !
 Are you gone mad ? If not, pray speak to me.

BEATRICE.

You see I am not mad ; I speak to you.

LUCRETIA.

You talked of something that your father did
After that dreadful feast? Could it be worse
Than when he smiled, and cried, My sons are dead!
And every one looked in his neighbour's face
To see if others were as white as he?
At the first word he spoke I felt the blood
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance;
And when it passed I sat all weak and wild;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
Checked his unnatural pride; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.
Until this hour thus you have ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence: your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence:
What can have thus subdued it? What can now
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?

BEATRICE.

What is it that you say? I was just thinking
'Twere better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody,
Yet never—O! before worse comes of it,
'Twere wise to die: it ends in that at last.

LUCRETIA.

Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?

He stayed not after that accursed feast
One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

BERNARDO.

Oh, sister, sister, prithee, speak to us!

BEATRICE (*speaking very slowly with a forced calmness*).

It was one word, Mother, one little word ;
One look, one smile.

[*Wildly.*

Oh ! he has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
Ditch-water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten. He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,
And I have never yet despaired—but now !
What would I say ?

[*Recovering herself.*

Ah ! no, 'tis nothing new.

The sufferings we all share have made me wild :
He only struck and cursed me as he passed ;
He said, he looked, he did,—nothing at all
Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.
Alas ! I am forgetful of my duty,
I should preserve my senses for your sake.

LUCRETIA.

Nay, Beatrice ; have courage, my sweet girl.

If any one despairs it should be I,
 Who loved him once, and now must live with him
 Till God in pity call for him or me.
 For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
 And smile, years hence, with children round your knees;
 Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil,
 Shall be remembered only as a dream.

BEATRICE.

Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.
 Did you not nurse me when my mother died?
 Did you not shield me and that dearest boy?
 And had we any other friend but you
 In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
 To win our father not to murder us?
 And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
 Of my dead mother plead against my soul
 If I abandon her who filled the place
 She left, with more even than a mother's love!

BERNARDO.

And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed
 I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
 Even though the Pope should make me free to live
 In some blithe place, like others of my age,
 With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
 Oh, never think that I will leave you, mother!

LUCRETIA.

My dear, dear children!

Enter CENCI, suddenly,

CENCI.

What, Beatrice here !

Come hither !

[She shrinks back, and covers her face.]

Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair ;
 Look up ! Why, yesternight you dared to look
 With disobedient insolence upon me,
 Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
 On what I meant ; whilst I then sought to hide
 That which I came to tell you—but in vain.

BEATRICE (*wildly, staggering towards the door*).

Oh, that the earth would gape ! Hide me, oh God !

CENCI.

Then it was I whose inarticulate words
 Fell from my lips, who with tottering steps
 Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
 Stay, I command you : from this day and hour
 Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
 And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
 And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
 Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind ;
 Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber,
 Thou too, loathed image of thy cursed mother,

[To BERNARDO.]

Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate !

[Exeunt BEATRICE and BERNARDO.]

(*Aside.*) So much has passed between us as must make
 Me bold, her fearful.—'Tis an awful thing
 To touch such mischief as I now conceive :
 So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,
 And try the chill stream with their feet ; once in—
 How the delighted spirit pants for joy !

LUCRETIA (*advancing timidly towards him*).

Oh, husband ! Pray forgive poor Beatrice,
 She meant not any ill.

CENCI.

Nor you perhaps ?
 Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
 Parricide with his alphabet ? Nor Giacomo ?
 Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred
 Enmity up against me with the Pope ?
 Whom in one night merciful God cut off :
 Innocent lambs ! They thought not any ill.
 You were not here conspiring ? You said nothing
 Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman ;
 Or be condemned to death for some offence,
 And you would be the witnesses ?—This failing,
 How just it were to hire assassins, or
 Put sudden poison in my evening drink ?
 Or smother me when overcome by wine ?
 Seeing we had no other judge but God,
 And he had sentenced me, and there were none
 But you to be the executioners

Of his decree enregistered in heaven ?

Oh, no ! You said not this ?

LUCRETIA.

So help me God,

I never thought the things you charge me with !

CENCI.

If you dare speak that wicked lie again,

I'll kill you. What ! it was not by your counsel

That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night ?

You did not hope to stir some enemies

Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn

What every nerve of you now trembles at ?

You judged that men were bolder than they are ;

Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

LUCRETIA.

Look not so dreadfully ! By my salvation

I knew not aught that Beatrice designed ;

Nor do I think she designed any thing

Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

CENCI.

Blaspheming liar ! You are damned for this !

But I will take you where you may persuade

The stones you tread on to deliver you :

For men shall there be none but those who dare

All things ; not question that which I command.

On Wednesday next I shall set out : you know

That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella ;

'Tis safely walled, and moated round about :

Its dungeons under ground, and its thick towers,
Never told tales ; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak. Why do you
linger ?

Make speediest preparation for the journey !

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.]

The all beholding sun yet shines ; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets ;
I see the bright sky through the window panes :
It is a garish, broad, and peering day ;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears ;
And every little corner, nook, and hole,
Is penetrated with the insolent light.
Come, darkness ! Yet, what is the day to me ?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day ?
'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror : if there be a sun in heaven,
She shall not dare to look upon its beams ;
Nor feel its warmth. Let her then wish for night ;
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me : I bear a darker deadlier gloom
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air,
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done !

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

A Chamber in the Vatican.

Enter CAMILLO and GIACOMO, in conversation.

CAMILLO.

There is an obsolete and doubtful law,
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing.

GIACOMO.

Nothing more? Alas!

Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no high-born necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
An hundred servants, and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require?

CAMILLO.

Nay, there is reason in your plea; 'twere hard.

GIACOMO.

'Tis hard for a firm man to bear: but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,

Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father,
 Without a bond or witness to the deed :
 And children, who inherit her fine senses,
 The fairest creatures in this breathing world ;
 And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
 Do you not think the Pope would interpose
 And stretch authority beyond the law ?

CAMILLO.

Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
 The Pope will not divert the course of law.
 After that impious feast the other night
 I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
 Your father's cruel hand ; he frowned and said,
 " Children are disobedient, and they sting
 Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
 Requiting years of care with contumely.
 I pity the Count Cenci from my heart ;
 His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
 And thus he is exasperated to ill.
 In the great war between the old and young,
 I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
 Will keep at least blameless neutrality."

Enter ORSINO.

You, my good lord Orsino, heard those words.

ORSINO.

What words ?

GIACOMO.

Alas, repeat them not again !

There then is no redress for me ; at least
 None but that which I may achieve myself,
 Since I am driven to the brink. But, say,
 My innocent sister and my only brother
 Are dying underneath my father's eye.
 The memorable torturers of this land,
 Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
 Never inflicted on their meanest slave
 What these endure ; shall they have no protection ?

CAMILLO.

Why, if they would petition to the Pope
 I see not how he could refuse it—yet
 He holds it of most dangerous example
 In aught to weaken the paternal power,
 Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.
 I pray you now excuse me. I have business
 That will not bear delay.

[*Exit* CAMILLO.]

GIACOMO.

But you, Orsino,
 Have the petition ; wherefore not present it ?

ORSINO.

I have presented it, and backed it with
 My earnest prayers, and urgent interest ;
 It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
 But that the strange and execrable deeds
 Alleged in it—in truth they might well baffle
 Any belief—have turned the Pope's displeasure

Upon the accusers from the criminal :
So I should guess from what Camillo said.

GIACOMO.

My friend, that palace-walking devil, Gold,
Has whispered silence to his Holiness :
And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.
What should we do but strike ourselves to death ?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would—

[Stops abruptly.]

ORSINO.

What ? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover :
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves ;
A judge who makes the truth weep at his decree ;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile ;
A father who is all a tyrant seems,
Were the profaner for his sacred name.

GIACOMO.

Ask me not what I think ; the unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not ; and we trust
Imagination with such phantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words,
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye. My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.

ORSINO.

But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind,
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day,
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected—

GIACOMO.

Spare me now !
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell !
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.

ORSINO.

Farewell !—Be your thoughts better or more bold.

[*Exit* GIACOMO.]

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
To feed his hope with cold encouragement :
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will

Dangerous secrets : for it tempts our powers,
 Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
 Into the depth of darkest purposes :
 So Cenci fell into the pit ; even I,
 Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
 And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
 Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
 To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
 As little mischief as I can ; that thought
 Shall fee the accuser conscience.

[*After a pause.*]

Now what harm

If Cenci should be murdered ?—Yet, if murdered,
 Wherefore by me ? And what if I could take
 The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
 In such an action ? Of all earthly things
 I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words ;
 And such is Cenci : and while Cenci lives
 His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
 If a priest wins her.—Oh, fair Beatrice !
 Would that I loved thee not, or, loving thee,
 Could but despise danger and gold and all
 That frowns between my wish and its effect,
 Or smiles beyond it ! There is no escape :
 Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
 And follows me to the resort of men,
 And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,
 So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire ;

And if I strike my damp and dizzy head,
My hot palm scorches it : her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant ; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights,
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours :
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all :
Her father dead ; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave ;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved :
And she !—Once more take courage, my faint heart ;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee ?
I have such foresight as assures success ;
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions ; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts,
Till it become his slave—as I will do.

[*Exit.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.

LUCRETIA ; *to her enter* BEATRICE.

BEATRICE (*she enters staggering, and speaks wildly*).

Reach me that handkerchief!—My brain is hurt ;
My eyes are full of blood ; just wipe them for me—
I see but indistinctly.—

LUCRETIA.

My sweet child,
You have no wound ; 'tis only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow.—Alas ! alas !
What has befallen ?

BEATRICE.

How comes this hair undone ?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—O, horrible !
The pavement sinks under my feet ! The walls
Spin round ! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels.—My God !
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood !
The sunshine on the floor is black ! The air

Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe
 In charnel-pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
 A clinging, black, contaminating mist
 About me—'tis substantial, heavy, thick,
 I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
 My fingers and my limbs to one another,
 And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
 My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
 The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
 My God! I never knew what the mad felt
 Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt!

[*More wildly.*]

No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
 Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
 Which would burst forth into the wandering air!

[*A pause.*]

What hideous thought was that I had even now?
 'Tis gone; and yet its burthen remains here
 O'er these dull eyes—upon this weary heart!
 O, world! O, life! O, day! O, misery!

LUCRETIA.

What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not:
 Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
 But not its cause; suffering has dried away
 The source from which it sprung.—

BEATRICE (*frantically*).

Like Parricide—

Misery has killed its father: yet its father
 Never like mine—O, God! What thing am I?

LUCRETIA.

My dearest child, what has your father done ?

BEATRICE (*doubtfully*).

Who art thou, questioner ? I have no father.

[*Aside.*

She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me,
It is a piteous office.

[*To LUCRETIA, in a slow, subdued voice.*

Do you know,

I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair ;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams,
That I imagined—no, it cannot be !
Horrible things have been in this wild world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill ; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed
As—

[*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.*

Who art thou ? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest—Mother !

LUCRETIA.

Oh !

My sweet child, know you—

BEATRICE.

Yet speak it not :

For then if this be truth, that other too
 Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
 Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
 Never to change, never to pass away.

Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace ;
 Thou art Lucretia ; I am Beatrice.
 I have talked some wild words, but will no more.
 Mother, come near me : from this point of time,
 I am—

[Her voice dies away faintly.]

LUCRETIA.

Alas ! what has befallen thee, child ?
 What has thy father done ?

BEATRICE.

.What have I done ?

Am I not innocent ? Is it my crime
 That one with white hair, and imperious brow,
 Who tortured me from my forgotten years,
 As parents only dare, should call himself
 My father, yet should be !—Oh, what am I ?
 What name, what place, what memory shall be mine ?
 What retrospects, outliving even despair ?

LUCRETIA.

He is a violent tyrant, surely, child :
We know that death alone can make us free ;
His death or ours. But what can he have done
Of deadlier outrage or worse injury ?
Thou art unlike thyself ; thine eyes shoot forth
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,
Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.

BEATRICE.

'Tis the restless life
Tortured within them. If I try to speak
I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done ;
What, yet I know not—something which shall make
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it ;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done :
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never anything will move me more.
But now !—Oh blood, which art my father's blood,
Circling through these contaminated veins,
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime, and punishment
By which I suffer—no, that cannot be !
Many might doubt there were a God above

Who sees and permits evil, and so die :
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

LUCRETIA.

It must indeed have been some bitter wrong ;
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh ! my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
Thy sufferings from my fear.

BEATRICE.

I hide them not.

What are the words which you would have me speak ?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me. I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror. Of all words,
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear ? For there is none to tell
My misery : if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death ! Death ! Our law and our religion call thee
A punishment and a reward. Oh, which
Have I deserved ?

LUCRETIA.

The peace of innocence ;
Till in your season you be called to heaven.
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down

The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

BEATRICE.

Ay, death—

The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of thy spirit,
As a foul den from which what thou abhorrest
May mock thee, unavenged—it shall not be!
Self-murder—no that might be no escape,
For thy decree yawns like a Hell between
Our will and it.—Oh! in this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer.

Enter ORSINO.

(She approaches him solemnly.) Welcome, Friend!
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange,
That neither life or death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

ORSINO.

And what is he who has thus injured you?

BEATRICE.

The man they call my father: a dread name.

ORSINO.

It cannot be—

BEATRICE.

What it can be, or not,
 Forbear to think. It is, and it has been ;
 Advise me how it shall not be again.
 I thought to die ; but a religious awe
 Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
 Might be no refuge from the consciousness
 Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak !

ORSINO.

Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
 Avenge thee.

BEATRICE.

Oh, ice-hearted counsellor !
 If I could find a word that might make known
 The crime of my destroyer ; and that done,
 My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
 Which cankers my heart's core ; ay, lay all bare,
 So that my unpolluted fame should be
 With vilest gossips a stale mouthed story ;
 A mock, a by-word, an astonishment :—
 If this were done, which never shall be done,
 Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
 And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
 Baffling belief, and overpowering speech ;
 Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapt
 In hideous hints—Oh, most assured redress !

ORSINO.

You will endure it then ?

BEATRICE.

Endure !—Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.

[Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.]

Ay,

All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other ?

ORSINO.

Should the offender live ?
Triumph in his misdeed ? and make, by use,
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element ; until thou mayest become
Utterly lost ; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest ?

BEATRICE *(to herself)*.

Mighty death !
Thou double-visaged shadow ! Only judge !
Rightfullest arbiter !

[She retires absorbed in thought.]

LUCRETIA.

If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge—

ORSINO.

BlaspHEME not ! His high Providence commits

Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs
 Into the hands of men ; if they neglect
 To punish crime —

LUCRETIA.

But if one, like this wretch,
 Should mock, with gold, opinion, law, and power ?
 If there be no appeal to that which makes
 The guiltiest tremble ! If, because our wrongs,
 For that they are unnatural, strange and monstrous,
 Exceed all measure of belief ? Oh, God !
 If, for the very reasons which should make
 Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs ?
 And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
 Than that appointed for their torturer ?

ORSINO.

Think not

But that there is redress where there is wrong,
 So we be bold enough to seize it.

LUCRETIA.

How ?

If there were any way to make all sure,
 I know not—but I think it might be good
 To—

ORSINO.

Why, his late outrage to Beatrice ;
 For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
 As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her
 Only one duty, how she may avenge :

You, but one refuge from ills ill endured ;
Me, but one counsel—

LUCRETIA.

For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource
Will arise thence, where every other one
Might find them with less need.

(*BEATRICE advances.*)

ORSINO.

Then—

BEATRICE.

Peace, Orsino !
And, honoured Lady, while I speak, I pray,
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement, both for what is past,
And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburthened soul,
And be—what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will,
And have at length determined what is right.

Art thou my friend, Orsino ? False or true ?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

ORSINO.

I swear
To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.

LUCRETIA.

You think we should devise
His death ?

BEATRICE.

And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

ORSINO.

And yet most cautious.

LUCRETIA.

For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy
For that which it became themselves to do.

BEATRICE.

Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
What are the means ?

ORSINO.

I know two dull, fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.

LUCRETIA.

To-morrow, before dawn,

Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
If he arrive there--

BEATRICE.

He must not arrive.

ORSINO.

Will it be dark before you reach the tower ?

LUCRETIA.

The sun will scarce be set.

BEATRICE.

But I remember

Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine ; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice ;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down ;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life ; yet clinging, leans ;
And leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall : beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns—below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent

Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
 Crosses the chasm ; and high above there grow,
 With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
 Cedars, and yews, and pines ; whose tangled hair
 Is matted in one solid roof of shade
 By the dark ivy's twine. At noon-day here
 'Tis twilight and at sunset blackest night.

ORSINO.

Before you reach that bridge make some excuse
 For spurring on your mules, or loitering
 Until—

BEATRICE.

What sound is that ?

LUCRETIA.

Hark ! No, it cannot be a servant's step ;
 It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
 Returned—Make some excuse for being here.

BEATRICE (*to ORSINO as she goes out*).

That step we hear approach must never pass
 The bridge of which we spoke.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.]

ORSINO.

What shall I do ?

Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
 The imperious inquisition of his looks
 As to what brought me hither : let me mask
 Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

Enter GIACOMO, in a hurried manner.

How ! Have you ventured thither ? know you then
That Cenci is from home ?

