COMPLETE POEMS OF KEATS AND SHELLEY

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COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS

JOHN KEATS

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DEDICATION

TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

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

POEMS

"Places of nesting green for Poets made."
Story of Rimini.

I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,
The air was cooling, and so very still,
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scantily leav'd, and finely tapering stems,
Had not yet lost those starry diadems
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new born
And fresh from the clear brook; sweetly they slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves:
For not the faintest motion could be seen
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.
There was wide wand'ring for the greediest eye,
To peer about upon variety;
Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim;
To picture out the quaint, and curious bending
Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending;
Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,
Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves.
I gazed awhile, and felt as light, and free
As though the fanning wings of Mercury
Had play'd upon my heels; I was light-hearted,
And many pleasures to my vision started;
So I straightway began to pluck a posy
Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy.
A bush of May flowers with the bees about them;
Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them;
And let a lush laburnum oversweep them,
And let long grass grow round the roots to keep them
Moist, cool and green; and shade the violets,
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.
A filbert hedge with wild briar overtwined,
And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind
KEATS

Upon their summer thrones; there too should be
The frequent chequer of a youngling tree,
That with a score of light green brethren shoots
From the quaint mossiness of aged roots:
Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters
Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters
The spreading blue-bells: it may haply morn
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn
From their fresh beds, and scattered thoughtlessly
By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds!
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids
That in these days your praises should be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung;
And when again your dewiness he kisses,
Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses:
So haply when I rove in some far vale,
His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight:
With wings of gentle blush, o'er delicate white,
And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Linger awhile upon some bending planks
That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,
And watch Intently Nature's gentle doings:
They will be found softer than ring-dove's cooings.
How silent comes the water round that bend;
Not the minutest whisper does it send
To the o'erhanging sallows: blades of grass
Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass.

Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach
To where the hurrying freshnesses ayre preach
A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds;
Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,
Staying their wavy bodies against the streams,
To taste the luxury of sunny beams
Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand.
If you but scantily hold out the hand,
That very instant not one will remain;

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But turn your eye, and they are there again.
The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses,
And cool themselves among the em'rald cresses;
The while they cool themselves, they freshness give,
And moisture, that the bowery green may live:
So keeping up an interchange of favours,
Like good men in the truth of their behaviours.
Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
From low hung branches; little space they stop;
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek;
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak;
Or perhaps, to show their black, and golden wings,
Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.

Were I in such a place, I sure should pray
That naughtless sweet, might call my thoughts away,
Than the soft rustle of a maiden's gown
Fanning away the dandelion's down;
Than the light music of her nimble toes
Pattling against the sorrel as she goes.
How she would start, and blush, thus to be caught
Playing in all her innocence of thought,
O let me lead her gently o'er the brook,
Watch her half-smiling lips, and downward look;
O let me for one moment touch her wrist;
Let me one moment to her breathing list:
And as she leaves me may she often turn
Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburne.
What next? A tuft of evening primroses,
O'er which the mind may hover till it dozes;
O'er which it well might take a pleasant sleep,
But that 'tis ever startled by the leap
Of buds into ripe flowers; or by the flitting
Of diverse moths, that aye their rest are quitting;
Or by the moon lifting her silver rim
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
Coming into the blue with all her light.

O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight
Of this fair world, and all its gentle lives;
Spangler of cloudy, halo of crystal rivers,
Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling streams,
Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams,
Lover of loneliness, and wandering,
Of upcast eye, and tender pondering!
Thou must I praise above all other glories
That smile us on to tell delightful stories.
For what has made the sage or poet write
But the fair paradise of Nature's light
In the calm grandeur of a sober line,
We see the waving of the mountain pine;
And when a tale is beautifully staid,
We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade:
When it is moving on luxurious wings,
The soul is lost in pleasant smootherings:
Fair dewy roses brush against our faces,
And flowering laurels spring from diamond vases;
O'er head we see the jasmine and sweet briar,
And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire;
While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles
Charms us at once away from all our troubles:
So that we feel uplifted from the world,
Walking upon the white clouds wreath'd and curl'd,
So felt he, who first told, how Psyche went
On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment;
What Psyche felt, and Love, when their full lips
First touch'd; what amorous, and fondling nips
They gave each other's cheeks; with all their sighs,
And how they kiss each other's tremulous eyes:
The silver lamp,—the ravishment,—the wonder—
The darkness,—loneliness,—the fearful thunder;
Their woes gone by, and both to heaven uplifted,
To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne.
So did he feel, who pull'd the boughs aside,
That we might look into a forest wide,
To catch a glimpse of Fauns, and Dryades
Coming with softest rustle through the trees;
And garlands woven of flowers wild, and sweet,
Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet;
Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled
Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful tread.
Poor nymph,—poor Pan,—how he did weep to find,
Naught but a lovely sighing of the wind
Along the reedy stream; a half-heard strain,
Full of sweet desolation—balmy pain.

What first inspired a bard of old to sing
Narcissus pining o'er the untainted spring?
In some delicious ramble, he had found
A little space, with boughs all woven round;
And in the midst of all, a clearer pool
Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool.
The blue sky here, and there, serenely peeping
Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping.
And on the bank a lonely flower he spied,
A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride,

Dropping its beauty o'er the watery clearness,
To woo its own sad image into nearness:
Deaf to light Zephyrus it would not move;
But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love.
So while the poet stood in this sweet spot,
Some fainter gleamings o'er his fancy shot;
Nor was it long ere he had told the tale
Of young Narcissus, and sad Echo's bale.

Where had he been, from whose warm head out-flew
That sweetest of all songs, that ever new,
That aye refreshing, pure deliciousness,
Coming ever to bless
The wanderer by moonlight? to him bringing
Shapes from the invisible world; unearthly singing
From out the middle air, from flowery nests,
And from the pillowy silkiness that rests
Full in the speculation of the stars.
Ah! surely he had burst our mortal bars;
Into some wondrous region he had gone,
To search for thee, divine Endymion!

He was a Poet, sure a lover too,
Who stood on Latmus' top, what time there blew
Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below;
And brought in faintness solemn, sweet, and slow
A hymn from Dian's temple; while upswept,
The incense went to her own starry dwelling.
But though her face was clear as infant's eyes,
Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice,
The Poet wept at her so piteous fate,
Wept that such beauty should be desolate:
So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won,
And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

Queen of the wide air; thou most lovely queen
Of all the brightness that mine eyes have seen!
As thou exceedest all things in thy shine,
So every tale, does this sweet tale of thine.
O for three words of honey, that I might
Tell but one wonder of thy bridal night!

Where distant ships do seem to show their keels,
Phoebus awhile delay'd his mighty wheels,
And turn'd to smile upon thy bashful eyes,
Ere he his unseen pomp would solemnize,
The evening weather was so bright, and clear,
KEATS

That men of health were of unusual cheer;
Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call,
Or young Apollo on the pedestal:
And lovely women were as fair and warm,
As Venus looking sideways in alarm.
The breezes were ethereal, and pure,
And crept through half-closed lattices to cure
The languid sick; it cool'd their fever'd sleep,
And soothe'd them into slumberies full and deep.

Soon they awoke clear eyed; nor burnt with thristing,
Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting:
And springing up, they met the world's ring sight
Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight;
Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and stare,
And on their placid foreheads part the hair.

Young men, and maidens at each other gaze'd
With hands held back, and motionless, amaz'd
To see the brightness in each other's eyes;
And so they stood, till'd with a sweet surprise,
Until their tongues were loo'd in poesy.

Therefore no lover did of anguish die;
But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken,
Made silken ties, that never may be broken.
Cynthia! I cannot tell the greater blisses,
That follow'd thine, and thy dear shepherd's kisses:

Was there a poet born?—but now no more,
My wandering spirit must no further soar.—

SPECIMEN OF AN INDUCTION TO A POEM

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry:
For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye.
Not like the formal crest of latter days:
But bending in a thousand graceful ways;
So graceful, that it seems no mortal hand,
Or e'en the touch of Archimago's wand,
Could charm them into such an attitude.

We must think rather, that in playful mood,
Some mountain breeze had turn'd its chief delight,
To show this wonder of its gentle might.

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;
For while I muse, the lance points slantingly
Adwart the morning air; some lady sweet,
Who cannot feel for cold her tender feet,
From the worn top of some old battlement
Hails it with tears, her stout defender sent:

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And from her own pure self no joy dispensing,
Wraps round her ample robe with happy trembling.
Sometimes, when the good Knight his rest would take,
It is reflect'd, clearly, in a lake.
With the young ashen boughs, 'gainst which it rests,
And th' half seen mossiness of linnets' nests.

Ah! shall I ever tell its cruelty,
When the fire flashes from a warrior's eye,
And his tremendous hand is grasping it,
And his dark brow for very wrath is knit?
Or when his spirit, with more calm intent,
Leaps to the honors of a tournament,
And makes the gazers round about the ring
Stare at the grandeur of the ballancing?

No, not this far off;—then how shall I
Revive the dying tones of minstrelsy,
Which linger yet about long gothic arches,
In dark green ivy, and among wild larches.

How sing the splendor of the revelries,
When butts of wine are drunk off to the lees?
And that bright lance, against the fretted wall,
Beneath the shade of stately bannier.

Is slung with shining cuirass, sword, and shield?
Where ye may see a spur in bloody field.

Light-footed damsons move with gentle pace,
Round the wide hall, and show their happy faces;
Or stand in courtly talk by fives and sevens.
Like those fair stars that twinkle in the heavens.

Yet must I tell a tale of chivalry:
Or wherefore comes that steed so proudly by?
Wherefore more proudly does the gentle knight,
Rein in the swelling of his ample might?

Spenser! thy brows are arched, open, kind,
And come like a clear sun-rise to my mind;
And always does my heart with pleasure dance,
When I think on thy noble countenance.

Where never yet was sought more earthly seen
That think upon freshness of thy laurels green.

Therefore, great bard, I not so fearfully
Call on thy gentle spirit to hover nigh
My daring steps: or if thy tender cares,
Thus startled unaware.

Be jealous that the foot of other might
Should hardly follow that bright path of light.
Trac'd by thy lov'd Libertas; he will speak,
And tell thee that my prayer is very meek;
KEATS

That I will follow with due reverence,
And start with awe at mine own strange pretence.
Him thou wilt hear; so I will rest in hope
To see wide plains, fair trees and lawny slope:
The morn, the eve, the light, the shade, the flowers;
Clear streams, smooth lakes, and overlooking towers.

CALIDORE

A FRAGMENT

Young Calidore is paddling o'er the lake;
His healthful spirit eager and awake
To feel the beauty of a silent eve,
Which seem'd full loth this happy world to leave;
The light dwelt o'er the scene so lingeringly.
He bares his forehead to the cool blue sky,
And smiles at the far clearness all around,
Until his heart is well nigh over wound,
And turns for calmness to the pleasant green
Of easy slopes, and shadowy trees that lean
So elegantly o'er the waters' brim
And show their blossoms trim
Scarcely can his clear and nimble eye-sight follow
The freaks, and dartings of the black-wing'd swallower,
Delighting much, to see it half at rest,
Dip so refreshingly its wings, and breast
'Gainst the smooth surface, and to mark anon,
The widening circles into nothing gone.

And now the sharp keel of his little boat
Comes up with ripple, and with easy float,
And glides into a bed of water lilies.
Broad leav'd are they and their white canopies,
Are upward turn'd to catch the heavens' dew.
Near to a little island's point they grew;
Whence Calidore might have the godliest view
Of this sweet spot of earth. The bowery shore
Went off in gentle windings to the hour
And light blue mountains: but no breathing man
With a warm heart, and eye prepared to scan
Nature's clear beauty, could pass lightly by
Objects that look'd out so invitingly
On either side. These, gentle Calidore
Greeted, as he had known them long before.
The sidelong view of swelling leathness,
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Which the glad setting sun, in gold doth dress;
Whence ever, and anon the jay outsprings,
And scales upon the beauty of its wings.
The lonely turret, shatter'd, and outworn,
Stands venerably proud; too proud to mourn
Its long lost grandeur: fir trees grow around,
Aye dropping their hard fruit upon the ground.
The little chapel with the cross above
Upholding wreaths of ivy; the white dove,
That on the window spreads his feathers light,
And seems from purple clouds to wing its flight.
Green tufted islands casting their soft shades
Across the lake; sequent'rd leafy glades,
That through the dimness of their twilight show
Large dock leaves, spiral foxgloves, or the glow
Of the wild cat's eyes, or the silvery stems
Of delicate birch trees, or long grass which hems
A little brook. The youth had long been viewing
These pleasant things, and heaven was bedewing
The mountain flowers, when his glad senses caught
A trumpet's silver voice. Ah! it was fraught
With many joys for him: the warbler's ken
Had found white courser's prancing in the glen;
Friends very dear to him he soon will see;
So pushes off his boat most eagerly,
And soon upon the lake he skims along,
Deaf to the nightingale's first under-song;
Nor minds he the white swans that dream so sweetly:
His spirit flies before him so completely.

And now he turns a jutting point of land,
Whence may be seen the castle gloomy, and grand:
Nor will a bee buzz round two swelling peaches,
Before the point of his light shallop reaches
Those marble steps that through the water dip:
Now over them he goes with hasty trip
And scarcely stays to ope the folding doors:
Anon he leaps along the oaken floors
Of halls and corridors.
Delicious sounds! those little bright-eyed things
That float about the air on azure wings,
Had been less heartfelt by him than the clang
Of clattering hoods; into the court he sprang,
Just as two noble steeds, and palfreys twain,
Were slanting out their necks with loosened rein;
While from beneath the threaten'ng portcullis
They brought their happy burthens. What a kiss,
KEATS

What gentle squeeze he gave each lady's hand?
How tremblingly their delicate ankles spanned!
Into how sweet a trance his soul was gone,
White whisperings of affection
Made him delay to let their tender feet
Come to the earth; with an incline so sweet
From their low pale cries o'er his neck they bent:
And whether there were tears of languishment,
Or that the evening dew had pearl'd their tresses
He feels a moisture on his cheek, and blesses
With lips that tremble, and with glistening eye,
All the soft luxury
That nestled in his arms. A dimpled hand,
Fair as some wonder out of fairy land,
Hung from his shoulder like the drooping flowers
Of whitest Cassia, fresh from summer showers;
And this he fondled with his happy cheek
As if for joy he would no further seek;
When the kind voice of good Sir Clerimond
Came to his ear, like something from beyond
His present being; so he gently drew
His warm arms, thrilling now with pulses new,
From their sweet thrall, and forward meekly bending,
Thank'd heaven that his joy was never ending;
While 'gainst his forehead he devoutly press'd
A hand heaven made to succour the distress'd;
A hand that from the world's bleak promontory
Had lifted Calidore for deeds of Glory.

Amid the pages, and the torches' glare,
There stood a knight, patting the flowing hair
Of his proud horse's mane; he was withal
A man of elegance, and stature tall:
So that the waving of his plumes would be
High as the berries of a wild ash tree,
Or as the winged cap of Mercury.
His armour was so dexterously wrought
In shape, that sure no living man had thought
It hard, and heavy steel; but that indeed
It was some glorious form, some splendid weed,
In which a spirit new come from the skies
Might live, and show itself to human eyes.
'Tis the far-fam'd, the brave Sir Gondibert,
Said the good man to Calidore alert;
While the young warrior with a step of grace
Came up—a courtly smile upon his face,
And mailed hand held out, ready to greet

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

The large-eyed wonder, and ambitious heat
Of the aspiring boy; who as he led
Those smiling ladies, often turn'd his head
To admire the visor arch'd so gracefully.
Over a knightly brow; while they went by
The lamps that from the high roof'd hall were pendent,
And gave the steel a shining quite transcendent.

Soon in a pleasant chamber they are seated,
The sweet-lipp'd ladies have already greeted
All the green leaves that round the window clamber,
To show their purple stars, and bells of amber.
Sir Gondibert has doff'd his shining steel,
Gladdening in the free, and airy feel
Of a light mantle; and while Clerimond
Is looking round about him with a fond,
And placid eye, young Calidore is burning
To hear of knightly deeds, and gallant spurning
Of all unworthiness; and how the strong of arm
Kept off dismay, and terror, and alarm
From lovely women: while bountiful of this,
He gav'e each damsel's hand so warm a kiss,
And had such manly ardour in his eye,
That each at other look'd half staringly;
And then their features started into smiles
Sweet as blue heavens o'er enchanted isles.

Softly the breezes from the forest came,
Softly they blew aside the taper's flame;
Clear was the song from Philomel's far bower;
Grateful the incense from the lime-tree flower;
Mysterious, wild, the far heard trumpet's tone;
Lovely the moon in ether, all alone:
Sweet too the converse of these happy mortals,
As that of busy spirits when the portals
Are closing in the west; or that soft humming
We hear around when Hesperus is coming.
Sweet be their sleep. * * * * * *

TO SOME LADIES

What though while the wonders of nature exploring;
I cannot your light, many footsteps attend;
Nor even to accents, that almost adoring;
Bless Cynthia's face, the enthusiast's friend.
KEATS

Yet over the steep, whence the mountain stream rushes,
With you, kindest friends, in idea I muse;
Mark the clear tumbling crystal, its passionate gushes,
In spray that the wild flower kindly bedews.

Why linger you so, the wild labyrinth strolling?
Why breathless, unable your bliss to declare?
Ah! you list to the nightingale’s tender condoling,
Responsive to sylphs, in the moon-beamy air.

’Tis morn, and the flowers with dew are yet drooping,
I see you are treading the verge of the sea:
And now! ah, I see it—you just now are stooping
To pick up the keep-sake intended for me.

If a cherub, on pinions of silver descending,
Had brought me a gem from the fret-work of heaven;
And smiles, with his star-cheering voice sweetly blending,
The blessings of Tighe had melodiously given;

It had not created a warmer emotion
Than the present, fair nymphs, I was blest with from you,
Than the shell, from the bright golden sands of the ocean
Which the emerald waves at your feet gladly threw.

For, indeed, ’tis a sweet and peculiar pleasure
(And blissful is he who such happiness finds),
To possess but a span of the hour of leisure,
In elegant, pure, and aerial minds.

ON RECEIVING A CURIOUS SHELL, AND A COPY OF VERSES,
FROM THE SAME LADIES

Hast thou from the caves of Golconda, a gem
Pure as the ice-drop that froze on the mountain?
Bright as the humming-bird’s green diadem,
When it flutters in sun-beams that shine through a fountain?

Hast thou a goblet for dark sparkling wine?
That goblet right heavy, and massy, and gold?
And splendidly mark’d with the story divine
Of Armida the fair, and Rinaldo the bold?

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

Hast thou a steed with a mane richly flowing?
Hast thou a sword that thine enemy’s smart is?
Hast thou a trumpet rich melodies blowing?
And wear’st thou the shield of the fam’d Britomartis?

What is it that hangs from thy shoulder, so brave,
Embroider’d with many a spring peering flower?
Is it a scarf that thy fair lady gave?
And hastest thou now to that fair lady’s bower?

Ah! courteous Sir Knight, with large joy thou art crown’d;
Full many the glories that brighten thy youth!
I will tell thee my blisses, which richly abound
In magical powers to bless, and to sooth.

On this scroll thou seest written in characters fair
A sun-beamy tale of a wreath, and a chain;
And, warrior, it nurtures the property rare
Of charming my mind from the trammels of pain.

This canopy mark: ’tis the work of a day;
Beneath its rich shade did King Oberon languish,
When lovely Titania was far, far away,
And cruelly left him to sorrow, and anguish.

There, oft would he bring from his soft sighing lute
Wild strains to which, spell-bound, the nightingales listen’d;
The wondering spirits of heaven were mute,
And tears ’mong the dewdrops of morning oft glisten’d.

In this little dome, all those melodies strange,
Soft, plaintive, and melting, for ever will sigh;
Nor e’er will the notes from their tenderness change;
Nor e’er will the music of Oberon die.

So, when I am in a voluptuous vein,
I pillow my head on the sweets of the rose,
And list to the tale of the wreath, and the chain,
Till its echoes depart; then I sink to repose.

Adieu, valiant Eric! with joy thou art crown’d;
Full many the glories that brighten thy youth,
I too have my blisses, which richly abound
In magical powers, to bless and to sooth.
TO ** * **

[Georgiana Augusta Wylie, afterwards
MRS. GEORGE KEATS]

Hadst thou liv'd in days of old,
O what wonders had been told
Of thy lively countenance;
And thy humrid eyes that dance
In the midst of their own brightness;
In the very face of lightness.
Over which twin eyebrows, leaping,
Picture out each lovely meaning:
In a dainty bend they lie,
Like to streaks across the sky,
Or the feathers from a crown,
Fallen on a bed of snow.
Of thy dark hair, that extends
Into many graceful bends:
As the leaves of Hellebore
Turn to whence they sprung before
And behind each ample curl
Pepas the richness of a pearl.
Downward too flows many a tress
With a glossy waviness;
Full, and round like globes that rise
From the censer to the skies.
Through sunny air, Add too, the sweetness
Of thy honey'd voice; the neatness
Of thine ankle lightly turn'd;
With those beauties, scarce discern'd,
Kept with such sweet privacy,
That they seldom meet the eye
Of the little loves that fly
Round about with eager pry;
Saving when, with freshening lave,
Thou dippst them in the taintless wave;
Like twin water lilies, born
In the coolness of the morn.
O, if thou hadst breathed then,
Now the Muses had been ten.
Couldst thou wish for lineage higher
Than twin sister of Thalía?
At least for ever, evenmore,
Will I call the Graces four.

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

Hadst thou liv'd when chivalry,
Lifted up her lance on high,
Tell me what thou wouldst have been?
Ahi! I see the silver sheen
Of thy broider'd, floating vest,
Cow'ring half thine ivory breast;
Which, O heavens! I should see,
But that cruel destiny
Has placed a golden curass there;
Keeping secret what is fair,
Like sunbeams in a cloudlet nested.
Thy locks in knighly casque are rested;
O'er which bend four milky plumes
Like the gentle lily's blooms.
Springing from a costly vase.
See with what a stately pace
Comes thine alabaster steed;
Sert son of heroic deed.
O'er his loins, his trappings glow.
Like the northern lights on snow.
Mount his back! thy sword unsheath!
Sign of the enchanter's death;
Bane of every wicked spell
Silencer of dragon's yell.
Alas! thou this wilt never do;
Thou art an enchantress too.
And wilt surely never spill
Blood of those whose eyes can kill.

TO HOPE

When by my solitary hearth I sit,
And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom;
When no fair dreams before my 'mind's eye' flit,
And the bare hearth of life presents no bloom;
Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head.

Where'er I wander, at the fall of night,
Where wanen boughs shut out the moon's bright ray,
Should sad Despondency my musings fright,
And drown, to drive fair Cheerfulness away,
Peep with the moon-beams through the leafy roof
And keep that fiend Despondence far aloof.
KEATS

Should Disappointment, parent of Despair,
Strive for her son to seize my careless heart;
When, like a cloud, he sits upon the air,
Preparing on his spell-bound prey to dart:
Chace him away, sweet Hope, with visage bright,
And fright him as the morning frightens night!

Whene'er the fate of those I hold most dear
Tells to my fearful breast a tale of sorrow,
O bright-eyed Hope, my morbid fancy cheer;
Let me awhile thy sweetest comforts borrow:
Thy heaven-born radiance around me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

Should e'er unhappy love my bosom pain,
From cruel parents, or relentless fair;
O let me think it is not quite in vain
To sigh out sonnets to the midnight air!
Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

In the long vista of the years to roll,
Let me not see our country's honour fade:
O let me see our land retain her soul,
Her pride, her freedom; and not freedom's shade.
From thy bright eyes unusual brightness shed—
Beneath thy pinions canopied my head!

Let me not see the patriot's high bequest,
Great Liberty! how great in plain attire!
With the base purple of a court oppress'd,
Bowing her head, and ready to expire:
But let me see thee stoop from heaven on wings
That fill the skies with silver glitterings!

And as, in sparkling majesty, a star
Gilds the bright summit of some gloomy cloud;
Brightening the half veil'd face of heaven afar:
So, when dark thoughts my boding spirit shroud,
Sweet Hope, celestial influence round me shed,
Waving thy silver pinions o'er my head.

February, 1818.

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

IMITATION OF SPENSER

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

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

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

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

[EDMONTON.]
KEATS

WOMAN! when I behold thee flippant, vain,
Inconstant, childish, proud, and full of fancies;
Without that modest softening that enhances
The downcast eye, repentant of the pain
That its mild light creates to heal again:
E'en then, elate, my spirit leaps, and prances,
E'en then my soul with exultation dances.

For that to love, so long, I've dormant lain:
But when I see thee meek, and kind, and tender,
Heaven! how desperately do I adore
Thy winning graces,—to be thy defender
I ho! to be a Castor—
A very Red Cross Knight—a stout Leander—
Might I be loved by thee like these of yore.

Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair;
Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy breast,
Are things on which the dazzled senses rest
Till the fond, fixed eyes, forget they stare.

From such fine pictures, heavens! I cannot dare
To turn my admiration, though unpossess'd
They be of what is worthy,—though not drest
In lovely modesty, and virtues rare.
Yet these I leave as thoughtless as a lark;
These lures I straight forget,—e'en ere I dine,
Or thrice my palate moisten; but when I mark
Such charms with mild intelligences shine,
My ear is open like a greedy shark,
To catch the tunings of a voice divine.

Ah! who can e'er forget so fair a being?
Who can forget her half retiring sweets?
For man's protection. Surely the All-seeing,
Who joys to see us with his gifts agreeing,
Will never give him phantoms, who intreats
Such innocence to ruin,—who vilely cheats
A dove-like bosom. In truth there is no freeing
One's thoughts from such a beauty: when I hear
A lay that once I saw her hand awake,
Her form seems floating palpable, and near;
Had I e'er seen her from an arbour take
A dewy flower, oft would that hand appear;
And o'er my eyes the trembling moisture shake.

EPISTLES

TO GEORGE FELTON MATHews

SWEET are the pleasures that to verse belong,
And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song;
Nor can remembrance, Mathew! bring to view
A fate more pleasing, a delight more true
Than that in which the brother Poets joy'd,
Who with combined powers, their wit employ'd
To raise a trophy to the drama's muse,
The thought of this great partnership diffuses
Over the genius loving heart, a feeling
Of all that's high, and great, and good, and healing.

Too partial friend! fain would I follow thee
Past each horizon of fine poesy,
Fain would I echo back each pleasant note
As o'er Sicilian seas, clear anthems float.
'Mong the light skimming gondolas far parted,
Just when the sun his farewell beam has darted:
But 'tis impossible; far different cares
Beckon me sternly from soft Lydian airs,
And hold my faculties so long in thrall,
That I am oft in doubt whether at all
I shall again see Phoebus in the morning:
Or flush'd Aurora in the roseate dawning,
Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream;
Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam;
Or again witness what with thee I've seen,
The dew by fairy feet swept from the green,
After a night of some quaint jubilee
Which every elf and Fay had come to see.

When bright processions took their airy march
Beneath the curved moon's triumphal arch.
But might I now each passing moment give
To the coy muse, with me she would not live
In this dark city, nor would condescend
'Mid contradictions her delights to lend.
Should e'er the fine-eyed maid to me be kind,
Ah! surely it must be when'er I find
Some flowery spot, sequester'd, wild, romantic,
That often must have seen a poet frantic;
Where oaks, that erst the Druid knew, are growing,
KEATS

And flowers, the glory of one day, are blowing;
Where the dark-leaf'd laburnum's drooping clusters
Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres,
And intertwined the cassia's arms unite,
With its own drooping buds, but very white.
Where on one side are covert branches hung,
'Mong which the nightingales have always sung
In leafy quiet: where to pry, aloof,
Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof,
Would be to find where violet beds were nesting,
And where the bee with cowslip bells was wrestling.
There must be too a ruin dark, and gloomy,
To say 'joy not too much in all that's bloomy.'

Yet this is vain—O Mathew lend thy aid
To find a place where I may greet the maid—
Where we may soft humanity put on,
And sit, and rhyme and think on Chatterton;
And that warm-hearted Shakespeare sent to meet him
Four laurell'd spirits, heaven-ward to intreat him.
With reverence would we speak of all the sages
Who have left streaks of light athwart their ages:
And thou shouldst moralize on Milton's blindness,
And mourn the fearful dearth of human kindness
To those who strove with the bright golden wing
Of genius, to flap away each sting
Thrown by the pitiless world. We next could tell
Of those who in the cause of freedom fell;
Of our own Alfred, of Helvetian Tell;
Of him whose name to ev'ry heart's a solace, a
High-minded and unbending William Wallace.
While to the rugged north our musing turns
We well might drop a tear for him, and Burns.
Felton! without incitements such as these,
How vain for me the niggard Muse to tease:
For thee, she will thy every dwelling grace,
And make 'a sun-shine in a shady place.'
For thou wast once a flowret blooming still,
Close to the source, bright, pure, and undeil'd,
Whence rush the streams of song: in happy hour
Came chaste Diana from her shady bower,
Just as the sun was from the east uprising;
And, as for him some gift she was desiring,
Beheld thee, pluck'd thee, cast thee in the stream
To meet her glorious brother's greeting beam.
I marvel much that thou hast never told
How, from a flower, into a fish of gold

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE

Full many a dreary hour have I past,
My brain bewild'er'd, and my mind o'ercast
With heaviness; in seasons when I've thought
No spheric strains by me could e'er be caught
From the blue dome, though I to dimness gaze
On the far depth where sheeted lightning plays;
Or, on the wavy grass outstretch'd supinely,
To 'mong the stars, to strive to think divinely:
That I should never hear Apollo's song,
Though feathery clouds were floating all along
The purple west, and, two bright streaks between,
The golden lyre itself were dimly seen;
That the still murmur of the honey bee
Would never teach a rural song to me:
That the bright glance from beauty's eyelids slanting
Would never make a lay of mine enchanting,
Or warm my breast with ardour to unfold
Some tale of love and arms in time of old.

But there are times, when those that love the bay,
Fly from all sorrowing far, far away;
A sudden glow comes on them, naught they see
In water, earth, or air, but poesy.
It has been said, dear George, and true I hold it,
(For knightly Spenser to Libertas told it,
That when a Poet is in such a trance,
In air he sees white coursers paw, and prance,
Bestridden of gay knights, in gay apparel,
Who at each other tilt in playful quarrel,
And what we, ignorantly, sheet-lightning call,
Is the swift opening of their wide portal,
When the bright warder blows his trumpet clear,
Whose tones reach naught on earth but Poet's ear.

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

Apollo chang'd thee; how thou next didst seem
A black-eyed swan upon the widening stream;
And when thou first didst in that mirror trace
The placid features of a human face?
That thou hast never told thy travels strange,
And all the wonders of the maze range
O'er pebbly crystal, and o'er golden sands;
Kissing thy daily food from Nalad's pearly hands.

November, 1815.
When these enchanted portals open wide,
And through the light the horsemen swiftly glide,
The Poet's eye can reach those golden halls,
And view the glory of their festivals:
Their ladies fair, that in the distance seem
Fit for the silv'ring of a sorcer's dream;
Their rich brimm'd goblets, that incessant run
Like the bright spots that move about the sun;
And, when upheld, the wine from each bright jar
Pours with the lustre of a falling star.
Yet further off, are dimly seen their bowers,
Of which, no mortal eye can reach the flowers;
And 'tis right just, for well Apollo knows
Twould make the Poet quarrel with the rose.
All that's reveal'd from that fair seat of blisses,
Is, the clear fountains' interchanging kisses,
As gracefully descending, light and thin,
Like silver streaks across a dolphin's fin,
When he upswimmeth from the coral caves,
And sports with half his tail above the waves.

These wonders strange he sees, and many more,
Whose head is pregnant with poetic lore.
Should he upon an evening ramble fare
With forehead to the soothing breezes bare;
Would he not gaze, but the dark, silent blue
With all its diamonds trembling through and through?
Or the coy moon, when in the waviness
Of whitest clouds she does her beauty dress,
And staidly paces higher up, and higher,
Like a sweet nun in holy-day attire?
Ah, yes! much more would start into his sight—
The revelries, and mysteries of night;
And should I ever see them, I will tell you
Such tales as needs must with amazement spell you.

These are the living pleasures of the bard:
But richer far posterity's award.
What does he murmur with his latest breath,
While his proud eye looks through the film of death?
"What though I leave this dull, and earthly mould,
Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold
With after times.—The patriot shall feel
My stern alarm, and unsheathe his steel;
Or, in the senate thunder out my numbers
To startle princes from their easy slumbers.

