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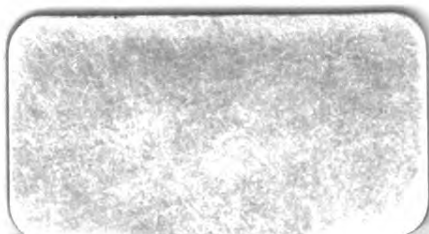
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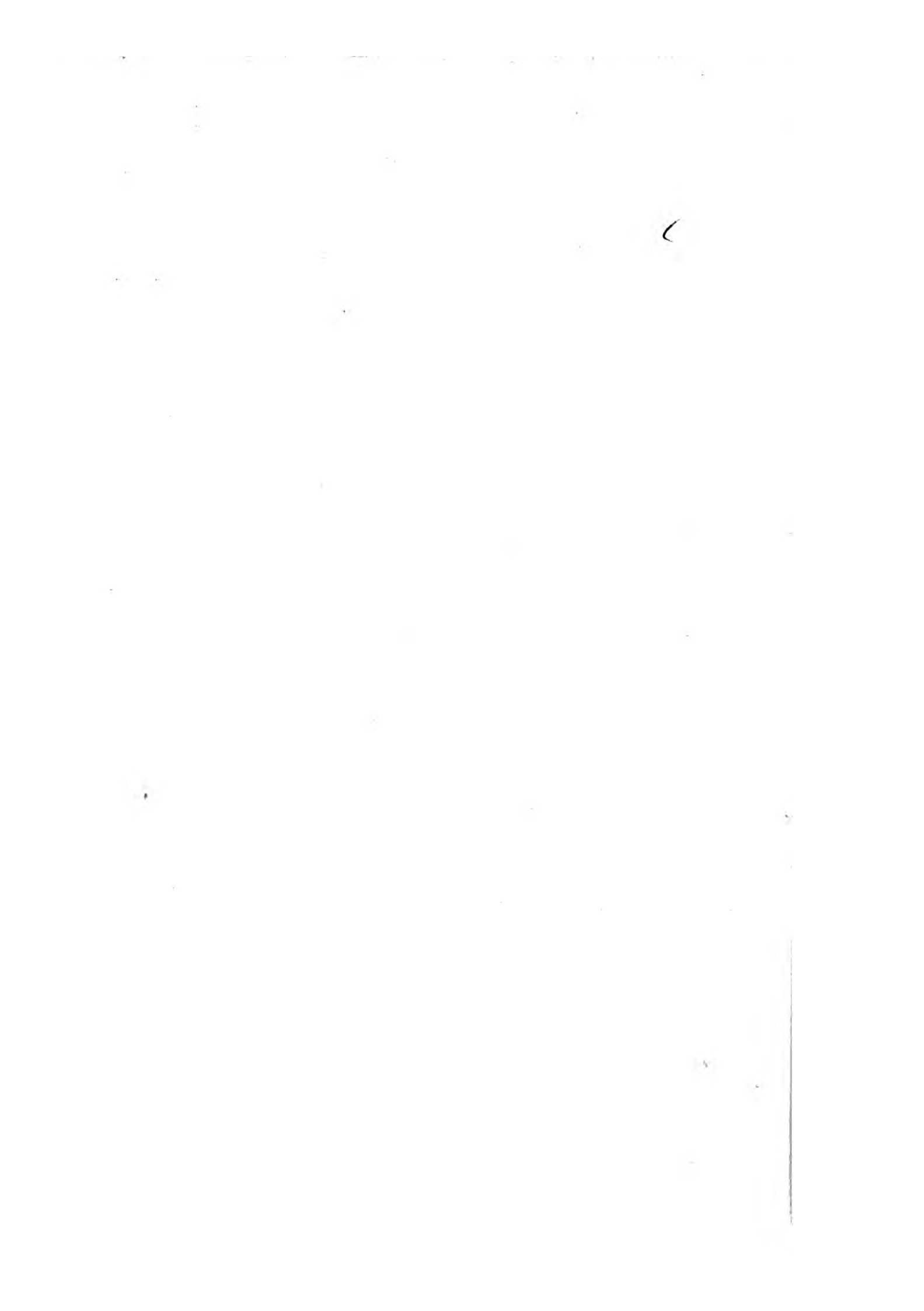
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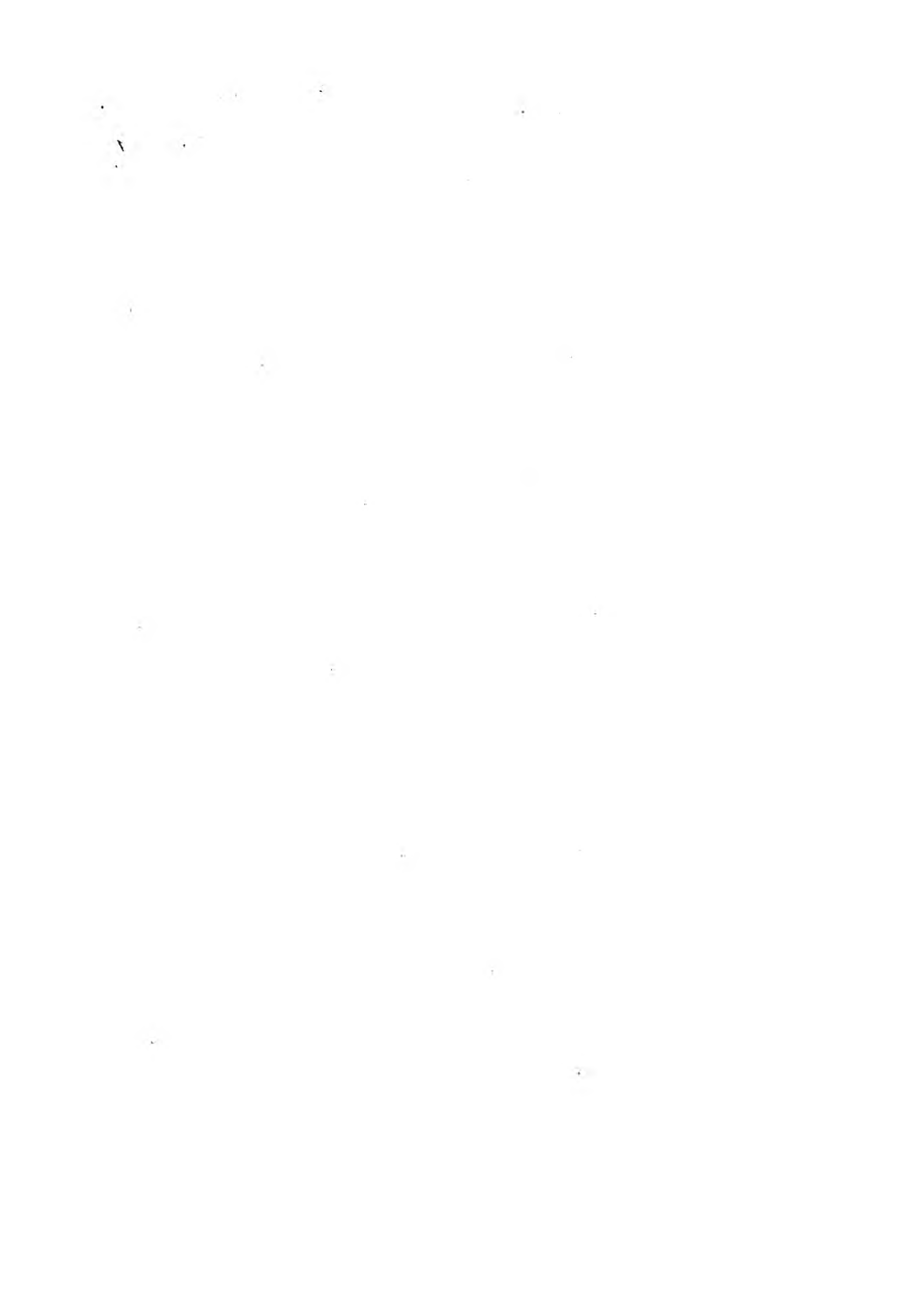


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M A R I O N .

A POEM,

I N F I V E C A N T O S .

BY

CATULLUS REDIVIVUS.

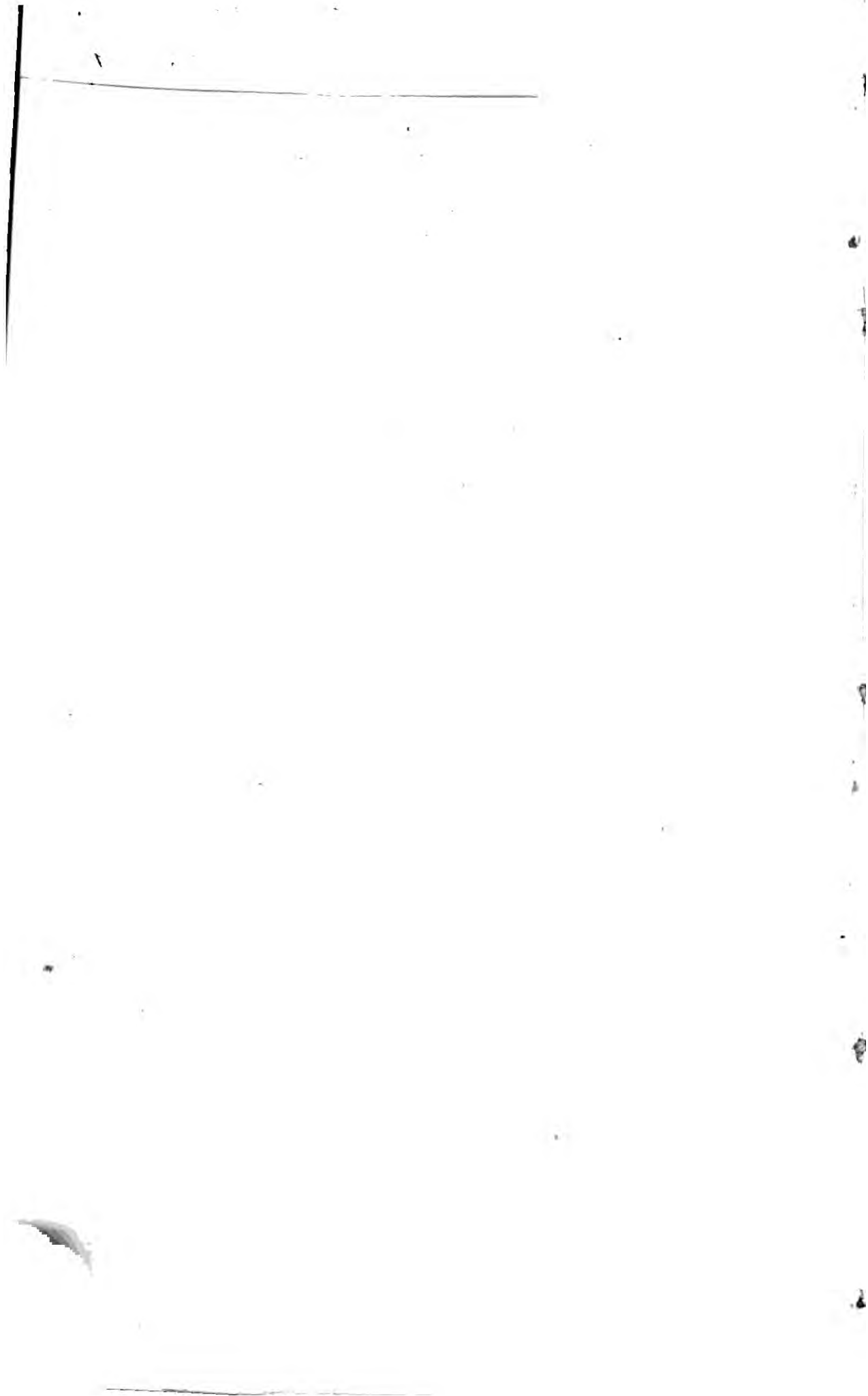
"Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them. If his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient. Let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave, which might otherwise have been unknown."---SHELLEY.

MANCHESTER:

PRINTED AT THE PROPertian PRINTING PRESS,
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M D C C C X L V I I .

280. j. 738.



DEDICATION.

MY DEAR PROPERTIUS,

To you, my fellow-labourer and my friend, I dedicate these pages.

Accept them—though printed by ourselves—as a pledge of my esteem, and as an offering to the memory of that far time, when, by the walls of mighty Rome, we strolled so frequently together—pondering o'er the destinies of men.

Wild were those dreams! but, in their utmost speculation, how little did we fancy that our souls would transmigrate to days like these, and live to look on the barbarians we had vanquished, as the first and foremost of created men!

Methinks the shade of good Pythagoras now smiles upon us from the Elysian fields, to see us yoked, in all humility and patience, to the car of Commerce, and joining in the triumph of these Northern Isles. Let that pass. 'Tis enough that we are here, and, in our hours of leisure—brief

though they have been—have raised a temple with our unassisted hands, beneath whose simple roof we can sit down, and conjure up the fond remembrances of other days.

Nights—long nights—of toil! who shall count your number? Hours of midnight, and of early dawn—when the world slept—ye have witnessed us! Ye have seen us gathering together, by the dim and solitary lamp, the atoms of unthinking metal, and converting them, by slow yet steady course, into the vehicles of life and thought! Shall I go on? Blest is the heart of that man who feels as we felt, when before us stood the homely press, and the (to us) gigantic “chase.” Not to the spirit of Columbus came a purer joy—when the shores of the expected land burst gloriously upon his sight—than did to us, when the first fair proof stood, like an emanation from some god, before us, and, in that Presence—the Transubstantiation of the mind of Guttenberg—we embraced, and swore to finish what we had begun!

What will the world say? What matters it, PROPETIUS, whether the world censure or applaud? I shall be neither flattered by its praise, nor angered by its condemnation. It may be said I have more vanity than doth beseem me; but that I modestly

deny. Nay, more,—I will confess to many faults ; and, lest any one should think me insincere, confess them now.

The style which I have chosen for my work is not original, for I have followed (though most unpretendingly) the path which Byron opened in the field of letters—adopting his stanza (for he made it his) and roaming with the same erratic license through the realms of thought.

And why have I done all this? Certainly not from an idea of my own ability to cope with such a rival. 'Twas because “ Don Juan ” was my first and fondest love in modern poesy, and showed that independence of conception and expression which the cant of this age and country tends so miserably to destroy. In the days of our own Cæsar, men spoke what they felt, and (would to the gods they did it now!) felt what they spoke. Should our spirits ever walk again—after we have finished this our second life—what changes will have taken place! How changed is all before us now! The deities of high Olympus are dethroned:—the thunder-bolts of Jove are grappled by the hand of Science, and disarmed:—the Muses have been driven to the innermost recesses of their desecrated groves; and the lyre of our Apollo lies voiceless and shattered on the ground! Who knows,

but, at the expiration of a thousand years, the creeds which have done these things, shall be themselves abolished and destroyed? Who shall gaze, with a prophetic eye, along the vista of futurity, and pierce the veil which hangs, as it has ever hung, over the volume of the *TIME TO COME*? And shall we, who have seen Rome in all her splendour,—the daughter of the gods and the mistress of the world:—who have seen empires fade from grandeur into insignificance—leaving “nothing eternal but the silence of their dust:”—shall we, I say, be flattered or abashed by what the generation of to-day may think? Censure it must be; for the living get no praise. Then let the angry man chafe, so long as it shall please him so to do; and the foolish man deride, so long as derision shall afford him merriment. To us is still left the satisfaction of an accomplished purpose—a source of pleasure which no one can take from us.

As for the sentiments made manifest, by this our perseverance, I would say with Virgil;—

“*Fortunati ambo ! si quid mea carmina possunt :
Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet ævo !*”

But let us not dream of immortality. There is nothing immortal but the gods.

Let every man, then, do that which he hath to

do, and lie down in peace. If virtuous, he will have fulfilled the purpose of his generation; and, whether he repose beneath a pyramid, or where the lilies of the field alone adorn his sepulchre, his rest shall be unbroken, and the blessings or the curses of his children shall fall equally indifferent on his ear?

But why so grave? and whither have I strayed? In wandering by the river of my fancy, I have left your side. Behold me there once more; and be assured how deeply I feel gratified that I can thus thank you, in sincerity and truth, for the friendship you have ever borne me. Believe me, my dear PROPERTIUS, though I have had as many sorrows as most men of my years, I have had bright moments too; among the brightest of which let me number that which threw us first together, and this which enables me to tell you how unchangingly I am, and ever shall be,

Your most faithful and affectionate friend,

CATULLUS REDIVIVUS.

MANCHESTER,
FEBRUARY 24TH, 1846.

M A R I O N.

CANTO THE FIRST.

I.

'Twas on a summer's eve. Apollo now
Come down from heaven, and from thy silver wing
Let me pluck forth a plume! Around my brow
Twine wreaths of laurel and perpetual spring,
With inspiration fraught! And Venus, thou,
Sweet Goddess, who to Neptune's joyous string
Rose from the deep by Paphos' sainted isle,
Throw back thy yellow hair and on me smile!

II.

'Twas on a summer's eve—soft mellow hour,
When Nature rests beneath the slanting beams
Of the descending orb, whose gorgeous power
Gilds sea and sky, mountains and vales and streams
And forests, with one universal shower!
The distant cloud reflects the light, and seems
Like Angel with his heavenward pinions spread;
And Fancy, rapt, sees Paradise display'd!

III.

Hast thou e'er wandered, Citizen sublime,
 Perched at a desk with quill behind thine ear,
 Over the mountains in the summer's prime,
 Far, far from home, with just such scanty fare
 As could in wallet dwell—nor thought it crime
 To hook the speckled trout with painted snare,
 The livelong day; till rose the yellow moon,
 And nought was heard except the brook's sweet tune?

IV.

Art thou a sportsman?—hast thou ever trod
 The fresh green sward, or breathed "empyreal air"
 On mountain heights—nor felt thou wert a clod,
 A soul-less clod, no more?—the wild flowers fair,
 Answering, upon a thousand hills, that God [there!—
 Who stamped their dyes, and bade them blossom
 Have these no charms to win thee from the spoil
 Of thy polluted gold, thou man of toil?

V.

Go, pale abomination, go thy way—
 Rot in an alley—pawn thy spirit—and
 Leave Nature and her works to nobler clay!
 Go, con thy parchments, till the fleeting sand
 Of life be run,—then yield thee to decay,
 A miserable worm;—in short be damned!
 (Startling perhaps at first—but this we call
 Anathema the purest after all!)

VI.