GIACOMO.

I sought him here ;
And now must wait till he returns.

ORSINO.

Great God !
Weigh you the danger of this rashness ?

GIACOMO.

Ay !
Does my destroyer know his danger ? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man ; the oppressor to the oppressed ;
The slanderer to the slandered ; foe to foe.
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame ;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake ? and say, I ask not gold ;
I ask not happy years ; nor memories
Of tranquil childhood ; nor home-sheltered love ;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more ;
But only my fair fame ; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee ;
Or I will—God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man ?

ORSINO.

Be calm, dear friend.

GIACOMO.

Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
And then denied the loan ; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,
And my wife smiled ; and my heart knew repose ;
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness ; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry ; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot ; and he saw
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,

And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
 My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
 I went forth too : but soon returned again ;
 Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
 My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
 " Give us clothes, father ! Give us better food !
 What you in one night squander were enough
 For months ! " I looked, and saw that home was hell.
 And to that hell will I return no more
 Until mine enemy has rendered up
 Atonement, or, as he gave life to me
 I will, reversing nature's law—

ORSINO.

Trust me,
 The compensation which thou seekest here
 Will be denied.

GIACOMO.

Then—Are you not my friend ?
 Did you not hint at the alternative,
 Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
 The other day when we conversed together ?
 My wrongs were then less. That word parricide,
 Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

ORSINO.

It must be fear itself, for the bare word
 Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God
 Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,

So sanctifying it : what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplished.

GIACOMO.

Is he dead ?

ORSINO.

His grave is ready. Know that since we met
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.

GIACOMO.

What outrage ?

ORSINO,

That she speaks not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do,
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
Of her stern brow, bent on the idle air,
And her severe unmodulated voice,
Drowning both tenderness and dread ; and last
From this ; that whilst her step-mother and I,
Bewildered in our horror, talked together
With obscure hints ; both self-misunderstood,
And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,
Over the truth, and yet to its revenge,
She interrupted us, and with a look
Which told before she spoke it, he must die—

GIACOMO.

It is enough. My doubts are well appeased ;
There is a higher reason for the act
Than mine ; there is a holier judge than me,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,

Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
 Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
 A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
 With needless tears! Fair sister, thou in whom
 Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
 Did not destroy each other! Is there made
 Ravage of thee? O, heart, I ask no more
 Justification! Shall I wait, Orsino,
 Till he return, and stab him at the door?

ORSINO.

Not so; some accident might interpose
 To rescue him from what is now most sure;
 And you are unprovided where to fly,
 How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen:
 All is contrived; success is so assured
 That—

Enter BEATRICE.

BEATRICE.

'Tis my brother's voice! You know me not?

GIACOMO.

My sister, my lost sister!

BEATRICE.

Lost indeed!

I see Orsino has talked with you, and
 That you conjecture things too horrible
 To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,
 He might return: yet kiss me; I shall know
 That then thou hast consented to his death.

Farewell, Farewell ! Let piety to God,
 Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
 And all things that make tender hardest hearts,
 Make thine hard, brother. Answer not—farewell.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

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SCENE II.

*A mean Apartment in GIACOMO's house.*

GIACOMO *alone.*

GIACOMO.

'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.

[*Thunder, and the sound of a storm.*]

What ! can the everlasting elements  
 Feel with a worm like man ? If so, the shaft  
 Of mercy-winged lightning would not fall  
 On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep :  
 They are now living in unmeaning dreams :  
 But I must wake, still doubting if that deed  
 Be just which was most necessary. O,  
 Thou unreplenished lamp ! whose narrow fire  
 Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge  
 Devouring darkness hovers ! Thou small flame,  
 Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,  
 Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,  
 Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be  
 As thou hadst never been ! So wastes and sinks  
 Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine :  
 But that no power can fill with vital oil

That broken lamp of flesh. Ha ! 'tis the blood  
 Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold :  
 It is the form that moulded mine, that sinks  
 Into the white and yellow spasms of death :  
 It is the soul by which mine was arrayed  
 In God's immortal likeness which now stands  
 Naked before Heaven's judgment-seat !

[*A bell strikes.*

One ! Two !

The hours crawl on ; and when my hairs are white  
 My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,  
 Tortured between just hate and vain remorse ;  
 Chiding the tardy messenger of news  
 Like those which I expect. I almost wish  
 He be not dead, although my wrongs are great ;  
 Yet—'tis Orsino's step—

*Enter ORSINO.*

Speak !

ORSINO.

I am come

To say he has escaped.

GIACOMO.

Escaped !

ORSINO.

And safe

Within Petrella. He passed by the spot  
 Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.



GIACOMO.

Are we the fools of such contingencies?  
 And do we waste in blind misgivings thus  
 The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,  
 Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter  
 With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth  
 Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done,  
 But my repentance.

ORSINO.

See, the lamp is out.

GIACOMO.

If no remorse is ours when the dim air  
 Has drank this innocent flame, why should we quail  
 When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits  
 See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever?  
 No, I am hardened.

ORSINO.

Why, what need of this?

Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse  
 In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,  
 Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.  
 But light the lamp; let us not talk 't' the dark.

GIACOMO (*lighting the lamp*).

And yet once quenched I cannot thus relume  
 My father's life: do you not think his ghost  
 Might plead that argument with God?

ORSINO.

Once gone,

You cannot now recall your sister's peace ;  
 Your own extinguished years of youth and hope ;  
 Nor your wife's bitter words ; nor all the taunts  
 Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes ;  
 Nor your dead mother ; nor—

GIACOMO.

O, speak no more !

I am resolved, although this very hand  
 Must quench the life that animated it.

ORSINO.

There is no need of that. Listen : you know  
 Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella  
 In old Colonna's time ; him whom your father  
 Degraded from his post ? And Marzio,  
 That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year  
 Of a reward of blood, well earned and due ?

GIACOMO.

I knew Olimpio ; and they say he hated  
 Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage  
 His lips grew white only to see him pass.  
 Of Marzio I know nothing.

ORSINO.

Marzio's hate  
 Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,  
 But in your name, and as at your request,  
 To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

GIACOMO.

Only to talk ?

ORSINO.

The moments which even now  
 Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour,  
 May memorise their flight with death : ere then  
 They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,  
 And made an end.

GIACOMO.

Listen ! What sound is that ?

ORSINO.

The house-dog moans, and the beams crack : nought else.

GIACOMO.

It is my wife complaining in her sleep :  
 I doubt not she is saying bitter things  
 Of me ; and all my children round her dreaming  
 That I deny them sustenance.

ORSINO.

Whilst he  
 Who truly took it from them, and who fills  
 Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps  
 Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly  
 Mocks thee in visions of successful hate  
 Too like the truth of day.

GIACOMO.

If e'er he wakes  
 Again, I will not trust to hireling hands—

ORSINO.

Why, that were well. I must be gone ; good night !  
When next we meet may all be done !

GIACOMO.

And all

Forgotten : Oh, that I had never been !

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

## ACT IV.

## SCENE I.

*An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella.*

*Enter CENCI.*

CENCI.

She comes not ; yet I left her even now  
 Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty  
 Of her delay ; yet what if threats are vain ?  
 Am I not now within Petrella's moat ?  
 Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome ?  
 Might I not drag her by the golden hair ?  
 Stamp on her ? Keep her sleepless till her brain  
 Be overworn ? Tame her with chains and famine ?  
 Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone  
 What I most seek ! No, 'tis her stubborn will,  
 Which, by its own consent, shall stoop as low  
 As that which drags it down.

*Enter LUCRETIA.*

Thou loathed wretch !  
 Hide thee from my abhorrence ; fly, begone !  
 Yet stay ! Bid Beatrice come hither.

LUCRETIA.

Oh,  
 Husband ! I pray, for thine own wretched sake,

Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee  
 Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,  
 Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.  
 And thou art old ; thy hairs are hoary grey ;  
 As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,  
 Pity thy daughter ; give her to some friend  
 In marriage : so that she may tempt thee not  
 To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

CENCI.

What ! like her sister, who has found a home  
 To mock my hate from with prosperity ?  
 Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee,  
 And all that yet remain. My death may be  
 Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,  
 Bid her come hither, and before my mood  
 Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

LUCRETIA.

She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence  
 She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance ;  
 And in that trance she heard a voice which said,  
 " Cenci must die ! Let him confess himself !  
 Even now the accusing angel waits to hear  
 If God, to punish his enormous crimes,  
 Harden his dying heart ! "

CENCI.

Why—such things are :  
 No doubt divine revealings may be made.  
 'Tis plain I have been favoured from above,

For when I cursed my sons, they died.—Aye—so—  
 As to the right or wrong, that's talk—repentance—  
 Repentance is an easy moment's work,  
 And more depends on God than me. Well—well—  
 I must give up the greater point, which was  
 To poison and corrupt her soul.

[*A pause ; LUCRETIA approaches anxiously, and  
 then shrinks back as he speaks.*

One, two ;

Ay—Rocco and Christofano my curse  
 Strangled : and Giacomo, I think, will find  
 Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave :  
 Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,  
 Die in despair, blaspheming : to Bernardo,  
 He is so innocent, I will bequeath  
 The memory of these deeds, and make his youth  
 The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts  
 Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.  
 When all is done, out in the wide Campagna,  
 I will pile up my silver and my gold ;  
 My costly robes, paintings, and tapestries ;  
 My parchments and all records of my wealth ;  
 And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave  
 Of my possessions nothing but my name ;  
 Which shall be an inheritance to strip  
 Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,  
 My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign  
 Into the hands of him who wielded it ;

Be it for its own punishment or theirs,  
 He will not ask it of me till the lash  
 Be broken in its last and deepest wound ;  
 Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,  
 Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make  
 Short work and sure.

[*Going.*

LUCRETIA (*stops him*).

Oh, stay ! It was a feint :  
 She had no vision, and she heard no voice.  
 I said it but to awe thee.

CENCI.

That is well.

Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,  
 Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie !  
 For Beatrice, worse terrors are in store,  
 To bend her to my will.

LUCRETIA.

Oh ! to what will ?  
 What cruel sufferings, more than she has known,  
 Canst thou inflict ?

CENCI.

Andrea ! go, call my daughter,  
 And if she comes not, tell her that I come.  
 What sufferings ? I will drag her, step by step,  
 Through infamies unheard of among men :  
 She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon  
 Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,



One among which shall be—What? Canst thou guess?  
 She shall become (for what she most abhors  
 Shall have a fascination to entrap  
 Her loathing will), to her own conscious self  
 All she appears to others ; and when dead,  
 As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,  
 A rebel to her father and her God,  
 Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds ;  
 Her name shall be the terror of the earth ;  
 Her spirit shall approach the throne of God  
 Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make  
 Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

*Enter ANDREA.*

ANDREA.

The lady Beatrice—

CENCI.

Speak, pale slave ! What

Said she ?

ANDREA.

My Lord, 'twas what she looked ; she said :  
 “ Go tell my father that I see the gulf  
 Of Hell between us two, which he may pass,  
 I will not.”

*[Exit ANDREA.]*

CENCI.

Go thou quick, Lucretia,  
 Tell her to come ; yet let her understand

Her coming is consent : and say, moreover,  
That if she come not I will curse her.

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.

Ha !

With what but with a father's curse doth God  
Panic-strike armed victory, and make pale  
Cities in their prosperity ? The world's Father  
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,  
Be he who asks even what men call me.  
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers  
Awe her before I speak ? For I on them  
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

*Enter* LUCRETIA.

Well ; what ? Speak, wretch !

LUCRETIA.

She said, " I cannot come ;  
Go tell my father that I see a torrent  
Of his own blood raging between us."

CENCI (*kneeling*).

God !

Hear me ! If this most specious mass of flesh,  
Which thou hast made my daughter ; this my blood,  
This particle of my divided being ;  
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,  
Whose sight infects and poisons me ; this devil  
Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant  
To aught good use ; if her bright loveliness

Was kindled to illumine this dark world ;  
 If nursed by thy selectest dew of love,  
 Such virtues blossom in her as should make  
 The peace of life, I pray thee for my sake,  
 As thou the common God and Father art  
 Of her, and me, and all ; reverse that doom !  
 Earth, in the name of God, let her food be  
 Poison, until she be encrusted round  
 With leprous stains ! Heaven, rain upon her head  
 The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,  
 Till she be speckled like a toad ; parch up  
 Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs  
 To loathed lameness ! All-beholding sun,  
 Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes  
 With thine own blinding beams !

LUCRETIA.

Peace ! peace !

For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.  
 When high God grants, he punishes such prayers.

CENCI (*leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards  
 Heaven*).

He does his will, I mine ! This in addition,  
 That if she have a child——

LUCRETIA.

Horrible thought !

CENCI.

That if she ever have a child ; and thou,  
 Quick Nature ! I adjure thee by thy God,

That thou be fruitful in her, and increase  
 And multiply, fulfilling his command,  
 And my deep imprecation ! May it be  
 A hideous likeness of herself ; that as  
 From a distorting mirror, she may see  
 Her image mixed with what she most abhors,  
 Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.  
 And that the child may from its infancy  
 Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,  
 Turning her mother's love to misery :  
 And that both she and it may live, until  
 It shall repay her care and pain with hate,  
 Or what may else be more unnatural.  
 So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs  
 Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave.  
 Shall I revoke this curse ? Go, bid her come,  
 Before my words are chronicled in heaven.

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.]

I do not feel as if I were a man,  
 But like a fiend appointed to chastise  
 The offences of some unremembered world.  
 My blood is running up and down my veins !  
 A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle :  
 I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe ;  
 My heart is beating with an expectation  
 Of horrid joy.

*Enter* LUCRETIA.

What ? Speak !

LUCRETIA.

She bids thee curse ;  
 And if thy curses, as they cannot do,  
 Could kill her soul—

CENCI.

She would not come. 'Tis well,  
 I can do both : first take what I demand,  
 And then extort concession. To thy chamber !  
 Fly ere I spurn thee : and beware this night  
 That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer  
 To come between the tiger and his prey.

[Exit LUCRETIA.]

It must be late ; mine eyes grow weary dim  
 With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.  
 Conscience ! Oh, thou most insolent of lies !  
 They say that sleep, that healing dew of heaven,  
 Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain  
 Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go,  
 First to belie thee with an hour of rest,  
 Which will be deep and calm, I feel : and then—  
 O, multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake  
 Thine arches with the laughter of their joy !  
 There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven  
 As o'er an angel fallen ; and upon Earth  
 All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things  
 Shall, with a spirit of unnatural life,  
 Stir and be quickened—even as I am now.

[Exit.]

## SCENE II.

*Before the Castle of Petrella.**Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA above on the ramparts.*

BEATRICE.

They come not yet.

LUCRETIA.

'Tis scarce midnight.

BEATRICE.

How slow

Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,  
Lags leaden-footed time !

LUCRETIA.

The minutes pass—

If he should wake before the deed is done ?

BEATRICE.

O, Mother ! He must never wake again.  
What thou hast said persuades me that our act  
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell  
Out of a human form.

LUCRETIA.

'Tis true he spoke

Of death and judgment with strange confidence  
For one so wicked ; as a man believing  
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.  
And yet to die without confession !—

BEATRICE.

Oh!

Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,  
And will not add our dread necessity  
To the amount of his offences.

*Enter OLIMPIO, and MARZIO, below.*

LUCRETIA.

See,

They come.

BEATRICE.

All mortal things must hasten thus  
To their dark end. Let us go down.

*[Exeunt LUCRETIA and BEATRICE from above.]*

OLIMPIO.

How feel you to this work?

MARZIO.

As one who thinks  
A thousand crowns excellent market price  
For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.

OLIMPIO.

It is the white reflection of your own,  
Which you call pale.

MARZIO.

Is that their natural hue?

OLIMPIO.

Or 'tis my hate, and the deferred desire  
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.

MARZIO.

You are inclined then to this business ?

OLIMPIO.

Ay,

If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns  
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,  
I could not be more willing.

*Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA below.*

Noble ladies !

BEATRICE.

Are ye resolved ?

OLIMPIO.

Is he asleep ?

MARZIO.

Is all

Quiet ?

LUCRETIA.

I mixed an opiate with his drink :  
He sleeps so soundly—

BEATRICE.

That his death will be  
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,  
A dark continuance of the Hell within him,  
Which God extinguish ! But ye are resolved ?  
Ye know it is a high and holy deed ?

OLIMPIO.

We are resolved.



MARZIO.

As to the how this act  
Be warranted, it rests with you.

BEATRICE.

Well, follow!

OLIMPIO.

Hush! Hark! What noise is that?

MARZIO.

Ha! some one comes!

BEATRICE.

Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest  
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate,  
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,  
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow!  
And be your steps like mine, light, quick, and bold.

[*Exeunt.*]

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SCENE III.

An Apartment in the Castle.

Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA.

LUCRETIA.

They are about it now.

BEATRICE.

Nay, it is done.

LUCRETIA.

I have not heard him groan.

BEATRICE.

He will not groan.

LUCRETIA.

What sound is that?

BEATRICE.

List! 'tis the tread of feet

About his bed.

LUCRETIA.

My God!

If he be now a cold stiff corpse—

BEATRICE.

O, fear not

What may be done, but what is left undone:

The act seals all.

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO.

Is it accomplished?

MARZIO.

What?