The sage will mingle with each moral theme
My happy thoughts sententious; he will teem
With lofty periods when my verses fire him,
And then I'll stoop from heaven to inspire him.
Lays I have left of such a dear delight
That maid's will sing them on their bridal night.
Gay villagers, upon a morn,
When the bright spots their gentle limbs with play,
And form'd a snowy circle on the grass,
And plac'd in midst of all that lovely lass
Who chosen is their queen,—with her fine head
Crowned with flowers purple, white, and red:
For there the lilly, and the musk-rose, sighing,
Are emblems true of hapless lovers dying:
Between her breasts, that never yet felt trouble,
A bunch of violets full blown, and double,
Serenely sleep,—she from a casket takes
A little book,—and then a joy awakes.
About each youthful heart,—with stifled cries,
And rubbing of white hands, and sparkling eyes:
For she's to read a tale of hopes, and fears;
One that I foster'd in my youthful years:
The pearls, that on each glint'ring circlet sleep,
Gush ever and anon with silent creep.
Lured by the innocent dimples. "To sweet rest
Shall the dear babe, upon its mother's breast,
Be lull'd with songs of mine. Fair world, adieu!
Thy dales, and hills, are fading from my view:
Swiftly I mount, upon wide spreading pinions,
Far from the narrow bounds of thy dominions.
Full joy I feel, while thus I cleave the air,
That my soft verse will charm thy daughters fair,
And warm thy sons!" Ah, my dear friend and brother,
Could I, at once, my mad ambition smother,
For tasting joys like these, sure I should be
Happier, and dearer to society,
At times, 'tis true, I've felt relief from pain
When some bright thought has darted through my brain.
Through all that day I've felt a greater pleasure
Than if I'd brought to light a hidden treasure.
As to my sonnets, though none else should heed them,
I feel delighted, still, that you should read them.
Of late, too, I have had much calm enjoyment,
Stretch'd on the grass at my best lov'd employment
Of scribbling lines for you. These things I thought
While, in my face, the freshest breeze I caught.
E'en now I'm pillow'd on a bed of flowers
That crowns a lofty cliff, which proudly towers
Above the ocean-waves. The starks, and blades,
Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.
On one side is a field of drooping oats,
Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats;
So pert and useless, that they bring to mind
The scarlet coats that pester human-kind.
And on the other side, outspread, is seen
Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple, and green.
Now 'tis I see a canvass'd ship, and now
Mark the bright silver curling round her prow.
I see the lark down-dropping to his nest,
And the broad winged sea-gull never at rest;
For when no more he spreads his feathers free,
His breast is dancing on the restless sea.
Now I direct my eyes into the west,
Which at this moment is in sun-beams drest:
Why westward turn? 'Twas but to say adieu!
'Twas but to kiss my hand, dear George, to you!


TO CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE

Oft have you seen a swan superbly frowning,
And with proud breast his own white shadow crowning;
He slants his neck beneath the waters bright
So silently, it seems a beam of light
Come from the galaxy: anon he sports,—
With outspread wings the Nadal Zephyr courts,
Or ruffles all the surface of the lake
In striving from its crystal face to take
Some diamond water drops, and them to treasure
In milky nest, and sip them off at leisure.
But not a moment can be there insure them,
Nor to such downy rest can he allure them:
For down they rush as though their feathers would be free,
And drop like hours into eternity.
Just like that bird am I in loss of time,
When'er I venture on the stream of rhyme;
With shatter'd boat, oar snapt, and canvass rent
I slowly sail, scarce knowing my intent;
Still scooping up the water with my fingers,
In which a trembling diamond never lingers.
By this, friend Charles, you may full plainly see
Why I have never penn'd a line to thee;

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

Because my thoughts were never free, and clear,
And little fit to please a classic ear;
Because my wine was of too poor a savour
For one whose palate gladdens in the flavour
Of sparkling Helicon:—small good it were
To take him to a desert rude, and bare,
Who had on Bacis's shore reclin'd at ease,
While Tasso's page was floating in a breeze
That gave soft music from Arminia's bowers,
Mingled with fragrance from her rarest flowers:
Small good to one who had by Mulla's stream
Fondled the maidens with the breasts of cream;
Who had beheld Belphoebe in a brook,
And lovely Una in a leafy nook;
And Archimago leaning o'er his book:
Who had of all that's sweet tasted, and seen,
From silvery ripple, up to beauty's queen;
From the sequester'd haunts of gay Titania,
To the blue dwelling of divine Urania:
One, who, of late, had taken sweet forest walks
With him who elegantly chats and talks—
The wrong'd Libertas,—who has told you stories
Of laurel chaplets, and Apollo's glories;
Of troops chivalrous prancing through a city,
And tearful ladies made for love, and pity:
With many else which I have never known.
Thus have I thought; and days on days have flown
Slowly, or rapidly—unwilling still
For you to try my dull, unlearned quill.
Nor should I now, but that I've known you long;
That you first taught me all the sweets of song;
The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine;
What swell'd with pathos, and what right divine:
Spenserian vowels that sleep with ease,
And float along like birds o'er summer seas;
Mittonian storms, and more, Mittonian tenderness;
Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair slenderess.
Whor ever for me the sonnet swelling loudly
Up to its climax and then dying proudly?
Who found for me the grandeur of the ode,
Growing, like Atlas, stronger from its load?
Who let me taste that more than cordial dram,
The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram?
Should I that epic was of all the king,
Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's ring?
You too upheld the veil from Clio's beauty,
And pointed out the patriot's stern duty;
KEATS

The might of Alfred, and the shaft of Tell;
The hand of Brutus, that so grandly fell
Upon a tyrant's head. Ah! had I never seen,
Or known your kindness, what might I have been?
What my enjoyments in my youthful years,
Bereft of all that now my life endears?
And can I e'er these benefits forget?
And can I e'er repay the friendly debt?
No, doubly no;—yet should these rhymings please,
I shall roll on the grass with two-fold ease:
For I have long time been my fancy feeding
With hopes that you would one day think the reading
Of my rough verses not an hour misspent;
Should it e'er be so, what a rich content!
Some weeks have pass'd since last I saw the spires
In lucent Thames reflected:—warm desires
To see the sun o'erpeer the eastern dimness,
And morning shadows streaking into slimmess
Across the lawny fields, and pebbly water;
To mark the time as they grow broad, and shorter;
To feel the air that plays about the hills,
And sips its freshness from the little rills;
To see high, golden corn wave in the light
When Cynthia smiles upon a summer's night,
And peers among the cloudlets jet and white,
As though she were reclining in a bed
Of bean blossoms, in heaven freshly shed.
No sooner had I stepp'd into these pleasures
Than I began to think of rhymes and measures:
The air that floated by me seem'd to say
"Write! thou wilt never have a better day."
And so I did. When many lines I'd written,
Though with their grace I was not oversmitten,
Yet, as my hand was warm, I thought I'd better
Trust to my feelings, and write you a letter.
Such an attempt required an inspiration
Of a peculiar sort,—a consummation;
Which, had I felt, these scribblings might have been
Verses from which the soul would never wean:
But many days have passed since last my heart
Was warm'd luxuriously by divine Mozart;
By Arne delighted, or by Handel madden'd;
Or by the song of Erin pier'd and sadden'd:
What time you were before the music sitting,
And the rich notes to each sensation fitting,
Since I have walk'd with you through shady lanes
That freshly terminate in open plains,
SONNETS

I

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE

Many the wonders I this day have seen:
The sun, when first he kist away the tears
That fill'd the eyes of morn,—the laurell'd peers
Who from the feathery gold of evening lean;
The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears,—
Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears
Must think on what will be, and what has been.
E'en now, dear George, while this for you I write,
Cynthia is from her silken curtains peeping
So scantily, that it seems her bridal night,
And she her half-discover'd revels keeping.
But what, without the social thought of thee,
Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?

II

TO ****

Had I a man's fair form, then might my sighs
Be echoed swiftly through that ivory shell
Thine ear, and find thy gentle heart; so well
Would passion arm me for the enterprise;
But ah! I am no knight whose foemen dies;
No cuirass glistens on my bosom's swell;
I am no happy shepherd of the dell
Whose lips have trembled with a maiden's eyes.
Yet must I dote upon thee,—call thee sweet,
Sweeter by far than Hybla's honied roses
When steep'd in dew rich to intoxication.
Ah! I will taste that dew, for me 'tis meet,
And when the moon her pallid face discloses,
I'll gather some by spells, and incantation.

III

WRITTEN ON THE DAY THAT MR. LEIGH HUNT LEFT PRISON

What though, for showing truth to flatter'd state,
Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
In his immortal spirit, been as free

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

As the sky-searching lark, and as elate,
Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait?
Think you he naught but prison walls did see,
Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key?
Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!
In Spenser's halls he stray'd, and bowers fair,
Colling enchanted flowers; and he flew
With daring Milton through the fields of air
To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?

IV

How many bards gild the lapses of time!
A few of them have ever been the food
Of my delighted fancy,—I could brood
Over their beauties, earthily, or sublime:
And often, when I sit me down to rhyme,
These will in throngs before my mind intrude:
But no confusion, no disturbance rude
Do they occasion; 'tis a pleasing chime.
So the unnumber'd sounds that evening store;
The songs of birds,—the whispering of the leaves—
The voice of waters,—the great bell that heaves
With solemn sound,—and thousand others more,
That distance of recognizance bereaves,
Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar.

V

TO A FRIEND WHO SENT ME SOME ROSES

As late I rambled in the happy fields,
What time the sky-lark shakes the tremulous dew
From his lush clover covert,—when anew
Adventurous knights take up their dinted shields:
I saw the sweetest flower wild nature yields,
A fresh-blown musk-rose; 'twas the first that threw
Its sweets upon the summer: graceful it grew
As is the wand that queen Titania wields.
And, as I feasted on its fragrancy,
I thought the garden-rose it far excell'd:
But when, O Wells! thy roses came to me
My sense with their deliciousness was spell'd:
Soft voices had they, that with tender plea
Whisper'd of peace, and truth, and friendliness unquell'd.

June 29, 1816.
VI
TO G. A. W.

[Georgiana Augusta Wylie]

NYMPH of the downw ard smile and sidelong glance,
In what diviner moments of the day
Art thou most lovely?—when gone far astray
Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance,
Or when serenely wand'ring in a trance
Of sober thought?—or when starting away
With careless robe to meet the morning ray
Thou spar'st the flowers in thy mazy dance?
Haply 'tis when thy ruby lips part sweetly,
And so remain, because thou listest:
But thou to please wert nurtured so completely
That I can never tell what mood is best.
I shall as soon pronounce which Grace more neatly
Trips it before Apollo than the rest.

VII

O S OLITUDE! if I must with thee dwell,
Let it not be among the jumbled heap
Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep,—
Nature's observatory—whence the dell,
Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,
May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep
'Mongst boughs pavilion'd, where the deer's swift leap
Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.
But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
Whose words are images of thoughts refin'd,
Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be
Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,
When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

VIII

TO MY BROTHERS

Small, busy flames play through the fresh laid coals,
And their faint cracklings o'er our silence creep
Like whispers of the household gods that keep
A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls.
And while, for rhymes, I search around the poles,

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

Your eyes are fix'd, as in poetic sleep,
Upon the lore so voluble and deep,
That eye at fall of night our care consoles.
This is your birth-day Tom, and I rejoice
That thus it passes smoothly, quietly.
Many such eyes of gently whispering noise
May we together pass, and calmly try
What are this world's true joys,—ere the great voice,
From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly.

November 18, 1816.

X

KEEN, fitful gusts are whispering here and there
Among the bushes half leafless, and dry;
The stars look very cold about the sky,
And I have many miles on foot to fare.
Yet feel I little of the cool bleak air,
Or of the dead leaves rustling drearily,
Or of those silver lamps that burn on high,
Or of the distance from home's pleasant lair:
For I am brimful of the friendliness
That in a little cottage I have found;
Of fair-hair'd Milton's eloquent distress,
And all his love for gentle Lycid drown'd;
Of lovely Laura in her light green dress,
And faithful Petrarch gloriously crown'd.

X

To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by:
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.
ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

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

ON LEAVING SOME FRIENDS AT AN EARLY HOUR

Give me a golden pen, and let me lean
On heap'd up flowers, in regions clear, and far;
Bring me a tablet whiter than a star,
Or hand of hymning angel, when 'tis seen
The silver strings of heavenly harp atween:
And let there glide by many a pearly car,
Pink robes, and wavy hair, and diamond jar,
And half discovered wings, and glances keen.
The while let music wander round my ears,
And as it reaches each delicious ending,
Let me write down a line of glorious tone,
And full of many wonders of the spheres:
For what a height my spirit is contending!
'Tis not content so soon to be alone.

ADDRESS TO HAYDON

High-mindedness, a jealousy for good,
A loving-kindness for the great man's fame,
Dwells here and there with people of no name,
In noisome alley, and in pathless wood:
And where we think the truth least understood,
TO KOSCIUSKO

The names of heroes, burst from clouds concealing,
And change to harmonies, for ever stealing
Through cloudless blue, and round each silver throne.
It tells me too, that on a happy day,
When some good spirit walks upon the earth,
Thy name with Alfred's, and the great of yore
Gently commingling, gives tremendous birth
To a loud hymn, that sounds far, far away
To where the great God lives for evermore.

December, 1816.

HAPPY is England! I could be content
To see no other verdure than its own;
To feel no other breezes than are blown
Through its tall woods with high romances bled:
Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment
For skies Italian, and an inward groan
To sit upon an Alp as on a throne,
And half forget what world or wond'ring meant.
Happy is England, sweet her artless daughters;
Enough their simple loveliness for me,
Enough their whitest arms in silence clinging:
Yet do I often warmly burn to see
Beauties of deeper glance, and hear their singing,
And float with them about the summer waters.

SLEEP AND POETRY

"As I lay in my bed slept full unme"
"Was unto me, but why that I no might
"Rest I ne wist, for there n'an ethly wight
"(As I suppose) had more of her its ese.
"Than I, for I n'd sickness nor disese."

What is more gentle than a wind in summer?
10
What is more soothing than the pretty hummer
That stays one moment in an open flower,
And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower?
What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing
In a green island, far from all men's knowing?
More healthful than the leafiness of dales?
More secret than a nest of nightingales?
More serene than Cordelia's countenance?
What is more full of visions than a high romance?
What, but thee Sleep? Soft closer of our eyes
10
Low murmurer of tender lullabies!
Light hov'gerer around our happy pillows!
Wreath of poppy buds, and weeping willows!
Silent entangler of a beauty's tresses!
Most happy listener! when the morning blesses
Thee for enlivening all the cheerful eyes
That glance so brightly at the new sun-rise.

But what is higher beyond thought than thee?
20
Fresher than berries of a mountain tree?
More strange, more beautiful, more smooth, more regal,
Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-seen eagle?
What is it? And to what shall I compare it?
It has a glory, and naught else can share it:
The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy,
Chasing away worldliness and folly;
Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder,
Or the low rumblings earth's regions under;
And sometimes like a gentle whispering
Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing
That breathes about us in the vacant air;
So that we look around with praying stare,
Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial limning,
And catch soft floatings from a faint-heard hymning;
To see the laurel wreath, on high suspended,
That is to crown our name when life is ended.
Sometimes it gives a glory to the voice,
And from the heart up-springs, rejoice! rejoice!
Sounds which will reach the Framer of all things,
And die away in ardent murrain.

No one who once the glorious sun has seen,
And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean
For his great Maker's presence, but must know
What 'tis I mean, and feel his being glow;
Therefore no insult will I give his spirit,
By telling what he sees from native merit.

O Poesy! for thee I hold my pen
That am not yet a glorious denizen
Of thy wide heaven—Should I rather kneel
Upon some mountain-top until I feel
A glowing splendour round about me hung,
And echo back the voice of thine own tongue?
O Poesy! for thee I grasp my pen
That am not yet a glorious denizen
Of thy wide heaven; yet, to my ardent prayer,
Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air
Smooth'd for intoxication by the breath
Of flowering bays, that I may die a death
Of luxury, and my young spirit follow
The morning sun-beams to the great Apollo
Like a fresh sacrifice; or, if I can bear
The overwhelming sweets, 'twill bring to me the fair
Visions of all places: a bowery nook
Will be elysium—an eternal book
Whence I may copy many a lovely saying
About the leaves, and flowers—about the playing
Of nymphs in woods, and fountains; and the shade
Keeping a silence round a sleeping maid;
And many a verse from so strange influence
That we must ever wonder how, and whence
It came. Also imaginings will hover
Round my fire-side, and haply there discover
Vistas of solemn beauty, where I'd wander
In happy silence, like the clear Meander
Through its lone vales; and where I found a spot
Of awfuller shade, or an enchanted grot,
Or a green hill o'erspread with chequer'd dress
Of flowers, and fearful from its loveliness,
Write on my tablets all that was permitted,
All that was for our human senses fitted.
KEATS

Of human hearts! for lo! I see afar,
O'er-wailing the blue craginess, a car
And steeds with streamy manes—the charioteer
Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear:
And now the numerous tramplings quiver lightly
Along a huge cloud's ridge; and now with sprightly
Wheed downward come they into fresher skies,
Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright eyes.
Still downward with capacious whirl they glide;
And now I see them on the green-hill's side
In breezy rest among the nodding stalks,
The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks
To the trees and mountains; and there soon appear
Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,
Passing along before a dusky space
Made by some mighty oaks: as they would chase
Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep.
Lo! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep;
Some with upbent hand and mouth severe;
Some with their faces muffled to the ear
Between their arms; some, clear in youthful bloom,
Go glad and smilingly athwart the gloom;
Some looking back, and some with upward gaze;
Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways
Filt onward—now a lovely wreath of girls
Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls;
And now broad wings. Most awfully intent
The driver of those steeds is forward bent,
And seems to listen: O that I might know
All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

The visions all are fled—the car is fled
Into the light of heaven, and in their stead
A sense of real things comes doubly strong,
And, like a muddy stream, would bear along
My soul to nothingness: but I will strive
Against all doubtings, and will keep alive
The thought of that same chariot, and the strange
Journey it went.

Is there so small a range
In the present strength of mankind, that the high
Imagination cannot freely fly
As she was wont of old? prepare her steeds,
Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
Upon the clouds? Has she not shown us all?
From the clear space of ether, to the small

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

Breath of new buds unfolding? From the meaning
Of Jove's large eye-brow, to the tender greening
Of April meadows? Here her altar shone,
E'en in this isle; and who could paragon
The fervid choir that lifted up a noise
Of harmony, to where it aye will poise
Its mighty self of convoluting sound,
Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,
Eternally around a dizzy void?
Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh clow'd
With honours; nor had any other care
Than to sing out and soothe their wavy hair.

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a schism
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
Men were thought wise who could not understand
His glories: with a puling infant's force
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,
And thought it Pegasus. Ah dismal soul'd!
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not, The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious: beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it,—no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepit standard out
Mark'd with most flimsy motto's, and in large
The name of one Boylead!

O ye whose charge
It is to hover round our pleasant hills!
Whose congregated majesty so fills
My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace
Your hallowed names, in this unholy place,
So near those common folk; did not their shames
Affright you? Did our old lamenting Thames
Delight ye? Did ye never cluster round
Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound,
And weep? Or did ye wholly bid adieu
To regions where no more the laurel grew?
Or did ye stay to give a welcoming
To some lone spirits who could proudly sing
Their youth away, and die? 'Twas even so:
But let me think away those times of woe:
Now 'tis a fairer season; ye have breathed
Rich benedictions o'er us; ye have wreathed
Fresh garlands: for sweet music has been heard
In many places;—some has been upstairs'd
From out its crystal dwelling in a lake,
By a swan's ebon bill: from a thick brake,
Nestled and quiet in a valley mild,
Bubbles a pipe; fine sounds are floating wild
About the earth: happy are ye and glad.

These things are doubtless; yet in truth we've had
Strange thunders from the potency of song;
Mingled indeed with what is sweet and strong,
From majesty: but in clear truth the themes
Are ugly clubs, the Poets' Polyphemus
Disturbing the grand sea. A drainless shower
Of light is poesy: 'tis the supreme of power;
'Tis might half slumbering on its own right arm.
The very archings of her eye-lids charm
A thousand willing agents to obey,
And still she governs with the mildest sway;
But strength alone though of the Muses born
Is like a fallen angel: trees uporn,
Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres
Delight it; for it feeds upon the burnes.
And thorns of life; forgetting the great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.

Yet I rejoice: a myrtle fairer than
E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds
Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds
A silent space with ever sprouting green.
All tenderest birds there find a pleasant screen,
Creep through the shade with jaunty fluttering,
Nibble the little cupped flowers and sing.
Then let us clear away the choking thorns
From round its gentle stem; let the young fawns,

Yeamed in after times, when we are flown,
Find a fresh sword beneath it, overgrown
With simple flowers: let there nothing be
More boisterous than a lover's bended knee;
Nought more ungentle than the placid look
Of one who leans upon a closed book;
Nought more untranquil than the grassy slopes
Between two hills. All hail delightful hopes!
As she was wont, th' imagination
Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone,
And they shall be accounted poet kings
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.
O may these joys be ripe before I die.

Will not some say that I presumptuously
Have spoken? that from hastening disgrace
'Twere better far to hide my foolish face?
That whining boyhood should with reverence bow
Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach? How!
If I do hide myself, it sure shall be
In the very same, the light of Poesy:
If I do fall, at least I will be laid
Beneath the silence of a poplar shade;
And over me the grass shall be smooth shaven;
And there shall be a kind memorial graven.
But off Despondence! miserable bane!
They should not know thee, who a thirst to gain
A noble end, are thirsty every hour.
What though I am not wealthy in the dover
Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know
The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow
Hither and thither all the changing thoughts
Of man: though no great musl'ring reason sorts
Out the dark mysteries of human souls
To clear conceiving: yet there ever rolls
A vast idea before me, and I glean
Therefrom my liberty: thence too I've seen
The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear
As anything most true; as that the year
Is made of the four seasons—manifest
As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest,
Lifted to the white clouds. Therefore should I
Be but the essence of deformity,
A coward, did my very eye-lids wink
At speaking out what I have dared to think.
Ah! rather let me like a madman run
Over some precipice; let the hot sun
KEATS

Melt my Dedalian wings, and drive me down
Convuls'd and headlong! Stay! an inward frown
Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile.
An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an isle,
Spreads awfully before me. How much toil!
How many days! what desperate turmoil!
Ere I can have explored its widenesses.
Ah, what a task! upon my bended knees,
I could unsay those—no, impossible!
Impossible!

For sweet relief I'll dwell
On humbler thoughts, and let this strange assay
Begin in gentleness die so away.
E'en now all tumult from my bosom fades:
I turn full hearted to the friendly aids
That smooth the path of honour; brotherhood,
And friendliness the nurse of mutual good.
The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet
Into the brain ere one can think upon it;
The silence when some rhymes are coming out;
And when they're come, the very pleasant rout;
The message certain to be done to-morrow.
'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow
Some precious book from out its snug retreat,
To cluster round it when we next shall meet.
Scarce can I scribble on; for lovely airs
Are fluttering round the room like doves in pairs;
Many delights of that glad day recalling,
When first my senses caught their tender falling.
And with these airs come forms of elegance
Stooping their shoulders o'er a horse's prance,
Careless, and grand—fingers soft and round
Parting luxuriant curls;—and the swift bound
Of Bacchus from his chariot, when his eye
Made Ariadne's cheek look blushingly.
Thus I remember all the pleasant flow
Of words at opening a portfolio.

Things such as these are ever harbingers
To trains of peaceful images: the stirr
Of a swan's neck unseen among the rushes:
A linnet starting all about the bushes:
A butterfly, with golden wings broad parted,
Nestling a rose, convuls'd as though it smarted
With over-pleasure—many, many more,
Might I indulge at large in all my store

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1817

Of luxuries: yet I must not forget
Sleep, quiet with his poppy-coronet:
For what there may be worthy in these rhymes
I partly owe to him: and thus, the chimes
Of friendly voices had just given place
To a sweet a silence, when I gan retire
The pleasant day, upon a couch at ease.
It was a poet's house who keeps the keys
Of pleasure's temple. Round about were hung
The glorious features of the bards who sung
In other ages—cold and sacred busts
Smiled at each other. Happy he who trusts
To clear Futurity his darling fame!
Then there were fauns and satyrs taking aim
At swelling apples with a frisky leap
And reaching fingers, 'mid a luscious heap
Of vine-leaves. Then there rose to view a fane
Of lily marble, and thereto a train
Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward:
One, loveliest, holding her white hand toward
The dazzling sun-rise: two sisters sweet
Bending their graceful figures till they meet
Over the trippings of a little child:
And some are hearing, eagerly, the wild
Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping.
See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping
Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs;—
A fold of lawny mantle dabbling swims
At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion
With the subsiding crystal: as when ocean
Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothness o'er
Its rocky marge, and balances once more
The patient weeds; that now unsent by foam
Feel all about their undulating home.

Sappho's meek head was there half smiling down
At nothing; just as though the earnest frown
Of over thinking had that moment gone
From off her brow, and left her all alone.
Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes,
As if he always listened to the sighs
Of the goaded world; and Kosciusko's worn
By horrid sufferance—nightily forlorn.
Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green,
Starts at the sight of Laura; nor can wean
His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy they!
For over them was seen a free display
KEATS

Of out-spread wings, and from between them shone
The face of Poesy: from off her throne
She overlook'd things that I scarce could tell.
The very sense of where I was might well
Keep Sleep aloof: but more than that there came
Thought after thought to nourish up the flame
Within my breast; so that the morning light
Surprised me even from a sleepless night;
And up I rose refresh'd, and glad, and gay,
Resolving to begin that very day
These lines; and howsoever they be done,
I leave them as a father does his son.

ENDYMION

A POETIC ROMANCE

INScribed
TO THE MEMORY
OF
THOMAS CHATTERTON
1818
PREFACE

Knowing within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public. What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good;—it will not: the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

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

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

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

[TEIGNMOUTH] April 10, 1818.

ENDYMION:

BOOK I

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days;
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits, Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the domes
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

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

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.
The very music of the name has gone
KEATS

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

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
A mighty forest; for the moist earth fed
So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits,
And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,
Where no man went; and if from shepherd's keep
A lamb stray'd far a-down those insomn glens,
Never again saw he the happy pens
Whitter his brethren, bleating with content,
Over the hills at every nightfall went.

Among the shepherds, 'twas believed ever,
That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever
From the white flock, but pass'd unworried
By angry wolf, or parr'd with prying head,
Until it came to some unfooted plains
Where fed the herds of Pan: aye great his gains
Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were many,
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,
And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly
To a wide lawn, whence one could only see

ENDYMION

Stems thronging all around between the swell
Of turf and slanting branches: who could tell
The freshness of the space of heaven above,
Edg'd round with dark tree tops? through which a dove
Would often beat its wings, and often too
A little cloud would move across the blue.

Full in the middle of this pleasantness
There stood a marble altar, with a tress
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew
Had taken fairy pantasies to strew
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve,
And so the dawned light in pomp receive.
For 'twas the morn: Apollo's upward fire
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
Of brightness so unsullied, that therein
A melancholy spirit well might win
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine
Into the winds: rain-scented egliantine
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooling sun;
The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass;
Man's voice was on the mountains; and the mass
Of nature's lives and wonders pulsed tenfold,
To feel this sun-rise and its glories old.

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

And now, as deep into the wood as we
Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmered light
Fair faces and a rush of garments white,
Plainer and plainer showing, till at last
Into the widest alley they all past,
Making directly for the woodland altar.
O kindly muse! let not my weak tongue faulter
In telling of this goodly company,
Of their old piety, and of their glee:
But let a portion of ethereal dew
Fall on my head, and presently unmew
My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring,
To stammer where old Chaucer us'd to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,
Bearing the burden of a shepherd song;
Each having a white wicker over brimm'd
With April's tender younglings; next, well trimm'd,
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books;
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'erflowing die
In music, through the vales of Thessaly:
Some idly trail'd their sheep-hocks on the ground,
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,
A venerable priest full soberly,
Begin'd with ministring looks: a first his eye
Steadfast upon the matted turf he kept,
And after him his sacred vestments swept.
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white,
Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light;
And in his left he held a basket full
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could call;
Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
Seem'd like a poll of ivory in the teeth
Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,
Up-followed by a multitude that rear'd
Their voices to the clouds, a fair wrought car
Easily rolling so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown:
Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown;
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftain king's: beneath his breast, half bare,

ENDYMION
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen.
A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd,
To common lookers on, like one who dream'd
Of idleness in groves Elysian:
But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether lip,
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
Through his forgotten hands: then would they sigh,
And think of yellow leaves, of owlets' cry,
Of logs piled solemnly—Ah, well-a-day,
Why should our young Endymion pine away!

Soon the assembly, in a circle rang'd,
Stood silent round the shrine: each look was chang'd
To sudden veneration: women meek
Beckon'd their sons to silence; while each cheek
Of virgin bloom pale'd gently for slight fear.
Endymion too, without a forest peer,
Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face,
Among his brothers of the mountain chace.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Raped them with joy from greatest to the least,
And, after lifting up his aged hands,
Thus spake he: "Men of Latmos! shepherd bands!
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains; whether come
From vales where the pipe is never dumb;
Or from your swarming downs, where sweet air stirs
Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibile their fill at ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn
By the dim echoes of Old Triton's horn:
Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare
The scrip, with needments, for the mountain air;
And all ye gentle girls who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup
Will put choice honey for a favoured youth:
Yea, every one attend! for in good truth
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide plains
Speckled with countless flocks? Have not rains
Green'd over April's lap? No howling sad
Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had
Great bounty from Endymion our lord.
The earth is glad; the merry lark has pour'd
His early song against you breezy sky,
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

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

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

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side
Of thine emossed realms: O thou, to whom
Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow girted bees
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas
Their fairest blossom'd beans and poppied corn;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee; low creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness; pent up butterflies
Their fleckled wings; vass, the fresh budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O forester divine!"
KEATS

Even while they brought the burden to a close,
A shout from the whole multitude arose,
That lingered in the air like dying rolls
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,
Young companies nimbly began dancing
To the swift treble pipe, and humming string.
Aye, those fair living forms swam heavily
To tunes forgotten—out of memory:
Fair creatures! whose young children's children bred
Thermopylae its heroes—not yet dead,
But in old marbles ever beautiful.
High genitors, unconscious did they cull
Time's sweet first-fruits—they danc'd to weariness,
And then in quiet circles did they press.
The hillock turf, and caught the latter end
Of some strange history, potent to send
A young mind from its bodily tenement,
Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent
On either side; pitying the sad death
Of Hyacinths, when the cruel breath
Of Zephyr slew him,—Zephyr penitent,
Who now, ere Phoebus mounts the firmament,
Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain.
The archers too, upon a wider plain,
Beside the feathery whizings of the shaft,
And the dull twangling bowstring, and the raft
Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top,
Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope
Those who would watch. Perhaps, the trembling knee
And frantic gape of lonely Niobe,
Poor, lonely Niobe! when her lovely young
Were dead and gone, and her caressing tongue
Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip,
And very, very deadliness did nip
Her motherly checks. Arous'd from this sad mood
By one, who at a distance loud hallow'd,
Uplifting his strong bow into the air,
Many might after brighter visions stare:
After the Argonauts, in blind amaze
Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways,
Until, from the horizon's vaulted side,
There shot a golden splendour far and wide,
Spangling those million poutings of the brine
With quivering ore: 'twas even an awful shine

ENDYMION

From the exaltation of Apollo's bow;
A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe.
Who thus were ripe for high contemplating,
Might turn their steps towards the sober ring
Where sat Endymion and the aged priest
'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks increas'd
The silvery setting of their mortal star,
There they discourse'd upon the fragile bar
That keeps us from our homes ethereal;
And what our duties there: to nightly call
Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather;
To summon all the downiest clouds together
For the sun's purple couch; to emulate
In ministring the potent rule of fate
With speed of fire-tail'd exhalations;
To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who cons
Sweet poesy by moonlight: besides these,
A world of other guile's offices.
Anon they wander'd, by divine converse,
Into Elysium; vio'ring to rehearse
Each one his own anticipated bliss.
One felt heart-certain that he could not miss
His quick gone love, among fair blossom'd boughs,
Where every zephyr-sighed pout, and endows
Her lips with music for the welcoming.
Another wish'd, mid that eternal spring,
To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails,
Sweeping, eye-earnestly, through almond vales:
Who, suddenly, should stoop through the smooth wind,
And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind;
And, ever after, through those regions be
His messenger, his little Mercury.
Some were a-thirst in soul to see again
Their fellow hunters o'er the wide champain
In times long past; to sit with them, and talk
Of all the chances in their earthy walk;
Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores
Of happiness, to when upon the moors,
Benighted, close they huddl'd from the cold,
And shud't their famish'd scrips. Thus all out-told
Their fond imaginations,—saving him
Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim,
Endymion: yet hourly had he striven
To hide the cankering venom, that had riven
His fainting recollections. Now indeed
His senses had swoon'd off: he did not heed
KEATS
The sudden silence, or the whispers low, 400
Or the old eyes dissolving at his wo,
Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,
Or maiden’s sigh, that grief itself embalms:
But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,
Like one who on the earth had never stept.
Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man,
Frozen in that old tale Arabian.

