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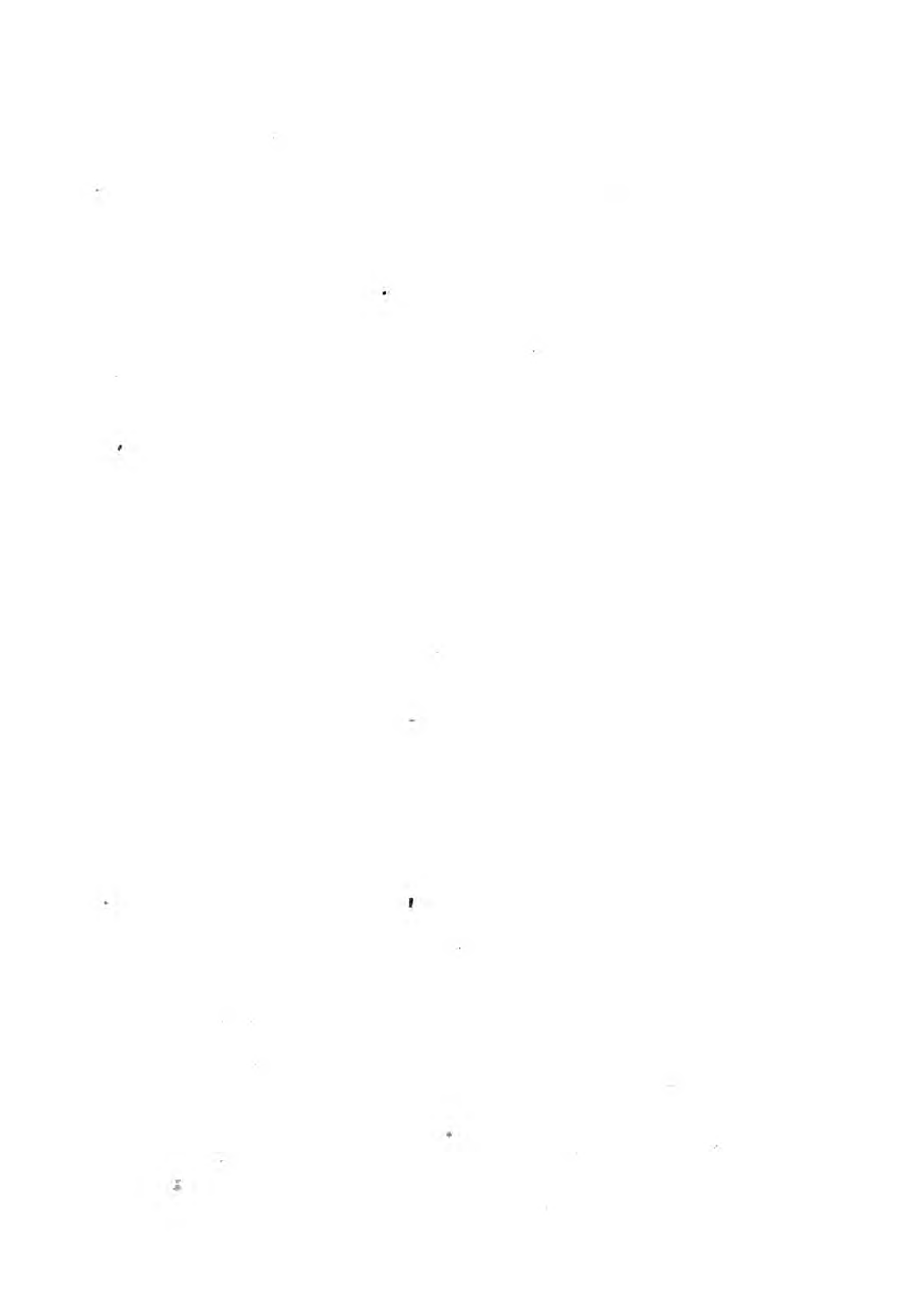
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MAMMON'S
MARRIAGE



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MAMMON'S MARRIAGE

A Poem

IN TWO CANTOS.

BY

J. G. H.

"Nor all that Heralds rake from confined clay,
Nor florid prose, nor honied lies of rhyme,
Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime."

CHILDE HAROLD.

LONDON :

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1855.

280. q. 92.



NOTICE.

A commentary—*quid rides?*—on what the French so well express by *un mariage de convenance*, is the *animus* of this little Poem.

Certainly, in our day, parents do not employ *active* violence for the purpose of driving unwilling maidens to the chief altar of Vanity Fair—MATRIMONY.