OLIMPIO.

Did you not call?

BEATRICE.

When?

OLIMPIO.

Now.

BEATRICE.

I ask if all is over?

OLIMPIO.

We dare not kill an old and sleeping man ;
 His thin grey hair, his stern and reverent brow,
 His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast,
 And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
 Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.

MARZIO.

But I was bolder ; for I chid Olimpio,
 And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave,
 And leave me the reward. And now my knife
 Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
 Stirred in his sleep, and said, “ God ! hear, O hear,
 A father’s curse ! What, art thou not our father ? ”
 And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
 Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
 And could not kill him.

BEATRICE.

Miserable slaves !

Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
 Found ye the boldness to return to me
 With such a deed undone ? Base palterers !
 Cowards and traitors ! Why, the very conscience
 Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
 Is an equivocation : it sleeps over
 A thousand daily acts disgracing men ;
 And when a deed where mercy insults heaven—
 Why do I talk ?

[Snatching a dagger from one of them and raising it.]

Hadst thou a tongue to say,
She murdered her own father, I must do it!
But never dream ye shall outlive him long!

OLIMPIO.

Stop, for God's sake!

MARZIO.

I will go back and kill him.

OLIMPIO.

Give me the weapon, we must do thy will.

BEATRICE.

Take it! Depart! Return!

[Exeunt OLIMPIO and MARZIO.]

How pale thou art!

We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime
To leave undone.

LUCRETIA.

Would it were done!

BEATRICE.

Even whilst

That doubt is passing through your mind, the world
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and hell
Have swallowed up the vapour they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood
Runs freely through my veins. Hark!

Enter OLIMPIO, and MARZIO.

He is—

OLIMPIO.

Dead!

MARZIO.

We strangled him, that there might be no blood ;
And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden
Under the balcony ; 'twill seem it fell.

BEATRICE (*giving them a bag of coin*).

Here take this gold, and hasten to your homes.
And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed
By that which made me tremble, wear thou this !

[*Clothes him in a rich mantle.*]

It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state : so may they envy thine.
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive ! And, mark,
If thou hast crimes, repent : this deed is none.

[*A horn is sounded.*]

LUCRETIA.

Hark, 'tis the castle horn : my God ! it sounds
Like the last trump.

BEATRICE.

Some tedious guest is coming.

LUCRETIA.

The drawbridge is let down ; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court ! fly, hide yourselves !

[*Exeunt OLIMPIO and MARZIO.*]

BEATRICE.

Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest ;
 I scarcely need to counterfeit it now :
 The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
 Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep
 Fearless and calm : all ill is surely past.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

Another Apartment in the Castle.

*Enter on one side the Legate SAVELLA, introduced by a Servant, and on
 the other LUCRETIA and BERNARDO.*

SAVELLA.

Lady, my duty to his Holiness
 Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
 I break upon your rest. I must speak with
 Count Cenci ; doth he sleep ?

LUCRETIA (*in a hurried and confused manner*).

I think he sleeps ;
 Yet, wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile,
 He is a wicked and wrathful man ;
 Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night,
 Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
 It were not well ; indeed it were not well.
 Wait till day break.—

(*Aside.*) O, I am deadly sick !

SAVELLA.

I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
Must answer charges of the gravest import,
And suddenly ; such my commission is.

LUCRETIA (*with increased agitation*).

I dare not rouse him, I know none who dare ;
'Twere perilous ;—you might as safely waken
A serpent ; or a corpse in which some fiend
Were laid to sleep.

SAVELLA.

Lady, my moments here
Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,
Since none else dare.

LUCRETIA (*aside*).

O, terror ! O, despair !
(*To BERNARDO.*) Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Le-
gate to
Your father's chamber.

[*Exeunt SAVELLA and BERNARDO.*]*Enter* BEATRICE.

BEATRICE.

'Tis a messenger
Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
Before the throne of unappealable God.
Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
Acquit our deed.

LUCRETIA.

Oh, agony of fear !

Would that he yet might live ! Even now I heard
The legate's followers whisper as they passed
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared by unforbidden means,
Which we must pay so dearly, having done.
Even now they search the tower, and find the body ;
Now they suspect the truth ; now they consult
Before they come to tax us with the fact ;
O, horrible, 'tis all discovered !

BEATRICE.

Mother,

What is done wisely, is done well. Be bold
As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child,
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light ;
Free as the earth-surrounding air ; as firm

As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock,
But shakes it not.

[*A cry within and tumult.*]

VOICES.

Murder ! Murder ! Murder !

Enter BERNARDO and SAVELLA.

SAVELLA (*to his followers*).

Go, search the castle round ; sound the alarm ;
Look to the gates that none escape !

BEATRICE.

What now ?

BERNARDO.

I know not what to say—my father's dead.

BEATRICE.

How, dead ? he only sleeps ; you mistake, brother.
His sleep is very calm, very like death ;
'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
He is not *dead* ?

BERNARDO.

Dead ; murdered !

LUCRETIA (*with extreme agitation*).

Oh, no, no,

He is not murdered, though he may be dead ;
I have alone the keys of those apartments.

SAVELLA.

Ha ! Is it so ?

BEATRICE.

My lord, I pray excuse us ;
 We will retire ; my mother is not well ;
 She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.]

SAVELLA.

Can you suspect who may have murdered him ?

BERNARDO.

I know not what to think.

SAVELLA.

Can you name any
 Who had an interest in his death ?

BERNARDO.

Alas !

I can name none who had not, and those most
 Who most lament that such a deed is done ;
 My mother, and my sister, and myself.

SAVELLA.

'Tis strange ! There were clear marks of violence.
 I found the old man's body in the moonlight,
 Hanging beneath the window of his chamber
 Among the branches of a pine : he could not
 Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped
 And effortless ; 'tis true there was no blood.—
 Favour me, Sir—it much imports your house
 That all should be made clear—to tell the ladies
 That I request their presence.

[*Exit* BERNARDO.]

Enter Guards, bringing in MARZIO.

GUARD.

We have one.

OFFICER.

My Lord, we found this ruffian and another
Lurking among the rocks ; there is no doubt
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci :
Each had a bag of coin ; this fellow wore
A gold-inwoven robe, which, shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon,
Betrayed them to our notice : the other fell
Desperately fighting.

SAVELLA.

What does he confess ?

OFFICER.

He keeps firm silence ; but these lines found on him
May speak.

SAVELLA.

Their language is at least sincere.

[*Reads.*

“ TO THE LADY BEATRICE.

“ That the atonement of what my nature sickens to
conjecture may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother’s
desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare
write.

“ Thy devoted servant,

“ ORSINO.”

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and BERNARDO.

Knowest thou this writing, lady ?

BEATRICE.

No.

SAVELLA.

Nor thou ?

LUCRETIA (*her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation*).

Where was it found ? What is it ? It should be
Orsino's hand ! It speaks of that strange horror
Which never yet found utterance, but which made
Between that hapless child and her dead father
A gulf of obscure hatred.

SAVELLA.

Is it so ?

Is it true, lady, that thy father did
Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate ?

BEATRICE.

Not hate, 'twas more than hate ;
This is most true, yet wherefore question me ?

SAVELLA.

There is a deed demanding question done ;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

BEATRICE.

What sayest ? My lord, your words are bold and
rash.

SAVELLA.

I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

LUCRETIA.

O, not to Rome! Indeed we are not guilty.

BEATRICE.

Guilty! Who dares talk of guilt? My lord,
I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless. Dear mother,
Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,
Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers,
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits? 'Tis ye are culprits! That poor wretch
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it? unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name,
God therefore scruples to avenge.

SAVELLA.

You own

That you desired his death?

BEATRICE.

It would have been

A crime no less than his, if for one moment
 That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
 'Tis true I did believe, and hope, and pray,
 Ay, I even knew—for God is wise and just,
 That some strange sudden death hung over him.
 'Tis true that this did happen, and most true
 There was no other rest for me on earth,
 No other hope in Heaven ;—now what of this ?

SAVELLA.

Strange thoughts beget strange deeds; and here are both :
 I judge thee not.

BEATRICE.

And yet, if you arrest me,

You are the judge and executioner
 Of that which is the life of life : the breath
 Of accusation kills an innocent name,
 And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life,
 Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
 That I am guilty of foul parricide ;
 Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
 That other hands have sent my father's soul
 To ask the mercy he denied to me.
 Now leave us free : stain not a noble house
 With vague surmises of rejected crime ;
 Add to our sufferings and your own neglect

No heavier sum ; let them have been enough :
Leave us the wreck we have.

SAVELLA.

I dare not, Lady.
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome :
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

LUCRETIA.

O, not to Rome ! O, take us not to Rome !

BEATRICE.

Why not to Rome, dear mother ? There, as here,
Our innocence is as an armed heel
To trample accusation. God is there
As here, and with his shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured, and the weak ;
And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady, lean
On me ; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot, as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother ; will you come ?

LUCRETIA.

Ha ! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
Self-accusation from our agony !
Will Giacomo be there ? Orsino ? Marzio ?
All present ; all confronted ; all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing
Which is in every heart ! O, misery !

[She faints, and is borne out.]

SAVELLA.

She faints ; an ill appearance this.

BEATRICE.

My Lord,

She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not : a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness :
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence
Stand at the judgment-seat of mortal man,
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, My Lord ;
Our suite will join yours in the court below.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in ORSINO's Palace.

Enter ORSINO and GIACOMO.

GIACOMO.

Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end ?
O, that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done, had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge !
O, that the hour when present had cast off
The mantle of its mystery, and shown
The ghastly form with which it now returns
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds
Of conscience to their prey ! Alas ! alas !
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,
To kill an old and hoary-headed father.

ORSINO.

It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

GIACOMO.

To violate the sacred doors of sleep ;
To cheat kind nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overwearied age ;
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul

Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes—

ORSINO.

You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.

GIACOMO.

O, had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance
The mirror of my darkest thoughts ; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire—

ORSINO.

'Tis thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts
Upon the abettors of their own resolve ;
Or any thing but their weak, guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence ; confess, 'tis fear disguised
From its own shame that takes the mantle now
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe ?

GIACOMO.

How can that be ? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia and the murderer, are in prison.
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.

ORSINO.

I have all prepared
 For instant flight. We can escape even now,
 So we take fleet occasion by the hair.

GIACOMO.

Rather expire in tortures, as I may.
 What! will you cast by self-accusing flight
 Assured conviction upon Beatrice?
 She, who alone in this unnatural work,
 Stands like God's angel ministered upon
 By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong
 As turns black parricide to piety;
 Whilst we for basest ends—I fear, Orsino,
 While I consider all your words and looks,
 Comparing them with your proposal now,
 That you must be a villain. For what end
 Could you engage in such a perilous crime,
 Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,
 Even to this gulf? Thou art no liar? No,
 Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!
 Coward and slave! But no—defend thyself;

[Drawing.]

Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
 Disdains to brand thee with.

ORSINO.

Put up your weapon.
 Is it the desperation of your fear
 Makes you thus rash and sudden with your friend,

Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
 Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed
 Was but to try you. As for me, I think
 Thankless affection led me to this point,
 From which, if my firm temper could repent,
 I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak
 The ministers of justice wait below :
 They grant me these brief moments. Now, if you
 Have any word of melancholy comfort
 To speak to your pale wife, 'twere best to pass
 Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

GIACOMO.

Oh, generous friend! How canst thou pardon me?
 Would that my life could purchase thine!

ORSINO.

That wish
 Now comes a day too late. Haste; fare thee well!
 Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor?

[Exit GIACOMO

I'm sorry for it; but the guards are waiting
 At his own gate, and such was my contrivance
 That I might rid me both of him and them.
 I thought to act a solemn comedy
 Upon the painted scene of this new world,
 And to attain my own peculiar ends
 By some such plot of mingled good and ill
 As others weave; but there arose a Power
 Which grasped and snapped the threads of my device,

And turned it to a net of ruin—Ha !

[*A shout is heard.*

Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad ?
But I will pass, wrapt in a vile disguise ;
Rags on my back, and a false innocence
Upon my face, through the misdeeming crowd
Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then
For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life, fashioned on old desires,
To change the honours of abandoned Rome.
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unaltered.—Oh, I fear
That what is past will never let me rest !
Why, when none else is conscious, but myself,
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
Trouble me ? Have I not the power to fly
My own reproaches ? Shall I be the slave
Of—what ? A word ! which those of this false world
Employ against each other, not themselves ;
As men wear daggers not for self-offence.
But if I am mistaken, where shall I
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
As now I skulk from every other eye ?

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Hall of Justice.

CAMILLO, JUDGES, etc., are discovered seated ; MARZIO is led in.

FIRST JUDGE.

Accused, do you persist in your denial?
 I ask you, are you innocent, or guilty?
 I demand who were the participators
 In your offence? Speak truth, and the whole truth.

MARZIO.

My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing;
 Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
 You would infer my guilt.

SECOND JUDGE.

Away with him!

FIRST JUDGE.

Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss,
 Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner,
 That you would bandy lovers' talk with it,
 Till it wind out your life and soul? Away!

MARZIO.

Spare me! O, spare! I will confess.

FIRST JUDGE.

Then speak.

MARZIO.

I strangled him in his sleep.

FIRST JUDGE.

Who urged you to it ?

MARZIO.

His own son Giacomo, and the young prelate
 Orsino sent me to Petrella ; there
 The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
 Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
 And my companion forthwith murdered him.
 Now let me die.

FIRST JUDGE.

This sounds as bad as truth. Guards, there,
 Lead forth the prisoners.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, guarded.

Look upon this man ;

When did you see him last ?

BEATRICE.

We never saw him.

MARZIO.

You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

BEATRICE.

I know thee ! How ! where ? when ?

MARZIO.

You know 'twas I

Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
 To kill your father. When the thing was done,
 You clothed me in a robe of woven gold
 And bade me thrive : how I have thriven, you see.

You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.

[BEATRICE *advances towards him ; he covers his
face, and shrinks back.*

Oh, dart

The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dread earth ! Turn them away from me !
They wound : 'twas torture forced the truth. My Lords,
Having said this, let me be led to death.

BEATRICE.

Poor wretch, I pity thee : yet stay awhile.

CAMILLO.

Guards, lead him not away.

BEATRICE.

Cardinal Camillo,

You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom : can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this ?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart,
And bade to answer, not as he believes,
But as those may suspect or do desire,
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply :
And that in peril of such hideous torments
As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is, that you,
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told, " Confess that you did poison

Your little nephew : that fair blue-eyed child
 Who was the load-star of your life ;” and though
 All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
 That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
 And all the things hoped for or done therein
 Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief,
 Yet you would say, “ I confess anything ”—
 And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
 The refuge of dishonourable death.
 I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
 My innocence.

CAMILLO (*much moved*).

What shall we think, my lords ?
 Shame on these tears ! I thought the heart was frozen
 Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
 That she is guiltless.

JUDGE.

Yet she must be tortured.

CAMILLO.

I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew ;
 (If he now lived, he would be just her age ;
 His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes
 Like hers in shape, but blue, and not so deep) :
 As that most perfect image of God’s love
 That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
 She is as pure as speechless infancy !

JUDGE.

Well, be her purity on your head, my lord,

If you forbid the rack. His Holiness
 Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
 By the severest forms of law ; nay even
 To stretch a point against the criminals.
 The prisoners stand accused of parricide,
 Upon such evidence as justifies
 Torture.

BEATRICE.

What evidence ? This man's ?

JUDGE.

Even so.

BEATRICE (*to MARZIO*).

Come near. And who art thou, thus chosen forth
 Out of the multitude of living men
 To kill the innocent ?

MARZIO.

I am Marzio,
 Thy father's vassal.

BEATRICE.

Fix thine eyes on mine ;
 Answer to what I ask.

[*Turning to the Judges.*]

I prithee mark
 His countenance : unlike bold calumny
 Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
 He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
 His gaze on the blind earth.

(*To MARZIO.*) What ! wilt thou say

That I did murder my own father ?

MARZIO.

Oh !

Spare me ! My brain swims round—I cannot speak—
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.

Take me away ! Let her not look on me !

I am a guilty miserable wretch ;

I have said all I know ; now, let me die !

BEATRICE.

My Lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern, as to have planned the crime alleged,
Which your suspicions dictate to this slave,
And the rack makes him utter, do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed ; this man, this bloody knife
With my own name engraven on the heft,
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death ? That with such horrible need
For deepest silence, I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution, as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory ? What is his poor life ?
What are a thousand lives ? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust ; and see, he lives !

[Turning to MARZIO.

And thou—

MARZIO.

Oh, spare me ! Speak to me no more !

That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,
Wound worse than torture.

(*To the Judges.*) I have told it all ;
For pity's sake lead me away to death.

CAMILLO.

Guards, lead him nearer the lady Beatrice,
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.

BEATRICE.

Oh, thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me ;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay :
What evil have we done thee ? I, alas !
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years,
And so my lot was ordered, that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope ; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul,
And my untainted fame ; and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart.
But the wound was not mortal ; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great Father, who in pity and love,
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off ;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation :
And art thou the accuser ? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth :
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.