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

So she was gently glad to see him laid
Under her favourite bower’s quiet shade,
On her own couch, new made of flower leaves,
Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves
When last the sun his autumn tresses shook,
And the tannd harvester’s rich armfuls took.
Soon was he quieted to slumberous rest:
But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest

ENDYMION
Peona’s busy hand against his lips,
And still, a sleeping, held her finger-tips
In tender pressure. And as a willow keeps
A patient watch over the stream that creeps
Windingly by it, so the quiet maid
Held her in peace: so that a whispering blade
Of grass, a wallifl gnat, a bee bustling
Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling
Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard.

O magic sleep! O comfortable bird,
That broodest o’er the troubled sea of the mind
Till it is hush’d and smooth! O unconfin’d
Restraint! imprisoned liberty! great key
To golden palaces: parted rapture,
Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled coves,
Echoing grotos, full of tumbling waves
And moonlight; aye, to all the mazy world
Of silvery enchantment!—who, upfurl’d
Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour,
But renovates and lives?—Thus, in the bower,
Endymion was calm’d to life again.
Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain,
He said: “I feel this thine endearing love
All through my bosom: thou art as a dove
Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings
About me; and the pearldest dew not brings
Such morning incense from the fields of May,
As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray
From those kind eyes,—the very home and haunt
Of sisterly affection. Can I want
Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such tears?
Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all tears
That, any longer, I will pass my days
Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise
My voice upon the mountain-heights; once more
Make my horn parley from their foreheads hoar:
Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall loll
Around the breathed hoar: again I’ll poll
The fair-grown yew tree, for a chosen bow:
And, when the pleasant sun is getting low,
Again I’ll linger in a sloping mead
To hear the thin his autumn tresses shook,
And see feed
Our idle sheep. So be thou cheered sweet,
And, if thy fute is here, softly intreat
My soul to keep in its resolved course.”
KEATS

Hereat Peona, in their silver source,
Shut her pure sorrow drops with glad exclaim,
And took a lute, from which there pulsing came
A lively prelude, fashioning the way
In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay
More subtle cadenced, more forest wild
Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child;
And nothing since has floated in the air
So mournful strange. Surely some influence rare
Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand;
For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spanned
The quick invisible strings, even though she saw
Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw
Before the deep intoxication.

But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon
Her self-possession—swung the lute aside,
And earnestly said: "Brother, 'tis vain to hide
That thou dost know of things mysterious,
Immortal, starry; such alone could thus
Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sim'd in aught
Offensive to the heavenly powers? Caught
A Paphian dove upon a message sent?
Thy deathful bow against some deer-herd bent
Sacred to Dion? Haply, thou hast seen
Her naked limbs among the alders green;
And that, alas, is death. No, I can trace
Something more high perplexing in thy face!"

Endymion look'd at her, and press'd her hand,
And said, "Art thou so pale, who wast so bland
And merry in our meadows? How is this?
Tell me thine ailment: tell me all amiss!—
Ah! thou hast been unhappy at the change
Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more strange?
Or more complete to overwhelm surprise?
Ambition is so sluggard: 'tis no prize,
That toiling years would put within my grasp,
That I have sighed for: with so deadly gasp
No man e'er panted for a mortal love.
So all have set my heavier grief above
These things which happen. Rightly have they done:
I, who still saw the horizontal sun
Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the world,
Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd
My spear aloft, as signal for the chase—
I, who, for very sport of heart, would race

ENDYMION

With my own steed from Arab; pluck down
A vulture from his towery perching; frown
A lion into growling, loth retire—
To lose, at once, all my toil-breeding fire,
And sing thus low! but I will ease my breast
Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

"This river does not see the naked sky,
Till it begins to progress silvery
Around the western border of the wood,
Whence, from a certain spot, its winding flood
Seems at the distance like a crescent moon:
And in that nook, the very pride of June,
Had I been used to pass my weary eves;
The rather for the sun unwilling leaves
So dear a picture of his sovereign power,
And I could witness his most kingly hour,
When he doth tighten up the golden reins,
And paces leisurely down amber plains
His snorting four. Now when his chariot last
Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast,
There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed
Of sacred ditamy, and poppies red:
At which I wondered greatly, knowing well
That but one night had wrought this flowery spell;
And, sitting down close by, began to muse
What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I, Morpheus,
In passing here, his owlet pinions shook;
Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook
Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth,
Had dipt his rod in it: such garland wealth
Came not by common growth. Thus on I thought,
Until my head was dizzy and distraught.
Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole
A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul;
And shaping visions all about my sight
Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangling light;
The which became more strange, and strange, and dim,
And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim:
And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell
The enchantment that afterwards befell?
Yet it was but a dream: yet such a dream
That never tongue, although it overteem
With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring,
Could figure out and to conception bring
All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay
Watching the zenith, where the milky way
Among the stars in virgin splendour pours;
And travelling my eye, until the doors
Of heav-en appear’d to open for my flight,
I became loth and fear-ful to alight.
From such high soaring by a down-ward glance;
So kept me stedfast in that airy trance,
Spreading imaginary pinions wide.
When, presently, the stars began to glide,
And faint away, before my eager view:
At which I sigh’d that I could not pur-sue,
And dropt my vision to the horizon’s verge;
And lo! from opening clouds, I saw emerge
The loveliest moon, that ever silver’d o’er
A shell for Neptune’s goblet; she did soar
So passionately bright, my dazzled soul
Commingle with her argent spheres did roll
Through clear and cloudy, even when she went
At last into a dark and vapoury ten—
Whereat, methought, the lids-eyed train
Of planets all were in the blue again.
To commune with those orbs, once more I rais’d
My sight right upward: but it was quite dazed
By a bright someth-ing, sailing down apace,
Making me quickly veil my eyes and face;
Again I look’d, and, O ye deities,
Who from Olympus watch our destinies!
Whence that completed form of all completeness?
Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness?
Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O where
Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair?
Not out-sheaves drooping in the western sun;
Not—thy soft hand, fair sister! let me shun
Such foll'y before thee—yet she had
Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad;
And they were simply gordin’d up and braided,
Leaving in naked comeliness, unshaded,
Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orbed brow;
The which were blended in, I know not how,
With such a paradise of lips and eyes,
Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest sighs,
That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings
And plays about its fancy, till the stings
Of human neighbourly enmity all.
Unto what awful power shall I call?
To what high fans?—Ah! see her hovering feet,
More bluely vein’d, more soft, more whitely sweet

Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose
From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blow’d
Her sculf into a fluttering pavilion;
’Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,
Handfuls of daisies.——“Endymion, how strange!
Dream within dream!”——“She took an airy range,
And then, towards me, like a very maid,
Came blush-ing, waning, will-ing, and afraid,
And press’d me by the hand: Ah! ’twas too much;
Methought I faint’d at the charmed touch,
Yet held my recollection, even as one
Who dives three fathoms where the waters run
Gurgling in beds of coral: for anon,
I felt upmounted in that region
Where falling stars dart their artillery forth,
And eagles struggle with the buffeting north
That bal-lances the heavy meteor-stone;—
Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone
But lapp’d and hull’d along the dangerous sky.
Soon, as it seem’d, we left our jorneying high,
And straightway into frightful eddies swoop’d;
Such as aye mister where grey time has scoop’d
Huge dens and caverns in a mountain’s side:
There hollow sounds arous’d me, and I sigh’d
To faint once more by looking on my bliss—
I was distracted; madly did I kiss
The wooffing arms which held me, and did give
My eyes at once to death: but ’twas to live,
To take in draughts of life from the gold fount
Of kind and passionate looks; to count, and count
The moments, by some greedy help that seem’d
A second self, that might be redeem’d
And plunder’d us; that was all beauty.
Ah, desperate mortal! I e’en dar’d to press
Her very cheek against my crowned lip,
And, at that moment, felt my body dip
Into a warmer air: a moment more,
Our feet were soft in flowers. There was store
Of newest joys upon that alp. Sometimes
A scent of violets, and blossoming limes,
Loiter’d around us; then of honey cells,
Made delicate from all white-flower bells;
And once, above the edges of our nest,
An arch face peep’d,—an Oread as I guess’d.
KEATS

"Why did I dream that sleep o'er-power'd me
In midst of all this heaven? Why not see,
Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark,
And stare them from me? But no, like a spark
That needs must die, although its little beam
Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream
Fell into nothing—into stupid sleep.
And so it was, until a gentle creep,
A careful moving caught my waking ears,
And up I started: Ah! my sighs, my tears,
My clenched hands;—for lo! the poppies hung
Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung
A heavy ditty, and the sullen day
Had driven Hesperus away,
With leaden looks: the solitary breeze
Bluster'd, and slept, and its wild self did teaze
With wayward melancholy; and I thought,
Mark me, Peona! that sometimes it brought
Faint fare-thee-wells, and sigh-shrihalled adieux!—
Away I wandered—all the pleasant hues
Of heaven and earth had faded: deepest shades
Were deepest dungeons: heaths and sunny glades
Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills
Seem'd sooty, and o'er-spread with upturn'd gills
Of dying fish; the vermill rose had blown
In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown
Like spiked aloe, if an innocent bird
Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and stirr'd
In little journeys, I beheld in it
A disguis'd demon, missioned to knit
My soul with under darkness; to entice
My stumblings down some monstrous precipice:
Therefore I eager followed, and did curse
The disappointment. Time, that aged nur
Rock'd me to patience. Now, thank gentle heaven!
These things, with all their comfortings, are given
To my down-sunken hours, and with thee,
Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea
Of weary life."

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

ENDYMION

On this poor weakness! but, for all her strife,
She could as soon have crush'd away the life
From a sick dove. At length, to break the pause,
She said with trembling chance: "Is this the cause?
This all? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas!
That one who through this middle earth should pass
Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave
His name upon the harp-string, should achieve
No higher than simple maidenhood,
Singing alone, and fearfully—how the blood
Left his young cheek; and how he used to stray
He knew not where; and how he would say, say,
If any said 'twas love: and yet 'twas love;
What could it be but love? How a ring-dove
Let fall a spaded loam tree in his path;
And how he died: and then, that love doth scathe,
The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses;
And then the bald of his sad life closes
With sighs, and an alas!—Endymion!
Be rather in the trumpet's mouth,—anon
Among the winds at large,—that all may hearken!
Although, before the crystal heavens darken,
I watch and dote upon the silver lakes
Pictur'd in western cloudiness, that takes
The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold sands,
Islands, and creeks, and amber-t freted straits
With horses prancing o'er them, palaces
And towers of amethyst,—would I so teaze
My pleasant days, because I could not mount
Into those regions? The Morphean fount
Of that fine element that visions, dreams,
And filthy whims of sleep are made of, streams
Into its airy channels with so subtle,
So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle,
Circled a million times within the space
Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace,
A tainting of its quality; how light
Must dreams themselves be; seeing they're more slight
Than the mere nothing that engenders them!
Then wherefore suff the entrusted gem
Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick?
Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick
For nothing but a dream?" Hereat the youth
Look'd up: a conflicting of shame and ruth
Was in his plaited brow: yet, his eyelids
Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids
A little breeze to creep between the fans
Of careless butterflies: amid his pains
He seemed to taste a drop of mannag-dew,
Full palatable; and a colour grew
Upon his cheek, while thus he l值ife spake.

"Peanut! ever have I long'd to slake
My thirst for the world's praises: nothing base,
No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace
The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd—
Though now 'tis tatter'd, leaving my bark bar'd
And sullenly drifting; yet my higher hope
Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,
To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks,
Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold
The clear religion of heaven! Fold
A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,
And soothe thy lips: hiss, when the airy stress
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
Æolian magic from their lucid wombs:
Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;
Ghosts of melodious prophecings rave
Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;
Bronze clarions awake, and faintly Bruit,
Where long ago a giant battle was;
And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
In every place where infant Orpheus slept.
Feel we these things?—that moment have we steeped
Into a sort of oneness, and our state
Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
More self-destructing, leading, by degrees,
To the chief intensity: the crown of these
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
Upon the forehead of humanity.
All its more ponderous and bulky worth
Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,
There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop
Of light, and that is love: its influence,
Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
KEATS

To breed so long upon one luxury,
Unless it did, though fearfully, espy
A hope beyond the shadow of a dream,
My sayings will the less obscured seem.
When I have told thee how my waking sight
Has made me scruple whether that same night
Was pass'd in dreaming. Hearken, sweet Peona!
Beyond the matron-temple of Latona,
Which we should see but for these darkening boughs,
Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows
Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart
And meet so nearly, that with wings outraged,
And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide
Past them, but he must brush on every side.
Some moulder'd steps lead into this cool cell,
Far as the slabb'd margin of a well,
Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye
Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky.
Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks set
Like vestal primroses, but dark velvets;
Edges them round, and they have golden pits:
'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and slits
In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my seat,
When all above was faint with mid-day heat.
And there in striate no burning thoughts to heed,
I'd bubble up the water through a reed;
So reaching back to boy-hood: make me ships
Of moulded feathers, touchwood, alder chips,
With leaves stuck in them; and the Neptune be
Of their petty ocean. Often, heavily,
When love-born hours had left me less a child,
I sat contemplating the figures wild
Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror through.
Upon a day, while thus I watch'd, by flew
A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver;
So plainly character'd, no breeze would shiver
The happy chance: so happy, I was fain
to follow it upon the open plain,
And, therefore, was just going; when, behold!
A wonder, fair as any I have told—
The same bright face I tasted in my sleep,
Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap
Through the cool depth.—It moved as if to flee—
I started up, when lo! refreshfully.
There came upon my face in plenteous showers
Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers,
"Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits,
And babbles through silence, till her wits
Are gone in tender madness, and anon,
Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone
Of sadness. O that she would take my vows,
And breathe them sighing among the boughs,
To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head,
Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed,
And weave them dyingly—send honey-whispers
Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers
May sigh my love unto her pitying!
"O charitable Echo! hear, and sing
This ditty to her!—tell her"—so I stay'd
My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid,
Stood stupefied with my own empty folly,
And blushing for the freaks of melancholy.
Salt tears were coming, when I heard my name
Most fondly lipp'd, and then these accents came:
"Endymion! the cave is secret
Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir
No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise
Of thy comely hand, the while it travelling cloyes
And trembles through my labyrinthine hair,"

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

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

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

Lightly this little herald flew aloft,
Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands:
Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands
His limbs are loose'd, and eager, on he hies
Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies.
It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was;
And like a new-born spirit did he pass
Through the green evening quiet in the sun,
O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun,
Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight dreams
The summer time away. One track unseams
A wooded cleft, and far away, the blue
Of ocean fades upon him; then, anew,
He sinks adown a solitary gleam,
Where there was never sound of mortal men,
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet,
To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet
Went swift beneath the merry-winged guide,
Until it reach'd a splashing fountain's side
That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever pour'd
Unto the temperate air: then high it soar'd,
And, downward, suddenly began to dip,
As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip

ENDYMION

The crystal spout-head: so it did, with touch
Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch
Even with mealy gold the waters clear.
But, at that very touch, to disappear
So fairy-quick, was strange! Bewildered,
Endymion sought around, and shook each bed
Of covert flowers in vain; and then he flung
Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue,
What whisperer disturb'd his gloomy rest?
It was a nymph uprisen to the breast
In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood
'Mong lillies, like the youngest of the brood.
To him her dripping hand she softly kist,
And anxiously began to plait and twist
Her ringlets round her fingers, saying: "Youth!
Too long, alas, hast thou starv'd on the ruth,
The bitterness of love: too long indeed,
Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed
Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer
All the bright riches of my crystal coffer
To Amphitrite; all my clear-eyed fish,
Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish,
Vermillion-tail'd, or finn'd with silvery gauze;
Yes, or my veined pebble-door, that draws
A virgin light to the deep; my grotto-sands
Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands
By my diligent springs; my level lillies, shells,
My charming rod, my potent river spells;
Yes, every thing, even to the pearly cup
Meander gave me,—for I bubbled up
To fainting creatures in a desert wild.
But woe is me, I am but as a child
To gladden thee; and all I dare to say,
Is, that I pity thee; that on this day
I've been thy guide; that thou must wander far
In other regions, past the scanty bar
To mortal steps, before thou canst be ta'en
From every wasting sigh, from every pain,
Into the gentle bosom of thy love.
Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above:
But, a poor Nadal, I guess not. Farewell!
I have a ditty for my hollow cell."?

Hereat, she vanished from Endymion's gaze,
Who brooded o'er the water in amaze:
The dashing fount pour'd on, and where its pool
Lay, half asleep, in grass and rushes cool,
KEATS

Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still,
And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill
Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer,
Holding his forehead, to keep off the burn
Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down:
And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown
Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps,
Thus breath'd he to himself: "Whose encamps
To take a fancied city of delight,
O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,
After long toil and travelling, to miss
The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile:
Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil;
Another city doth he set about,
Free from the smallest pebble-head of doubt
That he will seize on trickling honey-combs:
Alas, he finds them dry; and then he soars,
And onward to another city speeds.
But this is human life: the war, the deeds,
The disappointment, the anxiety,
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
All human; bearing in themselves this good,
That they are still the air, the subtle food,
To make us feel existence, and to show
How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow,
Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me,
There is no depth to strike in: I can see
Naught earthly worth my compassing; so stand
Upon a misty, jutting head of land—
Alone? No, no; and by the Orphean lute,
When mad Eurydice is listening to't;
I'd rather stand upon this misty peak,
With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek,
But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love,
Than be—I care not what. O meekest dove
Of heaven! O Cynthia, ten-times bright and fair!
From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,
Glance but one little beam of temper'd light
Into my bosom, that the dreadful might
And tyranny of love be somewhat scar'd!
Yet do not so, sweet queen; one torment spar'd;
Would give a pang to jealous misery,
Worse than the torment's self: but rather tie
Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out
My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout
Of Cupids shin thee, too divine art thou,
Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow
ENDYMION

Not to have dipp'd in love's most gentle stream,
O be propitious, nor severely deem
My madness impious; for, by all the stars
That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars
That kept my spirit in are burst—that I
Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky!
How beautiful thou art! The world how deep
How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep
Around their axle! Then those gleaming reins,
How lute! When this thy chariot attains
Its airy goal, haply some bower veils
Those twilight eyes? Those eyes!—thy spirit falls—
Dear goddess, help! or the wide-gaping air
Will gulp me—help!"—At this with madden'd stare,
And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood;
Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood,
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn
And, but from the deep cavern there was borne
A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone;
Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion'd moan
Had more been heard. Thus swell'd it forth: "Descend,
Young mountainer! descend where alleys bend
Into the sparry hollows of the world!
Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl'd
As from thy threshold; day by day hast been
A little lower than the chilly sheen
Of icy pinnacles, and dipp'dst thine arms
Into the deadening ether that still charms
Their marble being; now, as deep profound
As those are high, descend! He ne'er is crown'd
With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow,
The silent mysteries of earth, descend!"

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

'Twas far too strange, and wonderful for sadness;
Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite
To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light,
The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly:
But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy;
A dusky empire and its diadems;
One faint eternal eventide of gems.
Aye, millions sparkled on a vein of gold,
Along whose track the prince quick footsteps told,
With all its lines abrupt and angular:
Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star,
Through a vast anire; then the metal woof,
Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous roof
Curves hugely: now, far in the deep abyss,
It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss
Fancy into belief: anon it leads
Through winding passages, where sameness breeds
Vexing conceptions of some sudden change;
Whether to silver grots, or giant range
Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge
Atheart a flood of crystal, On a ridge,
Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath
Towers like an ocean-cliff, and whence he seeth
A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come
But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb
His bosom grew, when first he, far away
Descried an orbled diamond, set to fray
Old darkness from his throne: 'twas like the sun
Uprisen o'er chaos: and with such a stun
Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it,
He saw not fiercer wonders—past the wit
Of any spirit to tell, but one of those
Who, when this planet's sphereing time doth close,
Will be its high remembrance; who they?
The mighty ones who have made eternal day
For Greece and England. While astonishment
With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went
Into a marble gallery, passing through
A mimic temple, so complete and true
In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd
To search it inwards; whence far off appear'd,
Through a long pillar'd vista, a fair shrine,
And just beyond, on light tijpe divine,
A quiver'd Dian. Stepping awfully,
The youth approach'd; of turning his veil'd eye
Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old.
And when, more near against the marble cold
He had touch'd his forehead, he began to thread
All courts and passages, where silence dead
Rose'd by his whispering footsteps murmured faint:
And long he travers'd to and fro, to acquaint
Himself with every mystery, and awe;
Till, weary, he sat down before the maw

Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim,
To wild uncertainty and shadows grim.
There, when new wonders cease'd to float before,
And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore
The journey homeward to habitual self!
A mid-pursuing of the fog-born elf,
Whose flaming lantern, through rude nettle-briar,
Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,
Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowsingly doth sing
In lone Endymion's ear, now he has caught
The goal of consciousness? Ah, 'tis the thought,
The deadly feel of solitude: for lo!
He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow
Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild
In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pill'd,
The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west,
Like herded elephants; nor felt, nor prest
Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air;
But far from such companionship to wear
An unknown time, surcharged with grief, away,
Was now his lot. And must he patient stay,
Tracing fantastic figures with his spear?
"No!" exclaim'd he, "why should I tarry here?"
No! loudly echoed times innumerable.
At which he straightway started, and 'gan tell
His paces back into the temple's chief;
Warming and glowing strong in the belief
Of help from Diana: so that when again
He caught her airy form, thus did he plain,
Moving more near than the while: "O Haunter chase!
Of river sides, and woods, and healthy waste,
Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen
Art thou now forested? O woodland Queen,
What smoothest air thy smoother forehead whoes?
Where doth that ear, which the wide hale
Of thy dispersed nymphs? Through what dark tree
Glimmers thy crescent? Wheresoe'er it be,
'Tis in the breath of heaven: thou dost taste
Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste
Thy loveliness in dismal elements;
But, finding in our green earth sweet contents,
There lives blissfully. Ah, if to thee
It feels Elysian, how rich to me,
An exil'd mortal, sounds its pleasant name!
Within my breast there lives a choking flame—
O let me cool't the zephyr-boughs among!
A homeward fever parches up my tongue—
O let me slake it at the running springs!

Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings—
O let me once more hear the Innet's note!
Before mine eyes thick film and shadows float—
O let me 'oint them with the heaven's light!

Dost thou now love thy feet and ankles white?
O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice!
Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-juice?
O think how this dry palate would rejoice!

If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice,
O think how I should love a bed of flowers!—
Young goddess! let me see my native bowers!
Deliver me from this rapacious deep?!

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap
His destiny, alert he stood: but when
Obstinate silence came heavily again,
Feeling about for its old couch of space
And airy cradle, lowly bow'd his face
Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill.
But 'twas not long; for, sweeter than the rill
To its old channel, or a swollen tide
To margin sailows, were the leaves he spied.
And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle crowns
Up heaping through the slath; refreshment drowses
Itself, and strives its own delights to hide—
Nor in one spot alone; the floral pride
In a long whispering birth enchanted grew
Before his footsteps; as when heav'nd new
Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,
Down whose green back the short-ji'd foam, all hoar,
Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.

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

Of thron'd Apollo, could breathe back the lyre
To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

O did he ever live, that lonely man,
Who lov'd—and music slew not? 'Tis the pest
Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest;

That things of delicate and tenderest worth
Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth,
By one consuming flame; it doth immerse
And suffocate true blessings in a curse.

Half-happy, by comparison of bliss,
Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this
Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian ear;
First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear,
Vanish'd in elemental passion.

And down some swart abysm he had gone,
Had not a heavenly guide benignant led
To where thick myrtle branches, against his head
Brushing, awakened: then the sounds again
Went noiseless as a passing noontide rain
Over a bower, where little space he stood;
For as the sunset peeps into a wood
So saw he panting light, and towards it went
Through winding alleys; and lo, wonderment!
Upon soft verdure saw, one here, one there,
Cupid's a slumbering upon their pinions fair.

After a thousand mazes overgone,
At last, with sudden step, he came upon
A chamber, myrtle wall'd, embowered high,
Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy,
And more of beautiful and strange beside:
For on a silken couch of rosy pride,
In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth
Of fonder beauty: fonder, in fair sooth,
Than sights could fathom, or contentment reach:
And cover'd with gold-tinted like the peach,
Or ripe October's faded marigolds,
Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds—
Not lifting up an Apollonian curve
Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve
Of kneel'd knee, nor ankles pointing light;
But rather, giving them to the filled sight
Officiously. Sideways his face repos'd
On one white arm, and tenderly unclos'd,
KEATS

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

At these enchantments, and yet many more,
The breathless Latiniun wonder’d o’er and o’er;
Until, impatient in embarrassment,
He forthright pass’d, and lightly treading went
To that same feather’d lyre, who straightway,
Smiling, thus whisper’d: ‘Though from upper day
Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here
Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer!
For ‘tis the nicest touch of human honour,
When some ethereal and high-favouring donor
Presents immortal bower to mortal sense;
As now ’tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence
Was I in no wise sturrd. So recline
Upon these living flowers. Here is wine,
Alive with sparkles—never, I aver,
Since Ariadne was a vintage,
So cool a purple; taste these juicy pears,
Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears
Were high about Pomona: here is cream,
Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam;
Sweeter than that nurse Amalthaea skimm’d
For the boy Jupiter: and here, undimm’d

ENDYMION

By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums;
Ready to melt between an infant’s gums:
And here is manna pick’d from Syrian trees,
In starlight, by the three Hesperides.
Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know
Of all these things around us.” He did so,
Still brooding o’er the cadence of his lyre;
And thus: ‘I need not any hearing tire
By telling how the sea-born goddess pin’d
For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind
Him all in all unto her doting self,
Who would not be so prison’d? but, fond elf,
He was content to let her amorous plea
Faint through his careless arms; content to see
An unseiz’d heaven dying at his feet;
Content, O fool! to make a cold retreat,
When on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn,
Lay sorrowing; when every tear was born
Of diverse passion; when her lips and eyes
Were close’d in sullen moisture, and quick sighs
Came vex’d and pettish through her nostrils small,
Hush! no exclam—yet, justly mightest thou call
Curses upon his head—I was half glad
But my poor mistress went distract and mad,
When the boar task’d him: so away she flew
To Jove’s high throne, and by her plainings drew
Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer’s beard;
Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear’d
Each summer time to life. Lo! this is he,
That same Adonis, safe in the privacy
Of this still region all his winter-sleep.
Aye, sleep; for when our love-sick queen did weep
Over his wan’d corse, the temulous shower
Heal’d up the wound, and, with a balmy power,
Medicin’d death to a lengthened drowsiness:
The which she fills with visions, and doth dress
In all this quiet luxury; and hath set
Us young immortals, without any let,
To watch his slumber through. ’Tis well nigh pass’d,
Even to a moment’s filling up, and fast
She sealed with summer breezes, to pant through
The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew
Embower’d sports in Cytherea’s isle.
Look! how those wing’d listeners all this while
Stand anxious: see! behold!”—This clamant word
Broke through the careful silence; for they heard
KEATS

A rustling noise of leaves, and out there flutter’d
Pigeons and doves: Adonis something mutter’d
The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh
Lay dormant, mov’d convuls’d and gradually
Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum
Of sudden voices, echoing, “Come! come!
Arise! awake! Clear summer has forth walk’d
Unto the clever-award, and she has talk’d
Full soothingly to every nestled finch:
Rise, Cupids! or we’ll give the blue-bell pinch
To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life begin!”
At this, from every side they hurried in,
Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lacy wrists,
And doubling over head their little fists
In backward yawns. But all were soon alive:
For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, drive
In nectar’d clouds and curls through water fair,
So from the arbour roof down swell’d an air
Odorous and enlivening; making all
To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call
For their sweet queen: when lo! the wretched green
Disparted, and far upward could be seen
Blue heaven, and a silver car, air-borne,
Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn,
Spun off a drizzling dew,—which falling chill
On soft Adonis’ shoulders, made him still
Nestle and turn uneasily about.
Soon were the white doves plain, with neck stretch’d out,
And silken traces lighten’d in descent;
And soon, returning from love’s banishment,
Queen Venus leaning downward open arm’d:
Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm’d
A tumult to his heart, and a new life
Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife,
But for her comforting! unhappy sight,
But meeting her blue orbs! Who, who can write
Of these first minutes? The uncharest muse
To embraces warm as theirs makes coy excuse.

O it has ruffled every spirit there,
Saving Love’s self, who stands superb to share
The general gladness: awfully he stands;
A sovereign quell is in his waving hands;
No sight can bear the lightning of his bow;
His quiver is mysterious, none can know
What themselves think of it; from forth his eyes
There darts strange light of varied hues and dies:

ENDYMION

A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who
Look full upon it feel anon the blue
Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls.
Endymion feels it, and no more controls
The burning prayer within him; so, bent low,
He had begun a plaining of his woe.
But Venus, bending forward, said: “My child,
Favour this gentle youth; his days are wild
With love—he—but alas! too well I see
Thou know’st the depthness of his misery.
Ah, smile not so, my son: I tell thee true,
That when through heavy hours I used to rue
The endless sleep of this new-born Adon’,
This stranger aye I pitiéd. For upon
A dreary morning once I fled away
Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray
For this my love: for vexing Mars had teaz’d
Me even to tears: thence, when a little eas’d,
Down-looking, vacant, through a hazy wood,
I saw this youth as he despairing stood:
Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the wind;
Those same full fringed lids a constant blind
Over his sullen eyes: I saw him throw
Himself on wither’d leaves, even as though
Death had come sudden; for no jot he mov’d,
Yet mutter’d wildly. I could hear he lov’d
Some fair immortal, and that his embrace
Had zoned her through the night. There is no trace
Of this in heaven: I have mark’d each cheek,
And find it is the vainest thing to seek;
And that of all things ’tis kept secretest.
Endymion! one day thou wilt be blest:
So still obey the guiding hand that sends
Thee safely through these wonders for sweet ends.
’Tis a concealment needful in extremes;
And if I guess’d not so, the sunny beam
Thou shouldst mount up to with me. Now adieu!
Here must we leave thee.”—At these words upflow
The impatient doves, uprose the floating car,
Up went the hum celestial. High afar
The Latman saw them minish into naught;
And, when all were clear vanish’d, still be caught
A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow.
When all was darkened, with Athenean three
The earth clos’d—gave a solitary moan—
And left him once again in twilight lone.
KEATS

He did not rave, he did not stare aghast,
For all those visions were o'ergone, and past,
And he in loneliness: he felt assur'd
Of happy times, when all he had endur'd
Would seem a feather to the mighty prize.
So, with unusual gladness, on he hies
Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore,
Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquoise floor,
Black polish'd porticos of awful shade,
And, at the last, adiamond balustrade;
Leaping afar past wild magnificence,
Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and thence
Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er
Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,
Streams subterranean teaze their granite beds;
Then heighten'd just above the silvery heads
Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash
The waters with his spear; but at the splash,
Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose
Sudden a poplar's height, and gan to enclose
His diamond path with fretwork, streaming round
Alve, and dazzling cool, and with a sound,
Haply, like dolphin tumults, when sweet shells
Welcome the float of Thetis. Long he dwells
On this delight; for, every minute's space,
The streams with changed magic interface:
Sometimes like delicatest lattices,
Cover'd with crystal vines; then weeping trees.
Moving about as in a gentle wind,
Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin'd,
Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies,
Spangled, and rich with liquid broderies
Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and natads fair.
Swifter than lightning went these wonders rare;
And then the water, into stubborn streams
Collecting, mimick'd the wrought oak beams,
Pillars, and frieze, and high fantastic roof,
Of those dust places in times far afoot
Cathedrals call'd. He bade a loth farewell
To these founts Protean, passing gulph, and dell,
And torrent, and ten thousand jutting shapes,
Half seen through deepest gloom, and grisly gaps,
Blackening on every side, and overhead
A vaulted dome like Heaven's, far bespread
With starlight gems: aye, all so huge and strange,
The solitary felt a hurried change

ENDYMION

Working within him into something dreary,--
Vex'd like a morning eagle, lost, and weary,
And purblind amid foggy, midnight wolds,
But he revives at once: for who beholds
New sudden things, nor casts his mental slough?
Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,
Came mother Cybele: alone—alone--
In sombre chariot; dark foldings thrown
About her majesty, and front death-pale,
With turrets crownd: Four maned lions hale
The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed maws,
Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws
Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails
Covering their tawny brushes. Silent sails
This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away
In another gloomy arch.