But to resume. The sky was clear and full
 Of holy softness, and the aspens stirred
 With ceaseless undulation; beautiful,
 Thrice beautiful, each whisper that was heard;
 And beautiful each blossom you might cull
 Beneath the thorn, where built the timid bird
 Her pensile nest to rear her tender care,
 Whom love instinctive taught to place it there,

VII.

Sweet Marion, child of light! how could her soul
 Remain unmoved while summer winds were blowing,
 Nor pant for woods and wilds without controul,
 While, 'neath her very eye, the flowers were growing?
 She oped the lattice and began to roll
 The little kerchief she had just been sewing—
 Then placed the same beneath her work-box lid,
 And vowed she'd fetch her bonnet—which she did.

VIII.

Marion was young! her mother said sixteen,
 Save a few months—and mothers ought to know;
 Her eye was blue—such as is sometimes seen
 By those who dream of angels here below;
 Her hair of course was yellow, and her mien
 Spoke truth, simplicity, and softness so,
 You stood to gaze upon each matchless feature,
 And own she was—a perfect little creature!

IX.

Her curls were negligent, and softly fell,
 Kissing her cheek and neck, like golden rain,
 Until her bosom, with its budding swell,
 Caught the fair torrent on its spotless plain;
 Simple her dress—in fact she looked as well
 As artless beauty e'er could wish; and when,
 Turning aside, her ankle caught your eye,
 Love, changing name, became Idolatry!

X.

Quick at her toilet, yet with taste arrayed,
 With implements to botanize she stood—
 (A pleasant pastime, when they're not afraid,
 For nymphs romantic who love solitude,
 A basket, and a lilliputian spade
 To dig up roots or flowers with in the wood,
 Fairer than others, and to bring them home
 To fill her garden or adorn her room.

XI.

Such was her guileless store when, with a bound,
 She through the wicket sped and, far behind,
 Left the white cottage, which was planted round
 With aspens, elms, and sycamores, to find
 Something to frame a garland to surround
 Her brow or waist, then scatter to the wind;
 Also to hear the birds sing, and the trees
 Sigh o'er her head when ruffled by the breeze.

XII.

The time—perhaps it might be half past six
 O'clock, perhaps a trifle nearer seven—
 Sweet hour to wander when the conscience pricks,
 And tells us we have got no nearer heaven
 Than we were yesterday! a truth which sticks
 So fast within our gullet, that we're driven
 To hunt down consolation in the quiet
 Of woods and wilds, and such ethereal diet.

XIII.

And then we ponder on the life we've led,
 Turn penitent and vow we will be better—
 Feel startled by the thought that o'er our head
 The turf may heave tomorrow, and Death's fetter
 Wind round our heart when in its clammy bed—
 Pull out a bible or a pious letter,
 And read, until a damsel in the lane
 Ogles—in short, undoes it all again!

XIV.

For oaths are words, and words are air, and air
 Is mutability, now hot now cold;
 And so we stop to whisper to the fair
 Things complimentary, till, growing bold,
 Our arm finds out her waist, and then we dare
 The workings of our bosom to unfold;
 Then tear our small-clothes, whilst we try to get her a
 Rose which she longs for—and then—*then* &c.

XV.

Man's an Æolian harp, swept by the breath
 Of every passion—human or divine;
 The "vanity of vanities"—(so saith
 The Scripture, which we most of us deem fine:)—
 A pious weathercock which rusts to death,
 And grows each day less changeable:—a sign
 Of reformation hailed by some; but, really,
 The want of *animus* to rake genteelly!

XVI.

Here we must pause—the subject being abstruse—
 Slightly in fact beyond our comprehension;
 And leave it to philosophers who choose,
 With mighty mind, to give it their attention;
 (Our's being a simple, sympathising muse
 Of real merit and without pretension)—
 So we'll join Marion—(for we can't refrain)—
 Who was by this a furlong up the lane.

XVII.

Her basket was begemmed with many a flower
 Plucked from the hedge-row or the bank beneath;—
 Cowslips, and violets, and plenteous store
 Of blushing roses with celestial breath,—
 Daisies, forget-me-nots, and many more,
 Resting in conscious beauty underneath
 The most angelic arm that ever hung
 By woman's side since first from heaven she sprung!

XVIII.

The flower which blossoms 'neath some lowly thorn
 Is far more beautiful than that which grows
 Exposed to ever vision, or is borne,
 To deck some scene of mirth, from its repose;
 So blooms the maid whom soft seclusion's morn
 Finds even as innocent as when she rose
 The day before,—a thing of light and love,
 With soul unsullied as the skies above!

XIX.

And such was Marion! Not the city's stir
 E'er bade her young heart throb with vain delight :—
 Her native hills were paradise to her,
 With something ever new and ever bright !—
 The birds—the brooks—the trees—sufficient were
 For friends ;—and when she placed her cheek at night
 Upon her pillow, who—oh ! who—could dare,
 With impious hand to mar the slumbers there ?

XX.

Yet she was still a woman—flesh and blood,
 With woman's passions in her composition,
 Tho' more ethereal in her womanhood,
 Than some who boast a more refined tuition :
 Taught all by Nature—whom she understood—
 She read her pages without superstition,
 And reaped far purer learning than the schools
 Can give—which rear some sages and more fools !

XXI.

Virtue is strong, and so is Vice, and where
 They both fight single handed, there ensues
 A pleasant sort of battle where all's fair
 And you may lay your wagers as you choose ;
 But in your *schools* let Virtue have a care
 How she peeps in among the pious *Blues*,
 For polished Vices lurk there in profusion—
 Which seems to me one step to prostitution.

XXII.

I may be wrong—or right—we all are liable
 To different errors, though we always cling
 To those opinions which we deem least pliable,
 And scorn to be convinced about a thing !—
 You are not competent to judge—nor I able
 The necessary seriousness to bring,
 Which the affair demands :—Tally ho—a moral ;
 Who takes the brush shall have a leaf of laurel !

XXIII.

It was a quiet, green, and lonely lane,
 With pleasant sycamores on either side :
 Above the branches mingled ; and in vain
 To pierce the umbrageous roof the sunbeam tried ;
 And thence you heard the throstle's joyous strain,
 Clear and continuous, to his russet bride :
 Fearless among the leaves he chanted, tho'
 The beauteous Marion sauntered on below.

XXIV.

Charmed by the music, still she wandered on, [been,
 Thinking sweet thoughts—for sweet they must have
 Unwitting of the distance she had gone
 From home, and quite abstracted by the scene ;
 Nor brake the reverie till the sunlight shone
 Full on her form emerging from the green
 And silent grove :—then turned she round to see
 Just where she was and where she ought to be!

XXV.

'Twas strange she never had been there before—
 She must have been—and yet she hardly knew
 Whether or not she'd seen the bridge that o'er
 The tiny wave its welcome offering threw ;—
 So, sitting on a bank t'arrange her store
 Of roots and flowers, she pondered what to do,
 And deemed it best to cross the stream and see
 What sort of place the other side could be.

XXVI.

It proved a lonesome, unfrequented wood
 Full of tall trees, whose numerous branches made
 A holy murmur through the solitude.—
 Too pure in spirit e'er to be afraid,
 Along the bank she walked to trace the rude
 And devious current winding through the shade,
 Stopping to cull, as oft as she could find,
 The sweetest violets she ever twined!

XXVII.

The sky was blue above her, and the trees
 Clad in full foliage, stretching far away
 Unto the hills whose deep varieties
 Of height and hue in giant slumber lay ;
 And not a cloud came onward with the breeze,
 But all was clear and gentle as the day
 Whereon our father Adam found his spouse,
 Smiling, in sleep, beneath the myrtle boughs.

XXVIII.

And Marion wandered on, she knew not why—
 Twining together violets and roses,
 Unconscious all that in her cheek and eye
 Grew sweeter charms than nature e'er discloses
 Within the fairest blossom which the sky
 Sends manna down to bless as it reposes:—
 As tho' her soul had gathered from on high,
 And all around, its deep tranquility!

XXIX.

Lost in some wild, ethereal reverie
 Which common minds must never hope to know,
 She journeyed on:—what distance it might be
 'Twere hard to say—perhaps a mile or so—
 Beside the stream which still ran peacefully,
 Shallow and clear, with music soft and low ;
 And how much farther yet we cannot tell—
 A mile will suit the purpose very well!

XXX.

She journeyed on, we say, until she felt
 As other girls would feel—a little tired
 With her long walk;—so on the grass she knelt,
 Or rather lay,—the place was so retired—
 The air so very cool, as if there dwelt
 A captive zephyr there!—she saw, admired,
 And inly vowed she would come there again
 And bring with her her workbasket;—and then—

XXXI.

Softly, sweet muse,—remember that the scene
 Needs yet description. 'Twas as Eden fair,
 With banks embosoming in tender green
 The gentle spirit which had wandered there.
 Thick scattered round, the daisy's modest mien [bear
 Gleamed through the emerald grass which seemed to
 Eternal verdure; pressed by fairies only,
 At night's still noon so beautiful and lonely.

XXXII.

So loftily the bank rose up behind—
 Indeed all round—that scarcely could she see
 The trees which grew above her, though the wind
 Spoke their existence by its melody:
 And, scenting all, the pliant sweet-briar twined,
 Building as fair a bower as there could be
 On this side heaven: where anchorite might dwell,
 Nor fear intruder on his hallowed cell.

XXXIII.

And, in the middle of the velvet plain
 Whereon the maiden rested, calmly flowed
 The crystal river; having, not in vain,
 Leaped the white rocks which clumsily bestrode
 The pent-up channel, till it fell again
 Into a quiet stream. The clear depth showed
 The quivering pebbles as it rippled by,
 And smote the ear with its monotony.

XXXIV.

As Marion lay, she watched the gentle tide
 And idly threw her gathered flowers away:
 With listless eye she saw her treasures glide
 Like hopes of youth, or pleasures of to-day:—
 She cast her bright flowers from her ere they died,
 Nor read the moral of their swift decay,
 Which said—“'Tis better far to spurn than cherish
 Beauty which heaven created but to perish!”

XXXV.

She threw her flowers away!—there was one rose
 She would have kept—it was not then too late :—
 So, starting quickly up from her repose,
 She bent to save her favorite from its fate,
 And, saving, found the water warm. God knows
 How 'twas it happened; but, with joy elate,
 Flashed the bright thought across her soul, and she
 Resolved to bathe her feet—as you shall see.

XXXVI.

So, pulling off one slipper and a stocking,
 She placed her little foot upon the wave,
 First bending round her gaze, lest any shocking
 Libidinous satyr should a welcome crave;
 But, seeing none, she forthwith began rocking
 The sportive truant to and fro, to lave
 Its ivory beauty and, in vain, bestow
 A purer whiteness than this Earth can know.

XXXVII.

How cool!—how sweet!—and how delightful! She
 Had never felt so happy in that hour
 Beloved by all on mountain, valley, sea,
 The white-winged bark, or Beauty's haunted bower!
 So hushed was all, she thought of Italy,
 Its fragrant myrtle, and its orange flower;
 And, warming with the thoughts she could not smother,
 Resolved, as one was in, to try the other!

XXXVIII.

But, like a simple mortal, not content
 With what the present gave, she fondly deemed
 The future fertile as the past; and, bent
 On further pleasures, languishingly dreamed
 Of isles and lakes whose waters indolent
 Gondolas kissed, when Cynthia's silver gleamed
 On some lone silent ruin by the brink!
 (A scene more beautiful than people think.)

XXXIX.

Her trance was ended. Throwing back her hair,
 She looked one moment anxiously around,
 And then a blush suffused her cheek so fair,
 From some invisible impulse; for no sound,
 Save the trees' tremulous whisper, woke the air,
 And the small gushing waterfall which found
 Melodious channel. What it could have been
 Heaven only knows:—the sequel will be seen.

XL.

She took the silken ribband from her waist,
 ('Twas blue) and laid it softly by her side;
 And, as a sigh escaped her sinless breast,
 Her simply-woven bonnet she untied,
 And threw it carelessly among the rest.
 Her garb was light; and not in vain she tried
 To loose its folds:—it sank, and oh! betrayed
 The heaving bosom of the blushing maid!

XLI.

She gazed upon the sky, in silence kneeling,
 Unconscious of the charms which, but to see,
 The angels might indeed rebel; revealing
 As innocent a heart as there could be
 In this frail world, and with God's spirit stealing
 O'er all, and lighting with its sanctity!
 Like something not of earth; yet flesh and blood,
 With fascination not to be withstood!

XLII.

She rose—her snowy shoulders half betrayed
 And half concealed by the long hair which fell
 In golden tresses down her neck, and spread
 Gracefully onward to her bosom's swell!
 Round, plump, voluptuous, every grace obeyed
 Her bidding as she stood within that dell,
 Half hesitating whether to let fall
 Her dress—and just her petticoat—or all!

XLIII.

She dipped her foot into the wave once more,
 Uncertain whether she should dress agen,
 Or have one plunge—just one—and seek the shore!
 (Too guileless ever to fear vicious men)
 Just one! She dipped her foot agen. 'Twas o'er!
 She stood one moment on the bank, and then
 The die was thrown—her grasp relaxed—the veil
 Fell down—and left her form as Parian marble pale!

XLIV.

As marble pale, and oh! how beautiful
 Each limb that told of Eden's ruined bowers,
 When Earth was young, and Paradise so full
 Of pleasure that man noted not the hours;
 But laid him down where rivers ran to lull
 His soul into oblivion; and where flowers
 Sprang for a resting place, for ever new:—
 With fields for ever green, and skies for ever blue!

XLV.

Those days are gone for aye! What reck's it now,
 How, by the fruit of that forbidden tree,
 Man lost his birthright—for a branded brow?
 Who would not lose a glorious heaven to be
 A dweller on that bosom—there to grow,
 And listen to that voice's melody?
 For woman, though our curse, is still our blessing,
 And sweetest when she's tempting and caressing!

XLVI.

And Marion stood, all trembling, on the brink,
 Placing, in virgin modesty, her hands,
 One o'er her breast, the other—poets think
 The statue of the goddess who commands
 The world is grace's *ne plus ultra*:—wink!
 Stoics wink! for so fair Marion stands:
 Fairer than aught the chisel can contrive,
 And, what's more satisfactory,—alive!

XLVII.

'Twas like a dream of youth, when love and sleep
 Together build some bower of soft delight,
 And lead the captive soul where fountains leap
 Amid green leaves, far moved from mortal sight,
 Then call an angel down! How pure, how deep,
 Is the soul's rapture at the vision bright,
 Yet ah! how brief! As fades the transient dream
 Did Marion bend and plunge into the stream.

XLVIII.

The wave received her like a lotus, closing
 O'er her pale beauty as she sank beneath;
 And parted gently as she rose, disclosing
 One ivory shoulder and the dripping wreath
 Which bound her hair up:—she, the while, reposing
 As a still swan that floats, when zephyrs breathe,
 Upon some quiet and sequestered pool,
 Motionless all, and calmly beautiful!

XLIX.

'Twas well that no grim satyr loitered in
 The rustling wood with giant fern bedight—
 That Jove had conquered his besetting sin
 Of yielding up his all to false delight—
 Else must the muse a different strain begin
 Of rude embrace and damosel's affright:
 Of shrieks dissolved to sighs, and frowns to smiles,
 As wooed the subtle god with warmer wiles.

L.

Perhaps Jove's grown less amorous, or Juno
 More watchful than she was, since Ovid's song;
 Or else his godship rakes where very few know
 How to discern his favourites in the throng:—
 However that may happen this we *do* know,
 There have been signs and portents all along;
 And those same stars we meet with, if we search well,
 May be fresh bantlings first found out by Herschel.

LI.

Turn we to Marion. Kneeling on the green,
 Throwing the golden tresses from her face,
 Behold her now!—her pale young bosom seen
 Beneath the arm she elevates to trace
 A truant curl that drips with crystal sheen!
 While her broad thigh, bent down, displays its grace
 And symmetry, as, resting on her heel,
 She shows the charms she cannot now conceal!

LII.

And, like to 'marble 'neath the sculptor's hand,
 She rests in thought—as tho' the sky above
 Would e'er be blue, and time's eternal sand
 Would pause!—with eye like that of the gazelle,
 Gazing through faery vistas on some land
 Imagination framed of light and love!
 Oh! stir not, lest the silent charm be riven,
 And that bright form should wing its way to heaven!

LIII.

Alas! how brief and fickle is the smile
 Which Fate sheds o'er us, like the rainbow, till
 We fondly deem we're blest,—though, all the while,
 The colours fade, and leave us on the hill
 Of life—a dreary moorland—to beguile
 Our time as best we can, and how we will!
 For Marion, just to illustrate fortune's mockings,
 Proceeded calmly to put on her stockings.

LIV.

She saw 'the dew was falling on each flower
 Around her feet, and hastened to array
 Herself in all that she had just before
 Thrown idly down—(how temptingly they lay!)
 And, being a child of nature, knew the hour
 Was fast approaching twilight; so to stay
 Would not be wisdom, as the way was long,
 And to be late her mother thought was wrong.

LV.

Whereon she rose, determined to be going
And hasten homeward ere the night should fall,—
Gathering the sweetest blossoms which were growing
And crowding roses, sweetbriar, and all :
Nor paused until she saw the sunset glowing
On the rude bridge above the waterfall ;
Then found the lane, and then the cottage neared,
And, turning through the wicket, disappeared.

END OF CANTO THE FIRST.

M A R I O N.

CANTO THE SECOND.

I.

“Tired Nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep!”
(So Young, the sentimental, sang of yore)
How very sweet thou art to those who keep
The feasts of Bacchus, or to those who pore
O’er wisdom’s sacred page :—to those who weep
For friends or kindred dead :—or, what is more,
For pockets emptied by unlucky bets,
Cards, women, dice, returned bills, or bad debts!

II.

Sweet to the widow who, with ceaseless tears,
Bewails the loss of him whose early love
Had ripened, and grown tenderer, with years!
Sweet to the weary babe—unconscious dove—
That nestles in its mother’s breast, and wears
The impress of the face which hangs above!
Sweet to the heart o’er-fraught with joy or sorrow!
Sweet to the rogue who’s to be hanged tomorrow!

III.

And sweet are dreams too—those luxurious things
 Which haunt alike the king's and peasant's breast ;
 As tho' our better angel to us sings
 The harmonies of heaven while we rest :
 And, lifting up th' enchanted eye-lid, brings
 To view light forms in rainbow colours drest,
 Too pure for waking vision ; and which fade,
 Like gentle stars of reckless dawn afraid.

IV.