If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say : " My Maker,
I have done this and more ; for there was one
Who was most pure and innocent on earth ;
And because she endured what never any
Guilty or innocent, endured before ;
Because her wrongs could not be told, nor thought ;
Because thy hand at length did rescue her ;
I with my words killed her and all her kin."
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house, and stainless fame !
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,
Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood
All that which shows like innocence, and is,
Hear me, great God ! I swear, most innocent,
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
And that which now compels thee to reply
To what I ask : Am I, or am I not
A parricide ?

MARZIO.

Thou art not !

JUDGE.

What is this ?

MARZIO.

I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.

JUDGE.

Drag him away to torments ; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

MARZIO.

Torture me as ye will :
A keener pain has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent !
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me !
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin.

[*Exit MARZIO, guarded.*]

CAMILLO.

What say ye now, my lords ?

JUDGE.

Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
As snow thrice-sifted by the frozen wind.

CAMILLO.

Yet stained with blood.

JUDGE (*to BEATRICE*).

Know you this paper, lady ?

BEATRICE.

Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here
As my accuser ? Ha ! wilt thou be he,

Who art my judge ? Accuser, witness, judge,
 What, all in one ? Here is Orsino's name ;
 Where is Orsino ? Let his eye meet mine.
 What means this scrawl ? Alas ! ye know not what,
 And therefore on the chance that it may be
 Some evil, will ye kill us ?

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

Marzio's dead.

JUDGE.

What did he say ?

OFFICER.

Nothing. As soon as we
 Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,
 As one who baffles a deep adversary ;
 And holding his breath, died.

JUDGE.

There remains nothing
 But to apply the question to those prisoners,
 Who yet remain stubborn.

CAMILLO.

I overrule
 Further proceedings, and in the behalf
 Of these most innocent and noble persons
 Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

JUDGE.

Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile
 Conduct these culprits each to separate cells ;

And be the engines ready : for this night,
 If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
 Pious, and just as once, I'll wring the truth
 Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan.

[*Exeunt.*]

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SCENE III.

*The Cell of a Prison.*

BEATRICE *is discovered asleep on a couch.*

*Enter BERNARDO.*

BERNARDO.

How gently slumber rests upon her face,  
 Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent  
 Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.  
 After such torments as she bore last night,  
 How light and soft her breathing comes. Ah, me !  
 Methinks that I shall never sleep again.  
 But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest  
 From this sweet folded flower, thus—wake ! awake !  
 What, sister, canst thou sleep ?

BEATRICE (*awaking*).

I was just dreaming  
 That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest  
 This cell seems like a kind of Paradise  
 After our father's presence.

BERNARDO.

Dear, dear sister,



Would that thy dream were not a dream! O, God!  
How shall I tell?

BEATRICE.

What would'st thou tell, sweet brother?

BERNARDO.

Look not so calm and happy, or, even whilst  
I stand considering what I have to say,  
My heart will break.

BEATRICE.

See now, thou mak'st me weep:  
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,  
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.

BERNARDO.

They have confessed; they could endure no more  
The tortures—

BEATRICE.

Ha! What was there to confess?  
They must have told some weak and wicked lie  
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said  
That they were guilty? O white innocence,  
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide  
Thine awful and serenest countenance  
From those who know thee not!

*Enter JUDGE, with LUCRETIA and GIACOMO, guarded.*

Ignoble hearts!

For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least  
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,  
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust?

And that eternal honour which should live  
 Sunlike, above the reek of mortal fame,  
 Changed to a mockery and a by-word? What!  
 Will you give up these bodies to be dragged  
 At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep  
 The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,  
 Who, that they may make our calamity  
 Their worship and their spectacle, will leave  
 The churches and the theatres as void  
 As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude  
 Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,  
 Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,  
 Upon us as we pass to pass away,  
 And leave—what memory of our having been?  
 Infamy, blood, terror, despair? O thou,  
 Who wert a mother to the parentless,  
 Kill not thy child! Let not her wrongs kill thee!  
 Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,  
 And let us each be silent as a corpse;  
 It soon will be as soft as any grave.  
 'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear  
 Makes the rack cruel.

GIACOMO.

They will tear the truth  
 Even from thee at last, those cruel pains:  
 For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

LUCRETIA.

O, speak the truth! Let us all quickly die;

And after death, God is our judge, not they ;  
He will have mercy on us.

BERNARDO.

-If indeed

It can be true, say so, dear sister mine ;  
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,  
And all be well.

JUDGE.

Confess, or I will warp  
Your limbs with such keen tortures—

BEATRICE.

Tortures ! Turn

The rack henceforth into a spinning-wheel !  
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last  
He lapped the blood his master shed—not me !  
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,  
And of the soul ; aye, of the inmost soul,  
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall  
To see, in this ill world where none are true,  
My kindred false to their deserted selves.  
And with considering all the wretched life  
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,  
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth  
To me or mine ; and what a tyrant thou art,  
And what slaves these ; and what a world we make,  
The oppressor and the oppressed—such pangs compel  
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me ?

JUDGE.

Art thou not guilty of thy father's death ?

BEATRICE.

Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God  
That he permitted such an act as that  
Which I have suffered, and which he beheld ;  
Made it unutterable, and took from it  
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,  
But that which thou hast called my father's death ?  
Which is or is not what men call a crime,  
Which either I have done, or have not done ;  
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.  
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,  
And so an end of all. Now do your will ;  
No other pains shall force another word.

JUDGE.

She is convicted, but has not confessed.  
Be it enough. Until their final sentence  
Let none have converse with them. You, young lord,  
Linger not here !

BEATRICE.

O, tear him not away !

JUDGE.

Guards ! do your duty.

BERNARDO (*embracing* BEATRICE).

Oh ! would ye divide  
Body from soul ?

OFFICER.

That is the headsman's business.

[*Exeunt all but* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO.

GIACOMO.

Have I confessed? Is it all over now?  
 No hope! No refuge! O weak, wicked tongue,  
 Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been  
 Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed  
 My father first, and then betrayed my sister;  
 Ay, thee! the one thing innocent and pure  
 In this black, guilty world, to that which I  
 So well deserve! My wife! my little ones!  
 Destitute, helpless; and I—Father! God!  
 Canst thou forgive even the unforgiving,  
 When their full hearts break thus, thus?—

[*Covers his face and weeps.*

LUCRETIA.

O, my child!

To what a dreadful end are we all come!  
 Why did I yield? Why did I not sustain  
 Those torments? Oh! that I were all dissolved  
 Into these fast and unavailing tears,  
 Which flow and feel not!

BEATRICE.

What 'twas weak to do,  
 'Tis weaker to lament, once being done;  
 Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made  
 Our speedy act the angel of his wrath,

Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.  
 Let us not think that we shall die for this.  
 Brother, sit near me ; give me your firm hand,  
 You had a manly heart. Bear up ! bear up !  
 Oh ! dearest lady, put your gentle head  
 Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile :  
 Your eyes look pale, hollow, and overworn,  
 With heaviness of watching and slow grief.  
 Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,  
 Not cheerful, nor yet sad ; some dull old thing,  
 Some outworn and unused monotony,  
 Such as our country gossips sing and spin,  
 Till they almost forget they live : lie down !  
 So, that will do. Have I forgot the words ?  
 Faith ! they are sadder than I thought they were.

## SONG.

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep  
 When my life is laid asleep ?  
 Little cares for a smile or a tear,  
 The clay-cold corpse upon the bier !  
     Farewell ! Heigh ho !  
     What is this whispers low ?  
 There is a snake in thy smile, my dear ;  
 And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep ! were death like to thee,  
 Or if thou couldst mortal be,

I would close these eyes of pain ;  
 When to wake ? Never again.  
 O World ! farewell !  
 Listen to the passing bell !  
 It says, thou and I must part,  
 With a light and a heavy heart.

[ *The scene closes.*

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SCENE IV.

A Hall of the Prison.

Enter CAMILLO and BERNARDO.

CAMILLO.

The Pope is stern ; not to be moved or bent.
 He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
 Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
 From aught that it inflicts ; a marble form,
 A rite, a law, a custom ; not a man.
 He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
 Of his machinery, on the advocates
 Presenting the defences, which he tore
 And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice :
 “ Which among ye defended their old father
 Killed in his sleep ? ” Then to another : “ Thou
 Dost this in virtue of thy place ; ’tis well.”
 He turned to me then, looking deprecation,
 And said these three words, coldly : “ They must die.”

BERNARDO.

And yet you left him not ?

CAMILLO.

I urged him still ;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied, " Paolo Santa Croce
Murdered his mother yester evening,
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
You come to ask their pardon ; stay a moment ;
Here is their sentence ; never see me more
Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled."

BERNARDO.

O, God, not so ! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. O, there are words and looks
To bend the sternest purpose ! Once I knew them,
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears ?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood

May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
 And remorse waken mercy? I will do it!
 O, wait till I return!

[*Rushes out.*]

CAMILLO.

Alas! poor boy!
 A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
 To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, *guarded.*

BEATRICE.

I hardly dare to fear
 That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

CAMILLO.

May God in heaven be less inexorable
 To the Pope's prayers, than he has been to mine.
 Here is the sentence and the warrant.

BEATRICE (*wildly*).

Oh,

My God! Can it be possible I have
 To die so suddenly? So young to go
 Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
 To be nailed down into a narrow place;
 To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
 Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
 Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost!
 How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be—
 What? O, where am I? Let me not go mad!
 Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be

No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world ;
 The wide, grey, lampless, deep unpeopled world !
 If all things then should be—my father's spirit
 His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me ;
 The atmosphere and breath of my dead life !
 If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
 Even the form which tortured me on earth,
 Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come
 And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
 His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down !
 For was he not alone omnipotent
 On Earth, and ever present ? even though dead,
 Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
 And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
 Scorn, pain, despair ? Who ever yet returned
 To teach the laws of death's untrodden realm ?
 Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
 O, whither, whither ?

LUCRETIA.

Trust in God's sweet love,
 The tender promises of Christ : ere night
 Think we shall be in Paradise.

BEATRICE.

'Tis past !
 Whatever comes, my heart shall sink no more.
 And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill :
 How tedious, false, and cold seem all things ! I
 Have met with much injustice in this world ;

No difference has been made by God or man,
 Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
 'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
 I am cut off from the only world I know,
 From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
 You do well telling me to trust in God,
 I hope I do trust in him. In whom else
 Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

*[During the latter speeches GIACOMO has retired conversing
 with CAMILLO, who now goes out ; GIACOMO advances.]*

GIACOMO.

Know you not, mother—sister, know you not?
 Bernardo even now is gone to implore
 The Pope to grant our pardon.

LUCRETIA.

Child, perhaps

It will be granted. We may all then live
 To make these woes a tale for distant years :
 O, what a thought ! It gushes to my heart
 Like the warm blood.

BEATRICE.

Yet both will soon be cold :
 O, trample out that thought ! Worse than despair,
 Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope :
 It is the only ill which can find place
 Upon the giddy, sharp, and narrow hour
 Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
 That it should spare the eldest flower of spring :

Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
 Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free ;
 Now stench and blackness yawns, like death. O, plead
 With famine, or wind-walking pestilence,
 Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man !
 Cruel, cold, formal man ; righteous in words,
 In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die :
 Since such is the reward of innocent lives ;
 Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
 And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
 Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
 To death as to life's sleep ; 'twere just the grave
 Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
 And wind me in thine all-embracing arms !
 Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
 And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
 Live ye, who live, subject to one another
 As we were once, who now—

BERNARDO *rushes in.*

BERNARDO.

Oh, horrible !

That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
 Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
 Should all be vain ! The ministers of death
 Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
 Blood on the face of one—what if 'twere fancy ?
 Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
 Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off

As if 'twere only rain. O, life! O, world!
 Cover me! let me be no more! To see
 That perfect mirror of pure innocence
 Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
 Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
 Who made all lovely thou didst look upon—
 Thee, light of life—dead, dark! while I say, sister,
 To hear I have no sister; and thou, Mother,
 Whose love was a bond to all our loves—
 Dead! The sweet bond broken!

Enter CAMILLO and Guards.

They come! Let me
 Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
 Are blighted—white—cold. Say farewell, before
 Death chokes that gentle voice! O let me hear
 You speak!

BEATRICE.

Farewell, my tender brother. Think
 Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now:
 And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
 Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
 But tears and patience. One thing more, my child,
 For thine own sake be constant to the love
 Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,
 Though wrapt in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
 Lived ever holy and unstained. And though
 Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
 Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow

For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do ; fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell ! Farewell ! Farewell !

BERNARDO.

I cannot say farewell !

CAMILLO.

O, Lady Beatrice !

BEATRICE.

Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot ; aye, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another ! now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

END OF THE CENCI.

NOTE ON THE CENCI.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE sort of mistake that Shelley made, as to the extent of his own genius and powers, which led him deviously at first, but lastly into the direct track that enabled him fully to develop them, is a curious instance of his modesty of feeling, and of the methods which the human mind uses at once to deceive itself, and yet, in its very delusion, to make its way out of error into the path which nature has marked out as its right one. He often incited me to attempt the writing a tragedy—he conceived that I possessed some dramatic talent, and he was always most earnest and energetic in his exhortations that I should cultivate any talent I possessed, to the utmost. I entertained a truer estimate of my powers ; and above all, though at that time not exactly aware of the fact, I was far too young to have any chance of succeeding, even moderately, in a species of composition, that requires a greater scope of experience in, and sympathy with, human passion than could then have fallen to my lot, or than any perhaps, except Shelley, ever possessed, even at the age of twenty-six, at which he wrote the Cenci.

On the other hand, Shelley most erroneously conceived himself to be destitute of this talent. He believed that one of the first requisites was the capacity of forming and following up a story or plot. He fancied himself to be defective in this portion of imagination—it was that which gave him least pleasure in the writings of others—though he laid great store by it, as the proper framework to support the sublimest efforts of poetry. He asserted that he was too metaphysical and abstract—too fond of the theoretical and the ideal to succeed as a tragedian. It perhaps is not strange that I shared this opinion with himself, for he had hitherto shown no inclination for, nor given any specimen of his powers in framing and supporting the interest of a story either in prose or verse. Once or twice, when he attempted such, he had speedily thrown it aside, as being even disagreeable to him as an occupation.

The subject he had suggested for a tragedy was Charles I., and he had written to me, “Remember, remember Charles I. I have been already imagining how you would conduct some scenes. The second volume of *St. Leon* begins with this proud and true sentiment, ‘There is nothing which the human mind can conceive which it may not execute.’ Shakspeare was only a human being.” These words were written in 1818, while we were in Lombardy, when he

little thought how soon a work of his own would prove a proud comment on the passage he quoted. When in Rome, in 1819, a friend put into our hands the old manuscript account of the story of the Cenci. We visited the Colonna and Doria palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found, and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever I felt my incompetence ; but I entreated him to write it instead ; and he began and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived and gifted with poetic language. This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of the scenes together. I speedily saw the great mistake we had made, and triumphed in the discovery of the new talent brought to light from that mine of wealth, never, alas ! through his untimely death, worked to its depths—his richly-gifted mind.

We suffered a severe affliction in Rome by the loss of our eldest child, who was of such beauty and promise as to cause him deservedly to be the idol of our hearts. We left the capital of the world, anxious for a time to escape a spot associated too intimately with his presence and

loss*. Some friends of ours were residing in the neighbourhood of Leghorn, and we took a small house, Villa Valsovano, about half-way between the town and Monte Nero, where we remained during the summer. Our villa was situated in the midst of a podere; the peasants sang as they worked beneath our windows, during the heats of a very hot season, and at night the water-wheel creaked as the process of irrigation went on, and the fire-flies flashed from among the myrtle hedges:—nature was bright, sunshiny, and cheerful, or diversified by storms of a majestic terror, such as we had never before witnessed.

At the top of the house, there was a sort of terrace. There is often such in Italy, generally roofed. This one was very small, yet not only roofed but glazed; this Shelley made his study; it looked out on a wide prospect of fertile country, and commanded a view of the near sea. The storms that sometimes varied our day showed themselves most pic-

* Such feelings haunted him, when in the Cenci, he makes Beatrice speak to Cardinal Camillo of

that fair blue-eyed child,
Who was the loadstar of your life.

And say—

All see, since his most piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all things hoped for, or done therein,
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief.

turesquely as they were driven across the ocean ; sometimes the dark lurid clouds dipped towards the waves, and became water-spouts, that churned up the waters beneath, as they were chased onward and scattered by the tempest. At other times the dazzling sunlight and heat made it almost intolerable to every other ; but Shelley basked in both, and his health and spirits revived under their influence. In this airy cell he wrote the principal part of the Cenci. He was making a study of Calderon at the time, reading his best tragedies with an accomplished lady living near us, to whom his letter from Leghorn was addressed during the following year. He admired Calderon, both for his poetry and his dramatic genius ; but it shows his judgment and originality, that, though greatly struck by his first acquaintance with the Spanish poet, none of his peculiarities crept into the composition of the Cenci ; and there is no trace of his new studies except in that passage to which he himself alludes, as suggested by one in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio*.