Wherefore delay,
Young traveller, in such a mournful place?
Art thou wayworn, or canst not further trace
The diamond path? And does it indeed end
Abrupt in middle air? Yet earthward bend
Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne
Call ardently! He was indeed wayworn;
Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost;
To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost
Towards him a large eagle, twixt whose wings,
Without one impious word, himself he flings,
Committed to the darkness and the gloom:
Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom,
Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell
Through unknown things; till exalted asphodel,
And rose, with spicy fannings interbreath'd,
Came swelling forth where little caves were wreath'd
So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd
Large honeycombs of green, and freshly teen'd
With airs delicious. In the greenest nook
The eagle landed him, and farewell took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown
With golden moss. His every sense had grown
Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head
Flew a delight half-graspable; his tread
Was Hesperian; to his capable ears
Silence was music from the holy spheres;
A dewy luxury was in his eyes;
The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs
KEATS

And stir'd them faintly. Verdant cave and cell
He wander'd through, oft wondering at such swell
Of sudden exaltation: but, "Alas!"
Said he, "will all this rush of feeling pass
Away in solitude? And must they wane,
Like melodies upon a sandy plain,
Without an echo? Then shall I be left
So sad, so melancholy, so bereft!
Yet still I feel immortal! O my love,
My breath of life, where art thou? High above,
Dancing before the morning gates of heaven?
Or keeping watch among those starry seven,
Old Atlas' children? Art a maid of the waters,
One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters?
Or art, impossible! a nymph of Diana's,
Weaving a coronal of tender scions
For very idleness? Where'er thou art,
Methinks it now is at my will to start
Into thine arms; to scare Aurora's train,
And snatch thee from the morning; o'er the main
To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off
From thy sea-foamy cradle; or to dote
Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee mid fresh leaves.
No, no, too eagerly my soul deceives
Its powerless self: I know this cannot be.
O let me then by some sweet dreaming see
To her enthrancements: lither sleep awhile!
Hither most gentle sleep! and soothing still
For some few hours the coming solitude."

Thus spake he, and that moment felt endured
With power to dream deliciously; so wound
Through a dim passage, searching till he found
The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where
He threw himself, and just into the air
Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss!
A naked waist: "Fair Cupid, whence is this?"
A well-known voice sigh'd o'er, "Sweetest, here am I!"
At which soft ravishment, with stinging cry
They trembled to each other.—Hecuba!
O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon!
That thou would'st spout a little streamlet o'er
These sorry pages; then the verse would soar
And sing above this gentle pair, like lark
Over his nestled young; but all is dark
Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount
Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count

ENDYMION

Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll
Is folded by the Muses; the bright roll
Is in Apollo's hand; our dazed eyes
Have seen a new thing in the western skies:
The world has done its duty. Yet, oh yet,
Although the sun of poesy is set,
These lovers did embrace, and we must weep
That there is no old power left to steep
A quill immortal in their joyous tears.
Long time ere silence did their anxious fears
Question that thus it was; long time they lay
Fondling and kissing every doubt away;
Long time ere soft caressing sobs began
To mellow into words, and then there ran
Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet lips.
"O known Unknown! from whom my being sips
Such darling essence, wherefore may I not
Be ever in these arms? in this sweet spot
Pillow my chin for ever? ever press
These toying hands and kiss their smooth excess?
Why not for ever and for ever feel
That breath about my eyes? Ah, thou wilt steal
Away from me again, indeed, indeed—
Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed
My lonely madness. Speak, delicious fair!
Is—it to be so? No! Who will dare
To pluck thee from me? And, of thine own will,
Full well I feel thou wilt not leave me. Still
Let me entwine thee surer, surer—now
How can we part? Elysium! who art thou?
Who, that thou canst not be for ever here,
Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere?
Enchantress! tell me by this soft embrace,
By the most soft completion of thy face,
Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes,
And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties—
These tendrest, and by the nectar-wine,
The passion"——"O dost 'da Ida the divine!
Endymion! dearest! Ah, unhappy me!
His soul will 'scape us—O felicity!
How he does love me! His poor temples beat
To the very tume of love—how sweet, sweet, sweet.
Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die;
Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by
In trance-dulness; speak, and let that spell
Affright this lethargy! I cannot quell
Its heavy pressure, and will press at least
My lips to thine, that they may richly feast
Until we taste the life of love again.
I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive;
And so long absence from thee doth bereave
My soul of any rest: yet must I hence:
Yet, can I not to starry eminence
Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own
Myself to thee: Ah, dearest, do not groan
Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy,
And I must blush in heaven. O that I
Had done 't already; that the dreadful smiles
At my lost brightness, my impassion'd wiles,
Had wan'd from Olympus' solemn height,
And from all serious Gods; that our delight
Was quite forgotten, save of us alone!
And wherefore so ashamed? 'Tis but to atone
For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes:
Yet must I be a coward!—Horror rushes
Too palpable before me—the sad look
Of love—Minerva's start—no bosom shrowk
With awe of purity—no Cupid pinion
In reverence vailed—my crystalline dominion
Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity!
But what is this to love? O I could fly
With thee into the ken of heavenly powers,
So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours,
Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once
That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce—
Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown—
O I do think that I have been alone
In chastity: yes, Pallas has been sighing,
While every eve saw me my hair uprying
With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love,
I was as vague as solitary dove,
Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft kiss—
Aye, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss,
An immortality of passion's thine:
Ere long I will exalt thee to the shine
Of heaven ambrosial; and we will shade
Ourselves whole summers by a river glade;
And I will tell thee stories of the sky,
And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy.
My happy love will overwinding all bounds!
O let me melt into thee; let the sounds
Of our close voices marry at their birth;
Let us entwine hoveringly—O dearth
Of human words! roughness of mortal speech!
 Lispings enpyrean will I sometime teach
Thine honied tongue—lute-breathings, which I gape
To have thee understand, now while I clasp
Thee thus, and weep for fondness—I am pain'd,
Endymion: woe! woe! is grief contain'd
In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?—
Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife
Melted into a languor. He return'd
\[...\]

Ye who have yearn'd
With too much passion, will here stay and pity;
For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty
Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told
By a cavern wind unto a forest old;
And then the forest told it in a dream
To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam
A poet caught as he was journeying
To Phoebus' shrine; and in it he did fling
His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
And after, straight in that inspired place
He sang the story up into the air,
Giving it universal freedom. There
Has it been ever sounding for those ears
Whose lips are glowing hot. The legend cheers
Yon centinal stars; and he who listens to it
Must surely be self-doom'd or he will rue it:
For quenchless burnings come upon the heart,
Made fiercer by a tear lest any pari
Should be engulfed in the eddying wind.
As much as here is penn'd doth always find
A resting place, thus much comes clear and plain;
Anon the strange voice is upon the wane—
And 'tis but echo'd from departing dove,
That the fair visitant at last unwound
Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.—
Thus the tradition of the gus'ty deers.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.—
Endymion awoke, that grief of hers
Sweet paining on his ear; the stories of the sky
And I will tell thee stories of the sky.
And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy.
My happy love will overwinding all bounds!
O let me melt into thee; let the sounds
Sat silently. Love's madness he had known:
Often with more than tortured lion's groan
Moanings had burst from him; but now that rage
Had passed away: no longer did he wage
A rough-voiced war against the dooming stars.
No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars:
The lyre of his soul Æolian tun'd
Forgot all violence, and but commun'd
With melancholy thought: O he had swoon'd
Drunk from pleasure's nipple; and his love
Henceforth was dove-like.—Loth was he to move
From the imprinted couch, and when he did,
'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid
In muffling hands. So temper'd, out he stray'd
Half seeing visions that might have dismay'd
Ælete's serpents; ravishments more keen
Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean
Over eclipsing eyes: and at the last
It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast,
O'er studded with a thousand, thousand pearls,
And crimson mouthed shells with stubborn curls,
Of every shape and size, even to the bulk
In which whales abour close, to brood and suck
Against an endless storm. Moreover too,
Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue,
Ready to snort their streams. In this cool wonder
Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder
On all his life: his youth, up to the day
When 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands gay,
He steeped upon his shepherd throne: the look
Of his white palace in wild forest nook,
And all the revels he had lorded there:
Each tender maiden whom he once thought fair,
With every friend and fellow-woodland'er—
Pass'd like a dream before him. Then the spur
Of the old bards to mighty deeds: his plass
To nurse the golden age 'mong shepherd clans:
That wondrous night: the great Pan-festival:
His sister's sorrow; and his wanderings all,
Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd:
Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd
High with excessive love. "And now," thought he,
"How long must I remain in jeopardy
Of blank amusements that amaze no more?
Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core
All other depths are shallow: essences,
Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,
Meant but to fertilize my earthly root,
And make my branches lift a golden fruit
Into the bloom of heaven: other light,
Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight
The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark,
Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark!
My silent thoughts are echoing from these shells;
Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells
Of noises far away?—list!—Hereupon
He kept an anxious ear. The humming tone
Came louder, and behold, there as he lay,
On either side outshush'd, with misty spray,
A copious spring; and both together dash'd
Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks, and lash'd
Among the conchs and shells of the lofty grot,
Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot
Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a noise
As of some breathless racers whose hopes poise
Upon the last few steps, and with spent force
Along the ground they took a winding course.
Endymion follow'd—for it seem'd that one
Ever pursued, the other strove to shun—
Follow'd their languid mazes, till well nigh
He had left thinking of the mystery,—
And was now rapt in tender hoverings
Over the vanish'd bliss. Ah! what is it sings
His dream away? What melodies are these?
They sound as through the whispering of trees,
Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear!

"O Arethusa, peerless nymph! why fear
Such tenderness as mine? Great Diana, why,
Why didst thou hear her prayer? O that I
Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,
Circling about her waist, and striving how
To entice her to a dive then stealing in
Between her fuscous lips and eyelids thin,
O that her shinning rays in the sun
And I distilling from it thence to run
In amorous rillettes down her shrinking form!
To linger on her lily shoulders, warm
Between her kissing breasts, and every charm
Touch rap'tur'd!—See how painfully I flow:
Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe.
Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead
A happy wooer, to the flowery mead
KEATS

Where all that beauty snar’st me."—"Cruel god, Desist! or my offended mistress’ nod Will stagnate all thy fountains;—teaze me not With syren words—Ah, have I really got Such power to madden thee? And is it true— Away, away, or I shall dearly rue My very thoughts: in mercy then away, Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey My own dear will, ‘twould be a deadly bane. O, Oread-Queen! would that thou hadst a pain Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn And be a criminal. Alas, I burn, I shudder—gentle river, get thee hence. Alpheus! thou enchanter! every sense Of mine was once made perfect in these woods; Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent floods, Ripe fruits, and lonely couch, contentment gave; But ever since I heedlessly did love In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow Grew strong within me: wherefore serve me so, And call it love? Alas, ‘twas cruelly. Not once more did I close my happy eye Amid the thrushes’ song. Away! Away! Ah well, ‘twas a cruel thing."—"Now thou dost taunt So softly, Arethusa, that I think If thou wast playing on my shady brink, Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent maid! Stille thine heart no more; nor be afraid Of angry powers: there are deities Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful sighs 'Tis almost death to hear: 0 let me pour A dewy balm upon them!—fear no more, Sweet Arethusa! Dian’s self must feel Sometimes these very pangs. Dear maiden, steal Blushing into my soul, and let us fly These dreary caverns for the open sky. I will delight thee all my winding course, From the green sea up to my hidden-source About Arcadian forests; and will show The channels where my coolest waters flow Through mossy rocks; where, ‘mid exuberant green, I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen Than Saturn in his exile, where I bring Round flowery banks, and take thence a skim Of mealy sweets, which myriad of bees Buzz from their honey’d wings: and thou shouldst please

ENDYMION

Thyself to choose the richest, where we might Be incense-pillow’d every summer night. Doll all sad fears, thou white deliciousness, And let us be thus comforted; unless Thou couldst rejoice to see my hopeless stream Hurry distracted from Sol’s temperate beam, And pour to death along some hungry sands."— "What can I do. Alpheus? Dian stands Severe before me: persecuting fate! Unhappy Arethusa! thou wast late A huntress free in"—At this, sudden fell Those two sad streams adown a fearful dell. The Latmian listen’d, but he heard no more, Save echo, faint repeating o’er and o’er The name of Arethusa. On the verge Of that dark gulph he wept, and said: "I urge Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage, By our eternal hopes, to sooth, to assuage, If thou art powerful, these lovers’ pains; And make them happy in some happy plains."

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

BOOK III

THERE are who lord it o’er their fellow-men With most prevailing tinsel: who unpeel Their basking vanities, to browse away The comfortable green and juicy hay From human pastures; or, O torturing fact! Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack’d Fire-branded gear up and singe Our gold and ripe-ear’d hopes. With not one tinge Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight Able to face an owl’s, they still are sight By the blue-eyed nations in empurpled vests, And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts, Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount To their spirit’s perch, their being’s high account, Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones— Amid the fierce intoxicating tones
KEATS

Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour’d drums,
And sudden cannon. Ah! how all this hums,
In wakeful ears, like uproot past and gone—
Like thunder clouds that spoke to Babylon,
And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks. —
Are then realties all gilded masks?
No, there are throned seats unspeakable
But by a patient wing, a constant spell,
Or by ethereal things that, unconfined,
Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,
And poise about in cloudy thunder-tents.
To watch the abyss-birth of elements.
Aye, hohe the withering of old-lipp’d Fate
A thousand Powers keep religious state,
In water, fire, earth, and airly bourne;
And, silent as a consecrated urn,
Hold spurious sessions for a season due.
Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few!
Have bared their operations to this globe—
Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrol
Our piece of heaven—whose benevolence
Shakes hand with our own Ceres; every sense
Filling with spiritual sweets to plenteitude,
As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud
’Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear,
Eterne Apollo! that thy Sister fair
Is of all these the gentler-mindedest.
When thy gold breath is misting in the west,
She unobserved steals unto her throne,
And there she sits most meek and most alone;
As if she had not pomp subservient;
As if thine eye, high Poet! was not bent
Towards her with the Muses in thine heart;
As if the ministering stars kept not apart,
Waiting for silver-footed messages.
O Moon! the oldest shades ’mong oldest trees
Feel palpitations when thou lookest in:
O Moon! old boughs lisp forth a holier din
The while they feel thine airy fellowship.
Thou dost bless every where, with silver lip
Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine,
Couch’d in thy brightness, dream of fields divine:
Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes;
And yet thy beneficent passeth not
One obscure hiding-place, one little spot.

ENDYMION

Where pleasure may be sent: the nested wren
Has thy face within its tranquil ken,
And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf
Takes glimpses of thee; thou art a relief
To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps
Within its pearly house.—The mighty deeps,
The monstrous sea is thine—the myriad seal
O Moon! far-spriving Ocean bows to thee,
And Tellus feels his forehead’s cumbersome load.

Cynthia! where art thou now? What far abode
Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine
Such utmost beauty? Alas, thou dost pine
For one as sorrowful: thy cheek is pale
For one whose cheek is pale: thy dews bewail
His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou sigh?
Ah! surely that light peeps from Vesper’s eye,
Or what a thing is love? ’Tis She, but lo!
How chang’d, how full of ache, how gone in woeful
She dies at the thinnest cloud; her loneliness
Is wan on Neptune’s blue; yet there’s a stress
Of love-spangles, just off you cape of trees,
Dancing upon the waves, as if to please
The curly foam with amorous influence.
O, not so idle: for down-glancing thence
She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about
O’erwhelming water-courses; scaring out
The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and fright’ning
Their savage eyes with unaccustom’d lightning.
Where will the splendour be content to reach?
O love! how potent hast thou been to teach
Strange journeyings! Wherever beauty dwells,
In gulf or aerie, mountains or deep dells,
In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,
Thou pointest out the way, and straight ’tis won.
Amid his toil thou gav’st Leander breath;
Thou leftest Orpheus through the gleams of death;
Thou madest Pluto bear thine element;
And now, O winged Chieftain! thou hast sent
A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world,
To find Endymion.

On gold sand impearled
With lily shells, and pebbles milky white,
Innumerable mountains rise, and rise.
Poor Cynthia greeted him, and sound’d her light
Against his pallid face: he felt the charm
To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm
KEATS

Of his heart's blood: 'twas very sweet; he stay'd
His wandering steps, and half-entranced laid
His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds,
To taste the gentle moon, and freshening beads,
Lash'd from the crystal roof by fishes' tails.
And so he kept, until the rosy veils
Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand
Were lifted from the water's breast, and fam'd
Into sweet air; and sober'd morning came
Weekly through billows—when like taper-flame
Left sudden by a dallying breath of air,
He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare
Along his fated way.

Far had he roam'd,
With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd,
Above, around, and at his feet; save things
More dead than Morpheus' imaginings:
Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large
Of gone sea-warriors; brazen beaks and targe;
Rudders that for a hundred years had lost
The sway of human hand; gold vase emboss'd
With long-forgotten story, and wherein
No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin
But those of Saturn's vintage; mouldering scrolls,
Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls
Who first were on the earth; and sculptures rude
In ponderous stone, developing the mood
Of ancient Nox;—then skeletons of man,
Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,
And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw
Of nameless monster. A cold leader awe
These secrets struck into him; and unless
Dian had chased away that heaviness,
He might have died: but now, with cheered feel,
He onward kept; worring those thoughts to steal
About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

'What is there in thee, Moon! that thou shouldest move
My heart so potently? When yet a child
I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd.
Thou seem'st my sister: hand in hand we went
From eve to morn across the firmament.
No apples would I gather from the tree,
Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously:
No tumbling water ever spake romance,
But when my eyes with thine thereon could dance:

ENDYMION

No woods were green enough, no bower divine,
Until thou lift'st up thine eyelids fine:
In sowing time n'er would I dibble take,
Or drop a seed, till thou wost wide awake;
And, in the summer tide of blossoming,
No one but thee hath heard me blythly sing
And mesh my dewy flowers all the night.
No melody was like a passing sprite
If it went not to solemnize thy reign.
Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain
By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end;
And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend
With all my arduors: thou wast the deep glen;
Thou wast the mountain-top—the sage's pen—
The poet's harp—the voice of friends—the sun;
Thou wast the river—thou wast glory won;
Thou wast my clarion's blast—thou wast my steed—
My goblet full of wine—my topmost deed—
Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon!
O what a wild and harmonized tune
My spirit struck from all the beautiful!
On some bright essence could I lean, and lull
Myself to immortality: I prest
Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest,
But, gentle Orb! there came a nearer bliss—
My strange love came—Felicity's abase!
She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away—
Yet not entirely; no, thy starry sway
Has been an under-passion to this hour.
Now I begin to feel thine orb's power
Is coming fresh upon me: O be kind,
Keep back thine influence, and do not blind
My sovereign vision. Dearest love, forgive
That I can think away from thee and live:
Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize
One thought beyond thine argent luxuries.
How far beyond! At this a surpris'd start
Frosted the springing verdure of his heart;
For as he lifted up his eyes to swear
How his own goddess was past all things fair,
He saw far in the concave green of the sea
An old man sitting calm and peacefully.
Upon a weedéd rock this old man sat,
And his white hair was awful, and a mat
Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet;
And, ample as the largest winding-sheet,
A cloak of blue wrap'd up his aged bones,
O'erwrought with symbols by the deepest groans
Of ambitious magic, every ocean-form
Was woven in with black distinctness, storm,
And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar,
Quicksand, and whirlpool, and deserted shore,
Were emblem'd in the woof; with every shape
That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and cape.
The gulphing whale was like a dot in the spell;
Yet look upon it, and twould size and swell
To its huge self; and the minutest fish
Would pass the very hardest gazur's wish,
And show his little eye's anatomy.
Then there was picture'd the regality
Of Neptune; and the sea-nymphs round his state,
In beauteous vassalage, look up and wait.
Beside this old man lay a nearly wand,
And in his lap a book, the which he comm'd
So stedfastly, that the new denizen
Had time to keep him in amazed ken,
To mark these shadowings, and stand in awe.

The old man rais'd his hoary head and saw
The wilder'd stranger—seeming not to see,
His features were so lifeless. Suddenly
He woke as from a trance; his snow-white brows
Went arching up, and like two magic ploughs,
Furrow'd deep wrinkles in his forehead large,
Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge,
Till round his wither'd lips had gone a smile.
Then up he rose, like one whose tedious toil
Had watch'd for years in forlorn hermitage,
Who had not from mid-life to utmost age
Eas'd in one accent his o'er-burden'd soul,
Even to the trees. He rose; he graspy'd his stole,
With convuls'd clenches waving it abroad,
And in a voice of solemn joy, that aw'd
Echo into oblivion, he said:—

"Thou art the man! Now shall I lay my head
In peace upon my watery pillow; now
Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow.
O Jove! I shall be young again, be young!
O shell-born Neptune, I am pierc'd and sting
With new-born life! What shall I do? Where go,
When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe?—"
KEATS

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

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

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

"My soul stands
Now past the midway from mortality,
And so I can prepare without a sigh
To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain,
I was a fisher once, upon this main,
And my boat dance'd in every creek and bay;
Rough billows were my home by night and day,—
The sea-gulls not more constant; for I had
No housing from the storm and tempests mad,
But hollow rocks,—and they were palaces
Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease:
Long years of misery have told me so.
Aye, thus it was one thousand years ago,
One thousand years! —Is it then possible
To look so plainly through them? to dispel
A thousand years with backward glance sublime?
To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime

ENDYMION

From off a crystal pool, to see its deep,
And one's own image from the bottom peer?
Yet: now I am no longer wretched thrall,
My long captivity and moanings all
Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum,
The which I breathe away, and thronging come
Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.

"I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no measures:
I was a lonely youth on desert shores.
My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars,
And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry
Plaining discrepant between sea and sky.
Dolphins were still my playmates; shapes unseen
Would let me feel their scales of gold and green,
Nor be my desolation; and, full oft,
When a dread waterspout had rear'd aloft
Its hungry huggeness, seeming ready ripe
To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe
My life away like a vast sponge of fate,
Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state,
Has dived to its foundations, gulp'd it down,
And left me tossing safely. But the crown
Of all my life was utmost quietude:
More did I love to lie in cavern rude,
Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's voice,
And if it came at last, bark, and rejac'd;
There blush'd no summer eve but I would steer
My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear
The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery steep,
Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep:
And never was a day of summer shine,
But I beheld its birth upon the brine;
For I would watch all night to see unfold
Heaven's gates, and Aethon snort his morning gold
Wide o'er the swelling streams: and constantly
At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea,
My nets would be spread out, and I at rest.
The poor folk of the sea-country I blest
With daily boon of fish most delicate:
They knew not whence this bounty, and elate
Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

"Why was I not contented? Wherefore reach
At things which, but for thee, O Latmian!
Had been my dreary death? Fool! I began
To feel distemper'd longings: to desire
The utmost privilege that ocean's sire
Could grant in benediction: to be free
Of all his kingdom. Long in misery
I wasted, ere in one extremest fit
I plung'd for life or death. To intermit
One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff
Might seem a work of pain: so not enough
Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt,
And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt
Whole days and days in sheer astonishment;
Forgetful utterly of self-intent;
Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow.
Then, like a new fledg'd bird that first doth show
His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill,
I tried in vain the pinions of my will.
'Twas freedom! and at once I visited
The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed.
No need to tell thee of them, for I see
That thou hast been a witness— it must be
For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth,
By the melancholy corners of that mouth
So I will in my story straightway pass
To more immediate matter. Wo! alas!
That love should be my bane! Ah, Scylla fair!
Why did poor Glauce ever—ever dare
To sue thee to his heart? Kind stranger-youth!
I lov'd her to the very white of truth;
And she would not conceive it. Dimid thing!
She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing;
Round every isle, and point, and promontory,
From where large Hercules wound up his story.
Far as Egyptian Nile. My passion grew.
The more, the more I saw her dainty hue
Gleam delicately through the azure clear:
Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear;
And in that agony, across my grief
It shall'd, that Circe might find some relief
Cruel enchantress! So abode the water.
I hear'd my head, and look'd for Phœbus' daughter.
Æaea's isle was wondering at the moon:
It seem'd to whirl around me, and a swoon
Left me dead-drifting at that fatal power.

"When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower;
Just when the light of morn, with hum of bees,
Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh trees.

How sweet, and sweeter; for I heard a lyre,
And over it a sighing voice expire.
It ceased— I caught light footsteps; and anon
The fairest face that morn ever look'd upon
Push'd through a screen of roses. Starry Jove!
With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she wove
A net whose thraldom was more bliss than all
The range of flower'd Elysium. Thus did fall
The dew of her rich speech: "Ah! Art awake?
'O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake!
'I am so oppressed'd with joy! Why, I have shed
-An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold dead;
'And now I find thee living, I will pour
'From these devoted eyes their silver store,
'Until exhausted of the latest drop,
'So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop
'Here, that I too may live: but if beyond
'Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art fond
'Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme.
'If thou art ripe to taste a long love dream;
'If smiles, if dimples, tongues for ardour mute,
'Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit,
'O let me pluck it for thee." Thus she link'd
Her charming syllables, till indistinct
Their music came to my o'er-sweeter'd soul;
And then she hover'd over me, and stole.
So near, that if no nearer it had been
This wrack'd visage thou hadst never seen.

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

"Who could resist? Who in this universe?
She did so breathe ambrosia; so immense
My fine existence in a golden clique.
She took me like a child of sucking time.
And cradled me in roses. Thus condemn'd,
The current of my former life was stemm'd,
And to this arbitrary queen of sense
I bow'd a tranced vassal; nor would thence
Have mov'd, even though Amphin's harp had woo'd
Me back to Scylla or the billows rude.
For as Apollo each eve doth devise
A new apparel for western skies;
KEATS

So every eve, nay every spendthrift hour  
Shed balmy consciousness within that bower.  
And I was free of haunts unbrazenous;  
Could wander in the mazy forest-house  
Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antler'd deer,  
And birds from covert to innermost and drear  
Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow—  
To me new born delights!

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

"One morn she left me sleeping: half awake  
I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake  
My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-draughts;  
But she was gone, Whereas the barbed shafts  
Of disappointment stuck in me so sore,  
That out I ran and search'd the forest o'er  
Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom  
Damp awe assaid me; for there 'gan to boom  
A sound of moan, an agony of sound,  
Sepulchral from the distance all around.  
Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and rumbled  
That fierce complaint to silence: while I stumbled  
Down a precipitous path, as if impell'd.  
I came to a dark valley—Groanings swell'd  
Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew,  
The nearer I approach'd a flame's gaunt blue,  
That glare'd before me through a thorny brake.  
This fire, like the eye of gordin snake,  
Bewitch'd me towards; and I soon was near  
A sight too fearful for the feel of fear:  
In thicket hid I curs'd the haggard scene—  
The banquet of my arms, my arrowbourn  
Seated upon an upturn forest root;  
And all around her shapes, wizard and brute,  
Laughter and wailing, groveling, serpentiing,  
Showing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting!  
O such deformities! Old Charon's self,  
Should he give up awhile his penny pelf,  
And take a dream 'mong rushes Sisygian,  
It could not be so phantasied. Fierce, wan,  
And tyrannizing was the lady's look,  
As over them a gnam'd staff she shook.

ENDYMION

Oft-times upon the sudden she laugh'd out,  
And from a basket emptied to the rout  
Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd quick  
And round for more; with many a hungry lick  
About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow,  
Anon she took a branch of mistletoe,  
And emptied on't a black dull-gurgling phial:  
Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial  
Was sharpening for their pitiable bones.  
She lift up the charm: appealing groans  
From their poor breasts went seeing to her ear  
In vain; remorseless as an infant's bier  
She whisl'd against their eyes the sooty oil.  
Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil,  
Increasing gradual to a tempest rage.  
Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage;  
Until their grieved bodies 'gan to boast  
And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat:  
Then was appalling silence: then a sight  
More wildering than all that hoarse affright;  
For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind whirled,  
Went through the dismal air like one huge Python  
Antagonizing Boreas,—and so vanish'd.  
Yet there was not a breath of wind: she banish'd  
These phantoms with a nod. Lo! from the dark  
Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs stark,  
With dancing and loud revelry,—and went  
Swifter than centaurs after raping bent.  
Sighing an elephant appear'd and bow'd  
Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud  
In human accent: "Potent goddess! chief  
‘Of pains resistless! make my being brief,  
‘Or let me from this heavy prison fly:  
‘Or give me to the air, or let me die!  
‘I sue not for my happy crown again;  
‘I sue not for my phalanx on the plain;  
‘I sue not for my lone, my widow's wife;  
‘I sue not for my ruddy drops of life,  
‘My children fair, my lovely girls and boys!  
‘I will forget them; I will pass these joys;  
‘Ask nought so heavenward, so too—too high:  
‘Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die,  
‘Or be deliver'd from this cumbrous flesh,  
‘From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh,  
‘And merely given to the cold bleak air.  
‘Have mercy, Goddess! Circe, feel my prayer!"
KEATS

That cursed magician's name fell icy numb
Upon my wild conjecturing; truth had come.
Naked and sabre-like against my heart.
I saw a fury whetting a death-dart.
And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright,
Faintly away in that dark lair of night.
Think, my deliverer, how desolate
My waking must have been! disgust, and hate,
And terrors manifold divided me.
A spoil amongst them. I prepare’d to flee.
Into the dungeon core of that wild wood—
I fled three days—when, lo! before me stood
Glaring the angry witch. O Dis, even now,
A damny beard is beading on my brow,
At mere remembering her pale laugh, and curse.

HA! HA! Sir Dainty! there must be a nurse.
Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express,
To cradle thee my sweet, and lull thee: yes,
I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch.
My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clout.
So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies
Unheard of yet: and it shall still its cries
Upon some breast more lilly-feminine.
Oh, no—it shall not pine, and pine, and pine
More than one pretty, trifling thousand years;
And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears
Cut short its immortality. Sea-flit!
Young dove of the waters! truly I'll not hurt
One hair of thine: see how I weep and sigh,
That our heart-broken parting is so nigh.
And must we part? Ah, yes, it must be so.
Yet ere thou leavest me in utter woe,
Let me sob over thee my last adieux,
And speak a blessing: Mark me! Thou hast thorns
Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race;
But such a love is mine, that here I chace
Eternally away from thee all bloom
Of youth, and destinie thee towards a tomb.
Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast;
And there, ere many days be overpast,
Disabled age shall seize thee; and even then
Thou shalt not go the way of aged men;
But live and wither, cripple and still breathe
The hundred years: and next tell, I then bequeath
Thy fragile bones to unknown burial.

Adieu, sweet love, adieu!"—As shot stars fall,

ENDYMION

She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung
And poison'd was my spirit; despair sung aloud.
A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell.
A hand was at my shoulder to compel
My sullen steps; another 'tore my eyelids up
Moved on with pointed finger. In this guise I fell
Enforced, at the last by ocean's foam
I found me; by my fresh, my native home.
Its tempering coolness, to my life akin,
Came salutary as I waded in.
And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave my soul
Battle to the swollen bilow-ridge, and brave it;
Large froth before me, while there yet remain'd
Hale strength, nor from my bones all narrow drain'd.

Young lover, I must weep—such hellish spite
With dry cheek who can tell? While thus my might
Proving upon this element, dissaid'd and dought.
Upon a dead thing's face my hand I laid; and heard
I took'd—twas Scylla! Cursed, cursed Circe!
O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy?
Could not thy hardest vengeance be content,
But thou must nip this tender innocent
Because I lov'd her?—Gold! O Gold indeed
Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed
The sea-swell took her hair. Dead as she was
I clung about her waist, nor eas'd to pass
Fleet as an arrow through unfathomed brine,
Until there shone a fabric crystalline,
Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl.
Headlong I darted; at one euger swirl
Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd; and behold?
'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold;
And all around—But wherefore this to thee
Who in few minutes more thyself shalt see?—
I left poor Scylla in a niche and fled.
My fever'd parchings up, my scathing dread
Met palsy half way: soon these limbs became
Gaut, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame.

Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space
Without one hope, without one faintest trace
Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble
Of colour'd phantasy; for I fear twould trouble
Thy brain to lose of years: which gone, next tell
How a restoring chance came down to quell
One half of the witch in me.
“On a day,
Sitting upon a rock above the spray,
I saw grow up from the horizon’s brink
A gallant vessel; soon she seem’d to sink
Away from me again, as though her course—
So vanish’d: and not long, before arose
Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose.
Old Æolus would stifle his mad spleen,
But could not; therefore all the billows green
Toss’d up the silver spume against the clouds.
The tempest came: I saw that vessel’s shrouds
In perilous bustle; while upon the deck
Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck;
The final gulping; the poor struggling souls:
I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls.
O they had all been sav’d but crazed old
Annihil’d my vigorous cravings: and thus quell’d
And curb’d, think on’t, O Latman! did I sit
Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit
Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had gone,
By one and one, to pale oblivion;
And I was gazing on the surges prone,
With many a scalding tear and many a groan,
When at my feet emerg’d an old man’s hand,
Grasping this scroll, and this same slender wand.
I knelt with pain—reach’d out my hand—had grasp’d
These treasures—touch’d the knuckles—they unclasped—
I caught a finger: but the downward weight
O’erpowered me—it sank. Then ‘gan abate
The storm, and through chill aguish gloom outburst
The comfortable sun. I was athirst.
To search the book, and in the warming air
Parted its dripping leaves with eager care.
Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on
My soul page after page, till well-nigh won
Into forgetfulness; when, stoppered,
I read these words, and read again, and tried
My eyes against the heavens, and read again.
O what a load of misery and pain
Each Atlas-line bore off!—a shine of hope
Came gold around me, cheering me to cope
Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend!
For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

“In wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch,
Doom’d with enfeebled carcose to outstretch

His look’d existence through ten centuries,
And then to die alone. Who can devise
A total opposition? No one. So
One million times ocean must ebb and flow,
And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die.
These things accomplish’d:—If he utterly
Scans all the depths of magic, and expands
The meanings of all motions, shapes and sounds;
If he explores all forms and substances
Straight homeward to their symbol-estences;
He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,
He must pursue this task of joy and grief
Most piously;—all lovers tempest-tost,
And in the savage overwhelming lost,
He shall deposit side by side, unit
Time’s creeping shall the dreary space fulfil:
Which done, and all these labours ripened,
A youth, by heavenly power lov’d and led,
Shall stand before him; whom he shall direct
How to consummate all. The youth elect
Must do the thing, or both will be destroy’d.”—
The stranger from the mountains, breathless, trac'd
Such thousands of shut eyes in order plac'd;
Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips.
All ruddy,—for here death no blossom nips.
He mark'd their brows and foreheads; saw their hair
Put sleekly on one side with nicest care;
And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence,
Put cross-wise to its heart.

"Let us commence,"
Whisper'd the guide, stuttering with joy, "even now."
He spake, and trembling like an Aspen-bough,
Began to tear his scroll in pieces small,
Uttering the while some murmings funeral.
He tore it into pieces small as snow
That drifted unfeather'd when bleak northers blow;
And having done it, took his dark blue cloak
And bound it round Endymion; then struck
His wand against the empty air times nine,—
"What more there is to do, young man, is thine;
But first a little patience; first undo
This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue.
Ah, gentle! 'tis our woe, as spider's skin;
And shouldst thou break it—What, is it done so clean?
A power overshadows thee! O, brave!
The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.
Here is a shell; 'tis pearly blank to me,
Nor mark'd with any sign or charactery—
Canst thou read aught? O read for pity's sake!
Olympus! we are safe! Now, Carian, break
This wand against your lyre on the pedestal."

"Twas done: and straight with sudden swell and fall
Sweet music breath'd her soul away, and sigh'd
A lullaby to silence,—"'Tis our woe, now strew
These minus leaves on me, and passing through
Those files of dead, scatter the same around.
And thou wilt see the issue."—"Mid the sound
Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,
Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,
And scatter'd in his face some fragments light.
How lightning-swift the change! a youthful wight
Smiling beneath a coral diadem,
Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,
Appeard, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,
Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force
Press'd its cold hand, and wept,—and Scylla sigh'd!
Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied—

The nymph arose: he left them to their joy,
And onward went upon his high employ,
Showering those powerful fragments on the dead.
And, as he pass'd, each lifted up his head,
As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.
Death felt it to his inward: 'twas too much:
Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house.
The Latian persever'd along, and thus
All were re-animat'd. There arose
A noise of harmony, pulses and throes.
Of gladness in the air,—while many, who
Had died in mutual arms devout and true,
Sprang to each other madly; and the rest
Felt a high certainty of being blest.
They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment
Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent.
Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,
Budd'd, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full showers
Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.
The two deliverers tasted a pure wine
Of happiness, from fairy-press'd oz'rz'd out.
Speechless they eyed each other, and about
The fair assembly wander'd to and fro,
Distracted with the richest overflow.
Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven.

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

Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far,
Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,
Just within ken, they saw descending thick
Another multitude. Whereat more quick
Moved either foot. On a wide sand they met;
And of those numbers every eye was wet;
For each their old love found: A murmuring rose,
Like what was never heard in all the throes.
Of wind and waters: 'tis past human wit
To tell; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host
Mov'd on for many a league; and gain'd, and lost
Huge sea-marks; vanward swelling in array,
And from the rear diminishing away,
Till a faint dawn surpris'd them. Glauceus cried,
"Behold! behold, the palace of his pride!
God Neptune's palaces!" With noise increas'd,
They shoulder'd on towards that brightening east.
At every onward step proud domes arose
In prospect,—diamond gleams, and golden glows
Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling
Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring,
Still onward; still the splendour gradual swell'd.
Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld
By Jasper pillars, letting through their shafts
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts
Each gazer drank; and deeper drunk more near:
For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere
As marble was there lavish, to the vast
Of one fair palace, that far far surpass'd,
Even for common bulk, those olden three,
Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

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

Far as the mariner on highest mast
Can see all round upon the calmed vast,
So wide was Neptune's hall: and as the blue
Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew
KEATS

To utter secrets, haply I might say
Some pleasant words:—but Love will have his day.
So wait a while expectant. Pr’yer thee soon,
Even in the passing of thine honey-moon,
Visit thou my Cytherea: thou wilt find
Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind;
And pray persuade with thee—Ah, I have done,
All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son!—
Thus the fair goddess: While Endymion
Kneel’d to receive those accents halcyon.

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

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

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

"King of the stormy sea!
Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor
Of elements! Eternally before
Thee the waves awaft bow. Fast, stubborn rock,
At thy fear’d trident shrinking, doth unlock
Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.
All mountain-rivers, lost in the wide home
Of thy capacious bosom, ever flow.
Thou frownest, and old Æolus thy foe;
Skulls to his cavern, ’mid the gruff complaint
Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint

ENDYMION

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

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

"Bright-winged Child!
Who has another care when thou hast smil’d?
Unfortunates on earth, we see at last
All death-shadows, and glooms that overscast
Our spirits, fam’d away by thy light pinions.
O sweetest essence! sweetest of all minions!
God of warm pulses, and dishevell’d hair,
And panting bosoms bare!
Dear unseen light in darkness! eclipsed
Of light in light! delicious poisoner!
Thy venom’d goblet will we quaff until
We fill—we fill!
And by thy Mother’s lips——"

Was heard no more
For clamour, when the golden palace door
Opened again, and from without, in shone
A new magnificence. On oozy throne
Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old,
To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold,
Before he went into his quiet cave
To muse for ever—Then a lucid wave,

921
930
940
950
KEATS

Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea,
Alcni, and pillowing up the majestic
Of Doris, and the Ægean seer, her spouse—
Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs,
Theban Amphion leaning on his lute:
1000
His fingers went across it—All were mute
To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls,
And Thetis pearly too.—

The palace whirls
Around giddy Endymion; seeing he
Was there far strayed from mortality,
Could not hear it—shut his eyes in vain;
Imagination gave a dizzier pain.

"O I shall die! sweet Venus, be my stay!
Where is my lovely mistress? Well-away!
1010
I die—I hear her voice—I feel my wing—"
At Neptune's feet he sank. A sudden ring
Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife
To usher back his spirit into life:
But still he slept. At last they interwove
Their cradling arms, and purpos'd to convey
Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo! while slow carried through the plying crowd,
To his inward senses these words spake aloud;
Written in star-light on the dark above:
Dearest Endymion! my entire love!
How have I dwelt in fear of fate: 'tis done—
1020
Immortal bliss for me too vast thou won.
Arise then! for the ken-dove shall not hatch
Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch
Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!

The youth at once arose: a placid lake
Came quiet to his eyes; and forest green,
Cooler than all the wonders he had seen,
Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering breast.

1030
How happy once again in grassy nest!

BOOK IV

Music of my native land! loftiest Muse!
O first-born on the mountains! by the hues
Of heaven on the spiritual air begot:
Long didst thou sit alone in northern grove,

ENDYMION

While yet our England was a wolfish den;
Before our forests heard the talk of men;
Before the first of Druids was a child:—
Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild
Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.

There came an eastern voice of solemn mood:—
Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine,
Apollo's garland:—yet didst thou divine
Such home-bred glory, that they cry'd in vain,
"Come hither, Sister of the Island!" Plain
Spake fair Ausonia; and once more she spake
A higher summons:—still didst thou betake
Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won
A full accomplishment! The thing is done,
Which undone, these our latter days had risen
On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st what prison,
Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets
Our spirit's wings: despondency besets
Our pillows; and the fresh to-morrow morn
Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.
Long have I said, how happy he who strives
To thee! But then I thought on poets gone,
And could not pray:—nor could I now—so on
I move to the end in lowliness of heart.—

"Ah, woe is me! that I should fondly part
From my dear native land! Ah, foolish maid!
Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads bade
Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields!
To one so friendless the clear freshet yields
A bitter coolness; the ripe grape is sour;
Yet I would have, great gods! but one short hour
Of native air—let me but die at home."

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

"Is no one near to help me? No fair dawn
Of life from charitable voice? No sweet saying
To set my dull and sadden'd spirit playing?
KEATS

No hand to toy with mine! No lips so sweet
That I may worship them? No eyelids meet
To twinkle on my bosom? No one dies
Before me, till from these enslaving eyes
Redemption sparkles—"I am sad and lost."

Thou, Cariad lord, hadst better have been tossed
Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,
Warm mountaineer! for canst thou only bear
A woman's sigh alone and in distress?
See not her charms? Is Phoebe passionless?
Phoebe is fairer—O gaze no more:—
Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store,
Behold her panting in the forest grass!
Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass
For tenderness the arms so finely join
Amongst them? Feelest not a kindred pain,
To see such lovely eyes in swimming search
After some warm delight, that seems to perch
Dovellike in the dim cell lying beyond
Their upper lids?—Hast!

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

Upon a bough
He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now
Thirst for another love: O impious,
That he can ever dream upon it thus!—

ENDYMION

Thought he, "Why am I not as are the dead,
Since to a woe like this I have been led
Through the dark earth, and through the wondrous sea?
Goddesst! I love thee not the less: from thee
By Juno's smile I turn not—no, no, no—
While the great waters are at ebb and flow.—
I have a triple soul! O fond pretence—
For both, for both my love is so immense,
I feel my heart is cut for them in twain."

And so he groaned, as one by beauty slain,
The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see
Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously.
He sprang from his green covert: there she lay,
Sweet as a muskrose upon new-made hay;
With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes
Shut softly up alive. To speak he tried.
"Fair damsel, pity me! forgive that I
Thus violate thy bower's sanctity!
O pardon me, for I am full of grief—
Grief born of thee, young angel! fairest thief!
Who stolen hast away the wings whereby
I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sigh
Thou art my executioner, and I feel
Loving and hatred, misery and weal,
Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,
And all my story that much passion slew me;
Do smile upon the evening of my days:
And, for my tortured brain begins to craze,
Be thou my nurse; and let me understand
How dying I shall kiss that lilly hand.—
Dost weep for me? Then should I be content.
Swoon on, ye fates! until the firmament
Outblacks its Erebus, and the full-cavern'd earth
Crumbles into itself. By the cloud girth
Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst
To meet oblivion."—As her heart would burst
The maiden sobbed awhile, and then replied:
"Why must such desolation betide
As that thou speakest of? Are not these green rocks
Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks
Utter a groan? Does yonder thrush,
Schooling its half-fledg'd little ones to brush
About the dewy forest, whisper tales?—
Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails
Will slume the rose to night. Though if thou wilt,
Methinks 'twould be a guilt—a very guilt—
Not to companion thee, and sigh away
The light—the dusk—the dark—till break of day!"
"Dear lady," said Endymion, "'tis past:
I love thee! and my days can never last.
That I may pass in patience still speak:
Let me have music dying, and I seek
No more delight—I bid adieu to all.
Dost thou not after other climates call,
And murmur about Indian streams?"
—Then she,
Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,
For pity sang this roundelay—

"O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?—
To give maiden blushes
To the white rose bushes?
Or is't thy dewy hand the daisy lips?

"O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye?—
To give the glow-worm light?
Or, on a moonless night,
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spray?

"O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?—
To give at evening pale
Unto the nightingale,
That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?

"O Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?—
A lover would not tread
A cowslip on the head,
Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—
Nor any drooping flower
Held sacred for thy bower,
Wherever he may sport himself and play.

"To Sorrow,
I bade good-morrow,
And thought to leave her far away behind;
But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly;
She is so constant to me, and so kind:
I would deceive her
And so leave her,
But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept,—
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lilly cups with tears
Cold as my fears.

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

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

"Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trilling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite:
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
Tipishly quaffing.

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

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

"Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard runs,
With Asian elephants:
Onward these myriads—with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
Plump infant laughers mimicking the call
Of seamen, and stout galley-rows! toil:
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide.

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

"I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
Before the vine-wreath crown!
I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing
To the silver cymbals' ring!
I saw the whirling vintage hotly pierce
Old Tartary the fierce!
The kings of India their jewels—sceptres vail,
And from their treasures scatter pearl'd hail;
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
And all his priesthood moans;
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale,—
Into these regions came I following him,
Sick hearted, weary—so I took a whim
To stray away into these forests drear
Alone, without a peer:
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear,
"Young stranger!
I've been a ranger
In search of pleasure throughout every clime:
Alas, 'is not for me!
Bewitch'd I sure must be,
To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.
"Come then, Sorrow!
Sweetest Sorrow!
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:
I thought to leave thee
And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best.
"There is not one,
No, no, not one
But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid:
Thou art her mother,
And her brother,
Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade."

O what a sigh she gave in finishing,
And look, quite dead to every worldly thing!
Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her;
And listened to the wind that now did stir
About the crisped oaks full drearily,
Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
Remember'd from its velvet summer song.
At last he said: "Poor lady, how thus long
Have I been able to endure that voice?
Fair Melody! kind Syren! I've no choice;
I must be thy sad servant evermore:
I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.
Alas, I must not think—soft Angel! shall it be so?
Say, beautifullest, shall I never think?
O thou could'st foster me beyond the brink
Of recollection! make my watchful care
Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair!
Do gently murder half my soul, and I
Shall feel the other half so utterly—
I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth;
O let it blush so ever! let it soothe
My madness! let it mantle rosy-warm
With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm.—
This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is;
And this is sure thine other softling—this
Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near!
Wilt fall asleep? O let me sip that tear!
And whisper one sweet word that I may know
This is this world—sweet dewy blossom!—"Woe!
Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?
Even these words went echoing dismally
Through the wide forest—a most fearful tone,
Like one repenting in his latest moan;
And while it died away a shade passed by,
As of a thunder cloud. When arrows fly
Through the thick branches, poor ring-doves sleek forth
Their timid necks and tremble; so these both
Learn to each other trembling, and sat so
Waiting for some destruction—when lo,
Foot-feather'd Mercury appear'd sublime
Beyond the tall trea tops; and in less time
Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he dropt
Towards the ground; but reet'd not, nor stopt
One moment from his pace; only the sward
He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward
Swifter than sight was gone—even before
The teeming earth a sudden witness bore
Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear
Above the crystal circlings white and clear;
And catch the cheated eye in wide surprise.
How they can dive in sight and unseen rise—
So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-black,
Each with large dark blue wings upon his back.

The youth of Caria plac'd the lovely dame
On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame
The other's fierceness. Through the air they flew,
High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew
Exhal'd to Phebus' lips, away they are gone,
Far from the earth awa— unseen, alone,
Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free,
The buoyant life of song can floating be
Above their heads, and follow them untir'd.—
Muse of my native land, am I inspir'd?
This is the giddy air, and I must spread
Wide pinions to keep here; nor do I dread
Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance
Precipitious: I have beneath my glance
Those towering horses and their mournful freight.
Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await
Fearless for power of thought, without thine aid?—

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

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

His sluggish form reposing motionless.
Those two on winged steeds, with all the stress
Of vision search'd for him, as one would look
Athwart the sailors of a river nook.
To catch a glance at silver-throated eels—
Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals
His rugged forehead in a mantle pale,
With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale
Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they foster'd are
Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop
Their full-vein'd ears, nostrils blood wide, and stop;
Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread
Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,—
And on those pinions, level in mid air,
Endymion sleepeath and the lady fair.
Slowly they sail, slowly as icy tide
Upon a calm sea drifting: and meanwhile
The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold! he walks
On heaven's pavement: brotherly he talks
To divine power: from his hand full fain
Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain:
He tries the nerve of Phoebus' golden bow,
And asketh where the golden apples grow:
Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,
And strives in vain to unstill and wield
A Jovian thunderbolt: arch Hebe brings
A full-brimm'd goblet, dances lightly, sings
And tantalizes long; at last he drinks,
And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks,
Touching with dazled lips her starlight hand.
He blows a bugle,—an ethereal band
Are visible above; the Seasons four,—
Green-kirtled Spring, flush Summer, golden store
In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar.
Join dance with shadowy Hours; while still the blast,
In swells unmitigated, still doth last
To swing their floating morris. "Whose is this?
Whose bugle?" he inquires; they smile—"O Dis! Why is this mortal here? Dost thou not know
Its mistress' lips? Not thou?—"Tis Diana's: 101
She rises crescented!" He looks, "in she,
His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea,
And air, and paths, and care, and suffering;
Good-bye to all but love! Then doth he spring

ENDYMION

Towards her, and awakes—and, strange, o'erhead,
Of those same fragrant exhalations bred.
Beheld awake his very dream: the gods
Stood smiling; merry Hebe laughs and nods;
And Phoebe bends towards him crescented.
O state perplexing! On the pinion bed,
Too well awake, he feels the panting side
Of his delicious lady. Who he died
For soaring too audacious in the sun,
When that same treacherous wax began to run,
Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion,
His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne,
To that fair shadow'd passion pulls'd its way—
Ah, what perplexity! Ah, well a day!
So fond, so beauteous was his bed-fellow,
He could not help but kiss her: then he grew
Awhile forgetful of all beauty save
Young Phoebe's, golden hair'd; and so 'gan crave
Forgiveness: yet he turn'd once more to look
At the sweet sleeper,—all his soul was shook,—
She press'd his hand in slumber; so once more
He could not help but kiss her; and his adore.
At this the shadow wept, melting away.
The Latmian started up: "Bright goddess, stay!
Search my most hidden breast! By truth's own tongue,
I have no deceitful heart: why is it wrung
To desperation? Is there nought for me,
Upon the bourn of bliss, but misery?"

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

The good-night blush of eve was waning slow,
And Vesper, risen star, began to three
In the dusk heavens silverly, when they
Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy,
Nor did speed hinder converse soft and strange—
Eternal oaths and vows they interchange,
In such wise, in such temper, so aloof
Up in the winds, beneath a starry roof,
So witless of their doom, that verily
'Tis well nigh past man's search their hearts to see;
Whether they wept, or laugh'd, or griev'd, or toy'd—
Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow cloy'd.

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

There lies a den,
Beyond the seeming confines of the space
Made for the soul to wander in and trace
Its own existence, of remotest glooms,
Dark regions are around it, where the tombs
Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce
One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce
Of new-born woes it feels more hourly smart:
And in these regions many a venom'd dart
At random flies; they are the proper home
Of every ill: the man is yet to come

Who hath not journeyed in this native hell,
But few have ever felt how calm and well
Sleep may be had in that deep den of all,
There anguish does not sting; nor pleasure palls:
Woe—hurricanes beat ever at the gate,
Yet all is still within and desolate.
Blest with patient gusts, within ye hear
No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier
The death-watch tick is stilled. Enter none
Who strive therefore on the sudden it is won.
Just when the sufferer begins to burn,
Then it is free to him; and from an urn,
Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught—
Young Semele such richness never quaff'd
In her maternal longings! Happy gloom!
Dark Paradise! where pale becomes the bloom
Of health by dale; where silence dreariest
Is most articulate; where hopes infest;
Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep
Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.
O happy spirit-borne! O wondrous soul!
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian!
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,
Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud
Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude.
Aye, his hulld' soul was there, although upborne
With dangerous speed: and so he did not mourn
Because he knew not whither he was going.
So happy was he, not the aerial blowing
Of trumpets at clear parley from the east
Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast.
They stung the feather'd horse: with fierce alarm
He Fapp'd towards the sound. Alas, no charm
Could lift Endymion's head, or he had view'd
A skye'y mask, a pinion'd multitude,—
And silver was its passing; voices sweet
Warbling the while as if to lull and greet
The wanderer in his path. Thus wailed they,
While past the vision went in bright array.

"Who, who from Dian's feast would be away?
For all the golden bowers of the day
Are empty left? Who, who away would be
From Cynthia's wedding and festivity?
Not Hesperus: lol upon his silver wings
He leaps away for highest heaven and sings,
Snapping his lucid fingers merrily! —
Ah, Zephyrus! art here, and Flora too!
Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,
Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,
Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill
Your baskets high
With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,
Savory, latter-mint, and columbine,
Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme;
Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,
All gather'd in the dewy morning: his
Away! fly, fly! —
Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,
Aquarius! to whom king Jove has given
Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd wings,
Two fan-like fountains, thine illuminings
For Dion play:
Dissolve the frozen purity of air;
Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare
Show cold through watery pinions; make more bright
The Star Queen's crescent on her marriage night:
Haste, haste away! —
Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see!
And of the Bear has Polux mastery:
A third is in the race! who is the third
Speeding away swift as the eagle bird?
The ramping Centaur!
The Lion's mane's on end: the Bear how fierce!
The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce
Some enemy: far forth his bow is bent
Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,
Pain unrelevent,
When he shall hear the wedding lutes a playing.—
Andromeda! sweet woman! why delaying
So timidy among the stars: come hither!
Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither
They all are going.
Danie's Son, before Jove newly bow'd,
Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.
Thee, gentle lady, did he disenchant:
Ye shall for ever live and love, for all
Thy tears are flowing.—
By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo! —" More

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

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill.
"Alas!" said he, "were I but always borne
Through dangerous winds, had but my footsteps worn
A path in hell, for ever would I bless
Horrors which nourish an uneasiness
For my own sullen conquering; to him
Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is dim,
Sorrow is but a shadow: now I see
The grass; I feel the solid ground — Ah, me!
It is thy voice — divinest! Where? — who? who
Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew?
Behold upon this happy earth we are;
Let us aye love each other; let us fare
On forest-fruits, and never, never go
Among the abodes of mortals here below,
Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny!
Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,
But with thy beauty will I deaden it.
Where didst thou melt to? By thee will I sit
For ever: let our fate stop here—a kid
I on this spot will offer: Pan will bid
Us live in peace, in love and peace among
His forest wildernesses. I have clung
To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
Or felt but a great dream! O I have been
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
Against all elements, against the tide
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory
Has my own soul conspired: so my story
Will I to children utter, and repent.
There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
But starv'd and died. My sweetest Indian, here,
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
My life from too thin breathing: gone and past
Are cloudy phantasmis. Caverns lone, farewell!
And air of vision, and the monstrous swell
Of visionary seas! No, never more
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.
Adieu, my dearest Dream! although so vast
My love is still for thee. The hour may come
When we shall meet in pure elysium.
On earth I may not love thee; and therefore
Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store
KEATS

All through the teeming year: so thou wilt shine
On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,
And bless our silver lives. My Indian bliss!
My river-lily bud! one human kiss:
One sign of real breath—one gentle squeeze,
Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees,
And warm with dew at oozefrom living blood!
Whiter didst melt? Ah, what of that!—all good
We'll talk about—no more of dreaming.—Now,
Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none;
And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,
Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?
O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place;
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd:
For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find,
And by another, in deep dell below,
See, through the trees, a little river go
All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.

Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring,
And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,—
Cresses that grow where no man may them see,
And sorrel unmorn by the dew-claw'd stag:
Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag,
That thou mayst always know whither I roam,
When it shall please thee in our quiet home
To listen and think of love. Still let me speak;
Still let me dive into the joy I seek,—
For yet the past doth prison me. The rill,
Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill
With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn,
And thou shalt feed them from the squirrel's barn.
Its bottom will I strewn with amber shells,
And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells.
Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet gentiane,
And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine.
I will entice this crystal rill to trace
Love's silver name upon the meadow's face.
I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire;
And to god Phebus, for a golden lyre;
To Empress Diana, for a hunting spear;
To Vesper, for a taper silver-clear,
That I may see thy beauty through the night;
To Flora, and a nightingale shall light

ENDYMION

Tame on thy finger; to the River-gods,
And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods
Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress.
Heaven shield thee for thine utter loneliness!
Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be
'Foe which I'll bend, blessing, dear love, to thee:
Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak
Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek,
Trembling ere steadfastness to this same voice,
And of three sweetest pleasures the choice:
And that affectionate light, those diaphanous things,
Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl springs,
Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.
Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure?
O that I could not doubt!

The mountaineer

Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear
His brier'd path to some tranquillity.
It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye,
And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow;
Answering thus, just as the golden morrow
Beam'd upward from the valleys of the east:
'O that the flutter of this heart had cease'd,
Or the sweet name of love had pass'd away.
Young feather'd tyrant! by a swift decay
Wilt thou devote this body to the earth:
And I (e) think that at my very birth
I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly
For at the first, first dawn and thought of thee,
With uplift hands I blest the stars of heaven.
Art thou not cruel? Ever have I striven
To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do!
When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew
Favour from thee, and so I kisses gave
To the void air, bidding them find out love:
But when I came to feel how far above
All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,
All earthly pleasure, all imagin'd good,
Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,—
Even then, that moment, at the thought of this,
Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers,
And languish'd there three days. Ye milder powers,
Am I not cruelly wrong'd? Believe, believe
Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave
With my own fancies garlands of sweet life,
Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife!
I may not be thy love: I am forbidden—
Indeed I am—thwarted, affrighted, childen,
By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath.
Twice hast thou ask'd whither I went: henceforth
Ask me no more! I may not utter it,
Nor may I be thy love. We might commit
Ourselves at once to vengeance; we might die;
We might embrace and die: voluptuous thought!
Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught
In trammels of perverse deliciousness.
No, no, that shall not be: thee will I bless,
And bid a long adieu."

The Carian
No word return'd: both lovelorn, silent, wan,
Into the vallies green together went.
Far wandering, they were perfere content
To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree;
Nor at each other gaz'd, but heavily
For'd on its hazle cirque of shedden leaves.

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

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

"Dear brother mine!
Endymion, weep not so! Why shouldst thou pine
When all the great Latmos so exalt will be?
Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly;
And speak not one pale word, and sigh no more.
Sure I will not believe thou hast such store
Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again.
Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain,
Come hand in hand with one so beautiful.
Be happy both of you! for I will pull
The flowers of autumn for your coronals.
Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls;
And when he is restor'd, thou, fairest dame,
Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame
To see ye thus—nor very, very sad?
Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad:
O feel as if it were a common day;
Free-voic'd as one who never was away.
No tongue shall ask, whence come ye? but ye shall
Be gods of your own rest imperial.
Not even I, for one whole month, will pry
Into the hours that have pass'd us by.
Since in my arbour I did sing to thee.
O Hermes! on this very night will be
A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light;
For the soothsayers old saw yesternight
Good visions in the air,—whence will befal.
As say these sages, health perpetual
To shepherds and their flocks; and furthermore,
In Diana's face they read the gentle lore:
Therefore for her these vesper-carols are.
Our friends will all be there from morn and far.
Many upon thy death have ditties made;
And many, even now, their foreheads shade
With cypress, on a day of sacrifice.
New singing for our maids shall thou devise,
K E A T S

And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen’s brows,
Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse
This wayward brother to his rightful joys!
His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poise
His fate most goddess-like, Help me, I pray,
To lure—Endymion, dear brother, say
What ails thee?” He could bear no more, and so
Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,
And twang’d it inwardly, and calmly said:
“I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid!
My only visitor! not ignorant though,
That those deceptions which for pleasure go
Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be:
But there are higher ones I may not see,
If impiously an earthly realm I take.
Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake
Night after night, and day by day, until
Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.
Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me
More happy than betides mortality.
A hermit young, I’ll live in mossy cave,
Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave
Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell.
Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper well;
For to thy tongue will I all health confide.
And, for my sake, let this young maid abide
With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone,
Peona, mayst return to me. I own
This may sound strangely: but when, dearest girl,
Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl
Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair!
Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share
This sister’s love with me?” Like one resign’d
And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind
In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown:
“Aye, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,
Of jubilee to Diana—truth I heard;
Well then, I see there is no little bird,
Tender sover, but is Jove’s own care.
Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware,
Behold I find it so exalted too!
So after my own heart! I knew, I knew
There was a place untenanted in it:
In that same void white Chastity shall sit,
And monitor me nightly to lone slumber.
With sanest lips I vow me to the number

ENDYMION

Of Diana’s sisterhood; and, kind lady,
With thy good help, this very night shall see
My future days to her fame consecrate.”

As feels a dreamer what doth most create
His own particular fright, so these three felt:
Or like one who, in after ages, knelt
To Lucifer or Baal, when he’d pine
After a little sleep: or when in mine
Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends
Who know bim not. Each diligently bends
Towards common thoughts and things for very fear;
Striving their ghastly malady to cheer;
By thinking it a thing of yes and no,
That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow
Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last
Endymion said: “Are not our fates all cast?
Why stand we here? Adieu, ye tender pair!
Adieu!” Whereat those maidens, with wild stare,
Walk’d dizzyly away. Pained and hot
His eyes went after them, until they got
Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw,
In one swift moment, would what then he saw
Engulp for ever. “Stay!” he cried, “ah, stay!
Turn, damsels! hist! one word I have to say.
Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again.
It is a thing I dote on; so I’d fain,
Peona, ye should hand in hand repair
Into those holy groves, that silent are
Behind great Diana’s temple. I’ll be yon,
At vesper’s earliest twinkle—they are gone—
But once, once, once again—” At this he press’d
His hands against his face, and then did rest
His head upon a mossy hillock green,
And so remain’d as he a corpse had been
All the long day; save when he scantily lifted
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted
With the slow move of time,—sluggish and weary
Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,
Had reach’d the river’s brim. Then up he rose,
And, slowly as that very river flows,
Walk’d towards the temple grove with this lament:
“Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent
Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall
Before the serene father of them all
Bows down his summer head below the west.
Now am I of breath, speech, and speed posset,
KEATS

But at the setting I must bid adieu
To her for the last time. Night will strew
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,
And with them shall I die; nor much it grieves
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.
Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord
Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arrowb roses;
My kingdom’s at its death, and just it is
That I should die with it: so in all this
We miscall grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak, woe,
What is there to plain of? By Titan’s foe
I am but rightly serv’d.” So saying, he
Tripp’d lightly on, in sort of deathful glee;
Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun,
As though they jests had been: not had he done
His laugh at nature’s holy countenance,
Until that grove appear’d, as if perchance,
And then his tongue with sober semblance
Gave utterance as he enter’d: “Ha! I said,
King of the butterflies; but by this gloom,
And by old Rhadamanthus’ tongue of doom,
This dusk religion, pomp of solitude,
And the Promethean clay by thief endured,
By old Saturnus’ forelock, by his head
Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed
Myself to things of light from infancy;
And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,
Is sure enough to make a mortal man
Grow impious.” So he inwardly began
On things for which no wording can be found;
Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown’d
Beyond the reach of music: for the choir
Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar
Nor muffling thicket interpos’d to dull
The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full,
Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles,
He sware not to the maidens, nor their smiles,
 Wan as primroses gather’d at midnight
By chillly finger’d spring. “Unhappy wight!
Endymion!” said Peona, “we are here!
What wouldst thou cre we all are laid on bier?”
Then he embrac’d her, and his lady’s hand
Press’d, saying: “Sister, I would have command,
If it were heaven’s will, on our sad fate.”
At which that dark-eyed stranger stood clave

ENDYMION

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

THE END
LAMIA,  
ISABELLA,  
THE EVE OF ST. AGNES,  
AND  
OTHER POEMS.  
1820.
LAMIA

PART I

Upon a time, before the fairy broods
Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,
Before king Oberon's bright diadem,
Sceptre, and mantle, clasped with dewy gem,
Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip'd lawns,
The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.