'Tis Night! The rag-wrapt beggar dreams of wealth—
 The weary exile revels in his home—
 The wretch whom fever vanquishes has health—
 And the poor cripple learns once more to roam!
 The lunatic is busy, and, by stealth,
 Regains the kingdom he has lost,—while foam
 The fiery steeds which bear him to his throne—
 The scourge of kings—Earth's sovereign alone!

V.

The rich man dreams of poverty—and shrieks!
 And Innocence is daubed with guilty blood!
 The lover bends to kiss the roseate cheeks
 Of her he loves, and lo! a stirring brood
 Of maggots climbs his lips: and, while he speaks,
 Her eyes depart—the skinless jaws protrude—
 And, through the grated ribs—so lank and thin—
 He marks corruption hard at work within!

VI.

Sure, 'tis the devil who plans these aggravations
 So irksome to the quiet of the mind,—
 Lets us be flogged in public—plots probations
 Beyond the purest patience of mankind,—
 Submits us to that worst of all privations.
 The loss of clothes,—and (more remains behind)—
 Turns us adrift into the public street,
 To fly, for life, from every one we meet!

VII.

Ere Marión laid her head upon her pillow,
 She trimmed her lamp; and, from a little chest
 (Of curious workmanship and made of willow)
 She took her Bible. Always, before rest,
 She read one chapter; and, when o'er the billow
 (Which by its distant murmur was confest)
 The hoarse winds swept, read two and, sometimes, three,
 And prayed for those whose ships were on the sea.

VIII.

Her library was limited, the first
 And foremost being her Bible. Then there came
 A little book of travels, (not the worst
 That e'er was written either) and the same
 Told of fair Italy, and woke the thirst
 For fairy-like romance, while yet the name
 Lay secret in her bosom. Hence the dream
 Of gondolas and ruins by the stream.

IX.

Imagination raised up in the sky
 Many a throne of clouds in consequence.
 Living alone, she never questioned why
 Or how such feeling stole upon her sense:—
 Hers was a soul of silent poetry,—
 A thoughtless Alchemyst whose innocence
 Lingered near treasures which itself would make,
 And, conscious of its power, as idly break!

X.

That night being fine, she read one chapter, and
 Was soon a tenant of the yielding down;
 And whether 'twas that, round her form, a band
 Of gentle spirits watched to guard their own
 Peculiar charge; or, on the other hand,
 The beautiful adventure which was shown
 In the last Canto—(*certes* not the worst
 Of Cantos which by critics have been curst)—

XI.

We cannot quite decide ;—but this is certain,
 That o'er her lovely limbs, a heavenly sleep
 Fell softly down :—nor could the snowy curtain
 From the fair face upon the pillow keep
 The moon's pale light.—It may seem very pert in
 Us, with deliberate vision, thus to peep
 Into the maiden's privacy, and tell
 The wondrous things which then and there befell.—

XII.

There are, who will exclaim that we've no honour—
 (The softer sex to wit)—that we have had
 The favours of a fair—(God help the donor)—
 And now betray our trust! We are not mad!
 As for poor Marion, we had thrown upon her
 A load of moral covering, good or bad,
 Lest the rude eye of any thoughtless comer
 Should see her many beauties, but—'twas summer!

XIII.

So there she lay and slept :—one bending arm
 Beneath her gently-drooping head, the other
 Laid by her side,—while, delicate and warm,
 Slow heaved her stainless bosom. Hush! another,
 And yet more plaintive, sigh! O'er every charm
 Reigns deep tranquility :—O Holy Mother!
 What sorrow does that sinless heart recall?
 What slumbering grief is there—that tears should fall?

XIV.

Ay! there the pale young creature lay—revealing
 Her inward anguish by the tears which fell
 Adown her pensive cheek!—So dew-drops, stealing
 Their silver lustre from the moon, do dwell
 Upon the long grass watchfully concealing
 The little blossoms which they love so well.
 Vain metaphor! for what so much endears,
 Or what so beautiful, as woman's tears?

XV.

As woman's tears! Alas! who doth not know
That woman's tears can be "produced at will,"
And that, whate'er the measure of her woe,
Her lovely eyes do equal drops distil?
A ruffled head-dress, and a recreant beau,
Cause showers alike to rectify the ill!
In stormy drops, a spouse's passion flies out,
Or else, most probably, she tears your eyes out!

XVI.

But these are things behind the curtain, and
Should not be told to those before the stage;
Lest they, who deem reality at hand,
Be undeceived. Youth, manhood, age,
Strive to forget the ground whereon they stand,
And hug the phantom of perfection! Sage
Beings, who read Genesis, well know
Perfection died six thousand years ago!

XVII.

The sun was in the heaven when Marion rose,
And the dew lingered still on every flower.
Refreshed and beautiful from her repose,
She sought her cool and sweetly-scented bower,
And gazed upon the morning. Tamely close
The birds sang round her in that early hour;
And o'er the distant hills the sunlight fell,
Revealing the white homes wherein did dwell

XVIII.

Their own poor architects. Before her lay,
Stretching beyond her sight, the glittering sea;
Unspecked its bosom, save where, far away,
There gleamed one solitary sail. When she
Beheld that lonely wanderer as it lay,
Like a white bird, upon the waters free,
A sigh escaped her; and the heedless air
Passed by the words she stayed to utter there.

XIX.

“Child of the Ocean! whither art thou going?
 And whence, in all thy beauty, dost thou come?
 Perchance, within thee, bitter tears are flowing
 From eyes which never more shall see their home!
 Perchance, within thee, manly hearts are glowing,
 At sight of England’s hills—bidding the foam
 Fly faster from the prow!—Perchance there is
 Some one beloved in yon poor cottages!

XX.

“There, in one heap, lie messages of death,
 And life, and joy, and sorrow, rudely piled;—
 There, the last tale told by the feeble breath
 Of dying sire to his unconscious child,—
 Or mother’s tender lesson:—while, beneath,
 Reclines the merchant’s missal, full of wild
 And feverish speculation!—Get thee gone,
 And God protect and bear thee safely on!”

XXI.

She said, and left the spot.—And, if a tear,
 Trembling, suffused her soft blue eye, ’twas not
 The glittering gem of sorrow:—’twas that dear
 And exquisite delight which is the lot
 Of tender hearts, alone, which love to bear
 To pensive shade, or solitary grot, [tongue,
 Their burning thoughts; and breathe them where no
 Save that of Echo, blabs th’imperfect song!

XXII.

As Marion crossed the porch she met her mother,
 And, like a good child, kissed the proffered cheek,
 And then received a blessing;—when the other
 Remarked her paleness, and a hectic streak,
 Mingled with traces still of tears in both her
 Large, beautiful eyes, and begged of her to speak.
 Whereon she blushed—veiling those eyes’ soft gleam—
 And gently whispered,—“she had had a dream!”

XXIII.

“A dream? what nonsense! Why, thou foolish child!
 We all have dreams, and yet we do not die
 In consequence!—I’faith thy wits are wild,
 To conjure real sorrow thus, and sigh
 O’er phantoms, shadows, goblins, (here she smiled—
 The thing was so absurd)—o’er *nothing*!—why,
 Thou sleepest still! How long hast left thy closet?
 Wake up thy silly self! a dream? what was it?”

XXIV.

But Marion answered not,—her heart was full!
 And so she fell upon her mother’s breast,
 And wept aloud! There, had she learned to lull
 Unpleasant memories, and take her rest
 In childhood’s earlier years; and, sorrowful,
 She felt once more a child. Her grief suppress,
 She promised faithfully no more to weep
 O’er dreams or visions.—Here she took a peep,

XXV.

And saw such kindness in the face above—
 As though no anger there was ever known—
 That she determined to tell all, and strove
 To calm her bosom. On a seat o’ergrown
 With twining tendrils intricately wove,
 And sheltered from the sun, they sate them down;
 And thus did Marion tell the simple tale
 Which made her little cheek so very pale.

XXVI.

“Methought that I had wandered far away,
 And reached the margin of a quiet lake
 Which lay like silver. ’Twas a summer’s day,
 And scented flowers were seen in every brake,
 And birds were singing upon every spray;
 And there, unharmed, the russet deer did take
 Their silent meal from off the daisied green,
 Or bound to seek some more enchanting scene.

XXVII.

"Still were the waters—yet was music there,
 Of differing tones, as tho' among the trees
 Were harps invisible. I felt the air
 Fall on my cheek so lovingly—a breeze
 Laden with kisses—that I lingered where
 Such sweet things were assembled. Mysteries
 Were many things to me,—the birds—the flowers—
 Such as I thought ne'er dwelt in earthly bowers.

XXVIII.

"Oh! beautiful was every thing to see—
 The wonders all around me, and on high;
 But, more than all, that lake's placidity,
 For ever gazing on its sister sky!
 The wave was crystal-clear, and seemed to be
 Fraught with rich odours; and I stooped to try
 Th' inviting draught—when lo! a glittering boat,
 Of curious shape, before mine eyes did float!

XXIX.

"Into't I stepped. 'Twas a gigantic shell
 Of graceful mould, and all of blushing pearl
 As deep as tints on truant clouds that dwell,
 At sunset's hour:—and then I saw unfurl,
 Slowly, a large white wing—concealed too well
 Before—and, turning, marked the ripples curl
 Toward the receding shore. The whiles that wing
 Still bore me on, the soft winds gathering.

XXX.

"Over the waters calm, with rock and mountain
 On every side, the pearly piinnace flew;
 To the low sound of many a gushing fountain,
 Singing, unseen, where the dark pine-trees grew,
 And weeping willows. How I longed to count in
 Those rocks the echoes of a wild halloo!
 Answered, and answering faintly, till it fell
 On some high peak, with wavering syllable!

XXXI.

“Lost in mute wonder at the scene around—
Alternate gazing on the sea and sky,
And on the distant shore—I felt as bound
By some delightful spell or destiny;
Nor from the trance aroused me, till the sound
Of quivering leaves once more was heard on high.
Then looked I round, and lo! a little isle
Arose from out the deep with welcome smile.

XXXII.

“And thereon was a bower of costly kind,
Sheltered by lofty branches from the sun,
Of various flowers and leaves together twined.
Lilies and jasmine, roses many a one—
Casting a delicate perfume on the wind—
Grew wild there: building up a painted throne
Worthy that Paradise.—I left the shell,
Which sailed away, dipping a light farewell.

XXXIII.

“Laying me down within that gentle bower,
I watched my pinnace slowly glide away
O'er the blue mirror; till, beneath the power
Of strangely mingled melodies, the day
Passed from my vision. Mountains, trees and flowers
Forgotten were, as slumbering I lay;
Till a soft touch recalled me, and mine eye
Beheld a youth kneeling in ecstasy.

XXXIV.

“His locks were dark; his face was very pale—
But beautiful withal,—and eloquent
His kindling eye which told a glowing tale
Of love and melancholy strangely blent.
Speechless he knelt and gazed. I watched the frail
Tear tremble on his cheek as there he bent,
And fall; and, then, a low and silvery tone
Fell on mine ear, and whispered—“Marion!”

XXXV.

"With more than tenderness he lifted me,
 And pressed me to his bosom:—with a sigh
 He said he loved me—said that I should be
 The sharer of his Paradise; that I
 Should make his breast my pillow, and be free
 From pain, for ever, and from misery! [ing,
 Then swelled my heart; and, love's sweet harvest reap-
 We mingled tears—and then—then—I woke weeping!"

XXXVI.

The dream's soft memory called forth once more
 Poor Marion's grief. Her mother watched her weep,
 Until a rosy, dimpling smile came o'er
 Her face (now doubly beautiful) to keep
 Possession there,—then spake:—"My child, to pore
 Thus o'er the idle phantasies of sleep,
 Speaks poorly for thy wisdom. Banish hence
 All thoughts so destitute of common sense!"

XXXVII.

"True that we live alone, and that our cot
 By stranger's foot is rarely visited:
 True that the busy world is here forgot,
 And that no grandeur decks our board or bed.
 But we have generous blessings here, I wot,
 Which should not fall upon a thankless head;—
 And as for lakes, and mountains, and such stuff,
 Look round, and tell me—hast not here enough?"

XXXVIII.

"Blest with a loving mother, why repine?
 Or leave true joys, to build, in empty air,
 Unnatural castles, or an impious shrine
 To bend before? My child, my child, beware
 Of fostering thoughts like these, which quickly twine
 Round a young heart, and grow in secret there!
 Like ivy round an oak—'tis fair to see,
 But thrives upon the ruin of the tree!"

XXXIX.

The matron ceased—most probably forgetting
 That portion of the dream wherein appeared
 The youth of pallid front: perhaps not letting
 Such trifle mar her lecture, which she feared
 Scarce serious enough. However, setting
 Aside the nicety with which she steered,
 We fear that Marion thought more of the swain
 Than of her mother; so conjecture's vain.

XL.

That this should be the case (to say the least
 Of such a thing) is truly singular.
 Why, on her brain's creation, she should waste
 A tear—nay thought, beyond the time—we are
 Unable to conceive. A child of taste,
 She loved to roam alone, and wander far
 O'er Nature's bosom; and had learned to scan
 Her works, with one exception, which was—Man.

XLI.

Be it remembered she was but sixteen,
 Of tender heart, and warm imagination;
 And, also, that much older folks have been
 Known to behave, on similar occasion,
 By far more culpably. She was not seen
 To storm, then faint away from pure vexation,
 Because her dream had fled for ever. No!
 She knew that such were only idle woe.

XLII.

But still 'twas not forgotten. On her heart
 She stamped the image perfect, yet subdued,
 A thing to cherish, and he made a part
 Of what she pondered o'er in solitude.
 Something to love! and which could ne'er depart,
 Save with her very being. As she stood,
 Her kid came fawning:—it was all, before,
 But now she felt she wanted something more.

XLIII.

An indescribable sensation crept
 Into her bosom. Why, she could not tell;
 But oft, at unawares, a soft hand swept
 Sweet memory's harp to tones she loved too well.
 And then she sought her bower, and could have wept,
 But did not,—and endeavoured to repel
 Her melancholy musings. 'Twas in vain.
 With double power they haunted her again!

XLIV.

Meanwhile the winds had risen. Like spectres pale,
 Huge, livid clouds were hurrying through the sky;
 And deeper bent the trees before the gale,
 Which wildly shrieked, then sobbed convulsively,
 And died away into a long, low wail.
 With a tremendous heave, th' immensity
 Of Ocean stirred; and, hourly, darker grew;
 As, reckless o'er the void, the petrel flew.

XLV.

The mist came down upon the hills. Noon passed.
 As far as eye could con, each living thing
 Had shrunk before the terror of the blast;
 Save one young lamb whose thoughtless wandering
 Had led it from its mother's side, and cast
 Its lot upon a crag;—where, shivering,
 With piteous cries it swelled the tempest's sound,
 And still it cried, and still no comfort found.

XLVI.

Tumultuous and dark the night came on.
 The surge's roar was borne upon the wind,
 Solemn and deep! Of slender form stands one,
 With hands upraised, and tresses unconfined,
 Gazing upon the gloom:—'tis Marion.
 Christ save us!—'tis no night for womankind!
 See! hark! The lightning leaps from rock to rock!
 And God's own voice speaks in the thunder-shock!

XLVII.

Another flash!—" 'Tis there—'tis there!" she cried,
 "That goodly ship!"—the rest was heard in heaven.
 By the blue gleam—deep plunging in the tide—
 Was seen, with canvass rent, and cordage riven,
 A staggering ship! Above,—on every side—
 Destruction howled.—Another flash is given—
 Sublimely long—to light the blackened air.—
 The storm hath vanquished,—and no ship is there!

XLVIII.

With tottering step she left the fearful scene,
 And sought her home. Alas! she could not weep;
 But, o'er her marble cheek and spectral mien,
 Mute horror reigned. Upon the ruthless deep,
 Grim Death had stalked, clad in the lightning's sheen,
 And shouting through the storm—Eternal sleep!
 And who had slept? And where? The restless billow
 Was now the weary sailor's home and pillow!

XLIX.

Bright was the hearth as Marion entered; bright
 Each household implement: but, as she sate
 Before the blaze, she felt as though the light
 More horribly betrayed the ghastly fate
 Of the poor children of the deep. That night
 Had made a wife or daughter desolate,
 Who might, like her, be sitting by her fire,
 And praying for a husband or a sire.

L.

"To bed, my child!" the watchful mother said,
 And pressed her little hand,—"God's will de done!"
 There was a low Amen, and then her head
 Fell down upon that bosom where alone,
 On earth, her sorrows could be comforted.
 And then she listened to the tempest's moan—
 Its sullen gust—and then Æolian swell,
 Which fainter grew toward midn'ght—when it fell.

LI.

Then, when the terrors of the night were o'er,
 The clouds departed; and the cold blue sky
 And stars looked down upon the earth once more.
 And then the moon, in wild solemnity,
 From the dark mass emerged, and seemed to soar
 Into a region of her own; too high
 And pure to look thence upon Earth, and see
 Or human joy or human agony.

LII.

“Mother, the storm has ceased, — forth let us go
 And seek the beach: — perchance we there may find
 Some sinking wretch who else will only know
 A death more fearful than that left behind.”
 So forth they went upon their errand. Oh!
 How beautiful looked she who thus could bind
 Mercy and love together. Undefined
 They went their way — that mother and her child.

LIII.

There was no hesitating murmur heard,
 Albeit the way was long, and chill the air;
 Nor what the world terms *pity* — loathesome word —
 That prates of hovels, but — goes never there!
 Nor *charity*, which vaunteth to the herd
 Her deeds in secret done, and hovereth where
 The lord of thousands, by her precepts taught,
 Relieves a starving beggar — with a groat!

LIV.

Ye who build churches, and let paupers die —
 Who stain your purple with the poor's best blood,
 And preach in public your philanthropy —
 Come here, and learn the art of doing good!
 Ye cannot live for ever: — in the sky
 Ye cannot crush your brethren if ye would.
 Brethren ye are, and brethren ye shall be,
 And equal all, through all eternity!

LV.

How different here the scene, where simple piety
 Shone in each action: where a holy love
 Suffused each thought; and where a sweet anxiety
 Told how they strove to earn a heaven above.
 Theirs was the true religion: — their society
 Each other, or some swain who chanced to rove
 Among his native hills on summer's day,
 To bring back to his fold some runaway.

LVI.

'Twas a small creek, with rocks on every side
 Down sloping to the main. Upon the shore
 The giant waves came reeling, magnified
 By the white foam and the incessant roar —
 Uncouth and moonlit monsters. Far and wide,
 Seemed one tumultuous mass of life, with more
 Of hell than earth within it. 'Twas a scene
 To quail a woman's gentle heart I ween.

LVII.