Such truly barbarian measures are mere legendary heirlooms of the “good old times” of feudal despotism. Nevertheless human nature is a pretty constant quantity; the effects of civilisation may be compared to the arts of a Stultz or Mantilin—these may externally give a very different air to their myrmidons (of both sexes), but they cannot in the least affect the *corporeal development* of the Apollo Belvidere, or Venus de Medicis. In the same way, therefore, that “things of ton” have ostracised powder and pigtails, and adopted the “incomparable oil of Macassar” in

lieu thereof; so arbitrary sires of patrician, and even parvenu dignity, have substituted moral, for material, coercion.

On this principle many a May Fair bride—on her wedding morning—is as much a sacrifice at the courtly dome of St. George's, as Iphigenia was to have been in another point of view, at Aulis. Nor does reality lend the same escape as fable; she is rich, she is beautiful—she has made a match, *the* match of the season. Yet in her train attend (grim *unseen* bridesmaids of the occasion) vows erased, but not obliterated—the pangs of remorse, “casting their shadow before,” and moral perjury, consolidated by parental edict, and consecrated by sacerdotal law. Mediæval tyranny and modern “argument” (paternally employed) seem, therefore, to lead to pretty nearly the same result, as effecting the destiny of not a few of Eve's aristocratic daughters.

With these few remarks the Author submits his tale to the Anglo-Minos, as embodied and personified,

“*ARBITRIO POPULARIS AURÆ.*”

April, 1855.

MAMMON'S MARRIAGE.

CANTO I.

Auri sacra fames?

VIRGIL.

Betrothed, Betrayer, and Betrayed.

SCOTT.

MAMMON'S MARRIAGE.

CANTO THE FIRST.

I.

MAN'S guilty actions ever raise
A thousand ghosts for other days,
For dormant Conscience hath a date
Each mental wrong to compensate ;
She haunts his path—she dogs his way,
She hounds her victim to decay ;
She saps his joys, she spoils his rest,
He cannot chase th' unbidden guest—
The moral nightmare of his breast !
Ay, bitter waters taint the rill
Of those who quaff by lust of will ;

Who know on earth no Mentor-guide,
Save Passion, Prejudice, and Pride ;
Holding no other creed in awe,
Self rules the Leader and the Law—
But not the Lord, who largest reigns,
Whose heart may feel the fewest pains ;
Nor he who hoards the monster heap,
Is destined here the least to weep.

II.

There's many a man of lofty birth,
Among your lords so great on earth,
Self-sentenced by a sordid fate
To sorrow—and be desolate ;
Perchance, and 'tis a common story,
Your Dives shines with borrowed glory ;
His mortgaged acres to uphold,
He needs the chink of ready gold—
Gold, by ancestral folly spent,
Gold, at usurious int'rest lent
To make young heirs their merriment.
For this he goes prepared to wed
A handmaid with a Gorgon head,
So that at least a wealthy dow'r
Be his—the prize of present hour :

Gilding this scion of his line,
Anew illustriously to shine
A Pagod on a gorgeous shrine!

III.

Lord Otho held high Fortune's spell,
And so his wooing prospered well:
Yet grim and graceless is the groom
Whose steps are tott'ring to the tomb.
In autumn pluck a withered flow'r,
A rosebud from exotic bow'r,
Engraft them on a common stem—
A naked weed and Nature's gem;
Faded the one—the other fair,
See Life and Death commingle there
(One spray these sisters often share):
Emblem of wedlock, when you strive
To bid an old man's love revive,
As well to smooth his wrinkled cheek,
Tinge it anew with Manhood's streak,
His locks so hoary and so few,
Bid *these* assume their raven hue.
Cease, dotard, cease, and spare your pains,
The blood congeals within his veins.

IV.

Greatest of Wizards! Mammon still
Hath not a charm for ev'ry ill,
There is a barrier to his will.
The soaring flights of human love
Are Youth's illusions from above;
To gilded whim, to golden aid,
This stronghold yet is unbetrayed;
This Paradise kings cannot win,
By any act of sceptred sin;
Though each himself may deem a god,
Here each must own his Ichabod!
No jewels sheen, no heaps of gold,
Can make a withered leaf unfold,
Or warm a heart that once is cold.
This love of youth stands all alone,
A fountain in a torrid zone;
We never knew such thirst till then,
Nor shall we know the like again.

V.

Methinks there's many a mart of men,
The haunt of worldly denizen,

Where Commerce thrives, and Hebrews weave
Their Shylock projects to deceive,
Would blush at arts that mortals ply
To legalize the nuptial tie,
That climax of hypocrisy !
In wooing days, their pious task,
How best to wear the player's mask—
How best to feign and not to feel—
How best to cant and then conceal ;
Till—Hymen rends the veil apart,
And bares this barrenness of heart.