Shelley wished the Cenci to be acted. He was not a playgoer, being of such fastidious taste that he was easily disgusted by the bad filling up of the inferior parts. While preparing for our departure from England, however, he saw Miss O'Neil several times ; she was then in the zenith of her glory, and Shelley was deeply moved by her impersonation of several parts, and by the graceful sweetness, the

intense pathos, and sublime vehemence of passion she displayed. She was often in his thoughts as he wrote, and when he had finished he became anxious that his tragedy should be acted, and receive the advantage of having this accomplished actress to fill the part of the heroine. With this view he wrote the following letter to a friend in London :—

“ The object of the present letter is to ask a favour of you. I have written a tragedy on a story well known in Italy, and, in my conception, eminently dramatic. I have taken some pains to make my play fit for representation, and those who have already seen it judge favourably. It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterise my other compositions ; I having attended simply to the impartial development of such characters as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development. I send you a translation of the Italian MS. on which my play is founded ; the chief circumstance of which, I have touched very delicately ; for my principal doubt as to whether it would succeed, as an acting play, hangs entirely on the question as to whether any such a thing as incest in this shape, however treated, would be admitted on the stage. I think, however, it will form no objection, considering, first, that the facts are matter of history, and, secondly, the peculiar delicacy with which I have treated it.

“I am exceedingly interested in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or no. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present ; founding my hopes on this, that as a composition it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have been acted, with the exception of ‘Remorse,’ that the interest of the plot is incredibly greater and more real, and that there is nothing beyond what the multitude are contented to believe that they can understand, either in imagery, opinion, or sentiment. I wish to preserve a complete incognito, and can trust to you that, whatever else you do, you will at least favour me on this point. Indeed this is essential, deeply essential to its success. After it had been acted and successfully, (could I hope such a thing) I would own it if I pleased, and use the celebrity it might acquire to my own purposes.

“What I want you to do, is to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character, Beatrice, is precisely fitted for Miss O’Neil, and it might even seem to have been written for her, (God forbid that I should see her play it—it would tear’ my nerves to pieces) and in all respects it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character I confess I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean should play—that is impossible, and I must be contented with an inferior actor.”

The play was accordingly sent to Mr. Harris. He pronounced the subject to be so objectionable, that he could not even submit the part to Miss O'Neil for perusal, but expressed his desire that the author would write a tragedy on some other subject, which he would gladly accept. Shelley printed a small edition at Leghorn to insure its correctness ; as he was much annoyed by the many mistakes that crept into his text, when distance prevented him from correcting the press.

Universal approbation soon stamped the Cenci as the best tragedy of modern times. Writing concerning it, Shelley said :—" I have been cautious to avoid the introducing faults of youthful composition ; diffuseness, a profusion of inapplicable imagery, vagueness, generality, and, as Hamlet says, *words, words.*" There is nothing that is not purely dramatic throughout ; and the character of Beatrice, proceeding from vehement struggle to horror, to deadly resolution, and lastly, to the elevated dignity of calm suffering, joined to passionate tenderness and pathos, is touched with hues so vivid and so beautiful, that the poet seems to have read intimately the secrets of the noble heart imaged in the lovely countenance of the unfortunate girl. The Fifth Act is a masterpiece. It is the finest thing he ever wrote, and may claim proud comparison not only with any contemporary, but preceding poet. The varying feelings of Beatrice are

expressed with passionate, heart-reaching eloquence. Every character has a voice that echoes truth in its tones. It is curious, to one acquainted with the written story, to mark the success with which the poet has inwoven the real incidents of the tragedy into his scenes, and yet, through the power of poetry, has obliterated all that would otherwise have shown too harsh or too hideous in the picture. His success was a double triumph ; and often after was he earnestly entreated to write again in a style that commanded popular favour, while it was not less instinct with truth and genius. But the bent of his mind went the other way ; and even when employed on subjects whose interest depended on character and incident, he would start off in another direction, and leave the delineations of human passion, which he could depict in so able a manner, for fantastic creations of his fancy, or the expression of those opinions and sentiments with regard to human nature and its destiny ; a desire to diffuse which, was the master passion of his soul.

HELLAS ;

A Lyrical Drama.

MANTIS EIM' ΕΣΘΛΩΝ 'ΑΓΩΝΩΝ.

ŒDIP. COLON.



TO

HIS EXCELLENCY

PRINCE ALEXANDER MAVROCORDATO,

LATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE HOSPODAR OF WALLACHIA

THE DRAMA OF HELLAS

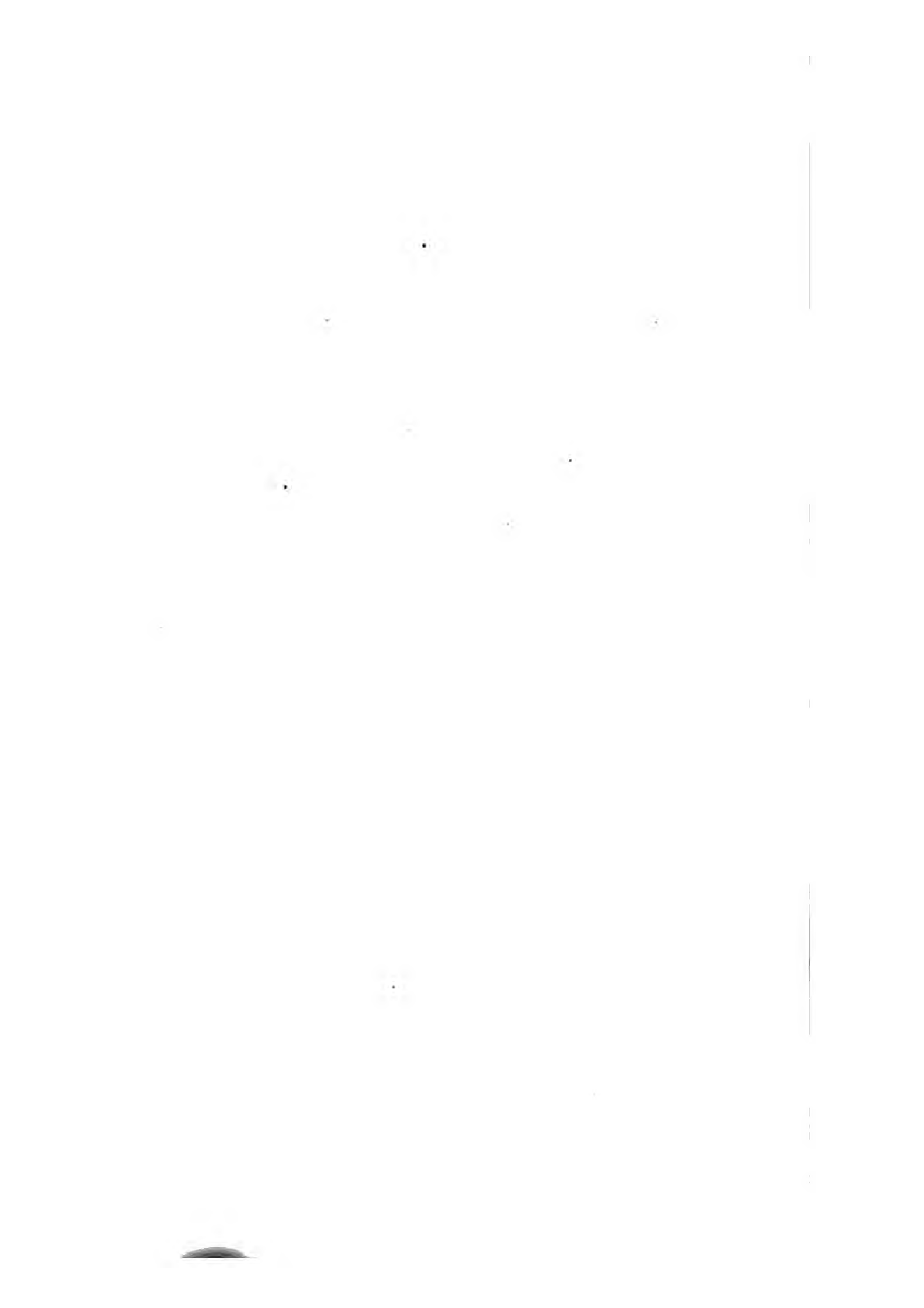
IS INSCRIBED,

AS AN IMPERFECT TOKEN OF THE ADMIRATION, SYMPATHY,
AND FRIENDSHIP

OF

THE AUTHOR.

PISA, *November 1, 1821.*



PREFACE.

THE poem of "Hellas," written at the suggestion of the events of the moment, is a mere improvise, and derives its interest (should it be found to possess any) solely from the intense sympathy which the Author feels with the cause he would celebrate.

The subject, in its present state, is insusceptible of being treated otherwise than lyrically, and if I have called this poem a drama from the circumstance of its being composed in dialogue, the licence is not greater than that which has been assumed by other poets, who have called their productions epics, only because they have been divided into twelve or twenty-four books.

The *Persæ* of Æschylus afforded me the first model of my conception, although the decision of the glorious contest now waging in Greece being yet suspended, forbids a catastrophe parallel to the return of Xerxes and the desolation of the Persians. I have, therefore, contented myself with exhibiting a series of lyric pictures, and with having wrought upon the curtain of futurity, which falls upon the unfinished scene, such figures of indistinct and visionary delineation as suggest the final triumph of the Greek cause as a portion of the cause of civilisation and social improvement.

The drama (if drama it must be called) is, however, so inartificial that I doubt whether, if recited on the Thespian waggon to an Athenian village at the Dionysiaca, it would have obtained the prize of the goat. I shall bear with equanimity any punishment greater than the loss of such a reward which the Aristarchi of the hour may think fit to inflict.

The only *goat-song* which I have yet attempted has, I confess, in spite of the unfavourable nature of the subject, received a

greater and a more valuable portion of applause than I expected, or than it deserved.

Common fame is the only authority which I can allege for the details which form the basis of the poem, and I must trespass upon the forgiveness of my readers for the display of newspaper erudition to which I have been reduced. Undoubtedly, until the conclusion of the war, it will be impossible to obtain an account of it sufficiently authentic for historical materials ; but poets have their privilege, and it is unquestionable that actions of the most exalted courage have been performed by the Greeks—that they have gained more than one naval victory, and that their defeat in Wallachia was signalised by circumstances of heroism more glorious even than victory.

The apathy of the rulers of the civilised world, to the astonishing circumstance of the descendants of that nation to which they owe their civilisation—rising as it were from the ashes of their ruin, is something perfectly inexplicable to a mere spectator of the shows of this mortal scene. We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts, have their root in Greece. But for Greece—Rome the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might still have been savages and idolaters ; or, what is worse, might have arrived at such a stagnant and miserable state of social institutions as China and Japan possess.

The human form and the human mind attained to a perfection in Greece which has impressed its image on those faultless productions whose very fragments are the despair of modern art, and has propagated impulses which cannot cease, through a thousand channels of manifest or imperceptible operation, to ennoble and delight mankind until the extinction of the race.

The modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind ; and he inherits much of their sensibility, their rapidity of conception, their enthusiasm, and their courage. If in many instances he is degraded by moral and political slavery to the practice of the basest vices it engenders, and that below the level of ordinary degradation ; let us reflect that the corruption of the best produces the worst, and that habits which subsist only in relation to a peculiar state of social institution may be expected to cease, as soon as that relation is dissolved. In fact,

the Greeks, since the admirable novel of "Anastatius" could have been a faithful picture of their manners, have undergone most important changes ; the flower of their youth, returning to their country from the universities of Italy, Germany and France, have communicated to their fellow-citizens the latest results of that social perfection of which their ancestors were the original source. The university of Chios contained before the breaking out of the revolution, eight hundred students, and among them several Germans and Americans. The munificence and energy of many of the Greek princes and merchants, directed to the renovation of their country with a spirit and a wisdom which has few examples, is above all praise.

The English permit their own oppressors to act according to their natural sympathy with the Turkish tyrant, and to brand upon their name the indelible blot of an alliance with the enemies of domestic happiness, of Christianity and civilisation.

Russia desires to possess, not to liberate Greece ; and is contented to see the Turks, its natural enemies, and the Greeks, its intended slaves, enfeeble each other, until one or both fall into its net. The wise and generous policy of England would have consisted in establishing the independence of Greece, and in maintaining it both against Russia and the Turks ;—but when was the oppressor generous or just ?

The Spanish Peninsula is already free. France is tranquil in the enjoyment of a partial exemption, from the abuses which its unnatural and feeble government are vainly attempting to revive. The seed of blood and misery has been sown in Italy, and a more vigorous race is arising to go forth to the harvest. The world waits only the news of a revolution of Germany, to see the tyrants who have pinnacled themselves on its supineness, precipitated into the ruin from which they shall never arise. Well do these destroyers of mankind know their enemy, when they impute the insurrection in Greece to the same spirit before which they tremble throughout the rest of Europe ; and that enemy well knows the power and cunning of its opponents, and watches the moment of their approaching weakness and inevitable division, to wrest the bloody sceptres from their grasp.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MAHMUD,

HASSAN,

DAOOD.

AHASUERUS, *a Jew.*

CHORUS of Greck Captive Women.

Messengers, Slaves, and Attendants.

SCENE—*Constantinople.*

TIME—*Sunset.*

HELLAS.

SCENE, *a Terrace, on the Seraglio.*

MAHMUD (*sleeping*), *an Indian Slave sitting beside his Couch.*

CHORUS OF GREEK CAPTIVE WOMEN.

WE strew these opiate flowers
On thy restless pillow,—
They were stript from Orient bowers,
By the Indian billow.
Be thy sleep
Calm and deep,
Like theirs who fell—not ours who weep!

INDIAN.

Away, unlovely dreams!
Away, false shapes of sleep!
Be his, as Heaven seems,
Clear, and bright, and deep!
Soft as love, and calm as death,
Sweet as a summer night without a breath.

CHORUS.

Sleep, sleep ! our song is laden
 With the soul of slumber ;
 It was sung by a Samian maiden,
 Whose lover was of the number
 Who now keep
 That calm sleep
 Whence none may wake, where none shall weep.

INDIAN.

I touch thy temples pale !
 I breathe my soul on thee !
 And could my prayers avail,
 All my joy should be
 Dead, and I would live to weep,
 So thou might'st win one hour of quiet sleep.

CHORUS.

Breathe low, low,
 The spell of the mighty mistress now !
 When Conscience lulls her sated snake,
 And Tyrants sleep, let Freedom wake.
 Breathe low, low,
 The words which, like secret fire, shall flow
 Through the veins of the frozen earth—low, low !

SEMICHORUS I.

Life may change, but it may fly not ;
 Hope may vanish, but can die not ;

Truth be veiled, but still it burneth ;
 Love repulsed,—but it returneth !

SEMICHORUS II.

Yet were life a charnel, where
 Hope lay confined with Despair ;
 Yet were truth a sacred lie,
 Love were lust—

SEMICHORUS I.

If Liberty
 Lent not life its soul of light,
 Hope its iris of delight,
 Truth its prophet's robe to wear,
 Love its power to give and bear.

CHORUS.

In the great morning of the world,
 The spirit of God with might unfurled
 The flag of Freedom over Chaos,
 And all its banded anarchs fled,
 Like vultures frightened from Imaus,
 Before an earthquake's tread.—
 So from Time's tempestuous dawn
 Freedom's splendour burst and shone :—
 Thermopylæ and Marathon

Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted,
The springing Fire.—The winged glory
On Philippi half-alighted,
Like an eagle on a promontory.
Its unwearied wings could fan
The quenchless ashes of Milan.¹
From age to age, from man to man
It lived; and lit from land to land
Florence, Albion, Switzerland.
Then night fell; and, as from night,
Re-assuming fiery flight,
From the West swift Freedom came,
Against the course of heaven and doom,
A second sun arrayed in flame,
To burn, to kindle, to illumine.
From far Atlantis its young beams
Chased the shadows and the dreams.
France, with all her sanguine steams,
Hid, but quenched it not; again
Through clouds its shafts of glory rain
From utmost Germany to Spain.
As an eagle fed with morning
Scorns the embattled tempest's warning,
When she seeks her aerie hanging
In the mountain-cedar's hair,
And her brood expect the clanging
Of her wings through the wild air,

Sick with famine;—Freedom, so
 To what of Greece remaineth now
 Returns; her hoary ruins glow
 Like orient mountains lost in day;
 Beneath the safety of her wings
 Her renovated nurselings play,
 And in the naked lightnings
 Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
 Let Freedom leave, where'er she flies,
 A Desert, or a Paradise;
 Let the beautiful and the brave
 Share her glory, or a grave.

SEMICHORUS I.

With the gifts of gladness
 Greece did thy cradle strew;

SEMICHORUS II.

With the tears of sadness
 Greece did thy shroud bedew;

SEMICHORUS I.

With an orphan's affection
 She followed thy bier through time!

SEMICHORUS II.

And at thy resurrection
 Re-appeareth, like thou, sublime!

SEMICHORUS I.

If Heaven should resume thee,
To Heaven shall her spirit ascend ;

SEMICHORUS II.

If Hell should entomb thee,
To Hell shall her high hearts bend.

SEMICHORUS I.

If Annihilation—

SEMICHORUS II.

Dust let her glories be ;
And a name and a nation
Be forgotten, Freedom, with thee !

INDIAN.

His brow grows darker—breathe not—move not !
He starts—he shudders ;—ye that love not,
With your panting loud and fast
Have awakened him at last.

MAHMUD (*starting from his sleep*).