Yet there they stood unawed, and looked around;
 But all the gluttonous Ocean had consumed.
 Keenly and long they searched, but nothing found,
 The whiles the moon their saintly work illumed.
 The mighty waters, with majestic sound,
 Seemed moved to scorn at mortals who presumed
 To war with their decree. In vain — in vain, —
 What earthly power can piety restrain?

LVIII.

On wings invisible a spirit hung,
 And watched the deed of love, then bore on high
 The grateful tidings. And the angels sung
 A song of mercy through the listening sky;
 And the sound spread; and, as its echoes rung
 Within their ears, Faith, Hope and Charity
 Came gently down from heaven, and led, unseen,
 The maiden where her foot had not yet been.

LIX.

And there, upon a rock, a lifeless form —
 Pale as the foam which revelled round him — lay.
 His lip still spake defiance to the storm,
 And manfully his soul had passed away.
 His throbbless heart — they felt — O God! 'twas warm!
 And life might still be lingering in that clay!
 Then whispered Faith and Hope. They raised his head,
 And Marion's tears fell on the seeming dead.

LX.

The seeming dead! Ay! there his pallid brow
 Gleamed in the moonlight through the long dark hair,
 Telling of distant lands. Cold, cheerless, low,
 With dripping garb, and clammy bosom bare,
 Lay the poor friendless boy, — unconscious how
 Those ministers of love were watching there.
 The arms which raised him up were nerved by heaven,
 And soul-recalling were the kisses given.

LXI.

O woman! woman! thou'rt a contradiction —
 By some called angel, and by others fiend;
 Proved to be both, in countless works of fiction,
 And praised, or blamed, as authors' fancy leaned.
 Grant me, ye gods, to share this life's affliction,
 A woman from all prejudices weaned;
 Who loves alike her bible and her dinner —
 A saint one moment, and the next a sinner.

LXII.

By sinner — but what boots an explanation,
 Since the poor ship-wrecked boy awakes once more
 Beneath their fostering hands, and animation
 Creeps through his chilly veins? Their toil is o'er:
 And, as with anxious fear and palpitation,
 They watch his eyes, (adding a further store
 Of raiment from their own,) a long-drawn sigh
 Calls from their stifled hearts a joyous cry.

LXIII.

'Tis morn. Once more upon the glorious hills
 The sunlight falls. Nor yet the dewy plain
 Receives the golden blessing, nor the rills,
 Whose ceaseless voices swell the merry strain
 Of dawn's loud music. Hark! the sky-lark trills
 (Example followed by a countless train)
 His opening hymn; and, from the coming tide,
 Refreshing zephyrs breathe on every side.

LXIV.

Now swells the flood of light, and every thing
 Looks bright and glad. The little cottage gleams
 With an unusual whiteness, as the king
 Of day ascends his throne, darting his beams
 Full on the lime-washed home where, slumbering,
 Lies the young mariner. Soft be his dreams,
 And theirs who rescued him from death; and fraught
 With heavenly bliss be every waking thought!

LXV.

Here ends the second Canto. Patient reader!
 If that thou likest what thou here hast read,
 Rest and rejoice! The Muse (Apollo speed her!)
 Hath to the silence of her fountain fled;
 Where, with soft music, will her sisters lead her
 Through twilight grottoes to her sylvan bed.
 From the long grass will peeping Satyrs pry,
 And fear to breathe until the Nine pass by.

LXVI.

Land of immortal memory! as o'er
 Thy classic fields the pilgrim wends his way,
 A voice mysterious breathes, from shore to shore,
 What once thou *wert* — not what thou *art* to-day.
 From some lone mound his spirit sees, once more,
 Thy shattered columns rise in proud array,
 And straight become, as in thine olden time,
 Imperial temples, wondrous and sublime!

LXVII.

Thy vallies are the gardens of the soul,
For ever hallowed by the poet's song;
And, though thy sons have bowed to fate's control;
And sunk to dust — the valiant and the strong —
Their glorious names — are they not writ where roll
The stars in bright, imperishable throng?
Eternal records — but 'tis not my plan to
Grow fine at the conclusion of a Canto.

END OF CANTO THE SECOND.

M A R I O N.

CANTO THE THIRD.

I.

Thou, who these pages view'st, whate'er thy station,
Mark, read, and learn the truths which they contain!
Thy praise is nothing, and thy condemnation
Falls idly as the ineffectual rain
Upon the Ocean's bosom. Let the ration
Be unto fools served out, who deem that pain
And pleasure dwell within a critic's bile:—
I neither want thy censure nor thy smile.

II.

When first I clad my harmless thoughts in rhyme,
I asked the world's opinion, now and then:—
Some laughed; some praised; and some said that, in time,
I should be wiser when I mixed with men.
I heard, with deference, all, nor marked the slime
Of fa'shood on their hollow lips; since when,
I've lived to see my error, which is more
Than some folks do who live to count fourscore.

III.

And so I write to please myself, because
 I've learned to look on self-congratulation
 As the sincerest species of applause,
 And the least liable to variation;
 And, governed by these somewhat private laws,
 To leave mankind unto their own vexation.
 Flatt'ry, to me, was ever tasteless diet,
 And as for public censure — I defy it.

IV.

He who, intent on great and virtuous deeds,
 Stoops oft to cull, on life's eventful way,
 The flowers of truth 'mid error's tangled weeds,
 Nor deigns to mix with less reflecting clay,
 Fears not the world's malevolence, nor heeds
 The fretful critic's democratic sway.
 So scorns the bard the world's applause and hisses,
 Who writes a tale as virtuous as this is.

V.

Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus,
Non eget Mauri jaculis — you know
 The simple truths which follow, and assure us
 That virtue is protection here below.
 Smile not at Horace fancying he can cure us,
 Because his company was sometimes low:
 The worthy poet was a man of taste,
 Though many of his lyrics are not chaste.

VI.

Yet chastity is all in all. Well, well,
 He had his failings, like his fellow men:
 He loved his bottle and the dinner bell,
 And, eke, a ready, yielding nymph — what then?
 Remember, *Joseph* was a miracle,
 And ought not to be deemed a standard when
 We speak of flesh and blood. In every station,
 A point which claims a nice discrimination.

VII.

The song I sing is chaste — or has been so ;
 I cannot answer what the next may be :
 Convinced that whoso rashly seeks to know
 Time's foetus ere its birth — futurity —
 Is but a bungling midwife, and will throw
 A monster on his hands. How patiently
 The crocus and the snow-drop wait for spring!
 Is there no moral here, worth gathering ?

VIII.

O Patience! dark-eyed Patience! on whose brow
 Submission dwells so sweetly, tell me where
 Thy shrine's unsullied sanctity is now!
 Wealth cannot charm thee; for th' expectant heir,
 Already rich, would see his sire laid low;
 And the poor man revolts for better fare.
 Since Liberty hath lost thee, is thy pale,
 Meek form the tenant of a debtor's gaol?

IX.

Crime e'er rejects thee till the eleventh hour,
 And thou forgiv'st the wrong. How different Debt!
 The wretch, whom Avarice has reft of power
 To woo dame Fortune, thou canst ne'er forget;
 But hoverest round him — changing every hour:
 Now lurking in a pot of heavy wet;
 Now, in the sober pipe, whose curling smoke
 The subtle transformation serves to cloak.

X.

Now urging him to skittles — now, "all fours" —
 Or other intellectual occupation,
 Whereby the world beyond the prison doors
 May be forgotten, and his situation
 Robbed of its tiresome sting. The tempest roars
 Without. What recks it? 'Tis an intimation
 That he is better sheltered than the man —
 The begging wretch too poor for pride to scan!

XI.

Blest is the rogue who, in that snug retreat,
 Can quaff his ale, and frequent pipe renew!
 No more shall fox-eyed duns beset the street,
 Nor grim bumbailiffs seize above their due!
 With tranquil soul he tends the roasting meat,
 Or helps his friend a bowl of punch to brew:
 Thankful heaven gave him plenty of relations
 With ready purses and exalted stations.

XII.

Where are we? In the city, when we should
 Be high among the mountains. Turn we there.
 And now seven days have fled since last we stood
 Beside that white and woodbined cottage, where
 The gentle Marion dwells. "An' if we could,
 We would not" tell the things enacted there,
 In that brief interval, lest we should be
 Condemned (and rightly) for prolixity.

XIII.

Suffice it, therefore, that the matron's art
 Had saved the stranger from the arms of death.
 A sage physician she, who could impart
 Relief from herbs which grew upon the heath,
 Or round her kitchen hung; for, in her heart,
 She ever, from her childhood's earliest breath,
 Had scorned all printed precepts on chirurgery,
 And that Pandora's box—a modern surgery.

XIV.

So the youth lived, and daily learned to bless
 The fostering hand which brought his simple fare;
 And so revived, beneath her tenderness,
 That soon 'twas settled he should take the air,
 Before the cottage porch. His sailor's dress
 Was placed beside the bed, upon a chair,
 And the good matron helped him with his gear—
 For Marion was forbidden to go near.

XV.

She had not seen him since that fearful night,
Her mother having cautioned her to keep
Without the chamber's precincts, lest she might
At any time disturb the patient's sleep.
But, on the shore, she'd seen sufficient, quite,
To rouse the woman; so she took a peep
One day; but soon repented, (as she ought,)
For the sly puss was very nearly caught!

XVI.

Thus gratified, she thought, and thought again
Of every circumstance, before and since,
And oft, in silence, did she rack her brain
To trace the fount of some coincidence
That dimly haunted her — but all in vain.
And so she strove her utmost to convince
Herself 'twas an illusion; when a gleam
Of light broke on her — yes! it *was* the dream!

XVII.

How very stupid not at once to spring
Into th' affair. The features were the same —
The hair the very colour — every thing
Precisely similar! The whole became
As clear as daylight; and, remembering
That neither of the strangers had a name,
She felt that now she could with ease untie
The thread of this delightful mystery.

XVIII.

A city damsel, if in Marion's place,
Would, ten to one, have sighed her breath away;
Or writ a sonnet, just to mend her case,
And make the thing romantic, as they say.
Sweet little Marion wore a different face,
And sang and smiled, and smiled and sang, all day;
Until her mother told her that such noise
Might please *her* ears — but *certes* not the boy's.

XIX.

And then the gentle soul was mute, and trod
 Over the floor so silently that she
 Was scarcely heard. And she would pray to God
 That, by his blessing kind, the youth might be
 Restored to health and pleasure; and the sod
 Bloom on unmoved, for many a year, where he
 Was destined to be laid. And every morn,
 For him, her garden of its smile was shorn.

XX.

Soft was the wind, and cloudless was the sky,
 As Leon sate beside the porch, and cast
 His eye upon the scene. There, mournfully,
 The Ocean lay before him, with the past
 Apparently forgotten; and a sigh
 Burst from his pent-up soul—the first and last.
 And then he keenly felt himself alone,
 His friendships ended—his companions gone.

XXI.

But heart like his ne'er bent to trouble, and
 He chid the tear which started to his cheek.
 "Insatiate wave!" he cried, "thou canst command
 The blood of every nation: why, then, wreak
 Thy vengeance on the men whose native land
 Was opening on their sight? Oh! wherefore break
 The thread of life in those who had to strive
 For wife or child—and let an orphan live?"

XXII.

He was a goodly youth of two and twenty,
 Blest with a bright and intellectual eye,
 And brow which plainly told he had seen plenty
 Of what we call—the world. Activity
 In every limb with elegance was blent: he
 Might, altogether, win a smile or sigh
 From fairest lips, however ripe and mellow.
 In three short words he was—a handsome fellow.

XXIII.

Yet not effeminate; for manliness
 And proud determination, were portrayed
 In every feature; as though age, were less
 The cause, than care, or early projects made,
 And by himself fulfilled; with none to bless
 His childhood's trials, or dispel the shade
 Which gathers round a young heart, left alone
 To fight its battles with a world full-grown.

XXIV.

In reverie lost he sate, contemplating
 The glassy Ocean which before him lay,
 Nor marked the eye so keenly canvassing
 His darkening brow—(as tho' 'twould tear away
 The veil which hid his inmost thoughts, and wring
 The future from them)—till a touch, light, gay,
 And cheerful, roused him. Turning quickly round,
 The smiling matron at his side he found.

XXV.

"Welcome!" she cried, "to life and health once more,
 My humble cot, and every thing beside
 'Tis but a roof of thatch, and sanded floor,
 Yet cold and hunger may be here defied."
 "Your pious care and never-failing store,
 Of kindness undeserved," the youth replied—
 While rose his blushes deep—"no thanks of mine
 Can e'er repay, nor memory, e'er resign!"

XXVI.

"Tut! tut!" the matron said—as, sitting down,
 By Leon's side, she took his passive hand,
 And placed it, with affection, in her own—
 "We will forget it all. A Christian land
 Should ever shield whom destiny hath thrown,
 Wounded or shipwrecked, on the very strand
 His blood protects; and blessed is the man
 Whom fortune makes the good Samaritan!"

XXVII.

These words to Leon's heart found ready way ;
 Nor is it wonderful, for they were spoken
 With such sincerity, that nought could stay
 The generous tribute of a tear—frail token
 Wrung sometimes even from the sternest clay !
 I know not why the good dame's language woke in
 His breast that echo, nor why tears should fall :
 I don't ev'n know why people weep at all.

XXVIII.

“ Deem me not hypocrite, because is seen,
 Thus palpably, the weakness I would hide.
 I am no weeper, though my path has been
 Strewn with more thorns than roses, in the wide
 And rugged world. What recks it? Nought, I ween.
 Happiest is he who, with a staff of pride,
 And scrip of virtuous deeds, sets out t' engage
 The countless troubles of life's pilgrimage !”

XXIX.

He said: and thus the matron in reply :—
 “ Since all thou say'st seems with experience rife,
 My curious ear I fain would gratify,
 And learn the history of thine earlier life.
 Mild is the air, and genial is the sky :
 Here, listening, will I ply, with mimic strife,
 My busy needles—'tis a gossip's plan.”
 Leon her knitting watched, and thus began.

XXX.

“ In Cuba was I born—at least 'twas said so :
 He who begot me lived and trafficked there.
 'Twas whispered, too, that, when a babe, I fed so,
 That my poor mother sank beneath her care.
 Whether, alas! or not, 'twas I who made so
 Great inroad on her health, 'tis true that ere
 Five summers had been numbered, she was borne
 Far from this world's compassion or its scorn.

XXXI.

"My father loved me, though his occupation
 Forbade much converse with his only son,
 Being a British merchant of high station,
 And famous for the trade he carried on.
 Much would have more; so he tried speculation,
 And woke, one morn, to find his riches—gone!
 This filled his cup with gall instead of honey:
 His wife he could survive—but not his money.

XXXII.

"In short, he pined and died, and left me—what?
 Beggar I never was, nor will I be;
 But I was penniless, and all forgot,
 Save one, my father's charity and me.
 He, kindly soul, took pity on my lot,
 And brought me up—to toil and drudgery;
 Making me feel, what man can least endure,
 That deadliest curse—the curse of being poor!

XXXIII.

"And so I left his roof without a tear,
 Fixing the Ocean as my future home.
 Tho' hard the school, I knew no *friends* were there,
 To mar my course, and make my life become
 A scene of misery, from year to year.
 Freedom was wealth; and the wide world a tome
 Of fitting matter for a man to read,
 And form from whence his character and creed.

XXXIV.

"Strangers received me, and, with them, have I
 Lived from my youth till now; and yonder sea
 Has been my portion. Once more will I try
 My fortune on the bosom which is free
 To all, no matter what their history.
 If life be mine, unspotted will it be—
 Unsullied by the world—and, when I die,
There is the grave that knows no calumny!"

XXXV.

He said; and rose. His tall, majestic mien,
 And flashing eye, entranced the matron's gaze;
 For, as he stood with outstretched arm, was seen
 The look which true nobility conveys.
 Pulling him gently down into his green
 And bowery resting-place, she 'gan to praise
 His candour and most wondrous self-control—
 Although she didn't quite believe the whole.

XXXVI.

And now she deemed it was the proper time
 To ease her mind as to the future, for
 She feared that Leon, being of sunny clime,
 Might have, perchance, an eye to plunder, or
 Repay her care with—I can't find a rhyme,
 My meaning is—with being familiar—
 Not with herself, for that he'd soon repent,
 But her poor child, so young, so innocent.

XXXVII.

The thought resolved her, so she spake outright:—
 “My friend, thine history is doubtless sad;
 But, in a heart like thine, so proud and light,
 Despair can never lodge; and I am glad
 To see thou hast determined on a bright
 And honourable course. With virtue clad,
 Go boldly forth; remembering that love
 To all mankind, ordained by One above!

XXXVIII.

“Yet think not, stranger, that my hospitality
 Already tires of thee. Though poor the fare,
 And humbler still the roof, there's prodigality,
 At least, of kind intention, and such care
 As all, who live in hope of immortality,
 Should ever entertain. Do thou but bear
 The penance of my tongue and physic, and
 Welcome! thrice welcome! Dost thou understand?”

XXXIX.

"Thanks! many thanks!" the youth replied, "but, now,
 My limbs are strong; and, though my cheek be pale,
 I feel the hot blood rush into my brow,
 As tho' to chide me! Nought can now avail,
 Save busy life, to quell th'inglorious flow;
 And therefore must I seek, once more, a sail
 To waft me quickly hence. It recks not where,
 Since every clime has my heart's equal share.

XL.

"Yet, ere I leave these hills, I fain would know
 Who is the pretty, little damsel seen
 Culling fresh blossoms, every morn, below
 My chamber window. I have loved to lean
 Upon my bed, and watch her to and fro;
 Fancying (it may be wrongly) she had been,
 With you, my life's restorer. Am I right?
 Say, for her beauteous image haunts my sight."

XLI.

"I have a daughter, sir," the matron said,
 "A simple child, some sixteen years of age,
 The chief delight and solace of my shed,
 And blithe as any songster in its cage.
 And though sometimes from home by fancy led,
 To gather flowers, or watch the torrent's rage,
 She wanders far, she comes, at set of sun,
 To lay down all the treasure she has won.

XLII.

"Though trained up in these hills, and rarely seeing
 A stranger's face throughout the livelong year,
 Yet deem not, thence, that in her gentle being
 Dwells not that quick perception women wear
 As their best safeguard ever, and agreeing
 Only with virtuous thoughts. Young man, beware
 Of trifling with a heart too pure to see
 That guile which finds — an enemy in me!"

XLIII.

Here Leon seized her hand, and begged to say
 That she was quite mistaken in her man;
 Assuring her he never would repay
 Her bounty with such baseness;—rather than
 Do so, he wished he had been cast away,
 (His manner here grew metropolitan)
 With the poor seamen on that fatal night,
 And never risen more to life and light!