VI.

Much Laura loathed Lord Otho's pray'r,
But he had gained her father's ear :
This, this, the aged suitor's care.
Hugo, her sire, of ancient clan,
A proud, exclusive, haughty man—
A Chief who held in bitter scorn,
Mere serfs of his th' ignobly born ;
He married late a gentle bride,
Her youth had withered by his side ;
A widower then, he stood alone,
With hand of might and heart of stone.
Rumour, that tints with specious hue,
The much that's false with something true,

Had whispered once the young wife died,
As should not die a Chieftain's bride ;
But he was powerful—a claim
That mantles many a line of shame ;
He lived, to live such rumours down,
To spurn the world with savage frown,
And only expiate within
The fearful Nemesis of Sin !

VII.

Yea, on his visage, hard and stern,
Few might the brunt of thought discern,
If grief he knew for her he lost,
'Twas masked by such an outward frost
Of cold, yet dignified, disdain,
For those who sought to scan his pain,
That they, the curious, scarce might know,
From those dark eddies outward show,
How deep the waters of his woe !
For they, who trample on a flow'r,
Regret it most—when past their power ;
They love to torture and retain,
But Heav'n regards the Martyr's pain.

VIII.

Deem not a sleeping-cup, orblow
Had lain his gentle victim low ;
But slower—not less certain—throes
Of care, that warp the mind's repose ;
That petty torment, day by day,
Corroding, fretting to decay,
The feeble shrine of suff'ring clay.
There's many a soul of gentle worth
Like this has disappeared from earth !
But doubt ye not at times alone,
'Twas his to ponder and atone ;
Vigils there are when Conscience stings
The marble hearts of mighty Kings ;
Moments there are, when murd'ers feel
The taint of poison, thrust of steel,
Writhing in streams of moral gore,
Worse than their victim writhed before.

IX.

Lord Hugo's son, the Death had torn
Away in youth, the elder born ;
There smiled upon the stern old man
A daughter, Heiress of his clan,

To widowed sire, the last bequest
Of Her, whose spirit is at rest !
Removed unto the distant sphere
Where tuneful angels whisper cheer ;
Where winds and tempests never sweep,
Nor billows surge against the steep ;
Where seraphs bask in endless day,
And years unnoticed glide away,
Unchanged, unchangeable are they !
Whence gorgeous rays of Light illumine
The once dark shadows of the tomb,
Making the Death—so fearful—once
Appear a vision-peopled trance—
Say, do these Pilgrims who have won
Those realms of Light beyond the Sun,
Look down, with sympathetic gaze
On what they loved in earthly days ;
Or when they break this human yoke,
Is all dismantled at the stroke ?
Exhausted by celestial ray,
Are Mem'ry's dews dissolved away,
And do they never smile again,
These spirits, on this world of pain ?
Transported o'er this dread expanse,
Did Laura's mother ever glance

In pity on the waves which rage
Around her daughter's pilgrimage?

X.

A thing of Contrasts—love-beguiled,
That father doted on that child
(That Love, the only gentle guest
Which harboured in his barren breast).
Anon, by him was scarce forgiv'n
The very atmosphere of Heav'n,
If Winter's breath should sweep too cold
Upon the Idol of his fold,
On what he then loved more than gold !
In sickness, he would watch her bed,
Sustain, all tenderly, the head,
Console the spirits drooping mood,
With many a tale of love renewed.
But now—that thing he used to bless,
With ev'ry trait of tenderness,
Is wrapt and withered in distress ;
Albeit to him his dearest treasure,
She still must marry at his pleasure.
She pleaded, knelt, but all in vain,
She cannot break that fatal chain—

'Tis an old tale, and she must smother
The love she bears unto another.

XI.

Another Love? And who is He,
The day-dream of her Destiny?
Linked to Lord Hugo's pedigree
By distant consanguinity,
Young Allan grew, and Cupid smiled
Upon his love with Hugo's child.
Of honoured name, ingenuous, bold,
Aristocrat in Nature's mould,
His sires emblazoned in the line
Where valour glows and virtues shine,
As Minstrels, in the vivid page,
Bequeath unto another age,
What feats are wrought on battle-stage!
Not ever thus the noblest born
Thy caste, Nobility, adorn;
Pariahs of the fiendish mind
Contaminate the human kind,
E'en most patrician, most refined.
Alas! small lustre Fortune lent
Unto his race of long descent;