Man the Seraglio-guard ! make fast the gate.
What ! from a cannonade of three short hours ?
'Tis false ! that breach towards the Bosphorus
Cannot be practicable yet—Who stirs ?
Stand to the match ; that when the foe prevails,

One spark may mix in reconciling ruin
 The conqueror and the conquered ! Heave the tower
 Into the gap—wrench off the roof.

Enter HASSAN.

Ha ! what !

The truth of day lightens upon my dream,
 And I am Mahmud still.

HASSAN.

Your Sublime Highness
 Is strangely moved.

MAHMUD.

The times do cast strange shadows
 On those who watch and who must rule their course,
 Lest they, being first in peril as in glory,
 Be whelmed in the fierce ebb :—and these are of them.
 Thrice has a gloomy vision hunted me
 As thus from sleep into the troubled day ;
 It shakes me as the tempest shakes the sea,
 Leaving no figure upon memory's glass.
 Would that—no matter. Thou didst say thou knewest
 A Jew, whose spirit is a chronicle
 Of strange and secret and forgotten things.
 I bade thee summon him :—'tis said his tribe
 Dream, and are wise interpreters of dreams.

HASSAN.

The Jew of whom I spake is old,—so old
 He seems to have outlived a world's decay ;
 The hoary mountains and the wrinkled ocean

Seem younger still than he ; his hair and beard
 Are whiter than the tempest-sifted snow ;
 His cold pale limbs and pulseless arteries
 Are like the fibres of a cloud instinct
 With light, and to the soul that quickens them
 Are as the atoms of the mountain-drift
 To the winter wind :—but from his eye looks forth
 A life of unconsumed thought, which pierces
 The present, and the past, and the to-come.
 Some say that this is he whom the great prophet
 Jesus, the son of Joseph, for his mockery
 Mocked with the curse of immortality.
 Some feign that he is Enoch ; others dream
 He was pre-adamite, and has survived
 Cycles of generation and of ruin.
 The sage, in truth, by dreadful abstinence
 And conquering penance of the mutinous flesh,
 Deep contemplation, and unwearied study,
 In years outstretched beyond the date of man,
 May have attained to sovereignty and science
 Over those strong and secret things and thoughts
 Which others fear and know not.

MAHMUD.

I would talk

With this old Jew.

HASSAN.

Thy will is even now

Made known to him, where he dwells in a sea-cavern

'Mid the Demonesi, less accessible
 Than thou or God! He who would question him
 Must sail alone at sun-set, where the stream
 Of ocean sleeps around those foamless isles
 When the young moon is westering as now,
 And evening airs wander upon the wave;
 And when the pines of that bee-pasturing isle,
 Green Erebinthus, quench the fiery shadow
 Of his gilt prow within the sapphire water,
 Then must the lonely helmsman cry aloud,
 Ahasuerus! and the caverns round
 Will answer, Ahasuerus! If his prayer
 Be granted, a faint meteor will arise,
 Lighting him over Marmora, and a wind
 Will rush out of the sighing pine-forest,
 And with the wind a storm of harmony
 Unutterably sweet, and pilot him
 Through the soft twilight to the Bosphorus:
 Thence, at the hour and place and circumstance
 Fit for the matter of their conference,
 The Jew appears. Few dare, and few who dare,
 Win the desired communion—but that shout
 Bodes—— *[A shout within.]*

MAHMUD.

Evil, doubtless; like all human sounds.
 Let me converse with spirits.

HASSAN.

That shout again.

HELLAS.

MAHMUD.

This Jew whom thou hast summoned—

HASSAN.

Will be here—

MAHMUD.

When the omnipotent hour, to which are yoked
 He, I, and all things, shall compel—enough.
 Silence those mutineers—that drunken crew
 That crowd about the pilot in the storm.
 Ay ! strike the foremost shorter by a head !
 They weary me, and I have need of rest.
 Kings are like stars—they rise and set, they have
 The worship of the world, but no repose.

[Exeunt severally.]

CHORUS.²

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
 From creation to decay,
 Like the bubbles on a river,
 Sparkling, bursting, borne away.
 But they are still immortal
 Who, through birth's orient portal,
 And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
 Clothe their unceasing flight
 In the brief dust and light
 Gathered around their chariots as they go ;
 New shapes they still may weave,
 New Gods, new laws receive,

Bright or dim are they, as the robes they last
 On Death's bare ribs had cast.

A power from the unknown God ;
 A Promethean conqueror came ;
 Like a triumphal path he trod
 The thorns of death and shame.

A mortal shape to him
 Was like the vapour dim
 Which the orient planet animates with light ;
 Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
 Like blood-hounds mild and tame,
 Nor preyed until their lord had taken flight.
 The moon of Mahomet
 Arose, and it shall set :
 While blazoned as on heaven's immortal noon
 The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
 From one whose dreams are paradise,
 Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
 And day peers forth with her blank eyes ;
 So fleet, so faint, so fair,
 The Powers of earth and air
 Fled from the folding star of Bethlehem :
 Apollo, Pan, and Love,
 And even Olympian Jove
 Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them.

Our hills, and seas, and streams,
 Dispeopled of their dreams,
 Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
 Wailed for the golden years.

Enter MAHMUD, HASSAN, DAOOD, and others.

MAHMUD.

More gold ? our ancestors bought gold with victory,
 And shall I sell it for defeat ?

DAOOD.

The Janizars

Clamour for pay.

MAHMUD.

Go ! bid them pay themselves
 With Christian blood ! Are there no Grecian virgins
 Whose shrieks and spasms and tears they may enjoy ?
 No infidel children to impale on spears ?
 No hoary priests after that Patriarch³
 Who bent the curse against his country's heart,
 Which clove his own at last ? Go ! bid them kill :
 Blood is the seed of gold.

DAOOD.

It has been sown,
 And yet the harvest to the sickle-men
 Is as a grain to each.

MAHMUD.

Then, take this signet,

Unlock the seventh chamber, in which lie
 The treasures of victorious Solyman.
 An empire's spoils stored for a day of ruin.
 O spirit of my sires ! is it not come ?
 The prey-birds and the wolves are gorged and sleep ;
 But these, who spread their feast on the red earth,
 Hunger for gold, which fills not.—See them fed ;
 Then lead them to the rivers of fresh death.

[*Exit* DAOOD.]

Oh ! miserable dawn, after a night
 More glorious than the day which it usurped !
 O, faith in God ! O, power on earth ! O, word
 Of the great Prophet, whose overshadowing wings
 Darkened the thrones and idols of the west,
 Now bright !—For thy sake cursed be the hour,
 Even as a father by an evil child,
 When the orient moon of Islam rolled in triumph
 From Caucasus to white Ceraunia !
 Ruin above, and anarchy below ;
 Terror without, and treachery within ;
 The chalice of destruction full, and all
 Thirsting to drink ; and who among us dares
 To dash it from his lips ? and where is Hope ?

HASSAN.

The lamp of our dominion still rides high ;
 One God is God—Mahomet is his Prophet.
 Four hundred thousand Moslems, from the limits
 Of utmost Asia, irresistibly

Throng, like full clouds at the Sirocco's cry,
But not like them to weep their strength in tears ;
They have destroying lightning, and their step
Wakes earthquake, to consume and overwhelm,
And reign in ruin. Phrygian Olympus,
Tmolus, and Latmos, and Mycale, roughen
With horrent arms, and lofty ships, even now,
Like vapours anchored to a mountain's edge,
Freighted with fire and whirlwind, wait at Scala
The convoy of the ever-veering wind.
Samos is drunk with blood ;—the Greek has paid
Brief victory with swift loss and long despair.
The false Moldavian serfs fled fast and far
When the fierce shout of Allah-illa-Allah !
Rose like the war-cry of the northern wind,
Which kills the sluggish clouds, and leaves a flock
Of wild swans struggling with the naked storm.
So were the lost Greeks on the Danube's day !
If night is mute, yet the returning sun
Kindles the voices of the morning birds ;
Nor at thy bidding less exultingly
Than birds rejoicing in the golden day,
The Anarchies of Africa unleash
Their tempest-winged cities of the sea,
To speak in thunder to the rebel world.
Like sulphureous clouds half-shattered by the storm,
They sweep the pale Ægean, while the Queen
Of Ocean, bound upon her island throne,

Far in the West, sits mourning that her sons,
Who frown on Freedom, spare a smile for thee :
Russia still hovers, as an eagle might
Within a cloud, near which a kite and crane
Hang tangled in inextricable fight,
To stoop upon the victor ;—for she fears
The name of Freedom, even as she hates thine ;
But recreant Austria loves thee as the Grave
Loves Pestilence, and her slow dogs of war,
Fleshed with the chase, come up from Italy,
And howl upon their limits ; for they see
The panther Freedom fled to her old cover,
Amid seas and mountains, and a mightier brood
Crouch around. What Anarch wears a crown or mitre,
Or bears the sword, or grasps the key of gold,
Whose friends are not thy friends, whose foes thy foes ?
Our arsenals and our armories are full ;
Our forts defy assaults ; ten thousand cannon
Lie ranged upon the beach, and hour by hour
Their earth-convulsing wheels affright the city ;
The galloping of fiery steeds makes pale
The Christian merchant, and the yellow Jew
Hides his hoard deeper in the faithless earth.
Like clouds, and like the shadows of the clouds,
Over the hills of Anatolia,
Swift in wide troops the Tartar chivalry
Sweep ;—the far-flashing of their starry lances
Reverberates the dying light of day.

We have one God, one King, one Hope, one Law ;
 But many-headed Insurrection stands
 Divided in itself, and soon must fall.

MAHMUD.

Proud words, when deeds come short, are seasonable :
 Look, Hassan, on yon crescent moon, emblazoned
 Upon that shattered flag of fiery cloud
 Which leads the rear of the departing day,
 Wan emblem of an empire fading now !
 See how it trembles in the blood-red air,
 And like a mighty lamp whose oil is spent,
 Shrinks on the horizon's edge, while, from above,
 One star with insolent and victorious light
 Hovers above its fall, and with keen beams,
 Like arrows through a fainting antelope,
 Strikes its weak form to death.

HASSAN.

Even as that moon
 Renews itself——

MAHMUD.

Shall we be not renewed !
 Far other bark than ours were needed now
 To stem the torrent of descending time :
 The spirit that lifts the slave before its lord
 Stalks through the capitals of armed kings,
 And spreads his ensign in the wilderness ;
 Exults in chains ; and when the rebel falls,

Cries like the blood of Abel from the dust ;
 And the inheritors of earth, like beasts
 When earthquake is unleashed, with idiot fear
 Cower in their kingly dens—as I do now.
 What were Defeat, when Victory must appal ?
 Or Danger, when Security looks pale ?
 How said the messenger—who from the fort
 Islanded in the Danube, saw the battle
 Of Bucharest ?—that—

HASSAN.

Ibrahim's cimeter
 Drew with its gleam swift victory from heaven,
 To burn before him in the night of battle—
 A light and a destruction.

MAHMUD.

Ay ! the day
 Was ours ; but how ?—

HASSAN.

The light Wallachians,
 The Arnaut, Servian, and Albanian allies
 Fled from the glance of our artillery
 Almost before the thunder-stone alit ;
 One half the Grecian army made a bridge
 Of safe and slow retreat, with Moslem dead ;
 The other—

MAHMUD.

Speak—tremble not—

HASSAN.

Islanded

By victor myriads, formed in hollow square
 With rough and stedfast front, and thrice flung back
 The deluge of our foaming cavalry ;
 Thrice their keen wedge of battle pierced our lines.
 Our baffled army trembled like one man
 Before a host, and gave them space ; but soon,
 From the surrounding hills, the batteries blazed,
 Kneading them down with fire and iron rain.
 Yet none approached ; till, like a field of corn
 Under the hook of the swart sickle-man,
 The bands, intrenched in mounds of Turkish dead,
 Grew weak and few.—Then said the Pacha, “ Slaves,
 Render yourselves—they have abandoned you—
 What hope of refuge, or retreat, or aid ?
 We grant your lives.”—“ Grant that which is thine own,”
 Cried one, and fell upon his sword and died !
 Another—“ God, and man, and hope abandon me ;
 But I to them and to myself remain
 Constant ;” he bowed his head and his heart burst.
 A third exclaimed, “ There is a refuge, tyrant,
 Where thou darest not pursue, and canst not harm,
 Shouldst thou pursue ; there we shall meet again.”
 Then held his breath, and, after a brief spasm,
 The indignant spirit cast its mortal garment
 Among the slain—dead earth upon the earth !
 So these survivors, each by different ways,

Some strange, all sudden, none dishonourable,
Met in triumphant death ; and when our army
Closed in, while yet wonder, and awe, and shame
Held back the base hyenas of the battle
That feed upon the dead and fly the living,
One rose out of the chaos of the slain ;
And if it were a corpse which some dread spirit
Of the old saviours of the land we rule
Had lifted in its anger, wandering by ;
Or if there burned within the dying man
Unquenchable disdain of death, and faith
Creating what it feigned ;—I cannot tell :
But he cried, “ Phantoms of the free, we come !
Armies of the Eternal, ye who strike
To dust the citadels of sanguine kings,
And shake the souls throned on their stony hearts,
And thaw their frost-work diadems like dew ;—
O ye who float around this clime, and weave
The garment of the glory which it wears ;
Whose fame, though earth betray the dust it clasped,
Lies sepulchred in monumental thought ;—
Progenitors of all that yet is great,
Ascribe to your bright senate, O accept
In your high ministrations, us, your sons—
Us first, and the more glorious yet to come !
And ye, weak conquerors ! giants who look pale
When the crushed worm rebels beneath your tread—
The vultures, and the dogs, your pensioners tame,

Are overgorged ; but, like oppressors, still
 They crave the relic of Destruction's feast.
 The exhalations and the thirsty winds
 Are sick with blood ; the dew is foul with death—
 Heaven's light is quenched in slaughter : Thus where'er
 Upon your camps, cities, or towers, or fleets,
 The obscene birds the reeking remnants cast
 Of these dead limbs, upon your streams and mountains,
 Upon your fields, your gardens, and your house-tops,
 Where'er the winds shall creep, or the clouds fly,
 Or the dews fall, or the angry sun look down
 With poisoned light—Famine, and Pestilence,
 And Panic, shall wage war upon our side !
 Nature from all her boundaries is moved
 Against ye : Time has found ye light as foam.
 The Earth rebels ; and Good and Evil stake
 Their empire o'er the unborn world of men
 On this one cast—but ere the die be thrown,
 The renovated genius of our race,
 Proud umpire of the impious game, descends
 A seraph-winged Victory, bestriding
 The tempest of the Omnipotence of God,
 Which sweeps all things to their appointed doom,
 And you to oblivion !"—More he would have said,
 But—

MAHMUD.

Died—as thou shouldst ere thy lips had painted
 Their ruin in the hues of our success.

A rebel's crime, gilt with a rebel's tongue !
Your heart is Greek, Hassan.

HASSAN.

It may be so :

A spirit not my own wrenched me within,
And I have spoken words I fear and hate ;
Yet would I die for—

MAHMUD.

Live ! O live ! outlive
Me and this sinking empire :—but the fleet—

HASSAN.

Alas !

MAHMUD.

The fleet which, like a flock of clouds
Chased by the wind, flies the insurgent banner.
Our winged castles from their merchant ships !
Our myriads before their weak pirate bands !
Our arms before their chains ! Our years of empire
Before their centuries of servile fear !
Death is awake ! Repulsed on the waters,
They own no more the thunder-bearing banner
Of Mahmud ; but like hounds of a base breed,
Gorge from a stranger's hand, and rend their master.

HASSAN.

Latmos, and Ampelos, and Phanae, saw
The wreck—

MAHMUD.

The caves of the Icarian isles

Hold each to the other in loud mockery,
 And with the tongue as of a thousand echoes
 First of the sea-convulsing fight—and then—
 Thou darest to speak—senseless are the mountains ;
 Interpret thou their voice !

HASSAN.

My presence bore
 A part in that day's shame. The Grecian fleet
 Bore down at day-break from the North, and hung
 As multitudinous on the ocean line
 As cranes upon the cloudless Thracian wind.
 Our squadron, convoying ten thousand men,
 Was stretching towards Nauplia when the battle
 Was kindled.—
 First through the hail of our artillery
 The agile Hydriote barks with press of sail
 Dashed :—ship to ship, cannon to cannon, man
 To man were grappled in the embrace of war,
 Inextricable but by death or victory.
 The tempest of the raging fight convulsed
 To its crystalline depths that stainless sea,
 And shook heaven's roof of golden morning clouds
 Poised on an hundred azure mountain-isles.
 In the brief trances of the artillery,
 One cry from the destroyed and the destroyer
 Rose, and a cloud of desolation wrapt
 The unforeseen event, till the north wind
 Sprung from the sea, lifting the heavy veil

Of battle-smoke—then victory—victory!
For, as we thought, three frigates from Algiers
Bore down from Naxos to our aid, but soon
The abhorred cross glimmered behind, before,
Among, around us; and that fatal sign
Dried with its beams the strength of Moslem hearts,
As the sun drinks the dew.—What more? We fled!
Our noonday path over the sanguine foam
Was beacons, and the glare struck the sun pale
By our consuming transports: the fierce light
Made all the shadows of our sails blood-red,
And every countenance blank. Some ships lay feeding
The ravaging fire even to the water's level:
Some were blown up; some, settling heavily,
Sunk; and the shrieks of our companions died
Upon the wind, that bore us fast and far,
Even after they were dead. Nine thousand perished!
We met the vultures legioned in the air,
Stemming the torrent of the tainted wind:
They, screaming from their cloudy mountain peaks,
Stooped through the sulphureous battle-smoke, and
perched
Each on the weltering carcase that we loved,
Like its ill angel or its damned soul.
Riding upon the bosom of the sea,
We saw the dog-fish hastening to their feast.
Joy waked the voiceless people of the sea,
And ravaging famine left his ocean-cave

To dwell with war, with us, and with despair.
 We met night three hours to the west of Patmos,
 As with night, tempest—

MAHMUD.