XLIV.

But where was Marion? Was her young heart glowing,
 High on the hills, exulting in the morn?
 Or was she sitting on some lone bank, throwing
 A wreath of flowers together to adorn
 Her sunny brow and hair? Or was she showing
 Her dainty limbs, of all their vesture shorn,
 To envious Naiads? No. Then where was she?
 Close to the pair—ensconced behind a tree.

XLV.

O curiosity! thou fatal thing,
 That work'st such bane in woman's gentle breast!
 Child of that Snake whereof the prophets sing,
 As tempting Eve the wondrous fruit to taste!
 'Tis thou who, ruthless, clipped man's angel wing,
 And closed the gates of heaven's eternal rest!
 Plucked the bright spirit from its high estate,
 And stamped his soul—condemned and desolate!

XLVI.

Oh! blest that cherub who, to guide mankind,
 Has fixed thy kingdom clear to mortal view!
 To beauteous Woman all thy power assigned
 And made that Woman to her kingdom true!
 The imp that bade Lot's lady look behind,
 Had told the guileless Marion what to do;
 And, being a girl of quick perception, she
 (As just now writ) had crept behind the tree.

XLVII.

Thence had she gazed, unseen, upon the youth,
 And every word had forged another link
 To Cupid's chain. Her heart, so full of truth,
 Longed to recline on his, and wildly drink,
 Even from his lips, love's poison. To say sooth,
 She felt entranced, and oft was on the brink
 Of rushing forward to complete her joy,
 And, spite her mother, kiss the shipwrecked boy.

XLVIII.

But patience held her back, until, at last,
 The dame retired, and then the coast was clear.
 Alas! her former recklessness had passed,
 And she approached him, bending and in fear,
 But unobserved. Her heart beat very fast,
 When, at his side, she timidly stood near;
 And, laying her light hand upon his arm,
 Her eyes met his, dark, languishing, and warm!

XLIX.

"Thou lovely sprite!" cried Leon, "tell me whence,
 At my soul's bidding, hast thou sprung; and why
 My pretty one so long has tarried hence!
 What! not one word?—my resolutions, die!
 And let me press those lips whose innocence
 Forbids unhallowed touch!" There was a sigh,
 And that was all; and, then, a long embrace
 Brought Marion and her lover face to face.

L.

They sate them down together as though years
 Had seen their friendship mellow into love;
 He bending fondly over her whose tears
 Affection gave—its overflow to prove,—
 And she reclining on a breast whose cares
 Were all forgotten, while a helpless dove
 Nestled there unsuspectingly. No price
 In life could buy that depth of feeling twice.

LI.

First love! the sweetest, purest, and the best!
 Ray of that light which beams around the throne
 Of the eternal Allah! thou art blest
 Above all other loves, and stand'st alone
 'Midst the heart's best affections; and the breast
 Feels thy soft sunshine, as the bud unblown
 Feels Spring's awakening smile, and knows 'tis given
 To call its captive spirit nearer heaven!

LII.

And yet, how rarely does the heart's first flower
 Live to full beauty and to perfect bloom!
 Chill frosts will come, and, in one little hour,
 Lay all that living sweetness in the tomb!
 Chill frosts of meddling age which deems the power
 Of love a jest, and coldly seals the doom
 Of life's best, brightest hopes to sordid pelf!
 I once was jilted just that way myself.

LIII.

He who can watch, beneath some spreading tree,
 Two youthful lovers sitting all alone,
 And listen to their 'whispered words,' must be
 A pitiful and paltry wretch, and one
 Unworthy a fair woman's love; but he
 Who, with a bilious eye and heart of stone,
 Can rush upon a pair, when strictly private,
 Commits a deed which fiends would not connive at.

LIV.

And therefore we leave Marion and her swain,
 Speechless, yet eloquent; with sunshine streaming
 On them, the flowers, the mountains, and the main;
 Wrapt in each other's arms, and fondly dreaming
 That they had left, for aye, this world of pain
 And here we close the scene, for fear of seeming
 Too laboured: for an imp upon our desk
 Assures us that we've reached the picturesque.

LV.

What Leon said to Marion, as he pressed
 Her young and throbbing bosom to his own ;
 Or how she listened to the love confessed
 In sounds the sweetest she had ever known ;
 Or how she looked, then hid her face, and blessed
 In silence him who had so strangely grown,
 Even like her jessamine, around a heart
 Too simply fond to think they e'er should part ;

LVI.

Needs not be told, because their conversation
 Was just the same as lovers always hold,
 Which, though delightful, does not bear narration,
 Especially to people getting old.
 In fact, to throw aside all affectation,
 I've frequently, in confidence, been told,
 (Spite of what every unfledged poet sings)
 That folks, in love, are very silly things.

LVII.

Love is a game which heaven designed for two,
 At which, however, more will often play ;
 But Nature tells them it will never do,
 And orders all the bystanders away.
 Oft, stubborn hearts will still remain to sue,
 And sigh, and swear, and versify, and pray,
 Till told they either must resign the fair,
 Or for a hostile interview prepare.

LVIII.

The vulgar days of love are nearly over,
 And courtships, now, are managed by mamma.
 "What can you give your girl, sir?" asks the lover :
 "What can you settle?" answers the papa.
 The service done, the pair set out for Dover,
 Thence travel on to Paris or to Spa,—
 She, on the journey, voting all things bores,
 Whilst the fond husband calmly sits—and snores.

LIX.

Spent is the honeymoon, and back, once more,
 To Town—dear, old, delightful Town—they come.
 Punctual at club, Sir Joseph learns to pore
 O'er sage debates on sugar, slaves, and rum,
 And deems his cup of private bliss runs o'er—
 Blest with so chaste a wife, so kind a home;
 Though scandal whispers that Sir Joseph's heir
 Is strangely like the Count who visits there.

LX.

But husbands, when they marry, take their wives
 For better (so the service runs) or worse,
 And therefore should endeavour, all their lives,
 To make their bonds a blessing, not a curse;
 Keep early hours; drink tea; take Sunday drives;
 Run errands; and, if necessary, nurse;
 But, above all, should envious rumours rise,
 Like better men before them, shut their eyes.

LXI.

Poor, injured Woman! from thy very birth,
 Thy fate's most sad vicissitudes begin!
 In childhood oft oppressed, nor owned thy worth,
 Till beauty tells thee of the power within!
 Then dost thou rise, and, like a queen of earth,
 Scatter disdain, as heroes kneel to win;
 Till, lured by wedlock's glare, thy queendom o'er,
 Thou sink'st to wrongs and injury once more!

LXII.

One morning, (thus return we to our tale)
 Poor little Marion stood alone beside
 The porch, bedewed with tears, and very pale.
 In vain to soothe her grief the matron tried;
 All her endeavours were of no avail.
 She saw, at once, the poor child could not hide
 The anguish of her heart, and turned away,
 Lest she a kindred weakness should betray.

LXIII.

And near, in silence, Leon stood. No tear
 Responded unto hers; but, in his eye,
 The mighty struggle of the soul's despair
 With the man's pride, revealed his agony.
 "Dear Marion! fare thee well!" he said; "where'er
 My fate shall lead, beneath the broad blue sky,
 Shall memory love and bless thy name! Farewell!"
 He bent to kiss her cheek, and a tear fell.

LXIV.

His fortitude had failed him, and, poor fellow,
 He felt almost a woman at his heart;
 And so he turned, and plucked a piece of yellow
 Broom that was flourishing not far apart,
 To hide the grief he could not now repel. Oh
 Woman! thou canst weep, and even art
 More lovely in thy tears, but man must hide,
 Though death befall, the arrow in his side.

LXV.

"Come, Leon, come," the matron said, "methought
 Thou hadst been more a man. Cheer up! the day
 Must not be spent in trifling, nor thus ought
 That silly child to set us on our way.
 Come, dry thine eyes, girl! let thy face be fraught
 With smiles and blessings! drive thy care away!
 Six little days will very soon pass o'er,
 And then thy mother will be here once more."

LXVI.

"So laugh, and then some bauble will I bring;—
 Leon shall choose it, when we reach the town,
 And, ere he sails, shall buy some pretty thing,
 And send it as a present of his own."
 But Marion spake not: grief was gathering
 On her dejected lids; so she looked down,
 And, sobbing, hid her face. The harrowing tone
 Had ceased; and when she raised it, they were gone.

LXVII.

Far down the vale she watched them slowly wind,
 Nor deign one glance to cheer the desolate
 And sinking heart they coldly left behind.
 Long did she lean against the little gate,
 In anxious hope that they would yet be kind,
 And turn, if only once. Propitious fate
 Granted her prayer ; for how could fate deny
 The sinless prayer of such simplicity ?

LXVIII.

And then they disappeared. But still the way
 Rose from the valley up the farthest hill,
 Just seen upon the summit as it lay
 White in the sun ; and so she lingered still,
 Nor marked the hours pass speedily away,
 Determining to watch that turn until
 The travellers reached it ; for a single minute
 Removed from sight the few who journeyed in it.

LXIX.

Noon found her gazing pensively upon
 That distant path, and brought the consummation ;
 For lo ! two figures, gleaming in the sun,
 Stood still, surveying, from their elevation,
 The cottage and surrounding hills ; and one
 Held a white kerchief up—fond emanation
 Of an undying love—perchance, the last !
 There waved another, and the vision passed.

M A R I O N.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

I.

It was a custom with the bards of old,
And one well worthy of our imitation,
To head their various poems with a bold,
Determined, yet religious, invocation.
More modern authors strove to win their gold
By means of base and servile dedication;
While living scribes a different method use,—
Puff their own works, or pay for good reviews.

II.

Believing, as I do, in the mythology,
I choose the ancient system as the best;
Assured such choice requires not an apology,
At least to those of common sense possessed.
I am aware that, latterly, theology
Has an entirely different creed professed,
But still prefer, though it may seem audacious,
In my opinions to be pertinacious.

III.

I love to wander in some forest dim,
 And stand alone, 'neath patriarchal trees
 Which breathe for ever their mysterious hymn,
 Now loud, now low, as swells the summer breeze.
 In such an hour, I fancy Satyrs grim,
 Peering from quaint old trunks; and, by degrees,
 Fair Hamadryads venturing forth to cool
 Their dainty limbs in some sequestered pool.

IV.

But, above all, when Cynthia's light is streaming
 From heaven's fair field o'er all that forest wide,
 In some lone spot whereon the dew is gleaming—
 Some secret spot where all is dark beside—
 I love to watch the fairy myriads streaming
 From flower to fern in one exhaustless tide;—
 Right merrie elves that dance the night away,
 Nor fade from sight till breaks the morning gray.

V.

I love to linger 'mid some ruin tall,
 That lifts its rude edge 'gainst the clear blue sky,
 And mark, companionless, each mouldering wall,
 Wrapt in its own most strange solemnity!
 I love to watch that ruin, and recall
 The generations which have fled by;
 Bold knights, and winsome ladies, and the train
 Of cheerful minstrels sounding once again!

VI.

But, let me ponder where, in lonely vale,
 Some ancient abbey shuns the glare of day,
 And, where no sounds save those of heaven prevail,
 Fades amidst ever-whispering trees away!
 Some fair and peaceful glen, where, penance-pale,
 Those holy men unseen might fast and pray,
 And breathe, unheard, their matutinal hymn,
 Or chaunt their vespers in the twilight dim!

VII.

Those good old monks! Resigned to humblest fare—
 Content with simple venison and wine—
 They made their brethren's errors all their care,
 Till neighbouring peasants deemed them half divine.
 The old, who sought them, gained their wish—a prayer!
 The young found there an ever-welcome shrine!
 And never damsel, who before them bent,
 But came away much wiser than she went.

VIII.

In earlier ages, when the Romish Church
 Had just resolved her priests should have no wives,
 Some few, believing sackcloth and the birch
 Sufficient quite to mortify their lives,
 Called an assembly—fully proved the lurch—
 And told their brethren there were better hives,
 To which with ease they might convey their honey.
 Though priests, they wanted something more than money.

IX.

The Pope, who really was a clever man,
 Saw, at a glance, he'd overshot the mark,
 But called his priests together, and began
 To prove their wishes were corrupt and dark.
 The priests, however, told him 'twas their plan
 In ministry more genial to embark,
 Without some compensation or concession;
 So the Pope smiled, and granted them—Confession.

X.

This high and holy privilege, I'm told,
 Is, by some husbands, held in detestation,
 Who say the clergy frequently unfold
 More doctrines than are found in revelation.
 By this the curious fact may be unrolled,
 Why pretty women, whatsoe'er their station,
 Whose husbands suffer from old age or gout,
 Are universally the most devout.

XI.

“Whatever is, is right;” so I suppose
 Confession is a necessary thing:
 I can't imagine, though, amidst our woes,
 What kind of consolation it can bring.
 I've always thought that where the heather blows,
 And flowers in natural confusion spring,
 And merry sounds thrill through the joyous air,
 Is found the best and purest spot for prayer.

XII.

Talking of praying brings me back once more
 To invocations; but the Muse has spun
 Her web so well, that, though required before,
 'Tis needless now, the Canto being begun.
 I therefore pass the ceremony o'er,
 Which answers just as well as if 'twere done,
 And give at once the reason, (thus far hid,)
 Why Marion's mother acted as she did.

XIII.

It has been shown, in language pretty plain,
 That Leon was decidedly in love;
 And also that the maiden deemed her swain
 Some angel from the paradise above.
 Nor was her worship in the least profane,
 Nor such as even saints could disapprove:
 She had no train of suitors at her call—
 In fact, she seldom saw a man at all.

XIV.

The matron was half catholic, and made,
 For some sagacious reasons of her own,
 That mountain cot her dwelling where she prayed
 And fasted without hindrance. Thus, alone,
 In that wild home from year to year she stayed,
 Though why, or wherefore, it was never known;
 Some saying she was haughty and imperious,
 But all agreeing she was most mysterious.

XV.

The neighbours, therefore, who lived miles away,
 Believing her averse to their society,
 But rarely called, their compliments to pay,
 Though, when they did, were treated with propriety.
 As Marion grew, however, every day
 Awoke some new and unforeseen variety;
 And, soon, the dawning beauty of her child
 Her heart of half its loneliness beguiled.

XVI.

Through all there gleamed a firm determination
 To keep her charge unspotted from the world;
 So, to accomplish Marion's education,
 A scroll of private ethics was unfurled,—
 Though, at the details of the soul's salvation,
 Her brain was puzzled, and completely whirled.
 As for the saints, she positively trembled,
 For fear the child should ask what they resembled.

XVII.

She saw, at once, how critical the scheme,
 But, being a woman of superior mind,
 She strove to make the works of nature seem
 All that was requisite for humankind.
 But when, with troubled ear, she heard the dream,
 She felt the Soul could never be confined.
 The shipwrecked boy completed her dismay,
 And all her ethics passed, like smoke, away.

XVIII.

When some good folks get into a quandary,
 They sulk beneath accumulated pains;
 Others their line of conduct slightly vary,—
 Gash their carotids, or blow out their brains;
 While others still, more sensible and wary,
 Retire to calculate their future gains,
 And wait till fortune shall exhaust her spite,
 For time is certain to set all things right.

XIX.

The matron saw, at once, her plans were foiled,
 But, like a wise and prudent politician,
 Resolved, though all apparently was spoiled,
 To 'make the best she could of her position.
 With this intent she charitably toiled
 To rescue Leon from his sore condition,
 Deciding the most proper way would be,
 When fully cured, to send him off to sea.

XX.

Yet Leon was a gentlemanly lad,
 Of decent and respectable extraction,
 And the sole fault (if 'twas a fault) he had,
 Was loving Marion to complete distraction.
 Added to this, his heart seemed ever glad
 To show its gratitude by word or action,
 And, altogether, it were hard to find
 A youth more handsome, affable, and kind.

XXI.

But these were just the very reasons why
 To work her project promptly, lest the charm
 Should strike its root too deeply, and defy
 The grasp which now might counteract its harm.
 For every minute brought before her eye
 Some circumstance to heighten her alarm,
 Till the poor dame, expecting actual treason,
 Prayed to the Virgin to preserve her reason.

XXII.

I don't know what the matron feared, unless
 That Leon should entice her child away;
 But Leon felt (if we except his dress)
 In too good quarters not to wish to stay.
 In fact, he never let his thoughts transgress
 Beyond the wishes of his heart, and they
 Distinctly told him he must there remain,
 And never dream of going to sea again.

XXIII.

'Tis very strange, in matters of affection,
 How various are the views which people take.
 The young heart ever loves without reflection,
 And, very frequently, for loving's sake.
 The old look round on all, with circumspection—
 Detect, at once, the milksop or the rake,
 And find the swain their daughters deemed a treasure,
 A mere adventurer, or man of pleasure.

XXIV

Now Marion's notions of a perfect beau
 Were all concentrated in the form before her.
 She ne'er had known, nor had she wished to know,
 A fairer form, or more divine adorer.
 But the good dame thought otherwise, and so,
 Determined to remove him ; for the more her
 Eyes saw, she felt that nothing but decision
 Could save her child from absolute perdition.

XXV.

And why? Her lessons had contained morality,
 And virtue of the very purest kind ;
 Still, spite of all, she dreaded some fatality,
 To which her charge had hitherto been blind.
 The truth was, though the doctrine of mortality
 Had been explained, yet Marion's youthful mind
 Had never learned, with all its education,
 The secret mysteries of propagation.

XXVI.

This was a point to which the matron never,
 By any chance, alluded, for 'twas fraught
 With most immediate danger ; and, if ever
 Her pupil some elucidation sought,
 As to where people came from, she would sever
 The thread of conversation ; nor could aught
 Induce her to reveal the curious plan
 By which the world produced the genus man.

XXVII.

One day, however, being sorely pressed,
 She said that children came from underground ;
 But only those the Virgin Mary blessed
 Could have their tedious search with fortune crowned.
 The next day, therefore, Marion put the test,
 And dug, till quite fatigued, but nothing found ;
 Then gave the thing up, since she found she must,
 And left it with unqualified disgust.

XXVIII.

Had Marion mixed with other children, she
 Would, in all probability, have learned,
 Within five minutes, all this mystery
 For whose solution her young spirit yearned.
 But she had tasted not the fatal tree,
 Nor knew the meaning of the thoughts which burned
 Within her heart, absorbing every other ;
 Nor was this fact unnoticed by her mother.

XXIX.

The sequel hath been duly sung. In time,
 The two pedestrians reached their destination,
 Without events occurring, worthy rhyme,
 Much less deserving actual narration.
 The noisy throng of people, and the chime
 Of loud-voiced bells, woke Leon's tribulation ;
 But when, before his eyes, the vessels swam,
 His grief found utterance in a hearty "*d — n !*"

XXX.