For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hooped Satyrs knelt;
At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured
Pearls, while on land they witter'd and adored.
Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,
And in those meads where sometime she might haunt,
Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose.
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet!
So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,
That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.

From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
And wend with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepar'd her secret bed:
In vain; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
All pain but pity: thus the lone voice spake:
"When from this wreath'd tomb shall I awake!"
KEATS

"When move in a sweet body fit for life,
And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!"
The God, dove-footed, gilded silently.
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a pulpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusty brake.

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

"Fair Hermes, crown’d with feathers, ﬂuttering light,
I had a splendid dream of thee last night:
I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
The only sad one; for thou didst not hear
The soft, lute-finger’d Muses chanting clear,
Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
Deaf to his throbbing throat’s long, long melodious moan.
I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple ﬂakes,
Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
And, swiftly as a bright Phoebean dart,
Strike to the Cretan isle; and here thou art!
Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?"
Whereat the star of Lethe not delay’d
His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired:

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"Thou smooth-lipp’d serpent, surely high inspir’d!
Thou beauteous wretch, with melancholy eye,
Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
Telling me only where my nymph is fled—
Where she doth breathe! "Bright planet, thou hast said,
Return’d the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God!"
"I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,
And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!"
Light ﬂew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
Then thus again the brilliancy feminine:
"Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
Leave traces in the grass and ﬂowers sweet;
From weary tendrils, and bow’d branches green,
She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
And by my power is her beauty veil’d
To keep it unafﬂicted, unassail’d
By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear’d Silenus’ sighs.
Pale grew her immortality, for woe
Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
I took compassion on her, bade her sleep
Her hair in weird syrups, that would keep
Her loveliness invisible, yet free
To wander as she loves, in liberty.
Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!”
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent’s ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
Ravish’d, she lifted her Circean head,
Blush’d a live damask, and swift-lisping said,
"I was a woman, let me have once more
A woman’s shape, and charming as before.
I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!
Give me my woman’s form, and place me where he is.
Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now.
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
She breath’d upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green.
It was no dream; or say a dream it was,
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass.
KEATS

Their pleasures in a long immortal dream. One warm, flush'd moment, hovering, it might seem Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burn'd; Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd To the swain's serpent, and with languid arm, Delicate, put to proof the lyre Caducean charm. So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent Full of adoring tears and blandishment, And towards her treat she, like a moon in wane, Faded before him, ever'd, nor could restrain Her fearful soles, self-folding like a flower That faints into itself at evening hour: But the God fostering her chilled hand, She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland, And, like new flowers at morning song of bees, Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the bees Into the green-recessed woods they flew; Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began To change; her elvin blood in madness ran, Her mouth foam'd and the grass, therewith besprent, Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent; Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear, Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear, Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear. The colours all inflam'd throughout her train, She with'd about, convulsed with scarlet pain; A deep volcanick yellow took the place Of all her milder-mooned body's grace; And, as the lava ravishes the mead, Spolt all her silver mail, and golden brede; Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars, Eclipse'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars: So that, in moments few, she was undrest Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst, And rubious argent: of all these bereft, Nothing but pain and ugliness were left. Still shine her crown; that variis divine she Melted and disappear'd as suddenly; And in the air, her new voice luting soft, Cried, "Lycius, gentle Lycius!"—Borne aloft With the bright mists about the mountains hoar These words dissolv'd: Cretes's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright, A full-born beauty new and exquisite?

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She fled into that valley they pass o'er Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas's shore; And rested at the foot of those wild hills, The rugged fountains of the Parnassan rills And of that other ridge whose barren back Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack, South-westward to Cleone. There she stood About a young bird's flutter from a wood, Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread, By a clear pool, wherein she passion'd To see herself escap'd from so sore ills, While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

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

Why this fair creature chose so faery By the wayside to linger, we shall see; But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse And dream, when in the serpant prison-house, Of all she list, strange or magnificent: How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went; Whether to faint Elysium, or where Down through press-lifting waves the Nereids fair Wind into Tethis' bower by many a pearly stair; Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine She stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine; Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line. And sometimes into cities she would send Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend; And once, while among mortals dreaming thus, She saw the young Corinthian Lycius Charioting foremost in the envious race.
KEATS

Like a young Jove with calm unearner face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim
He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore; for freshely blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galleon now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchor'd; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.
Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire;
For by some freakish chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk,
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:
Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calm'd twilight of Platonick shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen
She stood: he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eyes
Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white
Turn'd—syllabling thus, "Ah, Lycius bright,
And will you leave me on the hills alone?
"Lycius, look back! and be some pity shown."
He did; not with cold wonder fearfully,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice;
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer long:
And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore:
"Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see
"Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
"For pity do not this sad heart belie—
"Even as thou vanishest so shall I die.
"Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
"To thy far wishes will thy streams obey:
"Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
"Alone they can drink up the morning rain:

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"Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
"Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
"Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxty shine?
"So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine
"Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade
"Thy memory will waste me to a shade.—
"For pity do not melt!"—"If I should stay,"
"Said Lamia, "here, upon this floor of clay,
"And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
"What canst thou say or do of charm enough
"To dull the nice remembrance of my home?
"Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
"Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
"Empty of immortality and bliss!
"Thou art a scholar, Lycus, and must know
"That finer spirits cannot breathe below,
"In human climes, and live: Alas! poor youth,
"What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
"My essence? What serener palaces,
"Where I may all my many senses please,
"And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease?
"It cannot be—Adieu!" So said, she rose
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
The amorous promise of her lone complaint,
Swoon'd, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.
The cruel lady, without any show
Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe,
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
Put her new lips to his, and gave a fresh
The life she had so tangled in her mesh:
And as he from one trance was wakening
Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres.
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting fires,
And then she whisper'd in such trembling tone,
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguish'd days,
Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
For that she was a woman, and without
Any more suit's fluid in her veins.
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his,
And next she wonder'd how his eyes could miss
KEATS
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retir’d, and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love; yet in content
Till she saw him, as once she pass’d him by,
Where ‘gainst a column he leant thoughtfully
At Venus’ temple porch, ’mid baskets heap’d
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap’d
Late on that eve, as ’twas the night before
The Adonian feast; whereof she saw no more,
But wept alone those days, for why should she adore?
Lycurus from death awoke into amaze;
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays;
Then from amaze into delight he fell
To hear her whisper woman’s lore so well;
And every word she spake entic’d him on
To unperplex’d delight and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say whate’er they please
Of the sweets of Faeries, Peris, Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, real indeed
From Pyrrha’s pebbles or old Adam’s seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judg’d, and judg’d aright,
That Lycurus could not love in half a fright,
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
More pleasantly by playing woman’s part,
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.
Lycurus to all made eloquent reply,
Marrying to every word a twainborn sigh:
And last, pointing to Corinth, ask’d her sweet,
If ’twas too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia’s eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces; not at all surpris’d
By blinded Lycurus, so in her compriz’d.
They pass’d the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Mutter’d, like tempest in the distance brew’d,
To the wide-spread’d night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,

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Shuffled their sandals o’er the pavement white,
Companion’d or alone; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found this cluster’d in the corniced shade
Of some arch’d temple door, or dusty colonnade.

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

While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillar’d porch, with lofty portal door.
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabb’d steps below,
Mild as a star in water; for so new,
And so unsullied was the marble’s hue.
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e’er have touch’d there. Sounds /olian
Breath’d from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclosed a place unknown
Some time to any, but these two alone,
And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
Were seen about the markets: none knew where
They could inhabit; the most curious
Were fool’d, who watch’d to trace them to their house:
And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,
For truth’s sake, what woes afterwards befell,
’Twould honour many a heart to leave them thus,
Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.
KEATS

PART II

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is—Love, forgive us—ashes, dust;
Love in a palace is perhaps at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:—
That is a doubtful tale from fairy land,
Hard for the non-elect to understand.
Had Lycidas liv'd to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh from,
Or clench'd it quite: but too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.
Beside, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side
They were enthrone'd, in the even tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Float'd into the room, and let appear
Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they repos'd,
Where use had made it sweet, with ey'dits closed,
Saving a tythe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost slept;
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets—Lylius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harbour'd in
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, than her empery
Of joys; and she began to roam and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
"Why do you sigh, fair creature?" whisper'd he:
"Why do you think?" return'd she tenderly:
"You have deserted me:—where am I now?
"Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow:

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"No, no, you have dismiss'd me; and I go
"From your breast houseless: aye, it must be so."
He answer'd, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,
"My silver planet, both of eye and form!
"Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
"While I am striving how to fill my heart
"With deeper crimson, and a double smart?
"How to entangle, tramell up and snare
"Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
"Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?
"Aye, a sweet kiss—your eye see your mighty woes.
"My thoughts! shall I unveil them? Listen then!
"What mortal hath a prize, that other men
"May be confounded and abash'd, withal,
"But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestical,
"And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
"Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.
"Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
"While through the thronged streets your bridal car
"Wheels round its dazzling spokes."—The lady's cheek
Trembld: she nothing said, but, pale and weep'd,
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain.
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim:
Besides, for all his love, in self he did;
Against his better self, he took delight,
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new,
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.
Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent—Ha, the serpent! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she lov'd the tyrannic,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour,
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
"Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
"I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee
"Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
"As still I do. Hast any mortal name?
"Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
KEATS

"Or friends or kinsfolk on the ctitcd earth,
"To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?"
"I have no friends," said Lamia, "no, not one;
"My presence in wide Corinth hardly known:
"My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
"Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
"Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
"And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
"Even as you list invite your many guests;
"But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
"With any pleasure on me, do not bid
"Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid."
Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank,
Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank,
Feigning a sleep, and he to the dull shade
Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.

It was the custom then to bring away
The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
Veil'd, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
With other pageants: but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone,
(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but "tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the saucy-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honour of the bride:
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branch'd one to one
All down the aisled place; and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall.
So canopied, lay an untasted feast
Trembling with odours. Lamia, regal dress,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale contented sort of discontent,

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Mission'd her viewless servants to enrich
The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
Came jasper pannels; then, anon, there burst
Porth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
And with the larger wave in small intricacies.
Approving all, she faded at self-will,
And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still,
Complete and ready for the revels rude,
When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude.

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

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

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume:
Before each lucid pannel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerv'd upon the soft
KEATS

Wool-roofed carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took
To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose
Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve spheric tables, by silk-seats imphered,
High as the level of a man's breast reard
On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine
Come from the gloomy tun with merry-shine.
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

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

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greek a vessel's undersong
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains.
Of powerful instruments,—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendour of the draperies,
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lania's self, appear,
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,
Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.
Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height;
Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright:
Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales delowe'd, or forest-trees branch-ent,
In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought
High as the handles heapt, to suit the thought
Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease.

What wreath for Lania? What for Lyicus?
What for the sage, old Apollonius?

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Upon her aching forehead be there hung
The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue;
And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
The thyræus, that his watching eyes may swing
Into forgetfulness; for the sage,
Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?

There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.

Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,

Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,

Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—

Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made

The tender-person'd Lania Melia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lyicus sitting, in chief place,
Scarce saw in all the room another face,

Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
Full brimmed, and opposite sent forth a look
Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,

And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir,

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

Lyicus then press'd her hand, with devout touch,
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:

'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins;

Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains

Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.

"Lania, what mean's this? Wherefore dost thou start?

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

He gaz'd into her eyes, and not a jot


Own'd they the lovovent piteous appeal:

More, more he gaz'd; his human senses reel'd;

Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;

There was no recognition in those orbs.

"Lania!" he cried—and no soft-toned reply,

The many heard, and the loud revelry

Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;

The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths;

By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;

A deadly silence step by step increased,

Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,

And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
KEATS

"Lamia!" he shriek’d; and nothing but the shriek
With its sad echo did the silence break.
"Begone, foul dream!" he cried, gazing again
In the bride’s face, where now no azure vein
Wander’d on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek; no passion to illumine
The deep-recessed vision:—all was blight;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
"Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man!
"Turn them aside, wretch! or the righteous ban
"Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
"Here represent their shadowy presences,
"May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
"Of painful blindness; leaving thee forlorn,
"In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
"Of conscience, for their long offended might.
"For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
"Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
"Corinthians! look upon that grey-beard wretch!
"Mark how, possess’d, his lashless eyelids stretch
"Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!
"My sweet bride withers at their potency."
"Fool!" said the sophist, in an under-tone
Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan
From Lycurgus answer’d, as heart-struck and lost,
He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
"Fool! Fool!" repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor mov’d; “from every ill
"Of life have I preserv’d thee to this day,
"And shall I see thee made a serpent’s prey?”
Then Lamia breath’d death breath; the sophist’s eye,
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, percutent, stinging: she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motion’d him to be silent; vainly so,
He look’d and look’d again a level—No!
"A serpent!" echoed he; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanished:
And Lycurgus’ arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
On the high couch he lay!—his friends came round—
Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

ISABELLA;

OR

THE POT OF BASIL

A Story from Boccaccio

I

Fair Isabel, poor simple Isabel!
Lorenzo, a young Palmer in Love’s eye!
They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
Without some stir of heart, some malady;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well
It soothed each to be the other by;
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep
But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

II

With every morn their love grew tenderer,
With every eye deeper and tenderer still;
He might not in house, field, or garden stir,
But her full shape would all his seeing fill;
And his continual voice was pleasanter
To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill;
Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,
She spoil’d her half-done broderie with the same.

III

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

IV

A whole long month of May in this sad plight
Made their cheeks paler by the break of June:
"To-morrow will I bow to my delight,
"To-morrow will I ask my lady’s boon."

127
KEATS

"O may I never see another night,
"Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune." —
So spake they to their pillows; but, alas,
Honeyless days and days did he let pass;

V

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

VI

So said he one fair morning, and all day
His heart beat awfully against his side;
And to his heart he inwardly did pray
For power to speak; but still the ruddy tide
Stilled his voice, and pulse'd resolve away—
Fever'd his high conceit of such a bride,
Yet brought him to the meekness of a child:
Alas! when passion is both meek and wild!

VII

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

VIII

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

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IX

"Love! thou art leading me from wintry cold,
"Lady! thou leadest me to summer's clime,
"And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
"In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time.
"So said, his earwhile timid lips grew bold,
"And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme:
"Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caresses.

X

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

XI

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

XII

Were they unhappy then?—It cannot be—
Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
Too much of pity after they are dead,
Too many doleful stories do we see,
Whose matter in bright gold were best be read;
Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse
Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

XIII

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

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

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

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

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

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

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio!
Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,
And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
And of thy lilies, that do paler grow
Now they can no more hear thy glibtern's tune,
For venturing syllables that ill beseech
The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

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

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

And many a jealous conference had they,
And many times they bit their lips alone,
Before they fix'd upon a surest way
To make the younger for his crime atone;
And at the last, these men of cruel clay
Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone;
For they resolved in some forest dim
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

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

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

And as he to the court-yard pass'd along,
Each third step did he pause, and listen'd oft
If he could hear his lady's matin-song,
Or the light whisper of her footstep soft;
And as he thus over his passion hung,
He heard a laugh full musical aloft;
When, looking up, he saw her features bright
Smile through an in-door lattice, all delight.

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

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

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

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

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

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long
Its fiery vigil in her single breast;
She fretted for the golden hour, and hung
Upon the time with feverish unrest—
KEATS

Not long—for soon into her heart a throng
Of higher occupants, a richer zest,
Came tragic; passion not to be subdued,
And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

XXXII

In the mid days of autumn, on their eyes
The breath of Winter comes from far away,
And the sick west continually bereaves
Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay
Of death among the bushes and the leaves,
To make all bare before he dares to stray
From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel
By gradual decay from beauty fell,

XXXIII

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

XXXIV

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

XXXV

It was a vision.—In the drowsy gloom,
The dull of midnight, at her couch’s foot
Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb
Had mar’d his glossy hair which once could shoot
Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears
Had made a miry channel for his tears.

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XXXVI

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

XXXVII

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

XXXVIII

Saying moreover, “Isabel, my sweet!
“Red whirlate-berries droop above my head,
“And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet;
“Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
“Their leaves and prickly nuts; a sheep-fold beat
“Comes from beyond the river to my bed:
“Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
“And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

XXXIX

“I am a shadow now, alas! alas!
“Upon the skirts of human-nature dwelling
“Alone: I chant alone the holy mass,
“While little sounds of life are round me knelling,
“And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
“And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,
“Paining me through: those sounds grow strange to me,
“And thou art distant in Humanity.

XL

“I know what was, I feel full well what is,
“And I should rage, if spirits could go mad;
“Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,
“That paleness warms my grave, as though I had
"A Seraph chosen from the bright abyss
"To be my spouse: thy paleness makes me glad;
"Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
"A greater love through all my essence steal."

The Spirit mourn'd "Adieu!"—dissolv'd and left.
The atom darkness in a slow turnroll,
As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
We put our eyes into a piquoy cleft,
And see the spangly gloom froth and boil:
It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache,
And in the dawn she started up awake;

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

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

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

Who hath not loiter'd in a green church-yard,
And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
To see scull, coffin'd bones, and funeral stole;
Fitting each form that hungry Death hath marr'd,
And filling it once more with human soul?
Ah! this is holiday to what was felt
When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

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

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

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
Until her heart felt pity to the core
At sight of such a dismal labouring,
And so she kneaded, with her locks all hoar,
And put her lean hands to the horrid thing:
Three hours they labour'd at this travail sore;
At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

Ahh! wherefore all this sorry circumstance?
Why linger at the yawning tomb so long?
O for the gentleness of old Romance,
The simple plaining of a minstrel's song!
KEATS

Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong
To speak:—O turn thee to the very tale,
And taste the music of that vision pale.

L

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

LI

In anxious secrecy they took it home,
And then the prize was all for Isabel:
She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb,
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell
Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam.
With tears, as chillly as a dripping well,
She drench'd it away:—and still she comb'd, and kept
Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd, and wept.

LII

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

LIII

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

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LV

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

LVI

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

LX

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

LXII

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

LXVII

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

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

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

LXI
O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away!
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh!
Spirits of grief, sing not your “Well-a-way!”
For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die;
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have ta’en away her Basil sweet.

LXII
Piteous she look’d on dead and senseless things,
Asking for her lost Basil amorously;
And with melodious chuckle in the strings
Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,
To ask him where her Basil was, and why
’Twas hid from her: “For cruel ‘tis,” said she,
“To steal my Basil-pot away from me.”
THE EVE OF ST. AGNÉS

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

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

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

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

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
"He had a fever late, and in the fit
"He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
"Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit.

"More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
"Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip dear,
"We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
"And tell me how"—"Good Saints! not here, not here;
"Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XX
"It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame:
"All cates and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820
"For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
"On such a caterer trust my dizzy head.
"Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
"The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
"Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XXVIII
Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gaz'd upon her empty dress,
And list'ned to her breathing, if it changed:
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;

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Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breath'd himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stent,
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo!—how fast she slept.

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

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

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

XXXII
Thus whispering, his warm, unmoved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dust curtains:—twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as ice recede.
KEATS

The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a stedfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

XXXIII

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

XXXIV

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

XXXV

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

XXXVI

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;

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Into her dream he melt'd, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
Solution sweet; meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarm pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII

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

XXXVIII

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

XXXIX

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

XL

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, pal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star,
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.—
KEATS

In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-droop’d lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Flutter’d in the besieging wind’s uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

XLI

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

XLII

And they are gone: aye, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a wo
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmar’d. Angola the old
Died paley-fitch’d, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand ayes told;
For aye unsought-for slept among his sabes cold.

POEMS

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

I

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

II

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool’d a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
Oh for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

III

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs:
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies:
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.
IV
Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy.
Thou dost the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light.
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

V
I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows.
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglandine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

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

VII
Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the selfsame song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in fairy lands forlorn.

VIII
Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music.—Do I wake or sleep?

ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

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

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

III
Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
KEATS

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

IV

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

V

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

ODE TO PSYCHE

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
Even into thine own soft-conch'd ear:
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whipping roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
A brooklet, scarce espied:

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Elate, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love:

The winged boy I knew;
But who was thou, O happy, happy dove?
His Psyche true!

O latest born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olymp's faded hierarchy!
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours;

No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
From happy pieties, thy luscious fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;

Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swinged censer teeming;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
Pledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
KEATS
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress.

With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in!

FANCY
Ever let the fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home:
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
Then let winged Fancy wander,
Through the thought still spread beyond her:
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Summer's joys are spoil'd by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming;
Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting: What do then?
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The hearth fire doth blaze bright,
Spirit of a winter's night:
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overflow'd,
Fancy, high-commission'd:—send her!
She has vassals to attend her;
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauty that the earth hath lost;

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820
She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or thorny spray;
All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth:
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it:—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear;
Rustle of the reaped corn;
Sweet birds anthemng the morn;
And, in the same moment—hark!
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold;
White-plum'd lillies, and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the mid-May;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearled with the self-same shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
Meagre from its cell'd sleep;
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin;
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn tree,
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee-hive casts its swarm;
Acorns ripe down-pattering,
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Every thing is spoil'd by use;
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gaz'd at? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary? Where's the face
One would meet in every place?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft?
KEATS

At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let, then, winged Fancy find
Thy a mistress to thy mind:
Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide;
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's, when her zone
Slipst its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet,
While she held the goblet sweet,
And Jove grew languisht.—Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash;
Quickly break her prison-string
And such joys as these she'll bring.—
Let the winged Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home.

ODE

[Written on the blank page before Beaumont and Fletcher's Tragi-Comedy "The Fair Maid of the Inn."]

Banks of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth,
Have ye souls in heaven too,
Double lived in regions new?
Yes, and those of heaven commune
With the spheres of sun and moon;
With the noise of fountains woundrous,
And the parle of voices thundrous;
With the whisper of heaven's trees
And one another, in soft ease
Seated on Elysian lawns
Brow'd by none but Dian's lawns;
Underneath large blue-bells tented,
Where the daisies are rose-scented,
And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless, tranced thing,
But divine melodious truth;
Philosophic numbers smooth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries.

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820

Thus ye live on high, and then
On the earth ye live again;
And the souls ye left behind you
Teach us, here, the way to find you,
Where your other souls are joying,
Never slumber'd, never sleying.
Here, your earth-born souls still speak
To mortals, of their little week;
Of their sorrows and delights;
Of their passions and their spites;
Of their glory and their shame;
What cloth strengthen and what maim.
Thus ye teach us, every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth,
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new.

LINES ON THE MERMAID TAVERN

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
Have ye tipped drink more fine
Than mine host's Canary wine?
Or are fruits of Paradise
Sweeter than those dainty pies
Of venison? O generous food!
Drest as though bold Robin Hood
Would, with his maid Marian,
Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
Mine host's sign-board flew away,
Nobody knew whither, till
An astrologer's old quill
To a sheepskin gave the story,
Said he saw yours in your glory,
Underneath a new old sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.
KEATS

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

ROBIN HOOD

TO A FRIEND

No! those days are gone away,
And their hours are old and gray,
And their minutes buried all
Under the down-trodden pall
Of the leaves of many years:
Many times have winter’s shears,
Frozen North, and chilling East,
Sounded tempests to the feast
Of the forest’s whispering fleeces,
Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

No, the bugle sounds no more,
And the swaying bow no more;
Silent is the ivory shrill
Past the heath and up the hill;
There is no mid-forest laugh,
Where lone Echo gives the half
To some wight, amaz’d to hear
Jesting, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June
You may go, with sun or moon,
Or the seven stars to light you,
Or the polar ray to right you;
But you never may behold
Little John, or Robin bold;
Never one, of all the clan,
Thrumming on an empty can
Some old hunting ditty, while
He doth his green way beguile
To fair hostess Merriment,
Down beside the pasture Trent;
For he left the merry tale
Messenger for spicy ale.

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820

Gone, the merry morris din;
Gone, the song of Gamelyn;
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
Idling in the “grenè shawe”;
All are gone away and past!
And if Robin should be cast
Sudden from his turfed grave,
And if Marian should have
Once again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze;
He would swear, for all his oaks,
Fall’n beneath the dockyard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her—strange! that honey
Can’t be got without hard money!

So it is: yet let us sing,
Honour to the old bow-string!
Honour to the bugle-horn!
Honour to the woods unborn!
Honour to the Lincoln green!
Honour to the archer keen!
Honour to tight little John,
And the horse he rode upon!
Honour to bold Robin Hood,
Sleeping in the underwood!
Honour to maid Marian,
And to all the Sherwood-clans!
Though their days have hurried by
Let us two a burden try.

TO AUTUMN

I

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

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Sparés the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

III

Where are the songs of Summer? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too.—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

ODE ON MELANCHOLY

I

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

II

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820

Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-waves,
Or on the wealth of globbed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Empire her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

III

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure sighs
Turning to Poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.
HYPERION
A FRAGMENT

BOOK I

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

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsought; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place;
But there came one, who with a kindred hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was a Goddess of the infant world;
By her in stature the tall Amazon
Had stood a pigmy's height: she would have ta'en
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck;
Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel.
Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,
Pedestal'd happily in a palace court;
When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820

But oh! how unlike marble was that face:
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain:
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenour and deep organ tone:
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in these like accents; O how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods!
"Saturn, look up!—though wherefore, poor old King?
"I have no comfort for thee, no not one:
"I cannot say, 'O wherefore sleepest thou?'
"For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
"Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God;
"And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
"Has from thy sceptre pass'd; and all the air
"Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
"Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
"Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house;
"And thy sharp lightning in unpractis'd hands
"Scorchers and burns our once serene domain.
"O aching time! O moments big as years!
"All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
"And press it so upon our weary griefs
"That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
"Saturn, sleep on:—O thoughtless, why did I
"Thus violate thy slumberous solitude?
"Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
"Saturn, sleep on! while at thy feet I weep."

As when, upon a tranced summer-night,
Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
So came these words and went; the while in tears
KEATS

She touch'd her fair large forehead to the ground,
Just where her falling hair might be outspread
A hair, and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
Her silver seasons four upon the night,
And still these two were postured motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern;
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet:
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess; and then spake,
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such ashen malady;
"O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
"Then, I feel thee ere I see thy face;
"Look up, and let me see our doom in it;
"Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
"Is Saturn's; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
"Of Saturn; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
"Naked and bare of its great diadem,
"Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
"To make me desolate? whence came the strength?
"How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
"While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp?
"But it is so; and I am smother'd up,
"And buried from all godlike exercise
"Of influence benign on planets pale,
"Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
"Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
"And all those acts which Deity supreme
"Doth ease its heart of love in.—I am gone
"Away from my own bosom: I have left
"My strong identity, my real self,
"Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
"Here on this spot of earth. Search, Then, search!
"Open thine eyes eternally, and sphere them round
"Upon all space: space star'd, and born of light;
"Space region'd with life-air; and barren void;
"Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell—
"Search, Then, search! and tell me, if thou seest
"A certain shape or shadow, making way
"With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
"A heaven he lost erewhile: it must—it must
"Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be King,
"Yes, there must be a golden victory;

POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820

"There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets blown
"Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
"Upon the gold clouds metropolitian.
"Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
"Of strings in hollow shells; and there shall be
"Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
"Of the sky-children; I will give command:
"Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
And made his hands to struggle in the air,
His Druid locks to shake and oozes with sweat,
His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.
He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep;
A little time, and then again he snatch'd
Utterance thus.—"But cannot I create?
"Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
"Another world, another universe,
"To overbear and crumble this to naught?
"Where is another chaos? Where?"—That word
Found way unto Olympus, and made quake
The rebel three.—Thea was startled up,
And in her bearing was a sort of hope,
As thus she quick-voic'd spake, yet full of awe.
"This cheers our fallen house: come to our friends,
"O Saturn! come away, and give them heart;
"I know the covert, for thence came I hither,"
Thus brief; then with beseeking eyes she went
With backward footing through the shade a space:
He follow'd, and she turn'd to lead the way
Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist
Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe:
The Titan fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
Gron'd for the old allience once more,
And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.
But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept
His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty;
—Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire
Still sat, still nour'd the incense, teeming up
From man to the sun's God; yet unsecure:
For as among us mortals omens dream
Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—
Not at dog's howl, or gloop-bird's hated screech,
KEATS

Or the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing-bell,
Or prophesymgs of the midnight lamp;
But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve,
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush'd angrily: while sometimes eagles' wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darken'd the place; and neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick:
And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day,—
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody.
He pac'd away the pleasant hours of ease
With stride colossal, on from hall to hall;
While far within each aisle and deep recess,
His winged minions in close clusters stood,
Amaz'd and full of fear; like anxious men
Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,
Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upon the threshold of the west;
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies;
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
in fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath;
His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly ire
That scar'd away the meek ethereal Hours
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,
POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820

From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond-paved lustrious long arcades,
Until he reach'd the great main cupola;
There standing fierce beneath, he stamped his foot,
And from the basements deep to the high towers
Jarr'd his own golden region; and before
The quivering thunder thereupon had cease'd,
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
To this result: "O dreams of day and night!
"O monstrous forms! O effigies of pain!
"O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom!
"O lank-ear'd Phantoms of black-weeded pools!
"Why do I know ye? why have I seen ye? why
"Is my eternal essence thus distraught
"To see and to behold these horrors new?
"Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?
"Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
"This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
"This calm luxuriante of blissful light,
"These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
"Of all my lucent empire? It is left
"Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
"The blaze, the splendour, and the symmetry,
"I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.
"Even here, into my centre of repose,
"The shady visions come to domineer,
"Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.—
"Fall!—No, by Telus and her briny robes!
"Over the fiery frontier of my realms
"I will advance a terrible right arm
"Shall scar that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
"And bid old Saturn take his throne again."—

He spake, and cease'd, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat but came not forth;
For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out "Hush!"
So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale
Bestirr'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold;
And from the mirror'd level where he stood
A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh,
At this, through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a little serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convuls'd
From over-strained might. Releas'd, he fled
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
Before the dawn in season due should blush,

He breath'd fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
Clear'd them of heavy vapours, burnt them wide
Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams,
The planet orb of fire, wherein he rode
Each day from east to west the heavens through,
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds;
Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
Circles, and arcs, and broad-bellting colure,
Glów'd through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep
Up to the zenith,—hieroglyphics old
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries:
Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
Of stone, or marble swart; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled.—Two wings this orb
Possesa'd for glory, two fair argent wings,
Ever exalted at the God's approach:
And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense
Rose, one by one, till all outspread were;
While still the dazzling globe maintain'd eclipse,
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin, if but for change.
He might not.—No, thoug a primeval God:
The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd.
Therefore the operations of the dawn
Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
Easier to sail their orb; the porches wide
Open'd upon the dusk temernes of night;
And the bright Titan, phrenzied with new woes,
Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time;
And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night.
He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice
Of Cœlus, from the universal space,
Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear.
"O brightest of my children dear, earth-born
And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries
All uncevenc'd even to the powers
Which met at thy creating; at whose joys
And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
I, Cœlus, wonder, how they came and whence;
And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,
Distinct, and visible; symbols divine,
Manifestations of that beauteous life.
Diffusèd unseen throughout eternal space:
Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child!
Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses!
There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne!
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
Found way from forth the thunders round his head!
Pales wax I, and in vapours hid my face.
Art thou, too, near such doom? vague fear there is:
For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
Divine ye were created, and divine
In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd,
Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled.
Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath;
Actions of rage and passion; even as
I see them, on the mortal world beneath.
In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son!
Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall!
Yet do thou strive; as thou art capable,
As thou canst move about, an evident God;
And canst oppose to each malignant hour
Ethereal presence:—I am but a voice.
My life is but the life of winds and tides,
No more than winds and tides can I avail:
But thou canst.—Be thou therefore in the van
Of circumstance; yea, seize the arrow's barb
Before the tense string murmur.—To the earth!
For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
And of thy seasons be a careful nurse."
Ere half this region-whisper had come down
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceased; and still he kept them wide:
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,
Like to a god on the stormy seas,
Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,
And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.
HYPERION. BOOK II

Just at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd.
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns;
And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled:
Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering.
Ceus, and Gyges, and Briareus,
Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,
With many more, the bravest in assault,
Were pent in regions of laborious breath;
Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep
Their clenched teeth still clenched, and all their limbs
Lock'd up like veins of metal, cramped and screwed;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd
With sanguine feverous boiling gurgle of pulse,
Mnemosyne was straying in the world;
Far from her moon had Phoebe wandered;
And many else were free to roam abroad,
But for the main, here found they covert drear.
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
Lay vast and edgeways, like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
Or word, or look, or action of despair.
Cretis was one; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shattered rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iapetus another; in his grasp,

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A serpent's flashy neck; its barbed tongue
Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length
Dead; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus: prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain; for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
Though feminine, than any of her sons:
More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory;
And in her wide imagination stood
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
By Orus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelve,
Upon his elbow rais'd, all prostrate else,
Shadow'd Enceladus; once tame and mild
As grazing ox unworried in the meads;
Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth,
He meditated, plotted, and even now
Was hurling mountains in that second war,
Not long delay'd, that scar'd the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
Not far hence Atlas; and beside him prone
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close
Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
Sob'd Clymene among her tangle hair.
In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight;
No shape distinguishable, more than when
Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds:
And many else whose names may not be told.
For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
Who shall delay her flight? And she must chaunt
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd
With damp and slippery footing from a depth
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grew
Till on the level height their steps found ease:
Then Tha spread abroad her trembling arms
Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
And sidelong fix'd her eye on Saturn's face:
KEATS

There saw she direst strife; the supreme God 100
At war with all the frailty of grief,
Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
Against these plagues he strove in vain; for Fate
Had pour’d a mortal oil upon his head,
A disanointing poison: so that Then,
Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

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

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“For my firm-based footstool:—Ah, infirm!
“Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
“Of element, earth, water, air, and fire—
“At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling
“One against one, or two, or three, or all
“Each several one against the other three,
“As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
“Drown both, and press them both against earth’s face,
“Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath
“Unhinges the poor world:—not in that strife,
“Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,
“Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
“No, no-where can unriddle, though I search,
“And pore on Nature’s universal scroll
“Evep to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
“The first-born of all shapes and palpable Gods,
“Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
“Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here,
“O’erwhelm’d, and spur’d, and batter’d, ye are here!
“O Titans, shall I say, ‘Ariseth’—Ye groan:
“Shall I say ‘Crouch!’—Ye groan. What can I then?
“O Heaven wide! O unseen parent dear!
“What can I? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,
“How we can war, how engine our great wrath!
“O speak your counsel, for Saturn’s ear
“Is all a-hunger’d. Thou, Oceanus,
“Ponderest high and deep; and in thy face
“I see, astonished, that severe content
“Which comes of thought and musing: give us help!”