Cease!

Enter a Messenger.

MESENTER.

Your Sublime Highness,
 That Christian hound, the Muscovite ambassador,
 Has left the city. If the rebel fleet
 Had anchored in the port, had victory
 Crowned the Greek legions in the Hippodrome,
 Panic were tamer.—Obedience and Mutiny,
 Like giants in contention planet-struck,
 Stand gazing on each other.—There is peace
 In Stamboul.—

MAHMUD.

Is the grave not calmer still?
 Its ruins shall be mine.

HASSAN.

Fear not the Russian;
 The tiger leagues not with the stag at bay
 Against the hunter.—Cunning, base, and cruel,
 He crouches, watching till the spoil be won,
 And must be paid for his reserve in blood.
 After the war is fought, yield the sleek Russian
 That which thou canst not keep, his deserved portion

Of blood, which shall not flow through streets and fields,
Rivers and seas, like that which we may win,
But stagnate in the veins of Christian slaves !

Enter Second Messenger.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Nauplia, Tripolizza, Mothon, Athens,
Navarin, Artas, Monembasia,
Corinth, and Thebes are carried by assault ;
And every Islamite who made his dogs
Fat with the flesh of Galilean slaves,
Passed at the edge of the sword : the lust of blood
Which made our warriors drunk, is quenched in death ;
But like a fiery plague breaks out anew
In deeds which make the Christian cause look pale
In its own light. The garrison of Patras
Has store but for ten days, nor is there hope
But from the Briton ; at once slave and tyrant,
His wishes still are weaker than his fears ;
Or he would sell what faith may yet remain
From the oaths broke in Genoa and in Norway :
And if you buy him not, your treasury
Is empty even of promises—his own coin.
The freeman of a western poet chief⁴
Holds Attica with seven thousand rebels,
And has beat back the Pacha of Negropont ;
The aged Ali sits in Yanina,

A crownless metaphor of empire ;
 His name, that shadow of his withered might,
 Holds our besieging army like a spell
 In prey to famine, pest, and mutiny :
 He, bastioned in his citadel, looks forth
 Joyless upon the sapphire lake that mirrors
 The ruins of the city where he reigned
 Childless and sceptreless. The Greek has reaped
 The costly harvest his own blood matured,
 Not the sower, Ali—who has bought a truce
 From Ypsilanti, with ten camel loads
 Of Indian gold.

Enter a Third Messenger.

MAHMUD.

What more ?

THIRD MESSENGER.

The Christian tribes

Of Lebanon and the Syrian wilderness
 Are in revolt ;—Damascus, Hems, Aleppo,
 Tremble ;—the Arab menaces Medina ;
 The Ethiop has intrenched himself in Sennaar,
 And keeps the Egyptian rebel well employed,
 Who denies homage, claims investiture
 As price of tardy aid. Persia demands
 The cities on the Tigris, and the Georgians
 Refuse their living tribute. Crete and Cyprus,
 Like mountain-twins that from each other's veins

Catch the volcano-fire and earthquake spasm,
Shake in the general fever. Through the city
Like birds before a storm the Santons shriek,
And prophesyings horrible and new
Are heard among the crowd ; that sea of men
Sleeps on the wrecks it made, breathless and still.
A Dervise, learned in the Koran, preaches
That it is written how the sins of Islam
Must raise up a destroyer even now.
The Greeks expect a Saviour from the west ;⁵
Who shall not come, men say, in clouds and glory,
But in the omnipresence of that spirit
In which all live and are. Ominous signs
Are blazoned broadly on the noon-day sky ;
One saw a red cross stamped upon the sun ;
It has rained blood ; and monstrous births declare
The secret wrath of Nature and her Lord.
The army encamped upon the Cydaris
Was roused last night by the alarm of battle,
And saw two hosts conflicting in the air,—
The shadows doubtless of the unborn time,
Cast on the mirror of the night. While yet
The fight hung balanced, there arose a storm
Which swept the phantoms from among the stars.
At the third watch the spirit of the plague
Was heard abroad flapping among the tents :
Those who relieved watch found the sentinels dead.

The last news from the camp is, that a thousand
Have sickened, and—

Enter a Fourth Messenger.

MAHMUD.

And thou, pale ghost, dim shadow
Of some untimely rumour, speak !

FOURTH MESSENGER.

One comes
Fainting with toil, covered with foam and blood ;
He stood, he says, upon Clelonit's
Promontory, which o'erlooks the isles that groan
Under the Briton's frown, and all their waters
Then trembling in the splendour of the moon ;
When, as the wandering clouds unveiled or hid
Her boundless light, he saw two adverse fleets
Stalk through the night in the horizon's glimmer,
Mingling fierce thunders and sulphureous gleams,
And smoke which strangled every infant wind
That soothed the silver clouds through the deep air.
At length the battle slept, but the Sirocco
Awoke, and drove his flock of thunder-clouds
Over the sea-horizon, blotting out
All objects—save that in the faint moon-glimpse
He saw, or dreamed he saw the Turkish admiral
And two the loftiest of our ships of war,

With the bright image of that Queen of Heaven,
 Who hid, perhaps, her face for grief, reversed ;
 And the abhorred cross—

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT.

Your Sublime Highness,
 The Jew, who—

MAHMOUD.

Could not come more seasonably :
 Bid him attend. I'll hear no more ! too long
 We gaze on danger through the mist of fear,
 And multiply upon our shattered hopes
 The images of ruin. Come what will !
 To-morrow and to-morrow are as lamps
 Set in our path to light us to the edge
 Through rough and smooth ; nor can we suffer aught
 Which he inflicts not in whose hand we are.

[Exeunt.]

SEMICHORUS I.

Would I were the winged cloud
 Of a tempest swift and loud !
 I would scorn
 The smile of morn,
 And the wave where the moon-rise is born !
 I would leave
 The spirits of eve
 A shroud for the corpse of the day to weave

From other threads than mine !
 Bask in the blue noon divine
 Who would, not I.

SEMICHORUS II.

Whither to fly ?

SEMICHORUS I.

Where the rocks that gird th' Ægean
 Echo to the battle pæan
 Of the free—
 I would flee
 A tempestuous herald of victory !
 My golden rain
 For the Grecian slain
 Should mingle in tears with the bloody main ;
 And my solemn thunder-knell
 Should ring to the world the passing-bell
 Of tyranny !

SEMICHORUS II.

Ah king ! wilt thou chain
 The rack and the rain ?
 Wilt thou fetter the lightning and hurricane ?
 The storms are free,
 But we——

CHORUS.

O Slavery ! thou frost of the world's prime,
 Killing its flowers and leaving its thorns bare !
 Thy touch has stamped these limbs with crime,

These brows thy branding garland bear ;
 But the free heart, the impassive soul,
 Scorn thy control !

SEMICHORUS I.

Let there be light ! said Liberty ;
 And like sunrise from the sea,
 Athens arose !—Around her born,
 Shone like mountains in the morn,
 Glorious states ;—and are they now
 Ashes, wrecks, oblivion ?

SEMICHORUS II.

Go

Where Thermæ and Asopus swallowed
 Persia, as the sand does foam.
 Deluge upon deluge followed,
 Discord, Macedon, and Rome :
 And, lastly, thou !

SEMICHORUS I.

Temples and towers,
 Citadels and marts, and they
 Who live and die there, have been ours,
 And may be thine, and must decay ;
 But Greece and her foundations are
 Built below the tide of war,
 Based on the crystalline sea
 Of thought and its eternity ;

Her citizens, imperial spirits,
 Rule the present from the past,
 On all this world of men inherits
 Their seal is set.

SEMICHORUS II.

Hear ye the blast,
 Whose Orphic thunder thrilling calls
 From ruin her Titanian walls ?
 Whose spirit shakes the sapless bones
 Of Slavery ? Argos, Corinth, Crete,
 Hear, and from their mountain thrones
 The dæmons and the nymphs repeat
 The harmony.

SEMICHORUS I.

I hear ! I hear !

SEMICHORUS II.

The world's eyeless charioteer,
 Destiny, is hurrying by !
 What faith is crushed, what empire bleeds
 Beneath her earthquake-footed steeds ?
 What eagle-winged victory sits
 At her right hand ? what shadow flits
 Before ? what splendour rolls behind ?
 Ruin and Renovation cry,
 Who but we ?

SEMICHORUS I.

I hear ! I hear !

The hiss as of a rushing wind,
The roar as of an ocean foaming,
The thunder as of earthquake coming,

I hear ! I hear !

The crash as of an empire falling,
The shrieks as of a people calling
Mercy ! Mercy !—How they thrill !
Then a shout of “ Kill ! kill ! kill ! ”
And then a small still voice, thus—

SEMICHORUS II.

For

Revenge and wrong bring forth their kind,
The foul cubs like their parents are,
Their den is in their guilty mind,
And Conscience feeds them with despair.

SEMICHORUS I.

In sacred Athens, near the fane
Of Wisdom, Pity's altar stood ;
Serve not the unknown God in vain,
But pay that broken shrine again
Love for hate, and tears for blood.

Enter MAHMUD and AHASUERUS.

MAHMUD.

Thou art a man, thou sayest, even as we—

AHASUERUS.

No more !

MAHMUD.

But raised above thy fellow-men
By thought, as I by power.

AHASUERUS.

Thou sayest so.

MAHMUD.

Thou art an adept in the difficult lore
Of Greek and Frank philosophy ; thou numberest
The flowers, and thou measurest the stars ;
Thou severest element from element ;
Thy spirit is present in the past, and sees
The birth of this old world through all its cycles
Of desolation and of loveliness ;
And when man was not, and how man became
The monarch and the slave of this low sphere,
And all its narrow circles—it is much.
I honour thee, and would be what thou art
Were I not what I am ; but the unborn hour,
Cradled in fear and hope, conflicting storms,
Who shall unveil ? Nor thou, nor I, nor any
Mighty or wise. I apprehend not
What thou hast taught me, but I now perceive
That thou art no interpreter of dreams ;
Thou dost not own that art, device, or God,
Can make the future present—let it come !

Moreover thou disdainest us and ours ;
 Thou art as God, whom thou contemplest.

AHASUERUS.

Disdain thee?—not the worm beneath my feet !
 The Fathomless has care for meaner things
 Than thou canst dream, and has made pride for those
 Who would be what they may not, or would seem
 That which they are not. Sultan ! talk no more
 Of thee and me, the future and the past ;
 But look on that which cannot change—the One
 The unborn, and the undying. Earth and ocean,
 Space, and the isles of life or light that gem
 The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
 This firmament pavilioned upon chaos,
 With all its cressets of immortal fire,
 Whose outwalls, bastioned impregnably
 Against the escape of boldest thoughts, repels them
 As Calpe the Atlantic clouds—this whole
 Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts, and flowers,
 With all the silent or tempestuous workings
 By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
 Is but a vision ;—all that it inherits
 Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles and dreams ;
 Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
 The future and the past are idle shadows
 Of thought's eternal flight—they have no being ;
 Nought is but that it feels itself to be.

MAHMUD.

What meanest thou? thy words stream like a tempest
 Of dazzling mist within my brain—they shake
 The earth on which I stand, and hang like night
 On Heaven above me. What can they avail?
 They cast on all things, surest, brightest, best,
 Doubt, insecurity, astonishment.

AHASUERUS.

Mistake me not! All is contained in each.
 Dodona's forest to an acorn's cup
 Is that which has been or will be, to that
 Which is—the absent to the present. Thought
 Alone, and its quick elements, Will, Passion,
 Reason, Imagination, cannot die;
 They are what that which they regard appears,
 The stuff whence mutability can weave
 All that it hath dominion o'er,—worlds, worms,
 Empires, and superstitions. What has thought
 To do with time, or place, or circumstance?
 Wouldst thou behold the future?—ask and have!
 Knock and it shall be opened—look, and lo!
 The coming age is shadowed on the past,
 As on a glass.

MAHMUD.

Wild, wilder thoughts convulse
 My spirit—Did not Mahomet the Second
 Win Stamboul?

AHASUERUS.

Thou wouldst ask that giant spirit
 The written fortunes of thy house and faith.
 Thou wouldst cite one out of the grave to tell
 How what was born in blood must die.

MAHMUD.

Have power on me ! I see—
 Thy words

AHASUERUS.

What hearest thou ?

MAHMUD.

A far whisper —
 Terrible silence.

AHASUERUS.

What succeeds ?

MAHMUD.

The sound⁶

As of the assault of an imperial city,
 The hiss of inextinguishable fire,
 The roar of giant cannon ;—the earthquaking
 Fall of vast bastions and precipitous towers,
 The shock of crags shot from strange engin'ry,
 The clash of wheels, and clang of armed hoofs,
 And crash of brazen mail, as of the wreck
 Of adamantine mountains—the mad blast
 Of trumpets, and the neigh of raging steeds,
 And shrieks of women whose thrill jars the blood,
 And one sweet laugh, most horrible to hear,

As of a joyous infant waked and playing
 With its dead mother's breast ; and now more loud
 The mingled battle-cry—ha ! hear I not
 Ἐν τούτῳ νίκη. Allah-illah-Allah !

AHASUERUS.

The sulphureous mist is raised—thou seest—

MAHMUD.

A chasm,

As of two mountains, in the wall of Stamboul ;
 And in that ghastly breach the Islamites,
 Like giants on the ruins of a world,
 Stand in the light of sunrise. In the dust
 Glimmers a kingless diadem, and one
 Of regal port has cast himself beneath
 The stream of war. Another, proudly clad
 In golden arms, spurs a Tartarian barb
 Into the gap, and with his iron mace
 Directs the torrent of that tide of men,
 And seems—he is—Mahomet !

AHASUERUS.

What thou see'st

Is but the ghost of thy forgotten dream ;
 A dream itself, yet less, perhaps, than that
 Thou call'st reality. Thou mayst behold
 How cities, on which empire sleeps enthroned,
 Bow their towered crests to mutability.
 Poised by the flood, e'en on the height thou holdest,
 Thou mayst now learn how the full tide of power

Ebbs to its depths.—Inheritor of glory,
 Conceived in darkness, born in blood, and nourished
 With tears and toil, thou seest the mortal throes
 Of that whose birth was but the same. The Past
 Now stands before thee like an Incarnation
 Of the To-come ; yet wouldst thou commune with
 That portion of thyself which was ere thou
 Didst start for this brief race whose crown is death ;
 Dissolve with that strong faith and fervent passion
 Which called it from the uncreated deep,
 Yon cloud of war with its tempestuous phantoms
 Of raging death ; and draw with mighty will
 The imperial shade hither.

[*Exit* AHASUERUS.]

MAHMUD.

Approach !

PHANTOM.

I come

Thence whither thou must go ! The grave is fitter
 To take the living, than give up the dead ;
 Yet has thy faith prevailed, and I am here.
 The heavy fragments of the power which fell
 When I arose, like shapeless crags and clouds,
 Hang round my throne on the abyss, and voices
 Of strange lament soothe my supreme repose,
 Wailing for glory never to return.—

A later Empire nods in its decay ;
 The autumn of a greener faith is come,

And wolfish change, like winter, howls to strip
 The foliage in which Fame, the eagle, built
 Her aërie, while Dominion whelped below.
 The storm is in its branches, and the frost
 Is on its leaves, and the blank deep expects
 Oblivion on oblivion, spoil on spoil,
 Ruin on ruin : thou art slow, my son ;
 The Anarchs of the world of darkness keep
 A throne for thee, round which thine empire lies
 Boundless and mute ; and for thy subjects thou,
 Like us, shall rule the ghosts of murdered life,
 The phantoms of the powers who rule thee now—
 Mutinous passions and conflicting fears,
 And hopes that sate themselves on dust and die !
 Stript of their mortal strength, as thou of thine.
 Islam must fall, but we will reign together
 Over its ruins in the world of death :—
 And if the trunk be dry, yet shall the seed
 Unfold itself even in the shape of that
 Which gathers birth in its decay. Woe ! woe !
 To the weak people tangled in the grasp
 Of its last spasms.

MAHMUD.

Spirit, woe to all !

Woe to the wronged and the avenger ! Woe
 To the destroyer, woe to the destroyed !
 Woe to the dupe, and woe to the deceiver !
 Woe to the oppressed, and woe to the oppressor !

Woe both to those that suffer and inflict ;
 Those who are born, and those who die ! But say,
 Imperial shadow of the thing I am,
 When, how, by whom, Destruction must accomplish
 Her consummation ?

PHANTOM.