Society's a mixture of strange things
 Placed in a cauldron called the World. The fire
 By Fate is kindled, and Self-interest brings
 Her wand to stir it with. Grief, Mirth, and Ire,
 Meddle and mix, and Superstition sings
 Confusing melodies both dread and dire ;
 While, self-complacent, some low ditty humming,
 Law clears the scum, and sips as he is scumming.

XXXI.

To this same cauldron we conduct the pair,
 And leave them; for the Muse prefers her dwelling,
 Where, in the stillness of the roe-buck's lair,
 Crystalline fountains are for ever welling:—
 Where ruins rise, and poets snuff the air
 Of inspiration, with their bosoms swelling
 To impulses which range themselves in rhyme,
 And pass (except with readers) for sublime.

XXXII.

If, therefore, thou wouldst wish once more to see
 The glorious mountains, and the dark blue main,
 Th' ethereal gelding, Pegasus, shall be
 Saddled to bear us o'er the emerald plain.
 If thou canst ride, like one of low degree,
 Without an aide-de-camp, or liveried train,
 Courier, outrider, valet, or postilion,
 Jump up behind, and please excuse the pillion.

XXXIII.

Now, like a bee upon a summer morn,
 Sounds the low hum of men. Along the sky,
 No dismal cloud of human breath is borne,
 From the hot dens of ill-paid industry;
 But all is clear and beautiful,—the corn
 Yellow and waving, as the breeze sweeps by,
 Fraught with the odour of the flowery dells,
 And the sweet music of the sabbath bells.

XXXIV.

From yon gray tower, but indistinctly seen
 Through the thick shade of yew and sycamore,
 Issues the holy chime. Those bells have been
 Rung to call generations, now no more,
 Unto God's worship; and the pious scene,
 Of Age and Youth together trudging o'er
 The full-rewarding fields, might well atone
 For deeds which frailty sighs to call her own!

XXXV.

With reverend step approach, and mark yon stone!
 When he was born, who slumbers underneath,
 That music welcomed him! when, to his own,
 He pressed the bosom, long since cold in death,
 And sleeping by his side, a merry tone
 Answered his joy; and when the patriarch's breath
 Was hushed, they welcomed him again! And lo!
 That name was writ three hundred years ago!

XXXVI.

Hark! how they ring, those good old bells! They take
 The spirit back with them, through many a year,—
 Through Time's relentless barriers they break,
 And Fancy bends to etch the picture there!
 Old manners, and quaint garbs, and things which wake
 Within us hopes and wishes which must ne'er
 Be gratified—at least, on earth! Where then?
 What saith the tablet here? "We meet agen!"

XXXVII.

With speculative thoughts, we slowly tread,
 And strive, in vain, to pierce the ambient gloom.
 Reason rebels 'gainst Faith, and asks the dead
 And mouldering body what it has become.
 Faith says, an Angel!—Reason, dust! The dread
 And grinning skeleton proclaims the doom
 Of flesh alone, and, mocking at the vast
 Enquiry, holds its cunning secret fast!

XXXVIII.

Where are the great of old, who fought and fell
 To wrest their freedom from a tyrant's hand?
 The deeds they did, the soft-voiced Muses tell
 In every language, and to every land!
 Perchance some lone and unremembered dell
 May hold the ashes of a hero band,
 Could turn a triumph; yet thou shalt not see
 One trace of aught that they were wont to be!

XXXIX.

And shall their dust assume its form once more,
 And stand in fleshly mail, as erst it stood?
 Shall rank corruption lose its ulcerous sore,
 And youthful beauty make the framework good?
 Shall scattered bones be gathered, and the shore
 Call up each carcase from th' unfathomed flood?
 Yet such is the inexplicable creed
 Of millions!—nay, you smile. It is indeed.

XL.

Within her bower sate Marion. O'er the pale
 And pensive marble of her face there dwelt
 A voiceless sorrow which revealed the tale
 Of all the desolation that she felt.
 There were no tears—what could her tears avail,
 To soothe the misery which heaven had dealt
 Upon her childish heart? She thought that all
 Had passed away, beyond that heart's recall!

XLI.

And still she lingered there. The sabbath tide
 Like a huge mass of liquid gold was shining,
 And a full, rosy flood, on every side,
 Fell deep and glorious, as the sun's declining
 Lit up the western sky. The zephyrs tried
 To rob the rose and jasmine, which were twining
 Near, of their sweetness; and the deep blue sky
 Shed, o'er the whole, its soft tranquility.

XLII.

She sate, in silence, till the evening star
 Shone forth in heaven, and darker shadows crept
 Over the hills. And, as she watched that far
 And lonely world, the sense of sorrow swept
 More keenly o'er her heart. The harrowing war
 'Gainst her pure nature ended, and she wept!
 And, on her knees, like one to frenzy driven,
 Thus poured her grief, with broken voice, to heaven:—

1

"Blessed Virgin! from on high,
 Deign to look on these my tears!
 Tell my downcast spirit why
 All this sorrowing load it bears!
 Lo! before thee, now I kneel—
 Thou who ever mad'st me feel
 Happier far than words can tell,
 When o'er my heart dejection fell!
 As sweep the clouds by tempests driven,
 So rise my troubled thoughts to heaven,—
 Grant those thoughts admission there!
 Holy Mother! hear my prayer!

2

"If my heart hath sinned in loving,
 When it should have turned to thee—
 Unto earthly things removing
 Half its faith and purity,
 Let thy soft forgiveness fall,
 Like the shades of night, o'er all;
 And, this one transgression o'er,
 Teach my heart to sin no more!
 But if—oh! if—that heart hath done
 No wrong to heaven in being won,
 Let thy loving mercy still
 Shield my helpless soul from ill!

3

"Blessed Virgin! unto thee
 All mine inmost thoughts are known!
 Soothe, oh! soothe mine agony!
 Let mine anguish reach thy throne!
 I have loved—but loved in vain—
 One I shall not see again!
 I have loved—but now 'tis o'er,—
 He shall kiss these lips no more!

Hopes, I thought would ever stay,
 Like the dead have passed away!
 And I lift my voice to thee!
 Holy Mother! pity me!

4

“If thy sacred Will decide
 That his form no more I see,
 O'er him let thy love preside,
 As it hath ever watched o'er me!
 When thunders roll, and skies are riven,
 Look gently down, in peace, from heaven;
 And, where that holy glance shall fall,
 The storm will hush its voice, and all
 The waves lie calmly down to sleep,
 Upon the bosom of the deep!
 Thou who know'st my heart's despair—
 Holy Mother! hear my prayer!”

XLIII.

With quivering lip, and eyes suffused with tears
 Which fell, unheeded, down her angel cheek,
 She ceased. The agony which inly sears,
 Was hot within her, and she could not speak.
 She was the widow of the Past! No years
 To come, could bring her comfort, nor time wreak
 A greater vengeance. With a wild despair,
 She rose to leave the spot, once loved, and there—

XLIV.

Ay! there stood Leon! With a piercing cry,
 She fell upon his breast, and wept aloud!
 'Twas he indeed! His dark and dauntless eye
 Flashed, as he pressed his loved one—doubly proud!
 Alas! poor Marion knew not he was nigh,
 For senseless all, and pale as any shroud,
 Within his arms she lay. And many a kiss
 Awoke not one, unconscious of her bliss!

XLV.

There was a long, long sigh; and then she gazed
 Upon him timidly, as though she feared
 'Twas but the phantom of a brain half crazed
 With sorrow, which had suddenly appeared.
 Oh! 'twas no dream, as to his lips she raised
 Her own, to tell their silent tale, and heard
 Those syllables of love which, just before,
 Her heart had told her she must hear no more!

XLVI.

Then came enquiries manifold, such as
 Young hearts will make, if long divided, and
 The maid asked Leon where her mother was;
 And, also, how the matter had been planned,
 That he had thus returned, before the grass,
 Trod down when leaving her, had risen. The wand
 Of some magician must have struck the spot,
 Whereon he rose so suddenly! If not,

XLVII.

He must have hired a broomstick of some witch,
 And sought his opportunity to ride,
 Unseen by mortal, over hedge and ditch,
 Until he stood upon the mountain side;—
 Or bought a wishing-cap—she knew not which,
 And hardly cared, so long as she espied
 His beauteous face, and, round her little waist,
 Felt his protecting arm so fondly placed!

XLVIII.

“I left thy mother, sweet one, far away,
 Watching a merchant vessel,” Leon said,
 “Which favouring winds were bearing from the bay,
 And gazing long, as from her sight it sped.
 She deemed me there, but little knew the clay
 She sought to fashion when she strove to wed
 To the wild sea my destiny! Unseen,
 I left the ship for Earth’s enchanting green!

XLIX.

"To see thee, Marion, whom I pictured weeping
 That I had left thee, coldly and for ever,
 I left the busy haunts of commerce, creeping
 Along the bye-ways—which I thought would never
 Be free from men—until, before me sweeping,
 The calm, majestic mountains rose. A fever
 Of anxious joy came o'er me, and I flew
 To greet, once more, a scene so sweet and new!

L.

"At last I saw thine home, and, then, my heart
 Beat high with expectation, as I felt
 Thine image come before me—to depart
 No more—oh! never more!" A kiss that dwelt
 Long on her lips, here scorned the tongue's poor art.
 "Short is the tale. I saw the sunlight melt
 To fainter glow, before I reached the spot,
 Where sorrow and long toil were all forgot!

LI.

"I heard thee pray—I saw thee weep—and, oh!
 What words can tell what then I felt? My name
 Was still remembered, though allied to woe,
 And tears, in secret, told thine heart the same!
 With bursting soul, I let thine anguish flow
 On to the end; nor dared my voice proclaim
 That I, the object of thy prayer, was nigh
 To stay that grief—to sooth that agony!"

LII.

Long with his cheek upon her brow they sate,
 Watching the glory vanish from the sky,
 And the pale stars come trembling forth to wait
 Upon their empress Night. Around, on hi_h,
 Darkness was gathering, and desolate
 Grew the far hills—now losing rapidly
 Their clear bold outline. And the soft dews fell
 Silently down on mountain and on dell.

LIII.

Now Marion could have lingered there all night,
 Within her Leon's arms; but, as the hour
 Was growing late, her lover thought it right
 (Although reluctantly) to leave the bower.
 So, kissing the warm cheek, whereon delight
 Increased the bloom which was its natural dower,
 He raised her up, and told her that the dew
 Might to his little love some injury do.

LIV.

They passed the porch, and then a palpitation
 Came into Marion's heart. What could it be?
 Never before had she felt such sensation!
 It was not fear—what *could* she fear, whilst he
 Was by, to yield her succour, if occasion
 Offered? And 'twas not illness, being free
 From ailment ever. Yet it there remained,
 And, spite her efforts, would not be restrained.

LV.

“Dear Leon, we must part! My weary breast
 Can bear no more,” said Marion, “so good night!
 One kiss, just one, before I seek my rest—
 Tomorrow, love, I shall be better quite!”
 But Leon closer to his bosom pressed
 The treasure of his heart; and, as the bright
 And mellow moonlight shed its radiance o'er
 Her face, said softly, “We will part no more!”

LVI.

They joined their lips together, once agen,
 And Marion's voice was hushed. Her large blue eyes
 Languished, then gradually closed; and, then,
 Her thoughts of love were only breathed in sighs.
 Her arm hung listless at her side; and, when
 He spoke, she answered not. The ecstasies
 Of that delirious and voluptuous hour
 Had robbed her burning spirit of its power!

LVII.

And Leon hung above her, with a deep,
 Impassioned love. There was no mockery there!
 Her gentle face was calm, as if in sleep,
 'Mid the long curls of her luxuriant hair;
 As though those eyes had never learned to weep,
 Nor known the bitterness of earthly care:—
 A thing of heavenly birth, by mortal found,
 Slumbering, alone, on some enchanted ground.

LVIII.

A long-drawn sigh, as motionless she lay,
 Her kerchief loosed; and, o'er the still serene
 Of her pale bosom, did the moonbeams play.
 He saw—oh! would that he had never seen!—
 And, with his dark eyes flashing, bent his way
 To where her innocence had ever been
 Secure from wrong. He reached the room! 'Tis past!
 Now to the rescue!—ha! the door is fast!

LIX.

And so the pure and moral muse must turn,
 In sorrow, from the chamber, and, resigned
 To what she cannot alter, simply burn
 With indignation of the deepest kind.
 With the shocked muse the poet begs to mourn,
 That such vile thoughts should enter Leon's mind;
 And deems these stanzas should be said or sung,
 As moral fables, by both old and young.

LX.

Oh! happy they, who do together lie,
 As man and wife, in unoffending rest!
 No vain remorse, nor judgment of the sky,
 Shall haunt their dwelling, or their bed molest.
 But he who firmly can the flesh deny,
 And shrinks from naughty bliss, is doubly blest.
 Him shall no Justice mulct of weekly crown,
 To feed a babe he knows not is his own.

LXI.

We therefore leave the couple to repose,
 Trusting implicitly to Leon's honour,
 And feeling certain he already knows
 How infamous 'twould be to cast upon her,
 Who knew not wickedness, that stain which grows
 To misery eternal; while the donor
 Deserts the heart that must with patience take
 The mocking world's envenomed scorn, or break.

LXII.

And so good night to them, since it is done,—
 We cannot censure, though we own them wrong;
 For he was born in Cuba, and she one,
 Whose dove-like heart for love had panted long.
 Then, *entre nous*, we never could spoil fun
 Of any kind. Besides, they were so young,
 That the recording sprite who saw their pillow,
 Would blot out "crime", and write it "peccadillo".

LXIII.

Why not? She was so beautiful, and beauty,
 Combined with love, is such a sore temptation,
 That well might fallen man neglect his duty,
 And run the risk of absolute damnation.
 And then, so warm, so gentle, and so mute, she
 Lay on the breast which joy and exultation
 Swelled to her blushing cheek, that he were cold,
 Whose hand could tear that lambkin from its fold.

LXIV.

And, when the morning came, she still lay sleeping,
 Calm, and unconscious of the loving eye
 That o'er her innocence a watch was keeping;
 Nor feeling, on her brow's tranquility,
 Her Leon's lips their joyous harvest reaping.
 Nor ceased her slumber, till the merry sky
 Lit up the sounding world, and a bright stream
 Of sunshine woke her, and dispelled her dream.

LXV.

And then, oh! then, how thick her blushes came,
 As she concealed her face beneath her arm, —
 Deep, silent chronicles of virgin shame,
 Which heightened every sweet, voluptuous charm ;
 Until, at length, her burning tears became
 Apparent, and her sobs began to alarm
 The anxious youth, who tried, in vain, to raise
 The drooping head that dared not meet his gaze.

LXVI.

What will not Love obtain? At last, a smile
 Came slowly o'er her half-averted face,
 And deeper damask grew her cheek the while.
 Gently did Leon plead, and, to erase
 Her sorrow strive. But nothing would beguile
 Her bashfulness away, or blush efface,
 Until he drew her to his bosom, when
 Her face she buried in his neck; and then —

LXVII.

You say that this no business is of ours!
 We'll draw the curtain, then, although we can
 Assure the pious reader (whose brow lowers)
 That nought but what the chastest eye might scan
 Took place behind the screen; and dare the powers
 Of court ecclesiastic, to a man,
 To prove 'tis written falsely. We do this,
 Lest some should think our morals are amiss.

LXVIII.

We entertain the holiest veneration
 For spotless purity of thought and diction,
 And would, without the slightest hesitation,
 These cantos five consume, if self-conviction
 Proclaimed them incorrect,—though such damnation
 Would rob the world of much delightful fiction —
 And strive to purge our erring mind of dross —
 We mean thoughts lewd, irregular, or gross.

LXIX.

It has been hinted, and 'tis now asserted,
 That this is, really, a virtuous tale.
 There may be some, with judgment so perverted,
 As to suppose licentious thoughts prevail.
 At this the author is not disconcerted,
 But rather doth such ignorance bewail;
 And feels convinced that every pious reader
 Will, from such censure, prove a firm seceder.

LXX.

There are some people, I am quite aware,
 Who treat all serious subjects with derision.
 By such I may be joked upon, but ne'er
 Will sneers or laughter alter my decision.
 They may assert my honour is but bare,
 And my religion merely superstition.
 I trust such persons will repent and pray,
 And live to see the error of their way.

LXXI.

Return we to our tale. It chanced that Leon,
 Finding the cot such comfortable quarters,
 (For there was nought that both did not agree on)
 Forgot that they would probably be martyrs,
 In case the matron came—and she would be on
 Her way that night (their third) t'inspect her daughter's
 Stewardship;—and so their situation
 Was one which called aloud for alteration.

LXXII.

Poor Marion, when she turned to her chronology,
 And found that he must there and then depart,
 Informed her lover, without much apology,
 That from her roof he must that evening start;
 And called on certain names in the mythology—
 For recent matters had enlarged her heart
 And understanding vastly—to protect
 Her luckless swain, and her next step direct.

LXXIII.

“ Within an hour my mother may be here,
 And, if she find you, we’re completely lost !
 Where is the Venus that you mentioned, dear,
 Who rescues lovers by misfortune crossed ?
 Or Cupid—oh ! why cannot Cupid hear
 My cry for help, and bring of friends a host ?
 But cease this prattle. Something must be done,
 And speedily,—in short, you must be gone !

LXXIV.

“ So take this loaf with you—there, that will do—
 I’ll bring another, love, before you’ve done it ;
 And here’s a knife—you’ll want a knife, you know—
 And, as for other things, depend upon it,
 Supplied they shall be, and in plenty too.
 So never fear. And now I’ll fetch my bonnet,
 And lead you to a cave, while yet ’tis light ;
 For there you certainly must lodge to-night.”

LXXV.

“ A cave ?” cried Leon. “ Ay, a cave ! You’ll find
 It snug and warm, and doubtless will be able
 To sleep as easily as if ’twere lined
 With fur or down. And then there is a table
 Of stone to lay your loaf on :—come, be kind,
 And do not grumble, Leon. Comfortable
 It is, I warrant ye ; and here’s my cloak
 Will make a splendid pillow. Better folk,

LXVI.

“ I guess, have lived in caves, or under ground,
 (At least you said so,—there was one a king)
 So pray be quiet, dearest. We go round
 Yon little hill, and then the road will bring
 Us quickly to a green lane, where are found
 Ashes and sycamores and oaks which fling
 A most delightful shade. So come along :
 The way is easy, and we both are strong.”

LXXVII.