So ended Saturn; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades.
Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,
In murmurs, which his first-endavouring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far-loamed sands.
“O ye, whom wrath consumes! who, passion-strung,
“Wrieth at defeat, and nurse your agonies!
“Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
“My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
“Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
“How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop:
“And in the proof much comfort will I give,
“If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
“We fall by course of Nature’s law, not force
“Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
“Hast sifted well the atom-universe;
KEATS

"But for this reason, that thou art the King,
And only blind from sheer supremacy,
One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
So art thou not the last; it cannot be:
Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
From chaos and parental darkness came
"Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
And with it light, and engendering
Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
The whole enormous matter into life.
Upon that very hour, our parentage,
The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest:
Then thou first born, and we the giant race,
Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain;
'O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well!
As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;
And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
In form and shape compact and beautiful,
In will, in action free, companionship,
And thousand other signs of purer life;
So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us, as we pass
In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule
Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
And feedeth still, more comely than itself?
Can it deny the chiefdom of green groves?
Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings?
To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
Above us in their beauty, and must reign
In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might:
Yea, by that law, another race may drive
POEMS PUBLISHED IN 1820

"Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
"Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
"My dispossession? Have ye seen his face?
"Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
"By noble winged creatures he hath made?
"I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
"With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
"That it enforce'd me to bid sad farewell
"To all my empire: farewell said I took,
"And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
"Hath wrought upon ye; and how I might best
"Give consolation in this woeful extreme.
"Receive the truth, and let it be your balm.

Whether through p'z'd conviction, or disdain,
They guarded foes, where Oceanus
Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell?
But so it was, none answer'd for a space.
Save one whom none regarded, Clymene;
And yet she answer'd not, only complain'd,
With hectic lige, and eyes up-looking mild,
Thus wording timidly among the fierce:
"Of Father, I am here the simplest voice,
"And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
"And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,
"There to remain for ever, as I fear:
"I would not bode of evil, if I thought
"So weak a creature could turn off the help
"Which by just right should come of mighty Gods;
"Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
"Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
"And know that we had parted from all hope.
"I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
"Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
"Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
"Full of calm joy it was, as of grief;
"Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth;
"So that I felt a movement in my heart
"To chide, and to reproach that solitude
"With songs of misery, music of our woes;
"And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell
"And murmur'd into it, and made melody—
"0 melody no more! for while I sang,
"And with poor skill let pass into the breeze
"The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
"Just opposite, an island of the sea,
"There came enchantment with the shifting wind,
"That did both drown and keep alive my ears,
I threw my shell away upon the sand,
And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd
With that new blissful golden melody.
A living death was in each gush of sounds,
Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string:
And then another, then another strain,
Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
To hover round my head, and make me sick
Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
And I was stopping up my frantic ears,
When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands,
A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
And still it cried, Apollo! young Apollo!
"The morning-bright Apollo! young Apollo!"
"I fled, it follow'd me, and cried Apollo!"
"O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt
Those pains of mine; O Saturn, hadst thou felt,
Ye would not call this too indulged tongue
Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard."

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

"O joy! for now I see a thousand eyes
Wide-glaring for revenge!"—As this he said,
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,
Still without intermission speaking thus:
"Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,
And purge the ether of our enemies;
How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,
And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,
Stilling that puny essence in its tent.
O let him feel the evil he hath done;
For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,
Much pain have I for more than loss of realms;
The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled;
Those days, all innocent of scathing war,
When all the fair Existences of heaven
Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak:—
That was before our brows were taught to frown,
Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds;
That was before we knew the winged thing,
Victory, might be lost, or might be won.
And be ye mindful that Hyperion,
Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—
Hyperion, lo! his radiance is here!

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A palid gleam across his features stern;
Not savage, for he saw full many a God
Wroth as himself, he look'd upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
But splendider in Saturn's, whose hoar locks
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove,
In pale and silver silence they remain'd,
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetle gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf, and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams:
And all the everlasting cataracts,
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade;
Now saw the light and made it terrible.
It was Hyperion—a granite peak
His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to view
KEATS

The misery his brilliancy had betray’d
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memnon’s image at the set of sun.
To one who travels from the dusking East:
Sighs, too, as mellow as that Memnon’s harp
He utter’d, while his hands contemplative
He press’d together, and in silence stood.
Despondence set’sd again the fallen Gods
At sight of the dejected King of Day,
And many hid their faces from the light:
But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
Among the brotherhood; and, at their glare,
Uprose Tàpetus, and Creús, too,
And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode
To where he towered on his eminence.
There those four shouted forth old Saturn’s name;
Hyperion from the peak loud answered, “Saturn!”
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of “Saturn!”

HYPERION. BOOK III

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

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Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surpris’d.
Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,
Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,
And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech,
In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,
And hazels thick, dark-stemm’d beneath the shade:
Apollo is once more the golden theme!
Where was he, when the Giant of the Sun
Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers?
Together had he left his mother fair
And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower,
And in the morning twilight wandered forth
Beside the osiers of a rivulet,
Full ankle-deep in lillies of the vale.
The nightingale had cease’d, and a few stars
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle
There was no covert, no retired cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
He listen’d, and he wept, and his bright tears
Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,
While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by
With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
And there was purport in her looks for him,
Which he with eager guess began to read
Perplex’d, the while melodiously he said:
“How can’t thou over the unfooted sea?
Or hath that antique men and robed form
Mov’d in these vales invisible till now?
Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o’er
The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
The rustle of those ample skirts about
These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass’d.
Goddess! I have beheld those eyes before,
And their eternal calm, and all that face,
Or I have dream’d.”—“Yes,” said the supreme shape,
Thou hast dream’d of me; and awaking up
Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
Whose strings touch’d by thy fingers, all the vast
Unworeid ear of the whole universe
Listen’d in pain and pleasure at the birth
Of such new tuneful wonder. Is’t not strange
That thou shouldst weep, so gifted? Tell me, youth,
"What sorrow thou canst feel; for I am sad
When thou dost shed a tear; explain thy griefs
To one who in this lonely isle hath been
The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,
From the young day when first thy infant hand
Pluck'd wittles from the weak flowers, till thine arm
Could bend that bow heroic to all times.
Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power
Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones
For prophecies of thee, and for the sake
Of loveliness new born."—Apollo then,
With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes,
Thus answer'd, while his white melodious throat
Throb'd with the syllables.—"Mnemosyne!
Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how;
Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest?
Why should I strive to show what from thy lips
Would come no mystery? For me, dark, dark,
And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes:
I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
Uttill a melancholy numb's my limbs;
And then upon the grass I sit, and moan.
Like one who once had wings.—O why should I
Feed curs'd and thwarted, when the legless air
Yields to my step aspirant? why should I
Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet?
Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing:
Are there not other regions than this isle?
What are the stans? There is the sun, the sun!
And the most patient brilliance of the moon!
And stars by thousands! Point me out the way
To any one particular beauteous star,
And I will fit it into my lyre,
And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.
I have heard the cloudy thunder: Where is power?
Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
Makes this alarum in the elements,
While I here idle listen on the shores
In fearless yet in aching ignorance?
O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
That walleth every morn and eventide,
Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves!
Mute thou remainest—mute! yet I can read
A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
POSTHUMOUS
AND
FUGITIVE POEMS
POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

ON DEATH

I
Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream,
And scenes of bliss pass as a phantom by?
The transient pleasures as a vision seem,
And yet we think the greatest pain's to die.

II
How strange it is that man on earth should roam,
And lead a life of woe, but not forsake
His rugged path; nor dare he view alone
His future doom which is but to awake.

WOMEN, WINE, AND SNUFF
Give me women, wine and snuff
Until I cry out “hold, enough!”
You may do so sans objection
Till the day of resurrection;
For bless my aye shall be
My beloved Trinity.

FILL FOR ME A BRIMMING BOWL
Fill for me a brimming bowl
And let me in it drown my soul:
But put therein some drug, designed
To Banish Women from my mind:
For I want not the stream inspiring
That fills the mind with—fond desiring,
But I want as deep a draught
As e'er from Lethe's wave was quaff'd;
From my despairing heart to charm
The image of the fairest form
That e'er my reveling eyes beheld,
That e'er my wandering fancy spell'd,
In vain! away I cannot chase
The melting softness of that face,
KEATS

The beaminess of those bright eyes,
That breast—earth's only Paradise.
My sight will never more be blest;
For all I see has lost its zest:
Nor with delight can I explore
The Classic page, or Muse's lore.
Had she but known how beat my heart,
And with one smile reliev'd its smart
I should have felt a sweet relief,
I should have felt "the joy of grief."
Yet as the Tuscan mid the snow
Of Lapland thinks on sweet Arno,
Even so for ever shall she be
The Halo of my Memory.
_August, 1814._

SONNET

ON PEACE

O PEACE! and dost thou with thy presence bless
The dwellings of this war-surrounded Isle;
Soothing with placid brow our late distress,
Making the triple kingdom brightly smile?
Joyful I hail thy presence; and I hail
The sweet companions that await on thee;
Complete my joy—let not my first wish fail,
Let the sweet mountain nymph thy favourite be,
With England's happiness proclaim Europa's Liberty.
O Europe! let not sceptred tyrants see
That thou must shelter in thy former state;
Keep thy chains burst, and boldy say thou art free;
Give thy kings law—leave not uncurbed the great;
So with the horrors past th'ou'll win thy happier fate!

SONNET TO BYRON

BYRON! how sweetly sad thy melody!
Attuning still the soul to tenderness,
As if soft Psyche, with unusual stress,
Had touch'd her plaintive lute, and thou, being by,
Hadst caught the tones, nor suffer'd them to die.
O'ershadowing sorrow doth not make thee less
Delightful: thou thy griefs dost dress
With a bright halo, shining beamily,
As when a cloud the golden moon doth veil,
Its sides are ting'd with a resplendent glow,

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Through the dark robe oft amber rays prevail,
And like fair veins in sable marble flow;
Still warble, dying swan! still tell the tale,
The enchanting tale, the tale of pleasing woe.

SONNET TO CHATTERTON

O CHATTERTON! how very sad thy fate!
Dear child of sorrow—son of misery!
How soon the film of death obscurest that eye,
Whence Genius mildly flash'd, and high debate.
How soon that voice, majestic and clare,
Melted in dying numbers! Oh! how nigh
Was night to thy fair morning. Thou didst die
A half-blown flow'ret which cold blasts amate.
But this is past: thou art among the stars
Of highest Heaven: to the rolling spheres
Thou sweetly sing'st: naught thy hymning mars,
Above the ingrate world and human tears.
On earth the good man base detraction bars
From thy fair name, and waters it with tears.

SONNET TO SPENSCER

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

ODE TO APOLLO

In thy western halls of gold
When thou sittest in thy state,
Bards, that erst sublimely told
Heroic deeds, and sang of fate,
With fervour seize their adamantine lyres,
Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires.
Here Homer with his nervous arms
Strikes the twanging harp of war,
And even the western splendour warms,
While the trumpets sound afar:
But, what creates the most intense surprise,
His soul looks out through renovated eyes.

Then, through thy Temple wide, melodious swells
The sweet majestic tone of Maro's lyre;
The soul delighted on each accent swells,—
'Enraptur'd swells,—not daring to respire,
The while he tells of grief around a funeral pyre.

'Tis awful silence then again;
Expectant stand the spheres;
Breathless the laurel'd peers,
Nor move, till ends the lofty strain,
Nor move till Milton's tuneful thunders cease,
And leave once more the ravish'd heavens in peace.

Thou biddedst Shakspeare wave his hand,
And quickly forward spring
The Passions—a terrific band—
And each vibrates the string
That with its tyrant temper best accords,
While from their Master's lips pour forth the inspiring words.

A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.
'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Eolian lyre
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.

Next thy Tasso's ardent numbers
Float along the pleased air,
Calling youth from idle slumbers,
Rousing them from Pleasure's lair:—
Then o'er the strings his fingers gently move,
And melt the soul to pity and to love.

But when Thou joinest with the Nine,
And all the powers of song combine,
We listen here on earth:
The dying tones that fill the air,
And charm the ear of evening fair,
From thee, great God of Bards, receive their heavenly birth.

---

SONNET

TO A YOUNG LADY WHO SENT ME A LAUREL CROWN

FRESH morning gusts have blown away all fear
From my glad bosom,—now from gloominess
I mount for ever—not an atom less
Than the proud laurel shall content my bier.
No! by the eternal stars! or why sit here
In the Sun's eye, and 'gainst my temples press
Apollo's very leaves, woven to bless
By thy white fingers and thy spirit clear,
Lo! who dares say, "Do this"? Who dares call down
My will from its high purpose? Who say, "Stand,"
Or "Go"? This mighty moment I would frown
On abject Cæsars—not the stoutest band
Of mailed heroes should tear off my crown:
Yet would I kneel and kiss thy gentle hand!

ON RECEIVING A LAUREL CROWN FROM LEIGH HUNT

MINUTES are flying swiftly, and as yet
Nothing unearthly has enticed my brain
Into a delphic Labyrinth—I would fain
Catch an immortal thought to pay the debt
I owe to the kind Poet who has set
Upon my ambitious head a glorious gain,
Two bending laurel Sprigs—'tis nearly pain
To be conscious of such a Coronet.
Still time is fleeting, and no dream arises
Gorgeous as I would have it—only I see
A Trampling down of what the world most prizes
Turbans and Crowns, and blank regality;
And then I run into most wild surmises
Of all the many glories that may be.

SONNET

TO THE LADIES WHO SAW ME CROWN'D

What is there in the universal Earth
More lovely than a Wreath from the bay tree?
Haply a Halo round the Moon—a glee
Circling from three sweet pair of Lips in Mirth;
And haply you will say the dewy birth
Of morning Roses—ripples tenderly
Spread by the Halyon's breast upon the Sea—
KEATS
But these Comparisons are nothing worth—
Then is there nothing in the world so fair?
The silvery tears of April?—Youth of May?
Or June that breathes out life for butterflies?
No—none of these can from my favourite bear
Away the Palm—yet shall it ever pay
Due Reverence to your most sovereign eyes.

HYMN TO APOLLO
God of the golden bow,
And of the golden lyre,
And of the golden hair,
And of the golden fire,
Charioteer
Of the patient year,
Where—where slept thine ire,
When like a blank idiot I put on thy wreath,
Thy laurel, thy glory,
The light of thy story,
Or was I a worm—too low crawling, for death?
O Delphic Apollo!
The Thunderer grasp’d and grasp’d,
The Thunderer frown’d and frown’d;
The eagle’s feathery mane
For wrath became stiffen’d—the sound
Of breeding thunder
Went drowsily under,
Muttering to be unheard;
O why didst thou pity, and for a worm
Why touch thy soft lute
Till the thunder was mute,
Why was not I crush’d—such a pitiful germ?
O Delphic Apollo!
The Pleiades were up,
Watching the silent air;
The seeds and roots in the Earth
Were swelling for summer fare;
The Ocean, its neighbour,
Was at its old labour,
When, who—who did dare
To tie, like a madman, thy plant round his brow,
And grin and look proudly,
And blaspheme so loudly,
And live for that honour, to stoop to thee now?
O Delphic Apollo!

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

SONNET
As from the darkening gloom a silver dove
Upsairs, and darts into the Eastern light,
On pinions that naught moves but pure delight,
So fled thy soul into the realms above,
Regions of peace and everlasting love;
Where happy spirits, crown’d with circlets bright
Of starry beam, and gloriously bedight,
Taste the high joy none but the blest can prove.
There thou or joinest the immortal quire
In melodies that even Heaven fear
Fill with superior bliss, or, at desire
Of the omnipotent Father, cleavest the air
On holy message sent—What pleasures higher?
Wherefore does any grief our joy impair?

STANZAS TO MISS WYLIE
O come! Georgian! the rose is full blown,
The riches of Flora are lavish strown,
The air is all softness, and crystal the streams,
The West is resplendently clothed in beams.
O come! let us haste to the freshening shades,
The quaintly carv’d seats, and the opening glades;
Where the faeries are chanting their evening hymns,
And in the last sun-beam the sylph lightly swims.
And when thou art weary I’ll find thee a bed,
Of mosses and flowers to pillow thy head:
And there Georgiana I’ll sit at thy feet,
While my story of love I enrap’t unrul’d repeat.
So fondly I’ll breathe, and so softly I’ll sigh,
Thou wilt think that some amorous Zephyr is nigh:
Yet no—as I breathe I will press thy fair knee,
And then thou wilt know that the sigh comes from me.
Ah! why dearest girl should we lose all these blisses?
That mortal’s a fool who such happiness misses:
So smile acquiescence, and give me thy hand,
With love-looking eyes, and with voice sweetly bland.

SONNET
Ost! how I love, on a fair summer’s eve,
When streams of light pour down the golden west,
And on the balmy zephyrs tranquil rest
The silver clouds, far—far away to leave
All meaner thoughts, and take a sweet reprieve.
SONNET

Before he went to feed with owls and bats,
Nebuchadnezzar had an ugly dream,
Worse than an hour's when she thinks her cream
Made a Naumachia for mice and rats.
So scared, he sent for that "Good King of Cats"
Young Daniel, who soon did pluck away the beam
From out his eye, and said he did not deem
The sceptre worth a straw—his Cushions old door-mats.
A horrid nightmare similar somewhat
Of late has haunted a most motley crew,
Most loggerheads and Chapmen—we are told
That any Daniel thou be he a tot
Can make the lying lips turn pale of hue
By belching out "ye are that head of Gold."

SONNET

Written in disgust of vulgar superstitious
The church bells toll a melancholy round,
Calling the people to some other prayers,
Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,
More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.
Surely the mind of man is closely bound
In some black spell; seeing that each one tears
Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,
And converse high of those with glory crown'd.
Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp,—
A chill as from a tomb, did I not know
That they are dying like an outburnt lamp;
That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go
Into oblivion,—that fresh flowers will grow,
And many glories of immortal stamp.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

SONNET

After dark vapours have oppress'd our plains
For a long dreary season, comes a day
Born of the gentle South, and clears away
From the sick heavens all unseenly stains.
The anxious month, relieved of its pains,
Takes as a long-lost right the feel of May;
The eyelids with the passing coolness play
Like rose leaves with the drip of Summer rains.
The calmest thoughts come round us; as of leaves
Budding—fruit ripening in stillness—Autumn suns
Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves—
Sweet Sappho's cheek—a smiling infant's breath—
The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs—
A woodland rivulet—a Poet's death.

SONNET

[Written at the end of "The flower and the leaf"]

This pleasant tale is like a little cope:
The higher lines do freshly interlace
To keep the reader in so sweet a place,
So that he here and there full-hearted stops;
And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops.
Come cool and suddenly against his face,
And by the wandering melody may trace
Which way the tender-legged linnet hops.
Oh! what a power hath white Simplicity!
What mighty power has this gentle story!
I that for ever feel athirst for glory
Could at this moment be content to lie
Weekly upon the grass, as those whose sobbings
Were heard of none beside the mournful robins.

TWO SONNETS

TO HAYDON, WITH A SONNET WRITTEN ON SEEING THE ELGIN MARBLES

Haydon! forgive me that I cannot speak
Definitively on these mighty things;
Forgive me that I have not Eagle's wings—
That what I want I know not where to seek:
And think that I would not be over meek
KEATS

In rolling out upfollow’d thunderings,
Even to the steep of Heliconian springs,
Were I of ample strength for such a freak—
Think too, that all those numbers should be thine;
Whose else? In this who touch thy venture’s hem?
For when men star’d at what was most divine
With browless idolism—o’erwise phlegm—
Thou hadst beheld the Hesperian shine
Of their star in the East, and gone to worship them.

II

ON SEEING THE ELGIN MARBLES

My spirit is too weak—mortality
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
And each imagin’d pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship, tells me I must die
Like a sick Eagle looking at the sky.
Yet ’tis a gentle luxury to weep,
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep,
Fresh for the opening of the morning’s eye.
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
Bring round the heart an undescrivable feud;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
That mingle Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main—
A sun—a shadow of a magnitude.

SONNET

ON A PICTURE OF LEANDER

Come hither all sweet maidens soberly,
Down-looking eye, and with a chasten’d light,
Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,
And meekly let your fair hands joined be,
As if so gentle that ye could not see,
Untouch’d, a victim of your beauty bright,
Sinking away to his young spirit’s night,—
Sinking bewilderd ’mid the dreary sea:
’Tis young Leander tolling to his death;
Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips
For Hero’s cheek, and smiles against her smile.
O horrid dream! see how his body dips
Dead-heavy; arms and shoulders gleam awhile:
He’s gone: up bubbles all his amorous breath.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

TO

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

Do not look so sad, sweet one,—
Sad and fadingly;
Shed one drop, then it is gone,
O ’twas born to die.

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

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

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

LINES

I

UNFELT, unheard, unseen,
I’ve left my little queen,
Her languid arms in silver slumber lying:
Ah! through their nestling touch,
Who—who could tell how much
There is for madness—cruel, or complying?

II

Those fairy lids how sleek!
Those lips how moist!—they speak,
In ripest quiet, shadows of sweet sounds:
Into my fancy’s ear
Melting a burden dear,
How “Love doth know no fullness nor no bounds.”
III
True!—tender monitors!
I bend unto your laws:
This sweetest day for dalliance was born!
So, without more ado,
I'll feel my heaven anew,
For all the blushing of the hasty morn.

SONNET

ON THE SEA
It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand Caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
That scarcely will the very smallest shell
Be mov'd for days from where it sometime fell,
When last the winds of Heaven were unbound.
Oh ye! who have your eye-balls vex'd and tir'd,
Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea;
Oh ye! whose ears are dain'd with uproar rude,
Or fed too much with cloying melody—
Sit ye near some old Cavern's Mouth, and brood
Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quir'd!

SONNET

ON LEIGH HUNT'S POEM "THE STORY OF RIMINI"
Who loves to peer up at the morning sun,
With half-shut eyes and comfortable cheek,
Let him, with this sweet tale, full often seek
For meadows where the little rivers run;
Who loves to linger with that brightest one
Of Heaven—Hesperus—let him lowly speak
These numbers to the night, and starlight meek,
Or moon, if that her hunting be begun.
He who knows these delights, and too is prone
To moralize upon a smile or tear,
Will find at once a region of his own,
A bower for his spirit, and will steer
To alleys where the fir-tree drops its cone.
Where robins hop, and fallen leaves are scar.
KEATS

MODERN LOVE

And what is love? It is a doll dress’d up
For idleness to cosset, nurse, and dandle;
A thing of soft misnomers, so divine
That silly youth doth think to make itself
Divine by loving, and so goes on
Yawning and doting a whole summer long,
Till Miss’s comb is made a pearl thara,
And common Wellingtons turn Roméo boots;
Then Cleopatra lives at number seven,
And Antony resides in Brunswick Square.

Fools! if some passions high have warm’d the world,
If Queens and Soldiers have play’d deep for hearts,
It is no reason why such agonies
Should be more common than the growth of weeds,
Fools! make me whole again that weighty pearl
The Queen of Egypt melted, and I’ll say
That ye may love in spite of beaver hats.

THE CASTLE BUILDER

FRAGMENTS OF A DIALOGUE

Castle Builder

* * * * * * *
In short, convince you that however wise
You may have grown from Convent libraries,
I have, by many yards at least, been carding
A longer skein of wit in Convent garden.

BERNARDINE

A very Eden that same place must be!
Pray what demesne? Whose Lordship’s legacy?
What, have you convents in that Gothic Isle?
Pray pardon me, I cannot help but smile.

* * * * * * *

Castle Builder

Sir, Convent Garden is a monstrous beast
From morning, four o’clock, to twelve at noon,
It swallows cabbages without a spoon,
And then, from twelve till two, this Eden made is
A promenade for cooks and ancient ladies;

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

And then for supper, ’stead of soup and porches,
It swallows chairmen, dams, and Hackney coaches.
In short, Sir, ’tis a very place for monks,
For it containeth twenty thousand punks,
Which any man may number for his sport,
By following fat elbows up a court.

* * * * * * *
In such like nonsense would I pass an hour
With random Friar, or Rake upon his tour,
Or one of few of that imperial host
Who came unmained from the Russian frost

* * * * * * *
To-night I’ll have my friar—let me think
About my room,—I’ll have it in the pink;
It should be rich and sombre, and the moon,
Just in its mid-life in the midst of June,
Should look thro’ four large windows and display
Clear, but for gold-fish vases in the way,
Their glassy diamonding on Turkish floor;
The tapers keep aside, an hour and more,
To see what else the moon alone can show;
While the night-breeze doth softly let us know
My terrace is well bower’d with oranges.
Upon the floor the dullest spirit sees
A guitar-ribbon and a lady’s glove
Beside a crumple-leaved tale of love;
A tambour-frame, with Venus sleeping there,
All finish’d but some ringlets of her hair;
A viol-bow, strings torn, cross-wise upon
A glorious folio of Anacreon;
A skull upon a mat of roses lying,
Ink’d purple with a song concerning dying;
An hour-glass on the turn, amid the trails
Of passion-flower;—just in time there sails
A cloud across the moon,—the lights bring in!
And see what more my phantasy can win.
It is a gorgeous room, but somewhat sad;
The draperies are so, as tho’ they had
Been made for Cleopatra’s winding-sheet;
And opposite the stedfast eye doth meet
A spacious looking-glass, upon whose face,
In letters raven-sombre, you may trace
Old “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.”
Greek busts and statuary have ever been
Held, by the finest spirits, fitter far
Than vase grotesque and Siamesian jar;
Therefore 'tis sure a want of Attic taste
That I should rather love a Gothic waste
Of eyeshight on cinque-coloured potter's clay,
Than on the marble fairness of old Greece.
My table-coverlets of Jason's fleece
And black Numidian sheep-wool should be wrought,
Gold, black, and heavy, from the Lamps brought.
My ebon sofas should delicious be
With down from Leda's cygnet progeny.
My pictures all Salvator's, save a few
Of Titian's portraiture, and one, though new,
Of Haydon's in its fresh magnificence.
My wine—O good! 'tis here at my desire,
And I must sit to supper with my friar.

A SONG OF OPPOSITES

"Under the flag
Of each his faction, thy to battle bring
Their embayed storms."—Milton.

Welcome joy, and welcome sorrow,
Leithe's weft and Hermes' feather;
Come to-day, and come to-morrow,
I do love you both together!
I love to mark sad faces in fair weather;
And hear a merry laugh amid the thunder;
Fair and foul I love together.
Meadows sweet where flames are under,
And a giggle at a wonder;
Visage sage at pantomime;
Funeral, and steeple-chime;
Infant playing with a skull;
Morning fair, and shipwreck'd hull;
Nighthade with the woodbine kissing;
Serpents in red roses hissing;
Cleopatra regal-dress'd
With the aspic at her breast;
Dancing music, music sad;
Both together, sane and mad;
Muses bright and muse pale;
Sombre Saturn, Monus hale;
Laugh and sigh, and laugh again;
Oh the sweetness of the pain!
Muses bright, and muses pale,
Bare your faces of the veil;

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

Let me see; and let me write
Of the day, and of the night—
Both together;—let me slake
All my thirst for sweet heart-ache!
Let my bow'er be of yew,
Intervraeth'd with myrles new;
Pines and lime-trees full in bloom,
And my couch a low grass-tomb.

SONNET

TO A CAT

Cat! who hast pass'd thy grand climacteric,
How many mice and rats hast in thy days?
Destroy'd?—How many tit bits stolen? Gaze
With those bright languid segments green, and prick
Those velvet ears—but prythee do not stick
Thy latent talons in me—and upraise
Thy gentle meow—and tell me all thy frays
Of fish and mice, and rats and tender chick.
Nay, look not down, nor lick thy dainty wrists—
For all the wheezy asthma—and for all
Thy tail's tip is nick'd off—and though the fists
Of many a maid have given thee many a maul,
Still is that fur as soft as when the lists
In youth thou enter'dst on glass bottled wall.

LINES ON SEEING A LOCK OF MILTON'S HAIR

Chief of organic numbers!
Old Scholar of the Spheres!
Thy spirit never slumber's,
But rolls about our ears,
For ever, and for ever
O what a mad endeavour
Worketh he,
Who to thy sacred and ennobled hearse
Would offer a burnt sacrifice of verse.
And melody
How heavenward thou soundest,
Live Temple of sweet noise,
And Discord unconfounded,
Giving Delight new joys,
And Pleasure nobler pinions
O, where are thy dominions?
KEATS

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

When every childish fashion
Has vanish'd from my rhyme,
Will I, grey-gone in passion,
Leave to an after-time,
Hymning and harmony
Of thee, and of thy works, and of thy life;
But vain is now the burning and the strife,
Pangs are in vain, until I grow high-rise
With old Philosophy,
And mad with glimpses of futurity!

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

SONNET

ON SITTING DOWN TO READ KING LEAR ONCE AGAIN

O golden-tongued Romance, with serene lute!
Fair-plumed Syren, Queen of far-away!
Leave melodizing on this wintry day,
Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute:
Adieu! for, once again, the fierce dispute
Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay
Must I burn through; once more humbly assay
The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearean fruit:
Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,
Begetters of our deep eternal theme!
When through the old oak Forest I am gone,
Let me not wander in a barren dream,
But, when I am consumed in the fire,
Give me new Phoenix wings to fly at my desire.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

SONNET

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charactery,
Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

SHARING EVE'S APPLE

I

O BLUSH not so! O blush not so!
Or I shall think you knowing;
And if you smile the blushing while,
Then maidenheads are going.

II

There's a blush for won't, and a blush for shan't,
And a blush for having done it:
There's a blush for thought and a blush for naught,
And a blush for just begun it.

III

O sigh not so! O sigh not so!
For it sounds of Eve's sweet pippin;
By these loose'd lips you have tasted the pips
And fought in an amorous nipping.