Ask the cold pale Hour,
 Rich in reversion of impending death,
 When *he* shall fall upon whose ripe grey hairs
 Sit care, and sorrow, and infirmity—
 The weight which Crime, whose wings are plumed with
 years,
 Leaves in his flight from ravaged heart to heart
 Over the heads of men, under which burthen
 They bow themselves unto the grave : fond wretch !
 He leans upon his crutch, and talks of years
 To come, and how in hours of youth renewed
 He will renew lost joys, and——

VOICE WITHOUT.

Victory ! victory !

[The Phantom vanishes.]

MAHMUD.

What sound of the importunate earth has broken
 My mighty trance ?

VOICE WITHOUT.

Victory ! victory !

MAHMUD.

Weak lightning before darkness ! poor faint smile
 Of dying Islam ! Voice which art the response
 Of hollow weakness ! Do I wake and live ?
 Were there such things ? or may the unquiet brain,
 Vexed by the wise mad talk of the old Jew,
 Have shaped itself these shadows of its fear ?
 It matters not !—for nought we see or dream,
 Possess, or lose, or grasp at, can be worth
 More than it gives or teaches. Come what may,
 The future must become the past, and I
 As they were, to whom once this present hour,
 This gloomy crag of time to which I cling,
 Seemed an Elysian isle of peace and joy
 Never to be attained.—I must rebuke
 This drunkenness of triumph ere it die,
 And dying, bring despair.—Victory !—poor slaves !

[*Exit* MAHMUD.]

VOICE WITHOUT.

Shout in the jubilee of death ! The Greeks
 Are as a brood of lions in the net,
 Round which the kingly hunters of the earth
 Stand smiling. Anarchs, ye whose daily food
 Are curses, groans, and gold, the fruit of death,
 From Thule to the girdle of the world,
 Come, feast ! the board groans with the flesh of men—
 The cup is foaming with a nation's blood,
 Famine and Thirst await :—eat, drink, and die !

SEMICHORUS I.

Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,
Salutes the risen sun, pursues the flying day!

I saw her ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,
Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned lay
In visions of the dawning undelight.

Who shall impede her flight?
Who rob her of her prey?

VOICE WITHOUT.

Victory! victory! Russia's famished eagles
Dare not to prey beneath the crescent's light.
Impale the remnant of the Greeks! despoil!
Violate! make their flesh cheaper than dust!

SEMICHORUS II.

Thou voice which art
The herald of the ill in splendour hid!
Thou echo of the hollow heart
Of monarchy, bear me to thine abode
When desolation flashes o'er a world destroyed.
Oh bear me to those isles of jagged cloud
Which float like mountains on the earthquakes, mid
The momentary oceans of the lightning;
Or to some toppling promontory proud
Of solid tempest, whose black pyramid,
Riven, overhangs the founts intensely brightening

Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire
 Before their waves expire,
 When heaven and earth are light, and only light
 In the thunder-night !

VOICE WITHOUT.

Victory ! victory ! Austria, Russia, England,
 And that tame serpent, that poor shadow, France,
 Cry peace, and that means death when monarchs
 speak.

Ho, there ! bring torches, sharpen those red stakes !
 These chains are light, fitter for slaves and poisoners
 Than Greeks. Kill ! plunder ! burn ! let none remain.

SEMICHORUS I.

Alas for Liberty !
 If numbers, wealth, or unfulfilling years,
 Or fate, can quell the free ;
 Alas for Virtue ! when
 Torments, or contumely, or the sneers
 Of erring judging men
 Can break the heart where it abides.
 Alas ! if Love, whose smile makes this obscure world
 splendid,
 Can change, with its false times and tides,
 Like hope and terror—
 Alas for Love !
 And Truth, who wanderest lone and unbefriended,

If thou canst veil thy lie-consuming mirror
 Before the dazzled eyes of Error.
 Alas for thee ! Image of the Above.

SEMICHORUS II.

Repulse, with plumes from conquest torn,
 Led the ten thousand from the limits of the morn
 Through many an hostile Anarchy !
 At length they wept aloud and cried, "The sea! the
 sea!"

Through exile, persecution, and despair,
 Rome was, and young Atlantis shall become
 The wonder, or the terror, or the tomb
 Of all whose step wakes power lulled in her savage
 lair:

But Greece was as a hermit child,
 Whose fairest thoughts and limbs were built
 To woman's growth, by dreams so mild
 She knew not pain or guilt ;
 And now, O Victory, blush ! and Empire, tremble,
 When ye desert the free !

If Greece must be
 A wreck, yet shall its fragments reassemble,
 And build themselves again impregnably
 In a diviner clime,
 To Amphionic music, on some Cape sublime,
 Which frowns above the idle foam of Time.

SEMICHORUS I.

Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made ;
 Let the free possess the paradise they claim ;
 Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weighed
 With our ruin, our resistance, and our name !

SEMICHORUS II.

Our dead shall be the seed of their decay,
 Our survivors be the shadows of their pride,
 Our adversity a dream to pass away—
 Their dishonour a remembrance to abide !

VOICE WITHOUT.

Victory! Victory! The bought Briton sends
 The keys of ocean to the Islamite.
 Now shall the blazon of the cross be veiled,
 And British skill directing Othman might,
 Thunder-strike rebel victory. O keep holy
 This jubilee of unrevenged blood !
 Kill! crush! despoil! Let not a Greek escape !

SEMICHORUS I.

Darkness has dawned in the East
 On the noon of time :
 The death-birds descend to their feast,
 From the hungry clime.
 Let Freedom and Peace flee far
 To a sunnier strand,
 And follow Love's folding star
 To the Evening land !

SEMICHORUS II.

The young moon has fed
 Her exhausted horn
 With the sunset's fire :
 The weak day is dead,
 But the night is not born ;
 And, like loveliness panting with wild desire,
 While it trembles with fear and delight,
 Hesperus flies from awakening night,
 And pants in its beauty and speed with light
 Fast-flashing, soft, and bright.
 Thou beacon of love ! thou lamp of the free !
 Guide us far, far away,
 To climes where now, veiled by the ardour of day,
 Thou art hidden
 From waves on which weary noon
 Faints in her summer swoon,
 Between kingless continents, sinless as Eden,
 Around mountains and islands inviolably
 Prankt on the sapphire sea.

SEMICHORUS I.

Through the sunset of hope,
 Like the shapes of a dream,
 What Paradise islands of glory gleam
 Beneath Heaven's cope.
 Their shadows more clear float by—
 The sound of their oceans, the light of their sky,

The music and fragrance their solitudes breathe,
Burst like morning on dreams, or like Heaven on death,
Through the walls of our prison ;
And Greece, which was dead, is arisen !

CHORUS.⁷

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn :
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far ;
A new Peneus rolls its fountains
Against the morning-star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.
A loftier Argos cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize ;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

O write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be !

Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free :
Although a subtler sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime ;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose^s
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued :
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears, and symbol flowers.

O cease ! must hate and death return ?
Cease ! must men kill and die ?
Cease ! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
O might it die or rest at last !

END OF HELLAS.

NOTES.

¹ *The quenchless ashes of Milan.*

Milan was the centre of the resistance of the Lombard league against the Austrian tyrant. Frederick Barbarossa burnt the city to the ground, but liberty lived in its ashes, and it rose like an exhalation from its ruin.—See SISMONDI'S "*Histoires des Républiques Italiennes*," a book which has done much towards awakening the Italians to an imitation of their great ancestors.

² CHORUS.

The popular notions of Christianity are represented in this chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal. The first stanza contrasts the immortality of the living and thinking beings which inhabit the planets, and, to use a common and inadequate phrase, clothe themselves in matter, with the transience of the noblest manifestations of the external world.

The concluding verses indicate a progressive state of more or less exalted existence, according to the degree of perfection which every distinct intelligence may have attained. Let it not be supposed that I mean to dogmatize upon a subject concerning which all men are equally ignorant, or that I think the Gordian knot of the origin of evil can be disentangled by that or any similar assertions. The received hypothesis of a Being resembling men in the moral attributes of his nature, having called us out of non-existence, and after inflicting on us the misery of the

commission of error, should superadd that of the punishment and the privations consequent upon it, still would remain inexplicable and incredible. That there is a true solution of the riddle, and that in our present state the solution is unattainable by us, are propositions which may be regarded as equally certain; meanwhile, as it is the province of the poet to attach himself to those ideas which exalt and ennoble humanity, let him be permitted to have conjectured the condition of that futurity towards which we are all impelled by an inextinguishable thirst for immortality. Until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, this desire itself must remain the strongest and the only presumption that eternity is the inheritance of every thinking being.

³ *No hoary priests after that Patriarch.*

The Greek Patriarch, after having been compelled to fulminate an anathema against the insurgents, was put to death by the Turks.

Fortunately the Greeks have been taught that they cannot buy security by degradation, and the Turks, though equally cruel, are less cunning than the smooth-faced tyrants of Europe.

As to the anathema, his Holiness might as well have thrown his mitre at Mount Athos for any effect that it produced. The chiefs of the Greeks are almost all men of comprehension and enlightened views on religion and politics.

⁴ *The freeman of a western poet chief.*

A Greek who had been Lord Byron's servant commands the insurgents in Attica. This Greek, Lord Byron informs me, though a poet and an enthusiastic patriot, gave him rather the idea of a timid and unenterprising person. It appears that circumstances make men what they are, and that we all contain the germ of a degree of degradation or greatness, whose connexion with our character is determined by events.

⁵ *The Greeks expect a Saviour from the west.*

It is reported that this Messiah had arrived at a sea-port near Lacedemon in an American brig. The association of names and ideas is irresistibly ludicrous, but the prevalence of such a rumour strongly marks the state of popular enthusiasm in Greece.

⁶ *The sound
As of the assault of an imperial city.*

For the vision of Mahmud of the taking of Constantinople in 1445, see Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. xii. p. 223.

The manner of the invocation of the spirit of Mahomet the Second will be censured as overdrawn. I could easily have made the Jew a regular conjuror, and the Phantom an ordinary ghost. I have preferred to represent the Jew as disclaiming all pretension, or even belief, in supernatural agency, and as tempting Mahmud to that state of mind in which ideas may be supposed to assume the force of sensation, through the confusion of thought with the objects of thought, and excess of passion animating the creations of the imagination.

It is a sort of natural magic, susceptible of being exercised in a degree by any one who should have made himself master of the secret associations of another's thoughts.

⁷ CHORUS.

The final chorus is indistinct and obscure as the event of the living drama whose arrival it foretells. Prophecies of wars, and rumours of wars, &c. may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age ; but to anticipate, however darkly, a period of regeneration and happiness, is a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which bards possess or feign. It will remind the reader, "*magno nec proximus intervallo*" of Isaiah and Virgil, whose ardent spirits overleaping the actual reign of evil which we endure and bewail, already saw the possible and perhaps approaching state of society in which the "lion shall lie down with the lamb," and "*omnis feret omnia tellus*. Let these great names be my authority and excuse.

⁸ *Saturn and Love their long repose.*

Saturn and Love were among the deities of a real or imaginary state of innocence and happiness. *All those who fell*, or the Gods of Greece, Asia, and Egypt ; *the One, who rose*, or Jesus Christ, at whose appearance the idols of the Pagan world were amerced of their worship ; and *the many unsubdued*, or the monstrous objects of the idolatry of China, India, the Antarctic islands, and the native tribes of America, certainly have reigned over the understandings of men in conjunction or in succession, during periods in which all we know of evil has been in a state

of portentous, and, until the revival of learning and the arts, perpetually increasing activity. The Grecian Gods seem indeed to have been personally more innocent, although it cannot be said that, as far as temperance and chastity are concerned, they gave so edifying an example as their successor. The sublime human character of Jesus Christ was deformed by an imputed identification with a power, who tempted, betrayed, and punished the innocent beings who were called into existence by his sole will; and for the period of a thousand years, the spirit of this most just, wise, and benevolent of men, has been propitiated with myriads of hecatombs of those who approached the nearest to his innocence and wisdom, sacrificed under every aggravation of atrocity and variety of torture. The horrors of the Mexican, the Peruvian, and the Indian, superstitions are well known.

NOTE ON HELLAS.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE south of Europe was in a state of great political excitement at the beginning of the year 1821. The Spanish Revolution had been a signal to Italy—secret societies were formed—and when Naples rose to declare the Constitution, the call was responded to from Brundisium to the foot of the Alps. Early in 1821, the Austrians poured their armies into the Peninsula : at first their coming rather seemed to add energy and resolution to a people long enslaved. The Piedmontese asserted their freedom ; Genoa threw off the yoke of the King of Sardinia ; and, as if in playful imitation, the people of the little state of Massa and Carrara gave the *congé* to their sovereign and set up a republic.

Tuscany alone was perfectly tranquil. It was said, that the Austrian minister presented a list of sixty Carbonari to the grand-duke, urging their imprisonment ; and the grand-duke replied, “ I do not know whether these sixty men are

Carbonari, but I know if I imprison them, I shall directly have sixty thousand start up." But though the Tuscans had no desire to disturb the paternal government, beneath whose shelter they slumbered, they regarded the progress of the various Italian revolutions with intense interest, and hatred for the Austrian was warm in every bosom. But they had slender hopes ; they knew that the Neapolitans would offer no fit resistance to the regular German troops, and that the overthrow of the Constitution in Naples would act as a decisive blow against all struggles for liberty in Italy.

We have seen the rise and progress of reform. But the Holy Alliance was alive and active in those days, and few could dream of the peaceful triumph of liberty. It seemed then that the armed assertion of freedom in the south of Europe was the only hope of the liberals, as if it prevailed, the nations of the north would imitate the example. Happily the reverse has proved the fact. The countries accustomed to the exercise of the privileges of freemen to a limited extent, have extended, and are extending these limits. Freedom and knowledge have now a chance of proceeding hand in hand ; and if it continue thus, we may hope for the durability of both. Then, as I have said, in 1821, Shelley, as well as every other lover of liberty, looked upon the struggles in Spain and Italy as decisive of the destinies of the world, probably for centuries to come. The interest he took in the progress

of affairs was intense. When Genoa declared itself free, his hopes were at their highest. Day after day, he read the bulletins of the Austrian army, and sought eagerly to gather tokens of its defeat. He heard of the revolt of Genoa with emotions of transport. His whole heart and soul were in the triumph of their cause. We were living at Pisa at that time ; and several well-informed Italians, at the head of whom we may place the celebrated Vaccá, were accustomed to seek for sympathy in their hopes in Shelley : they did not find such for the despair they too generally experienced, founded on contempt for their southern countrymen.

While the fate of the progress of the Austrian armies then invading Naples, was yet in suspense, the news of another revolution filled him with exultation. We had formed the acquaintance at Pisa of several Constantinopolitan Greeks, of the family of Prince Caradja, formerly Hospodar of Wallachia, who, hearing that the bowstring, the accustomed finale of his viceroyalty, was on the road to him, escaped with his treasures, and took up his abode in Tuscany. Among these was the gentleman to whom the drama of Hellas is dedicated. Prince Mavrocordato was warmed by those aspirations for the independence of his country, which filled the hearts of many of his countrymen. He often intimated the possibility of an insurrection in Greece ; but we had no idea of its being so near at hand, when, on the 1st of April, 1821, he called on

Shelley; bringing the proclamation of his cousin, Prince Ipsilanti, and radiant with exultation and delight, declared that henceforth Greece would be free.

Shelley had hymned the dawn of liberty in Spain and Naples, in two odes, dictated by the warmest enthusiasm ;— he felt himself naturally impelled to decorate with poetry the uprising of the descendants of that people, whose works he regarded with deep admiration ; and to adopt the vaticinatory character in prophesying their success. “Hellas” was written in a moment of enthusiasm. It is curious to remark how well he overcomes the difficulty of forming a drama out of such scant materials. His prophecies, indeed, came true in their general, not their particular purport. He did not foresee the death of Lord Londonderry, which was to be the epoch of a change in English politics, particularly as regarded foreign affairs ; nor that the navy of his country would fight for instead of against the Greeks ; and by the battle of Navarino secure their enfranchisement from the Turks. Almost against reason, as it appeared to him, he resolved to believe that Greece would prove triumphant ; and in this spirit, auguring ultimate good, yet grieving over the vicissitudes to be endured in the interval, he composed his drama.

The chronological order to be observed in the arrangement of the remaining poems, is interrupted here for the sake of

comprising his three dramas in one volume. "Hellas" was among the last of his compositions, and is among the most beautiful. The chorusses are singularly imaginative, and melodious in their versification. There are some stanzas that beautifully exemplify Shelley's peculiar style ; as, for instance, the assertion of the intellectual empire which must be for ever the inheritance of the country of Homer, Sophocles, and Plato.

But Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war ;
Based on the crystalline sea
Of thought and its eternity.

And again, that philosophical truth felicitously imaged forth—

Revenge and wrong bring forth their kind,
The foul cubs like their parents are ;
Their den is in the guilty mind,
And conscience feeds them with despair.

The conclusion of the last chorus is among the most beautiful of his lyrics ; the imagery is distinct and majestic ; the prophecy, such as poets love to dwell upon, the regeneration of mankind—and that regeneration reflecting back splendour on the foregone time, from which it inherits so much of intellectual wealth, and memory of past virtuous deeds, as must render the possession of happiness and peace of tenfold value.

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