And forth they went. 'Twas very wondrous how
 Three little days such mighty change had wrought
 In Marion; for her eye, her cheek, her brow,
 Were far more beautiful and full of thought,
 Than a whole year would warrant. Quickly, now,
 She saw her danger, and, as quickly, brought
 Her plans to bear. The woman rose within her,
 And made her more a saint, though more a sinner.

LXXVIII.

The lane soon came to view, and then they pushed
 Briskly along, beneath the spreading trees,
 Until they reached a quiet spot, where gushed
 A mountain stream appearing ill at ease
 With the white pebbles over which it rushed.
 A rustic bridge its shelving boundaries
 United. This they crossed, then took their way,
 Along th' embankment which before them lay.

LXXIX.

Indeed the scene has been already drawn,
 In the first Canto, which must here suffice.
 Enough to know that Marion found the lane,
 And, further on, the cavern, in a trice.
 So far 'twas lucky; but the nascent dawn
 Of satisfaction fled, when Leon, nice
 In trifles grown, informed her, with a sigh,
 That, sooner than sleep there all night, he'd die.

LXXX.

"Come, come," the damsel cried, "you *must* sleep here,
 In this same cavern, and that's all about it!
 True, it is lonely—but you do not fear:
 True, there's no luxury—you can do without it.
 You will not starve. Here's bread, and water there.
 I'll visit you to-morrow, never doubt it.
 Why, in the name of heaven, then, dearest Leon,
 Make this the time and place to disagree on?"

LXXXI.

Here Leon saw a tear in her blue eye,
 And then reproached himself with being unkind.
 "Forgive me, pretty one!" he cried, "oh! why
 To its best interests was my heart so blind?
 Beneath the wandering stranger's home, the sky,
 These limbs shall rest, and gentlest slumber find.
 Come, kiss me, and depart. Dispel thy fears:
 I will remain! There, there! Nay, nay, no tears!

LXXXII.

"Weep when you find me hung upon a tree,
 Devoured by wild beasts, or attacked by rheum.
 Come here to-morrow, and perchance you'll see
 Your hapless lover has fulfilled his doom.
 Farewell! These very trees were grown to be
 My gibbet, or this horrid cave my tomb.
 No matter. There are robins here, and they
 With leaves will shroud my cold, unconscious clay!

LXXXIII.

"So leave me to my fate—ay, now you smile,
 Perfidious creature, at my wretched plight.
 Leave me to perish in this dungeon, while
 I watch the nameless horrors of the night—
 Ghouls, spectres, demons, sprites, and goblins vile,
 Against whose fury 'twere in vain to fight.
 Come not to-morrow for the fearful proof,
 But, if you should,—why, bring another loaf."

LXXXIV.

"I will," said Marion, "and, to pass the hours,
 The long, long hours, I've brought a little store
 Of learning for you, about herbs and flowers
 And stars and things you never learned before.
 There's something, too, about celestial powers,
 To which I leave you; and now one kiss more!"
 Poor Leon feared the volume was theology;
 It proved a work, however, on astrology.

LXXXV.

So, on the bank he sate, and 'gan to dive
 Into the secrets of its mystic page,
 Partly some information to derive,
 About a science o'er which many a sage
 In ancient times had pondered, and to drive
 The tedious hours away, which seemed an age.
 Devoutly did he read, till welcome night
 Set in, and heaven with tremulous stars grew bright.

LXXXVI.

Then, with one prayer for her he loved, his head
 He laid upon the pillow she had given,
 And soon, in sleep, forgot his rugged bed,
 And the harsh fate which had him thither driven
 From Marion's gentle side. Then wild dreams sped
 Through his bewildered brain—of love, and heaven,
 And herbs, and flowers, and kisses, and decoctions,
 And curious astrological deductions.

LXXXVII.

Spite of his sorrows, he slept very well.
 Perchance the unceasing music of the stream,
 Throughout the silent night, prolonged the spell,
 And, in some measure, influenced his dream!
 For, when he rose, the brilliant sunlight fell
 Upon him with invigorating gleam;
 And countless birds were singing on the branches
 Their usual oratorios and romances.

LXXXVIII.

Doffing his careless garb with ready hand,
 He sought a spot wherein his limbs to cool;
 And, turning from the rough and shallow strand,
 Wandered along until he found a pool,
 Deep, clear, and wide, by morning zephyrs fanned,
 And fringed with flowers, and willows beautiful,
 And waving grass. Upon the bank he stood,
 To admire, then headlong plunged into the flood.

LXXXIX.

Long time did Leon revel in the wave,
 For well could he along its bosom glide,
 Taught from his youth the billows wild to brave,
 On foaming river, or the ocean tide.
 At last he thought of Marion, and how grave
 Her little brow would grow when she espied
 The cavern vacant. A few moments' dressing
 Beheld him ready for his sweetheart's blessing.

XC.

A cry of quick delight was heard, and then
 The sylph-like being he adored was fast
 Within his arms. Her eye had marked him when
 He stooped to pluck the flower which decked his breast,
 And she had flown to greet him, ere his ken
 Forestalled her kind intention. But 'twas past;
 And now she hung upon him, overjoyed,
 Kissing the lips that never could be cloyed.

XCI.

Simple and loving ones! They knew not how
 The blush of morning oft conceals a storm!
 They knew not—thoughtless ones! how should they know?
 That Death may single out the fairest form—
 That soon the placid and angelic brow,
 Cold drops of anguish may bedew—the warm
 And pressing hand be cold, and the blue eye
 Of love be quenched in endless apathy!

XCII.

They knew not these things, so they journeyed on,
 Their Deity the Present. A deep draught
 Of the forbidden nectar, when alone,
 By their enchanted spirits had been quaffed,
 And sweet intoxication had begun
 To veil the future. With one voice they laughed,
 And sang aloud, imprinting many a kiss,
 In their wild fever of unfettered bliss!

XCIII.

She told him that her mother had come home,
 Happy and well, and that he must remain
 A tenant of the cavern, and become
 Inured, for her sake, to the wind and rain :—
 That, above all, he must not learn to roam,
 For fear the matron should a glimpse obtain ;
 Nor ever, ever, his departure take,—
 For, if he left her, her poor heart would break.

XCIV.

Then followed those endearments which no tongue,
 Nor lyre by mortal swept, can e'er express ;—
 Those little words—love's volumes—soft, yet strong,
 When breathed by passion or deep tenderness :—
 The hand's inviting pressure, and the long
 Glance of each other's eyes ; and the fair tress
 Upon the bosom lying to beguile
 The lips to charms which fire the heated pile !

xcv.

These are beyond our faltering power to tell,
 And so we leave imagination to
 Depict what here omitted is, as well
 As possibly she can, and bid adieu
 Reluctantly to love and rhyme, nor swell
 This somewhat lengthy Canto into two.
 For the poor muse is palpably distrest,
 And bards, like beasts of burden, must have rest.

M A R I O N .

CANTO THE FIFTH.

I.

We left the couple whom we sing, together
Within the cave, each in the other blest,—
(Though, by the bye, we're not quite certain whether
We mentioned how they reached that place of rest,)—
And bathed in dulcet pleasures which we neither
Intend to tell, nor wish should be confest,
For reasons which most willingly we ran to
In the last stanzas of the previous Canto.

II.

Namely, our inability to be
The faithful limner of a situation
From which all poets uninspired should shrink. This we
Consider a sufficient explanation,
And therefore bid the reader fancy he
Is once more at the cottage,—a translation
Perhaps unpleasant, but we beg to say
The scene is laid upon another day.

III.

For morn succeeds to night, and night to morning,
 In most mysterious circle. Thus, the time
 Had passed away unconsciously, adorning
 The maiden's cheek with hue of sunnier clime
 Than Albion boasts; for, heat and tempest scorning,
 She looked on absence from her swain as crime,
 And never failed to bear him food and pleasure,
 And daily bring him wealth from her heart's treasure.

IV.

Her mother deemed she had forgotten quite
 The handsome stripling who had gone to sea,
 And marked, with rapture, her child's eye grow bright,
 And her laugh merry as 'twas wont to be;
 And never dreamed but that the slippery wight
 From love-sick fancies was by this time free.
 O cunning Age! how oft does Youth beguile
 Thee with that ignis fatuus, its smile!

V.

Good creature! she was pleased to see her care
 Ripen to womanhood, and be content
 With all the world, their simple lot, and her,
 And thankful for what providence had sent!
 And, frequently, she watched her from her chair,
 With silent joy, on household things intent,
 (At least she thought so, so its all the same)
 And showered down many a blessing on her name!

VI.

Sweet Marion! she indeed was Nature's child,
 With soul above her circumstance, and heart
 Endowed with such affection as the wild
 And untaught vine possesses—without art
 To twine around a stronger stem; a mild
 Yet faithful hold that never must depart
 Save in the common wreck! Ay! she was one
 Whom Innocence and Truth baptised their own!

VII.

And she was made for loving. When she knew
 Nought save the hills around her, she culled flowers,
 And placed them in her garden, where they grew,
 The mute companions of her pensive hours.
 And then she had a little lamb which drew
 A warmer flood of feeling than her bower's
 Unanswering beauty could have done; until
 Her Leon came, the cup of heaven to fill.

VIII.

The nectar was eternal, for her lip
 Had deeply tasted, yet it never fell:—
 An everlasting fountain which could sweep
 Away pain, sorrow, and the tears which swell
 Unconsciously at times to eyes that weep,
 The spirit knows not wherefore. Did she well?
 God knows, who could have dashed the cup away,
 Or turned her fair young beauty into clay.

IX.

They met each morning, and together sate
 Within the cavern; sometimes, too, at night,
 (But that was rarely) to expatiate
 Upon connubial bliss in every light
 Their fancy placed it; or, with joy elate,
 Forth wandered when the sky was warm and bright,
 Renewing vows, and swearing to be true,
 And planning for the future what to do.

X.

In joys like these two rapid moons had waned,
 And yet affection grew. Not even a word
 (For his was not a bosom that complained)
 Of discontent from Leon's lips was heard;
 Albeit the yellow leaves about him rained
 Incessant, as th' autumnal zephyrs stirred,
 And the chill evenings earlier set in,
 And the swol'n brook increased its wonted din.

XI.

Then might be seen, at night, a little fire
 To warm his dwelling, when he sate alone,
 Twisting with ready hand the pliant wire
 To trap th' incautious game; for he had grown
 A wonderful mechanic in such dire
 And ruthless instruments,—since fate had thrown
 The means of dainty living in his way,—
 And learned to kill his dinner every day.

XII.

To Marion did he owe each useful thing—
 In fact, a guardian angel did he find her;
 For many a trifle she contrived to bring,
 And (from pure carelessness) to leave behind her.
 In short, he dwelt there like a petty king,
 And never monarch had a sweetheart kinder.
 Cupid is *not* etherial as folks say,
 But must have meat, and more than once a day.

XIII.

And so our hero gathered in a store
 Of food for winter, and, with some sagacity,
 (Assisted, doubtless, by the volume's lore,
 For slight was his botanical capacity,)
 Sought out such herbs as might be useful or
 Agreeable attendants on voracity.
 This done, he poached upon the stream, and there,
 His luck was more than usually fair.

XIV.

The sturdy trout did dainty Marion dress
 - With pilfered salt, and hang up in a row,
 On either side the cave; while, with no less
 Important air, did Leon, seated, strow
 His herbs in different heaps, and often bless
 His partner's toil with bursts of song, or throw
 His grateful arms about her, and admire
 Her beauty, heightened by the cheerful fire.

XV.

The entrance now was sheltered by a frame
 Of interwoven boughs, whose rude device
 And rustic workmanship could scarcely claim
 The title of a door. Proportions nice
 Were here discarded, and the weightier fame
 Of comfort valued at a higher price ;
 For the thick-matted leaves kept out the cold,
 While, through the roof, the smoke's pale volume rolled.

XVI.

Thus, in the wilderness, as 'twere, had they
 Made a small home, as comfortable quite
 As was required ; and, what with sprinkled hay
 Upon the earthen floor, the glowing light
 Of kindled fuel, with its column gray
 Of curling vapour, and the ever bright
 And smiling eye of woman, Leon had
 No real cause to deem his fortune bad.

XVII.

'Twas afternoon. The sun was setting, when
 Their toil they ended, and, beside her lover,
 The damsel sate to rest and chat, and, then,
 With paler cheek than usual, to discover
 The secrets of her heart. The ready ken
 Of him who listened, marked the change come over
 Her thoughtful face ; and so he questioned why
 It was so. Marion whispered a reply.

XVIII.

An emigrant, benighted in a wood,
 Hearing around him hungry lions roar :—
 A Cockney, in a vault's dim solitude,
 Finding the sexton's double locked the door :—
 A sporting gentleman by blacklegs jewed,
 Without a single shilling in his store :—
 A thrifty tradesman, rising some fine day,
 To learn his head cashier has run away :—

XIX.

The unexpected visit of a friend,
 For wrong unconscious claiming satisfaction :—
 A writ served on us, when about to blend
 Our fate with one whose wealth's her chief attraction :—
 A bill, to which we were induced to lend
 Our name, returned—five hundred and a fraction :—
 Are trifles which paint horror very well,
 And of this passion more than volumes tell.

XX.

But nothing to the glare of Leon's eye,—
 The paleness of his lip,—his stiffening hair,—
 Bewildered visage, and the deep drawn sigh
 Which changed his deadly horror to despair,—
 When Marion told him, in that brief reply,
 With chilly whisper, and mysterious air,
 A piece of news which, hitherto, she rather
 Had feared to tell—that he would be a father!

XXI.

Long did he speechless stand, like one who fears
 No further vengeance than that heaven has piled
 Upon his head. But Marion knelt, in tears,
 And begged him to be calm, nor look so wild ;
 And said that God would see her tender years,
 And pardon all ; and, if she had a child,
 His mercy would extend to it, and they
 Could shelter 'neath the wing that o'er it lay.

XXII.

Then Leon turned. The tear was on his cheek,
 As well as hers, and sorrow now dwelt there.
 With quivering lip he twice essayed to speak,
 But the words choked him, when he saw his fair
 And supplicating victim. Oh ! how meek
 Was she—the deeply injured one—who ne'er
 Upbraided him, not even in thought, and now
 Knelt at his feet, calm, penitent, and low.

XXIII.

With eyes averted, and his hand tight prest
 Against her throbbing bosom, thus he spake:—
 “Joy of thy mother! partner of her rest,
 And humble home! oh! why did heaven take
 Me, worthless, from the grave, to spoil thy nest,
 To mar thy peace, thy sinless heart to break?
 Be still mine own! nor tempt me now to do
 The self-avenging deed, though such be due!

XXIV.

“Yet will I live, if only, love, for thee,
 To shield the mournful ruin I have made.
 Fear not and weep not, dearest one, by me
 Thy trusting heart shall never be betrayed!
 Here, in the wilderness, thine home shall be,—
 No ills to fright thee, no remorse to shade
 Thy little brow,—and every day shall bless,
 With new delights, our simple loneliness!”

XXV.

He said; and, raising her, in long embrace,
 Forgot his previous gloom. And then, once more,
 The smile returned to Marion's gentle face,
 As sweetly and as brightly as before.
 A woman's love had risen in the place
 Of the child's rapture, and th' exhaustless store,
 Like a deep stream, rolled silently along,
 Losing the lightness of its shallow song.

XXVI.

Winter passed by, and Spring came round again,
 Scattering her flowers upon the smiling earth;
 And then, the birds began to sing, and, then,
 The shyly-peeping crocus to have birth.
 Nature, awakening to the wants of men,
 Dissolved, with genial breast, her snowy girth;
 And, in her usual, fascinating way,
 Drove, with sweet smiles, the churlish clouds away.

XXVII.

This figure's new, and must earn some laudation,
 Tho' modest bard should chaunt not his own praise.
 Yet, where there's decent room for commendation,
 Let it be given :—it probably may raise
 A good ambition to enrich his nation,
 With something worthy of immortal bays.
 We say enrich his nation; for the poet
 Is never recompensed, and people know it.

XXVIII.

Innumerable instances could be
 Brought forward to establish this assertion,
 Which shall, however, be omitted. He
 Who reads their lives—say Dr. Johnson's version,—
 Will find that steel, starvation, misery,
 The poison cup, and falsehood's cold aspersion,
 Have been the comrades of their dying day,—
 And blush for England's sons, as well he may.

XXIX.

'Twas Spring then,—March the month, time afternoon,
 The place, the cavern where we now must dwell.
 There Leon sate, as heretofore, alone,
 And lost in thought. Not even a syllable
 Disturbed the silence; and, around, were strown,
 His nets and implements, which served to tell
 Of painful reverie and unwelcome care,
 In him who threw them, all neglected, there.

XXX.

Time had wrought change. Upon his brow there lay
 Lines deeper than when first he sought that spot;
 And solitary pride had worn away
 All traces of the boy, yet suffered not
 Anticipated manhood to decay
 The attributes of youth. The same wild, hot,
 And headlong passion, and the dark proud eye,
 Remained there still in tameless majesty.

XXXI.

A step, light, cheerful—such as only she
 Who loves us can possess—was heard before
 The silent habitation; and then he,
 Its lonely tenant, started to the door.
 What other than the angel could it be,
 Who daily visited his home with more
 Than earthly blessing? Ay! 'twas she whom, never,
 The wintry winds had learned from him to sever!

XXXII.

Oh! beautiful, yea! more than beautiful,
 She looked as she approached. Her large blue eye
 Gleamed with a softer light, and seemed more full
 Of love than aught which lay beneath the sky,
 Or the blue sky itself, and formed to lull
 The sternness of man's soul. So angels hie
 To good men's pillows in the dead of night,
 To guard their souls until the morning light.

XXXIII.

“Speak! speak!” said Leon, “is our love betrayed?”
 And placed her tenderly beside his fire.
 “It is not!” Marion answered, as she laid
 Her hand upon his shoulder to inspire
 The calmness which she felt. “Be not afraid;
 I shall escape, and all be well, if dire,
 And unforeseen calamity mar not
 The regulations of our little cot.”

XXXIV.

Here Leon, who was lying at her feet,
 Hearing the merry tone in which she spake,
 Leaped up, the comfortable news to greet
 With kisses, ere enquiries he could make.
 “And is there, dearest, then, a safe retreat
 From coming sorrow? Answer me, nor break
 My heart with tardiness! Dear Marion, say,
 Not for my sake, but thine, the joyous way!”

XXXV.

“ Listen,” said she, “ and I will tell you all.
 Last night, my mother called me to her side,—
 Oh! how I trembled! for I feared that call
 A dreadful condemnation did betide!
 But gracious heaven vouchsafed me not to fall,
 And with new strength my faltering breast supplied.
 Far different was the tale she had to tell,
 And these her words, which I remember well:—

XXXVI.

“ Dear Marion, thou hast looked on me, and known
 Me for thy mother. I have been to thee
 A nurse and kind companion, till I’ve grown,
 In feeling, what was destined not to be.
 For early pain and trials, long since flown,
 Opened my heart, and made thee dear to me;
 And I have long forgot, by love beguiled,
 To sigh or weep that thou wert not my child.

XXXVII.

“ Seventeen quick years have fled, since strangers’ hands
 Consigned thee to my care. My own babe died,
 And I received thee. From a foreign land
 Thy mother came—she came, but not a bride!
 I see her now, as if enchanter’s wand
 Recalled her in her beauty and her pride!
 ’Tis a sad memory; for one hour betrayed
 My child to death, and me a widow made!

XXXVIII.

“ She was a lady, gentle, kind, and fair,
 Of English blood, and thus had come to die
 In her own land. And soon did wasting care
 Dim the once beauteous lustre of her eye.
 Her thin cheek faded daily, and her hair
 Began to lose the richness of its dye.
 None saw, save I, that mother pine away,
 Nor marked her beauty hasten to decay.

XXXIX.

“ One night, she faintly called me. She was lying
 Upon her bed, and tears were in her eyes.
 Pressing my hand, she told me she was dying,
 And pray'd that when her miserable sighs
 Were hush'd for ever, I would take her crying
 And desolate orphan to my breast, and prize
 It for its helplessness; and cast a veil
 Over its mother's melancholy tale.

XL.

“ She gave me gold and jewels for thy dower,
 And said these memorable words:—“Take these,
 And thanked be God I have it in my power,
 By this last act, my conscience to appease!
 They tell thee what I *have been*—this dark hour
 Informs thee what I *am*! The histories
 Of shame should perish; so I will not tell
 Of wrongs which death obliterates too well!

XLI.

“ “ Part with these baubles when I'm dead—but not
 Oh! not till then,—and let their price maintain
 Thee and mine infant, in some lonely cot
 Built on a hill, or unfrequented plain!
 Remove her from a world, wherein my lot
 Has met with nothing but remorse and pain!
 Oh! grant me this, ere I my breath resign,
 That she may never weep such tears as mine!

XLII.

“ “ Do this, and here is wealth! and, when I'm gone
 From her and thee, and laid the sod below,
 Upon my grave let there be placed a stone,
 But mute and uninscribed, that none may know
 What, even to thee, I would remain unknown!”
 Marion! the poor young creature died, and oh!
 In thee I recognise the angel face
 Which memory ne'er can yield, nor years efface.

XLIII.

“ ‘ She died ; and here, upon this lonely hill,
 Far from the world, I made our little home,—
 Thankful to heaven that so I could fulfil
 My solemn vow, and watch thine heart become
 My daily blessing—as I pray it will
 Be always ! Thou wilt never wish to roam,
 But stay with one who loves thee ; nor forget
 How solemn was the scene when first we met !

XLIV.

“ ‘ Within that little sea-port town was laid
 Her weary head ; and thither do I wend,
 To glean the dear provision which she made
 For thee, when helpless, and thine only friend.
 When last I went there I had nigh betrayed
 Her pious wish. Poor Leon ! But the end
 Was happy, and I’m very glad to see
 That he’s forgotten, as he ought to be.

XLV.

“ ‘ But come, let us be cheerful ; for tho’ sorrow
 Be useful, now and then, it weighs us down
 If sought, and rightly. Thou and I must borrow
 An hour from night. Go fetch my cloak and gown,
 And place them near this warm hearth ; for to-morrow
 Must see me once more trudging to the town.
 Ay, child, to-morrow ; though, of course, the weather,
 If bad, will change the matter altogether.’ ”

XLVI.

Here Leon’s transport quite forgot ’twas bound
 At least to gentleness and moderation.
 He should have recollected how profound
 The interest of the damsel’s situation ;
 Though instances may easily be found,
 Of husbands wanting due consideration,—
 And husbands, too, who long have been resigned
 To annual presents more of kin than kind.

XLVII.

So Marion begg'd, at last, he would be quiet,
 And just remember that she could not bear
 Such boist'rous mirth ; for, though she did not cry, it
 Was painful, as he ought to be aware ;
 Reminding him (and Leon couldn't deny it)
 That her *accouchement* must be very near.
 Which last assurance brought him to his senses,
 And deep contrition for his past offences.

XLVIII.

Seeing this salutary change, she rose,
 Informing him, as kindly as she could,
 That nature hinted she must have repose,
 As being essential to her future good :
 And adding, in no despicable prose—
 Whate'er the rhyme may chance to be—that should
 The dame her jaunt postpone, she would remain
 Within the cot, nor venture forth again.

XLIX.

But, should the morrow find her there alone,
 (As she prayed heaven it might) she would repair
 To his rude home, and thankfully atone
 For all the deprivations which he there
 Had suffered, by an offer of her own.
 This treaty Leon thought was very fair,
 And so accepted it, and swore that he,
 Until she came, an anchorite would be.

L.

Let none resolve. The firmest resolution
 Is apt to waver in affairs of love.
 Remember, Love itself is but delusion,—
 (A fact which modern courtships fully prove)
 An error of the system,—a confusion,—
 And, therefore, a deliberate oath must move
 Reflecting minds with horror. Never swear,
 In any of your dealings with the fair.

LI.

A present does much better than an oath,
 And, what is more, risks not the soul's salvation.
 Women love baubles, and are nothing loath
 To take them. A kiss, screened from observation,
 Goes further than a vow, and gold than both.
 The purest virtue of the purest nation
 Is very often bought—that is to say,
 Dames sometimes marry less for love than pay.

LII.

Change we the theme. When first the gentle muse,
 With loving hand vouchsafed to tune my lyre,
 I strove, in gloomy solitudes, to lose
 The world's remembrance. By the mouldering spire,
 The broken column, or sepulchral yews,
 I sate me down, and nurs'd the kindling fire
 Which burned within me ; hoping that mine eye
 Might pierce the veil which wrapt infinity.

LIII.

I saw the rich man lord it o'er the poor,—
 I saw the poor man grovel to the rich,—
 I asked, was Wealth the threshold of the door
 Which led to Paradise ? Here, in a ditch,
 The beggar yell'd and died ; while there, with store
 Of gaudy pomp, within his sculptured niche,
 A king was laid. I asked, were souls the same,
 Or man's redemption but an empty name ?

LIV.

I looked to history, and saw bishops burning,
 Philosophers imprisoned, poets starving,
 Widows oppressed and cheated, orphans yearning
 In vain for succour. I saw Folly carving
 The full fat joint, and Wisdom coldly turning,
 All supperless, to bed. I saw men swerving
 From right to might, the triumph with the strong,—
 And yet no judgment fall to prove them wrong !

LV.

And then I looked to Nature ; and, behold !
 How beautiful the working of her plan !
 Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter—all unroll'd
 In their due season, since the world began.
 The greatest worthlessness was worshipped gold—
 The greatest brute in God's creation, man !
 And then I thought of Eden, and its loss,
 And that dark deed, the murder on the Cross !

LVI.

Those drops of blood still fell—that piercing cry
 Still rang and echoed through a startled world.
 But were men better ? Christianity
 Had promised peace : her children had unfurled
 The banner of dread war, and given the lie
 To saints' and old men's prophecies, and hurled
 Contempt upon them. Was the Word made good ?
 Or were its glorious Truths misunderstood ?

LVII.

I sought the charnel-house, and, there, I found
 Bones heaped on bones, and slime, and crawling things.
 I saw putrescent lights, and heard the sound
 Of stealthy rats which held high revellings
 On dainty rottenness that strew'd the ground.
 Then filled my heart with dark imaginings.
 These were the beings who, through life, had striven
 To prove them fashioned like the God of heaven !

LVIII.

Philosophy ! thou told'st them they were dust,
 And yet these earth-worms flaunted to the sky !
 Ambition led them, and their heads they thrust
 Up to the throne which held Eternity !
 The soul's bright gem was nothing,—'twas the crust
 That did encase it. And so Vanity
 Built them a shrine, voluptuous and fair,
 And Self was the presiding angel there !

LIX.

“ And is there no remedial way,” I cried,
 “ To make men love their brethren ? ” “ No, Sir, none ! ”
 I turned, and saw a stranger at my side,
 Of solemn bearing and mysterious tone.
 “ Before your time, philanthropists have sighed
 To make men better, just as you have done.
 Take my advice, and burst this empty bubble:
 You’ll find society not worth the trouble.

LX.

“ I saw you sitting on this grave bareheaded,
 And full of sage and serious contemplation.
 A beggar passed you, and his sorrows pleaded,
 And craved some bread to save him from starvation.
 You gave him money, though the coin you needed,
 And thought his blessing sounded like salvation.
 How did that beggar value your relief?
 He stole your hat and pocket handkerchief ! ”

LXI.

It was too true. “ The widow saw it, and
 Came, with the trickling tears upon her cheek.
 She said her husband once had beeves and land,
 But had died penniless, and she, last week,
 In this church-yard had buried him. Your hand
 Again grew liberal to the poor and weak.
 Would you give more ? Inside that little inn,
 You’ll find the hopeful pair, half drunk with gin !

LXII.

“ As for philosophers and politicians,
 Who rot in prisons for opinion’s sake,
 And luckless bishops who, from church divisions,
 Fall by the sword, the scaffold, or the stake ;
 I own them placed in very sad positions,
 But pray permit me this remark to make :—
 They thought such death a meritorious action,
 And, dying happy, had their satisfaction.

LXIII.

"The world's a glorious humbug! we are here,
 Though why, we know not; and we live and die!
 Behold these grave-stones which lie scattered near,
 And, from their tenants, learn your history.
 Some died in hope, and others died in fear,
 Then plunged at once into eternity.
 What is eternity? You can't define it!
 No more can I, sir, so we'll both decline it."

LXIV.

He said, and vanished. Had I then been dreaming?
 Twilight had settled into deeper shade,
 And, o'er my head, the silver stars were gleaming,
 Wondrous and fair as when the world was made.
 What cared those stars, that, to an atom's seeming,
 Life was a pastime at which insects played?
 Sublime contempt was mingled with their glory,—
 In all, save Venus, who protects this story.

LXV.

We were just saying, when this long digression
 Bore the fair muse unconsciously away,—
 And we regret, 'tis not her first transgression—
 That Leon swore, most solemnly, to stay
 Within his habitation,—an expression
 Which, we are sorry, lightly on him lay.
 For the third morning of his thralldom saw
 Him venture forth, of course against the law.

LXVI.

With cautious steps he reached his Marion's dwelling,
 And stood, mute sentinel, behind a tree,
 The lovely being—whose sweet voice, repelling
 His visits there, still haunted him,—to see.
 For hours he lingered near, until the swelling
 Clouds overspread the sky, and the far sea
 Grew indistinct and gray; and then he sought
 His cheerless cave in solitary thought.

LXVII.

The next day saw him there, but all in vain.

No lovely thing to bless his weary sight
 Appeared, no sound his spirit to sustain ;

Save, now and then, some bird that would alight,
 Before the voiceless porch, in search of grain,
 And—as in mockery of the mournful wight
 Who watched him,—hop upon the window sill,
 And of the scene within thence take his fill.

LXVIII.

That bird, thought Leon, had a lov'd one, who,
 When he was absent, stayed within her nest,
 And welcomed his return : he journeyed through
 The labyrinth of boughs, and then was blest !
 Himself how different ! This reflection grew
 Into a phrensy ; and, with heart distrest,
 He saw, once more, the heedless night come on,
 And felt the rain his haggard cheek upon.

LXIX.

Shivering and wet, with miserable soul,
 He stood ; and, as it darker grew, beheld
 The lattice brighten. He could scarce control
 His rebel foot, as gradually swelled
 The inward flame, till it lit up the whole
 Of the adjacent gloom, and far propelled
 A widening column through the shade ; while round,
 Lay thicker night, mixed with the rain's dull sound.

LXX.

Despair now prompted him ; and, with his eye
 Quick glancing, he approached the window. There
 He saw—and, to support him, seized a nigh
 And waving bough—what caused an icy stare !
 With eye-balls fixed, as if eternally,
 He gazed upon the vision ; whilst the glare
 Of the bright flickering fire betrayed a mien,
 How different to the calm repose within !

LXXI.

There, sitting still and silently, was she—
 The gentle Marion! A few days had strewn
 Their lilies on her cheek; and, on her knee,
 There was a sleeping babe,—it was her own!
 She was a mother, and the good decree
 Had fallen lightly on the helpless one!
 No eye, save God's, had seen her pain; and, now,
 A mute prayer dwelt upon her youthful brow!

LXXII.

Three days ago, her swelling breasts had given
 Their earliest nourishment, and bent above
 Her heart's best blessing, as a thing of heaven,
 Requiring of her more than earthly love!
 From dawn till eve, she watched its face—nay, even
 At midnight, over the unconscious dove,
 She passionately hung; and, deeply blest,
 Guarded the small companion of her rest.

LXXIII.

A mother's love—what is it? Something telling
 A new fond tale of rapture to the heart!
 A dawning love, all other loves excelling,
 And of existence sensibly a part!
 A fountain of affection ever welling
 From an oasis of the soul; which art
 Can't imitate, nor words with truth define,—
 So strangely pure, so palpably divine!

LXXIV.

A lame—perchance an impotent—conclusion;
 But let it here suffice. The gentle she,
 Whose virgin charms ne'er suffered the confusion
 Of bliss connubial, should contented be
 With the most distant and most bare allusion
 To population's sacred mystery.
 While they who are numbered in the maids' proscription,
 (Pardon the quaint conceit) need no description.

LXXV.

By this time, Leon's awe had vanished quite;
 And, imperceptibly, a burning sense
 Of his unworthiness to call that bright
 And lovely being his own, with such intense,
 Yet pleasant, force came o'er him, that his sight
 Grew dim and indistinct,—such deference
 Will man to beauty pay. Besides, we rather
 Forget how strange it was to be a father.

LXXVI.

At last he tapped the window, once, twice, thrice,
 Which made poor Marion start; for her light frame
 Was delicate and nervous, as the price
 Of her still slumbering treasure. When the same
 Light touch, however, was renewed, all nice
 Objections faded, and she roused the flame;
 Calling aloud, in fearless tone, to know
 The author of that summons strange and low.

LXXVII.

One word! and then she laid her infant down,
 Quickly, upon the hearth, and sought the door.
 The bolt was drawn, and Leon clasped his own
 And treasured love, with speechless joy, once more!
 She, gentle creature, wept. Her voice had flown.
 And so she led him forward to adore
 Her in her child. Long time they stood to view
 Their own resemblance, faint, yet sweetly true.

LXXVIII.

A thousand fancies rushed through Leon's brain,
 As he beheld that little bosom move.
 Here was a link in the mysterious chain
 Which stretched from earth unto the heaven above!
 Its mother, too! There seemed, around the twain,
 A halo of unutterable love—
 Solemn yet strange, enchanting yet bewildering—
 There's always some unpleasantness with children.

LXXIX.

Shall I go on? The tableau here is fine,
 And cannot be sufficiently commended;
 Because a moral lurks in every line,
 And pious truths with every verse are blended.
 This is a startling fact; but, as good wine
 Requires no bush, the panegyric's ended.
 The tale is done—the Muse becomes imperious—
 The Canto's getting long—so let's be serious.

LXXX.

Thou, who hast wandered so far with me, twining
 Garlands of wild flowers in the forest dell;
 Or, by some old and moss-grown tower reclining,
 Hearing the winds with plaintive music tell
 The glories of the Past,—to thee resigning
 This, my heart's chronicle, I bid farewell!
 Tho' poor the gift, and valueless to thee,
 It hath been sweet companionship to me!

LXXXI.

'Twas to beguile my spirit of the gloom
 Which gathered round it, that I first begun
 These worthless pages. In my little room
 I sate alone, when the world's work was done,
 And others slept, endeavouring to illumine
 My soul's thick darkness, by creating one
 To bear me company, and charm away
 The desolation which upon me lay.

LXXXII.

Midnight was passed,—and, in that magic hour,
 The scene was changed. Then, through the sunny glade,
 I sought, with Marion, some sequestered bower,
 And wooed the fair companion I had made.
 Sweet was that vision's witchcraft! sweet the power
 Which thus my pensive solitude arrayed
 With living shapes! and sweeter still that one,
 Who smiled on all—the gentle Marion!

LXXXIII.

Yet, as in ruined hall, the minstrel's string,
 Which once so sweetly rang, is heard no more,
 So shall this world of mine imagining
 Fade, and grow dark and desolate; and o'er
 Its transient memory shall oblivion fling
 Her dusty pall. And he whose voice, of yore,
 Raised up its habitants, shall, like the scene,
 Depart, as though that voice had never been!

LXXXIV.

So sounds the cry of some one in distress,
 In the lone forest, or the houseless moor;
 Waking, with calls, the insensate wilderness,
 Which answereth not again, save with the roar
 Of winds and rushing waters. Less and less
 Grows the faint voice, then ceases quite; and o'er
 The pilgrim's limbs soon falls death's icy shiver,
 And voice, and heart, and hope, lie hushed for ever!

LXXXV.

For ever? No. There shall be young winds blowing,
 And, from the mound which covereth him, shall spring
 Sweet, simple flowers, though none may heed their growing;
 And joyous birds shall revel on the wing;
 And, in that forest dim, their dark heads bowing,
 Shall the tall trees a solemn requiem sing;
 Whilst, with her tears, the dewy heaven shall weep,
 In nightly sorrow o'er the pilgrim's sleep.

LXXXVI.

There shall be stars above his silent dwelling,
 And, it may be, his spirit shall arise
 From darkness, at their bidding. At the swelling
 Of that mysterious music of the skies,
 This child of earth may wake, and hear the telling
 Of glorious truths, and wond'rous mysteries;
 And see, with filmless eyes, those lands which spread
 Beyond the breathless City of the Dead.

LXXXVII.

So with the thoughts which I have buried here.
Though soon forgotten, like an idle dream,
There may, perchance, in some far distant year,
Be found a heart to echo and esteem
That which mine own hath uttered without fear,—
To wander with my spirit, by the stream,
The whispering forest, or the shady dell,
Which I have loved so deeply and so well!

LXXXVIII.

If such there be, when I have passed away,
I have not raised this monument in vain!
Though rude the form, and ruder still the clay
Whereof 'tis fashioned—yet doth it contain
Wealth which my soul has gathered, day by day,
And which no hand can take from me again,—
High thoughts, and proud—the offspring of a mind
Free as the hills—unfettered as the wind!

THE END.