IV

Will you play once more at nice-cut-core,
For it only will last our youth out.
And we have not one sweet tooth out,
KEATS

There's a sigh for yes, and a sigh for no,
And a sigh for I can't bear it!
O what can be done, shall we stay or run?
O cut the sweet apple and share it!

A DRAUGHT OF SUNSHINE

Hence Burgundy, Claret, and Port,
Away with old Hock and Madeira,
Too earthly ye are for my sport;
There's a beverage brighter and clearer.
Instead of a pitiful rummur;
My wine overbrims a whole summer;
My bowl is the sky,
And I drink at my eye,
Till I feel in the brain
A Delphian pain—
Then follow, my Cato! then follow:
On the green of the hill
We will drink our fill
Of golden sunshine,
Till our brains intertwine
With the glory and grace of Apollo!
God of the Meridian,
And of the East and West,
To thee my soul is flown,
And my body is earthward press'd.—

Is an awful mission,
A terrible division;
And leaves a gulph austere
To be fill'd with worldly fear.
Aye, when the soul is fled
To high above our head,
Afrighted do we gaze
After its airy raze,
As doth a mother wild,
When her young infant child
Is in an eagle's claws—
And is not this the cause
Of madness—God of Song,
Thee bearest me along
Through sights I scarce can bear;
O let me, let me share

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

With the hot lyre and thee,
The staid Philosophy,
Temper my lonely hours,
And let me see thy bowers
More unalarm'd!

SONNET

TO THE NILE

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

SONNET

TO A LADY SEEN FOR A FEW MOMENTS AT VAUXHALL

Time's sea hath been five years at its slow ebb,
Long hours have to and fro let creep the sand,
Since I was tangled in thy beauty's web,
And snared by the unloving of thine hand,
And yet I never look on midnight sky,
But I behold thine eyes' well memory'd light;
I cannot look upon the rose's dye,
But to thy cheek my soul doth take its flight.
I cannot look on any budding flower,
But my fond ear, in fancy at thy lips
And earthing for a love-sound, doth devour
Its sweets in the wrong sense;—Thou dost eclipse
Every delight with sweet remembering
And grieve unto my darling joys dost bring
SONNET
WRITTEN IN ANSWER TO A SONNET ENDING THUS:—

Dark eyes are nearer far
Than those that mock the hyacinthine bell—

By J. H. Reynolds.

Blue! 'Tis the life of heaven,—the domain
Of Cynthia,—the wide palace of the sun,—
The tent of Hesperus, and all his train,—
The bosomer of clouds, gold, grey and dun.

Blue! 'Tis the life of waters,—Ocean
And all its vassal streams, pools numberless,
May rage, and foam, and fret, but never can
Subside, if not to dark blue nativeness.

Blue! Gentle cousin of the forest-green,
Married to green in all the sweetest flowers,—
Forget-me-not,—the Blue bell,—and, that Queen
Of secrecy, the Violet: what strange powers

Hast thou, as a mere shadow! But how great,
When in an Eye thou art, alive with fate!

SONNET
TO JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS

O that a week could be an age, and we
Felt parting and warmth meeting every week,
Then one poor year a thousand years would be,

The flush of welcome ever on the cheek:
So could we live long life in little space,
So time itself would be annihilate,
So a day's journey in oblivious haze
To serve our joys would lengthen and dilate.

O to arrive each Monday morn from Ind!
To land each Tuesday from the rich Levant!
In little time a host of joys to bind,
And keep our souls in one eternal pant!
This morn, my friend, and yester-evening taught
Me how to harbour such a happy thought.

WHAT THE THRUSH SAID

LINES FROM A LETTER TO JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS

O thou whose face hath felt the Winter's wind,
Whose eye has seen the snow-clouds hung in mist,
DAISY'S SONG

I
The sun, with his great eye,
Sees not so much as I;
And the moon, all silver-proud,
Might as well be in a cloud.

II
And O the spring—the spring!
I lead the life of a king!
Couch'd in the teeming grass,
I spy each pretty lass.

III
I look where no one dares,
And I stare where no one stares,
And when the night is nigh,
Lambs bleat my lullaby.

FOLLY'S SONG
When wedding fiddles are a-playing,
Huzza for folly O!
And when maidens go a-maying,
Huzza, &c.
When a milk-pail is upset,
Huzza, &c.
And the clothes left in the wet,
Huzza, &c.
When the barrel's set abroach,
Huzza, &c.
When Kate Eyebrow keeps a coach,
Huzza, &c.
When the pig is over-roasted,
Huzza, &c.
And the cheese is over-toasted,
Huzza, &c.
When Sir Snap is with his lawyer,
Huzza, &c.
And Miss Chip has kissed the sawyer,
Huzza, &c.

SONG

I
The stranger lighted from his steed,
And ere he spake a word,
He seiz'd my lady's lilly hand,
And kiss'd it all unheard.

II
The stranger walk'd into the hall,
And ere he spake a word,
He kiss'd my lady's cherry lips,
And kiss'd 'em all unheard.

III
The stranger walk'd into the bower,—
But my lady first did go,—
Aye hand in hand into the bower,
Where my lord's roses blow.

IV
My lady's maid had a silken scarf,
And a golden ring had she,
And a kiss from the stranger, as off he went
Again on his fair palfrey.

Asleep! O sleep a little while, white pearl!
And let me kneel, and let me pray to thee,
And let me call Heaven's blessing on thine eyes,
And let me breathe into the happy air,
That doth enfold and touch thee all about,
Vows of my slavery, my giving up,
My sudden adoration, my great love!
KEATS

FAERY SONGS

I

Shed no tear—O shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year.
Weep no more—O weep no more!
Young buds sleep in the root's white core,
Dry your eyes—O dry your eyes,
For I was taught in Paradise
To ease my breast of melodies—
    Shed no tear.

Overhead—look overhead
'Mong the blossoms white and red—
Look up, look up—I flutter now
On this flush pomegranate bough—
See me—'tis this silvery bill
Ever cures the good man's ill—
    Shed no tear—O shed no tear!
The flower will bloom another year,
Adieu—Adieu—I fly, adieu,
I vanish in the heaven's blue—
    Adieu, Adieu!

II

Ah! woe is me! poor silver-wing!
    That I must chant thy lady's dirge,
And death to this fair haunt of spring,
Of melody, and streams of flowery verge,—
Poor silver-wing! ah! woe is me!
    That I must see
These blossoms snow upon thy lady's pall!
Go, pretty page! and in her ear
Whisper that the hour is near!
    Softly tell her not to fear
Such calm favonian burial!
Go, pretty page! and soothing tell,—
The blossoms hang by a melting spell,
And fall they must, ere a star wink thrice
Upon her closed eyes,
That now in vain are weeping their last tears,
At sweet life leaving, and these harbours green,—
Rich dowry from the Spirit of the Spheres,—
    Alas! poor Queen!

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

SONNET

TO HOMER

Standing aloof in giant ignorance,
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas,
So thou wast blind,—but then the veil was rent,
For Jove uncertain'd Heaven to let thee live,
And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,
And Pan made song for thee his forest-hive;
Aye on the shores of darkness there is light,
And precipices show un trodden green,
There is a budding morrow in midnight,
There is a triple sight in blindness keen;
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

SONG

[Written on a blank page in Beaumont and Fletcher's Works, between
"Cupid's Revenge" and "The Two Noble Kinsmen"]

I

Spirit here that reignest!
    Spirit here that painest!
Spirit here that burnest!
    Spirit here that mournest!
Spirit, I bow
    My forehead low,
Enshaded with thy pinions.
Spirit, I look
    All passion-struck
Into thy pale dominions.

II

Spirit here that laughest!
    Spirit here that quaffest!
Spirit here that dances!
    Noble soul that prancest!
Spirit, with thee
    I join in the glee
A-nudging thee of Momus.
Spirit, I flash
    With a Bacchanal blush
Just fresh from the Banquet of Comus.
TEIGNMOUTH

"SOME DOGGEREL" SENT IN A LETTER TO B. R. HAYDON

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

II
There's arch Brook
And there's larch Brook
Both turning many a mill;
And cooling the drouth
Of the salmon's mouth.
And fattening his silver gill.

III
There is Wild wood,
A Mill on
To the sheep on the lea o' the down,
Where the golden furze,
With its green, thin spurs,
Doth catch at the maiden's gown.

IV
There is Newton marsh
With its spear grass harsh—
A pleasant summer level
Where the maidens sweet
Of the Market Street.
Do meet in the dusk to revel.

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

The daisies blow
And the primroses are waken'd,
And violets white
Sit in silver plught,
And the green bud's as long as the spike end.

Then who would go
Into dark Soho,
And chatter with pack'd hair'd critics,
When he can stay
For the new-mown hay,
And startle the dappled Prickets?

THE DEVON MAID

STANZAS SENT IN A LETTER TO B. R. HAYDON

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

II
I love your Meads, and I love your flowers,
And I love your junkets mainly,
But behind the door I love kissing more,
O look not so disdainly.

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

IV
I'll put your Basket all safe in a nook,
Your shawl I hang up on the willow,
And we will sigh in the daisy's eye
And kiss on a grass green pillow.
EPISTLE TO JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS

Dear Reynolds! as last night I lay in bed,
There came before my eyes that wonted thread
Of shapes, and shadows, and remembrances,
That every other minute vex and please:
Things all disjointed come from north and south,—
Two Witch's eyes above a Cherub's mouth,
Voltaire with casque and shield and habergeon,
And Alexander with his nightcap on;
Old Socrates a-tying his cravat,
And Hazlitt playing with Miss Edgeworth's cat;
And Junius Brutus, pretty well so so,
Making the best of's way towards Soho.

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

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

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

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

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

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

O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,
Would all their colours from the sunset take:
From something of material sublime,
Rather than shadow our own soul's day-time
In the dark void of night. For in the world
We jostle,—but my flag is not unfurl'd
On the Admiral-staff,—and so philosophize
I dare not yet! Oh, never will the prize.
High reason, and the love of good and ill,
Be my award! Things cannot to the will
Be settled, but they tease us out of thought;
Or is it that imagination brought
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,
Cannot refer to any standard law
Of either earth or heaven? It is a flaw
In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,—
It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.
KEATS

Dear Reynolds! I have a mysterious tale,
And cannot speak it: the first page I read
Upon a Lamplight rock of green sea-weed
Among the breakers; 'twas a quiet eve,
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the flat brown sand; I was at home
And should have been most happy—but I saw
Too far into the sea, where every maw
The greater on the less feeds evermore.—
But I saw too distinct into the core
Of an eternal fierce destruction,
And so from happiness I far was gone.
Still am I sick of it, and tho', to-day,
I've gather'd young spring-leaves, and flowers gay
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,
Still do I that most fierce destruction see,—
The Shark at savage prey,—the Hawk at pouance,—
The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,
Ravening a worm,—Away, ye horrid moods!
Moods of one's mind! You know I hate them well.
You know I'd sooner be a clapping Bell
To some Kambeschan Missionary Church,
Than with these horrid moods be left i' the lurch.

DAWLISH FAIR

Over the Hill and over the Dale,
And over the Bourne to Dawlish,
Where ginger-bread wives have a scantly sale,
And ginger-bread nuts are smallish.

FRAGMENT OF AN ODE TO MAIA, WRITTEN ON
MAY DAY, 1818

Mother of Hermes! and still youthful Maia!
May I sing to thee
As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baie?
Or may I woo thee
In earlier Sicilian? or thy smiles
Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,
By bards who died content on pleasant sword,
Leaving great verse unto a little clan?
O, give me their old vigour, and unheard
Save of the quiet Primrose, and the span

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

Of heaven and few ears,
Rounded by thee, my song should die away
Content as theirs,
Rich in the simple worship of a day.

ACROSTIC

GEOGRANIA AUGUSTA KEATS

Give me your patience Sister while I frame
Exact in Capitals your golden name
Or sue the fair Apollo and he will
Rouse from his heavy slumber and instil
Great love in me for thee and Poesy
Imagine not that greatest mastery
And kingdom over all the Realms of verse
Nears more to Heaven in aught than when we nurse
And surety give to love and Brotherhood.

Anthropophagi in Othello's mood;
Ulysses stormed, and his enchanted belt
Glow with the Muse, but they are never felt
Unbosom'd so and so eternal made,
Such tender incense in their Laurel shade,
To all the regent sisters of the Nine
As this poor offering to you, sister mine.

Kind sister! aye, this third name says you are;
Enchanted has it been the Lord knows where.
And may it taste to you like good old wine,
Take you to real happiness and give
Sons, daughters and a home like honied hive.

SONNET

O N VISITING THE TOMB OF BURNS

The town, the churchyard, and the setting sun,
The clouds, the trees, the rounded hills all seem,
Though beautiful, cold—strange—as in a dream,
I dreamed long ago, now new begun.
The short-liv'd, paly Summer is but won
From Winter's age, for one hour's gleam;
Though sapphire-warm, their stars do never beam:
All is cold Beauty; pain is never done:
KEATS
For who has mind to relish, Minos-wise,
The Real of Beauty, free from that dead hue
Sickly imagination and sick pride
Cast wan upon it! Burns! with honour due
I oft have honour'd thee. Great shadow, hide
Thy face; I sin against thy native skies.

MEG MERRILIES

I
Old Mox she was a Gipsy,
And liv'd upon the Moors:
Her bed it was the brown heath turf,
And her house was out of doors.

II
Her apples were small blackberries,
Her currants pods o' broom;
Her wine was dew of the wild white rose,
Her book a churchyard tomb.

III
Her Brothers were the craggy hills,
Her Sisters larchen trees—
Alone with her great family
She liv'd as she did please.

IV
No breakfast had she many a morn,
No dinner many a noon,
And 'stead of supper she would stare
Full hard against the Moon.

V
But every morn of woodbine fresh
She made her garland,
And every night the dark glen Yew
She wove, and she would sing.

VI
And with her fingers old and brown
She plaited Mats o' Rushes,
And gave them to the Cottagers
She met among the Rushes.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

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

A SONG ABOUT MYSELF
FROM A LETTER TO FANNY KEATS

I
There was a naughty boy,
A naughty boy was he,
He would not stop at home,
He could not quiet be—
He took
In his Knapsack
A Book
Full of vowels
And a shirt
With some towels—
A slight cap
For night cap—
A hair brush,
Comb ditto,
New Stockings
For old ones
Would split O!
This Knapsack
Tight as a back
He rivetted close
And followed his Nose
To the North,
To the North,
And follow'd his nose
To the North.

II
There was a naughty boy
And a naughty boy was he,
For nothing would he do
But scribble poetry—
He took

There was a naughty boy
And a naughty boy was he,
He kept little fishes
In washing tubs three
In spite
Of the might
Of the Maid
Nor afraid
Of his Granny-good—
He often would
Hurly burly
Get up early
And go
By hook or crook
To the brook
And bring home
Miller's thumb,
Tittlebat
Not over fat,
Minnows small
As the stall
Of a glove,
Not above
The size
Of a nice
Little Baby's
Little fingers—
O he made
Twas his trade
Of Fish a pretty Kettle
A Kettle
A Kettle
Of Fish a pretty Kettle
A Kettle

A GALLOWAY SONG

FROM A LETTER TO TOM KEATS

Art! ken ye what I met the day
Out o'er the Mountains
A coming down by craggil[ ]'s grey
And mossie fountains—
A bit good hair'd Marie yeve I pray
Ane minute's guessing—
For that I met upon the way
Is past expressing.
As I stood where a rocky brig
A torrent crosses
I spied upon a misty rig
A trood o' Horses—

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

And as they trotted down the glen
I sped to meet them
To see if I might know the Men
To stop and greet them.
First Willie on his sleek mare came
At canting gallop
His long hair rustled like a flame
On board a shallop.
Then came his brother Rab and then
Young Peggy's mither
And Peggy too—adown the glen
They went together—
I saw her wrappit in her hood
Fra wind and rainin-
Her cheek was flush wi' diad blood
Twist growth and waxin—
She turn'd her dazed head full oft
For there her Brothers
Came riding with her Brudgroom soft
And mony others.
Young Tam came up an' eyed me quick
With reddened cheek—
Braw Tam was daffed like a chick—
He cou'd na speak—
Ah Marie they are all gane hame
Through blustering weather
An' every heart is full on flame
An' light as feather.
Ah! Marie they are all gone hame
Fra happy wedding,
Whilst I—Ah is it not a shame?
Sad tears am shedding.

SONNET

TO AILSA ROCK

Hearken, thou craggy ocean pyramid!
Give answer from thy voice, the sea-fowls' screams!
When were thy shoulders mantled in huge streams?
When, from the sun, was thy broad forehead hid?
How long is't since the mighty power bid
Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom dreams?
Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams,
Or when grey clouds are thy cold coverlid.
Thou answer'st not; for thou art dead asleep;
Thy life is but two dead eternities—
KEATS

The last in air, the former in the deep;  
First with the wholes, last with the eagle-skies—  
Drown'd wast thou till an earthquake made thee steep,  
Another cannot wake thy giant size.

SONNET

WRITTEN IN THE COTTAGE WHERE BURNS WAS BORN

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

LINES WRITTEN IN THE HIGHLANDS AFTER A VISIT TO BURNS'S COUNTRY

There is a charm in footstep slow across a silent plain,  
Where patriot battle has been fought, where glory had the gain;  
There is a pleasure on the heath where Druids old have been,  
Where mantes grey have rustled by and swept the nettles green;  
There is a joy in every spot made known by times of old,  
New to the feet, although each tale a hundred times be told;  
There is a deeper joy than all, more solemn in the heart,  
More parching to the tongue than all, of more divine a smart,  
When weary steps forget themselves upon a pleasant turf,  
Upon hot sand, or flinty road, or sea-shore iron scurf,  
Toward the castle or the cot, where long ago was born  
One who was great through mortal days, and died of fame unshorn,  
Light heather-bells may tremble then, but they are far away;  
Wood-lark may sing from sandy fern,—the Sun may hear his lay;  
Runnels may kiss the grass on shelves and shallows clear,  
But their low voices are not heard, though come on travels drear;  
Blood-red the Sun may set behind black mountain peaks;  
Blue tides may sluice and drench their time in caves and weedy creeks;  
Eagles may seem to sleep wing-wide upon the air;  
Ring-doves may fly convuls'd across to some high-cedar'd lair;  

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

But the forgotten eye is still fast lidded to the ground,  
As Palmer's, that with weariness, mid-desert shrine hath found.  
At such a time the soul's a child, in childhood is the brain;  
Forgotten is the worldly heart—alone, it beats in vain.—  
Aye, if a madman could have leave to pass a healthful day  
To tell his forehead's swoon and faint when first began decay,  
He might make tremble many a one whose spirit had gone forth  
To find a Bard's low cradle-place about the silent North!  
Scanty the hour and few the steps beyond the bourn of care,  
Beyond the sweet and bitter world,—beyond it unaware!  
Scanty the hour and few the steps, because a longer stay  
Would bar return, and make a man forget his mortal way:  
O horrible! to lose the sight of well remember'd face,  
Of Brother's eyes, of Sister's brow—constant to every place;  
Filling the air, as we move, with portraiture intense;  
More warm than those heroic tints that pain a painter's sense,  
When shapes of old come striding by, and visages of old,  
Locks shining black, hair scantly grey, and passions manifold.  
No, no, that horror cannot be, for at the cable's length  
Man feels the gentle anchor pull and gladdens in its strength:—  
One hour, half-idled, he stands by mossy waterfall,  
But in the very next he reads his soul's memorial:—  
He reads it on the mountain's height, where chance he may sit down  
Upon rough marble diadem—that hill's eternal crown.  
Yet be his anchor e'er so fast, room is there for a prayer  
That man may never lose his mind on mountains black and bare;  
That he may stray league after league some great birthplace to find  
And keep his vision clear from speck, his inward sight unblind.

THE GADFLY

FROM A LETTER TO TOM KEATS

I

All gentle folks who owe a grudge  
To any living thing  
Open your ears and stay your  
H'judge  
Whilst I in dudgeon sing.

III

Has any here an old grey Mare  
With three legs all her store,  
O put it to her Buttocks bare  
And straight she'll run on four.

II

The Gaddy he hath stung me sore—  
O may he ne'er sting you!  
But we have many a horrid bore  
He may sting black and blue.

IV

Has any here a Lawyer suit  
Of Seventeen-Forty-Three,  
Take Lawyer's nose and put it to't  
And you the end will see.
KEATS

VI
Is there a Man in Parliament
Dum[blac]founder'd in his speech,
O let his neighbour make a rent
And put one in his breech.

VII
O Lowther how much better thou
Hadst figur'd t'o'ther day
When to the folks thou mad'at a bow
And hast no more to say

VIII
If lucky Gadfly had but ta'en
His seat **
And put thee to a little pain
To save thee from a worse.

IX
Better than Southey it had been,
Better than Mr. D-----,
Better than Wordsworth too, I ween,
Better than Mr. V-----.

X
Has any here a daughter fair
Too fond of reading novels,
Too apt to fall in love with care
And charming Mister Loves, I

XI
O put a Gadfly to that thing
She keeps so white and pert----
I mean the finger for the ring,
And it will breed a wort.

XII
Has any here a pious spouse
Who seven times a day
Scolds as King David pray'd, to choose
And have her holy way-----

XIII
O let a Gadfly's little sting
Persuade her sacred tongue
That noises are a common thing
But that her bell has rung.

XIV
And as this is the summum bon-
num of all conquering,
I leave "withouten words mo"
The Gadfly's little sting.

SONNET
ON HEARING THE BAG-PIPE AND SEEING "THE STRANGER" PLAYED AT INVERARY

Of late two duities were before me plac'd
Sweet, holy, pure, sacred and innocent,
From the ninth sphere to me benignly sent
That Gods might know my own particular taste.
First the soft Bag-pipe mourn'd with zealous haste.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

The Stranger next with head on bosom bent
Sigh'd; rueful again the piteous Bag-pipe went,
Again the Stranger sighs fresh did waste.
O Bag-pipe thou didst steal my heart away—
O Stranger thou my nerves from Pipe didst charm—
O Bag-pipe thou didst re-assert thy sway—
Another thou Stranger gav'it me fresh alarm—
Alas! I could not choose. Ah! my poor heart,
Mum chance art thou with both oblig'd to part.

STAFFA
Nor Aladdin magian
Ever such a work began;
Not the wizard of the Dee
Ever such a dream could see;
Not St. John, in Patmos' Isle,
In the passion of his toil,
When he saw the churches seven,
Golden as'd, built up in heaven,
Gaz'd at such a rugged wonder.
As I stood its roofing under,
Lo! I saw one sleeping there,
On the marble cold and bare.
While the surges wash'd his feet,
And his garments white did beat
Drench'd about the sombre rocks,
On his neck his well-grown locks,
Lifted dry above the main,
Were upon the curl again.
"What is this? and what art thou?"
Whisper'd I, and touch'd his brow;
"What art thou? and what is this?"
Whisper'd I, and strove to kiss
The spirit's hand, to wake his eyes;
Up he started in a trice:
"I am Lyddas," said he,
"Fam'd in funeral minstrelsy!"
This was architectur'd thus
By the great Oceans;
Here his mighty waters play
Hollow organs all the day;
Here by turns his dolphins all,
Finn's palmer's great and small,
Come to pay devotion due—
Each a mouth of peals must strew.
KEATS

Many a mortal of these days,
Dares to pass our sacred ways,
Dares to touch audaciously
This Cathedral of the Sea!
I have been the pontiff-priest
Where the waters never rest,
Where a fledgy sea-bird choir
Soars for ever; holy fire
I have hid from mortal man;
Proteus is my Sacristan.
But the dulled eye of mortal
Hath pass'd beyond, the rocky portal;
So for ever will I leave
Such a taint, and soon unweave
All the magic of the place.''

* * * * *
So saying, with a Spirit's glance
He dived!

SONNET

WRITTEN UPON THE TOP OF BEN NEVIS

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

BEN NEVIS

A DIALOGUE

[PERSONS: MRS. CAMERON AND BEN NEVIS]

MRS. C.
Upon my life Sir Nevis I am pique'd
That I have so far panted tugg'd and reek'd
To do an hon[or] to your old bald pate

MRS. C.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

And now am sitting on you just to bate,
Without your paying me one compliment.
Alas 'tis with all, when our intent
Is plain, and in the eye of all Mankind
We fair ones show a preference, too blind!
You Gentle man immediately turn tail—
O let me then my hapless fate bewail!
Ungrateful Baldpate, have I not disdain'd
The pleasant Valleys—have I not, madbrain'd,
Deserted all my Pickles and preserves,
My China closet too,—with wretched Nerves
To boot—say, wretched ingrate, have I not
Le[ft] my soft cushion chair and cauld pot?
'Tis true I had no corns—no! thank the fates,
My Shoemaker was always Mr. Bates.
And if not Mr. Bates why I'm not old!
Still dumb, ungrateful Nevis—still so cold!

Here the Lady took some more w[h]iskey and was putting even more to her lips when she dashed [it] to the Ground for the Mountain began to grumble—which continued for a few minutes before he thus began,

BEN NEVIS

What whining bit of tongue and Mouth thus dares
Disturb my lumen of a thousand years?
Even so long my sleep has been secure—
And to be so awaked I'll not endure.
Oh pain—for since the Eagle's earliest scream
I've had a dam[n]d confounded ugly dream,
A Nightmare sure. What, Madam, was it you?
It cannot be! My old eyes are not true!
Red-Crag, my Spectacles! Now let me see!
Good Heavens, Lady, how the gemini
Did you get here? O I shall split my sides!
I shall earthquake—

MRS. C.

Sweet Nevis, do not quake, for though I love
You[r] honest Countenance all things above,
Truly I should not like to be convey'd
So far into your Bosom—gentle Maid
Loves not too rough a treatment, gentle Sir—
Pray thee be calm and do not quake nor stir,
No not a Stone, or I shall go in fits—
KEATS

BEN NEVIS

I must—I shall—I meet not such tit bits—
I meet not such sweet creatures every day—
By my old night-cap, night-cap night and day,
I must have one sweet Buss—I must and shall!
Red-Crag!—What, Madam, can you then repent
Of all the toil and vigour you have spent
To see Ben Nevis and to touch his nose?
Red-Crag, I say! O I must have them close!
Red-Crag, there lies beneath my farthest toe
A vein of Sulphur—go dear Red-Crag, go—
And rub your flinty back against it—budge!
Dear Madam, I must kiss you, faith I must!
I must Embrace you with my dearest gust!
Block-head, d'ye hear—Block-head, I'll make her feel—
There lies beneath my east leg's northern heel
A cave of young earth dragons—well, my boy,
Go thither quick and so complete my joy;
Take you a bundle of the largest pins
And when the sun on finest Phosphor shines
Fire them and ram them in the Dragon's nest,
Then will the dragons fry and fizzle their best
Until ten thousand now no bigger than
Poor Al[1]ligators—poor things of one span—
Will each one swell to twice ten times the size
Of northern whale—then for the tender prize—
The moment then—for then will Red-Crag rub
His flinty back—and I shall kiss and snub
And press my dainty morsel to my breast.
Block-head, make haste!

O Muses weep the rest—
The Lady fainted and he thought her dead
So pulled the clouds again about his head
And went to sleep again—soon she was rous'd
By her affrighted servants—next day hous'd
Safe on the lowly ground she bless'd her fate
That fainting fit was not delayed too late.

A PROPHECY: TO GEORGE KEATS IN AMERICA

'Tis the witching hour of night,
Orbed is the moon and bright,
And the stars they glisten, glisten,
Seeming with bright eyes to listen—
For what listen they?
For a song and for a charm,
See they glisten in alarm,
And the moon is waxing warm
To hear what I shall say.
Moon! keep wide thy golden ears—
Hearken, stars! and hearken, spheres—
Hearken, thou eternal sky!
I sing an infant's lullaby,
A pretty lullaby,
Listen, listen, listen, listen,
Glisten, glisten, glisten, glisten,
And hear my lullaby!
Though the rushes that will make
Its cradle still are in the lake—
Though the linen that will be
Its swathe, is on the cotton tree—
Though the woollen that will keep
It warm, is on the silly sheep—
Listen, starlight, listen, listen,
Glisten, glisten, glisten, glisten,
And hear my lullaby!
Child, I see thee! Child, I've found thee
Midst of the quiet all around thee!
Child, I see thee! Child, I spy thee!
And thy mother sweet is nigh thee!
Child, I know thee! Child no more,
But a Poet evermore!
See, see, the lyre, the lyre,
In a flame of fire,
Upon the little cradle's top.

TRANSLATION FROM A SONNET OF RONSARD

Nature withheld Cassandra in the skies,
For more adornment, a full thousand years;
She took their cream of Beauty's fairest dyes,
And shap'd and tinted her above all Peers:
Meanwhile Love kept her dearly with his wings,
And underneath their shadow fill'd her eyes.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

With such a richness that the cloudy Kings
Of high Olympus utter'd slavish sighs.
When from the Heavens I saw her first descend,
My heart took fire, and only burning pains,
They were my pleasures—they my Life's sad end;
Love pour'd her beauty into my warm veins . . .

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
KEATS

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

STANZAS

I
In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity:
The north cannot undo them,
With a sleetly whistle through them;
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

II
In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy brook,
Thy bubbleings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look;
But with a sweet forgetting,
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

III
Ah! would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Writh'd not at passed joy?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numbed sense to steal it,
Was never said in rhyme.

SPENSERIAN STANZA

[Written at the close of Canto II, Book V, of "The Faerie Queene"]

In after-time, a sage of mickle lore
Yclep'd Typographus, the Giant took,
And did reit his limbs as heretofore,
And made him read in many a learned book,
And into many a lively legend look;
Thereby in goodly themes so training him,
That all his bruitishness he quite forsook,
When, meeting Artegaill and Talus grim,
The one he struck stone-blind, the other's eyes wox dim.

THE EVE OF SAINT MARK

Upon a Sabbath-day 'tis fell:
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,
That call'd the folk to evening prayer;
The city streets were clean and fair
From wholesome drench of April rains;
And, on the western window panes,
The chilly sunset faintly tol'd
Of unmatur'd green vallies cold,
Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,
Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
And daisies on the aguish hills.
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell:
The silent streets were crowded well
With staid and plious companies,
Warm from their fire-side orat'ries;
And moving, with demurest air,
To even-song, and vesper prayer.
Each arch'd porch, and entry low,
Was fill'd with patient folk and slow,
With whispers hush, and shuffling feet,
While play'd the organ loud and sweet.
The bells had ceased, the prayers begun,
And Bertha had not yet half done.
A curious volume, patch'd and torn,
That all day long, from earliest morn,
Had taken captive her two eyes,
Among its golden broderies;
Perplex'd her with a thousand things,—
The stars of Heaven, and angels' wings,
Martyrs in a fiery blaze,
Azure saints in silver rays,
Moses' breastplate, and the seven
Candlesticks John saw in Heaven,
The winged Lion of Saint Mark,
And the Covenantal Ark,
With its many mysteries,
Cherubim and golden mice.

Bertha was a maiden fair,
Dwelling in the old Minster-square;
From her fire-side she could see,
Sidelong, its rich antiquity,
Far as the Bishop's garden-wall;
Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,
Full-leav'd, the forest had outstrip'd,
By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,
So shelter'd by the mighty pile.
Bertha arose, and read awhile,
With forehead 'gainst the window-pane.
Again she tried, and then again,
Until the dusk eve left her dark
Upon the legend of St. Mark.
From plaited lawn-frill, fine and thin,
She lifted up her soft warm chin,
With aching neck and swimming eyes,
And dust'd with sanctity imageries.

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

Bot I must tellen verile
Sondel of Sainte Cictile,
And chieflie what he auctorethe
Of Sainte Markis life and deche:"

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

ODE TO FANNY

I

PHYSICIAN Nature! let my spirit blood!
O ease my heart of verse and let me rest;
Throw me upon thy Tripod, till the flood
Of stifling numbers ebbs from my full breast.
A theme! a theme! great nature! give a theme;
Let me begin my dream.
I come— I see thee, as thou standest there,
Beckon me not into the wintry air.

II

Ah! dearest love, sweet home of all my fears,
And hopes, and joys, and panting miseries,—
To-night, if I may guess, thy beauty wears
A smile of such delight,
As brilliant and as bright,
As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes,
Lost in soft amaze,
I gaze, I gaze!

III

Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast?
What starce outfaces now my silver moon!
Ah! keep that hand unravished at the least;
Let, let, the amorous burn—
But, pr'ythee, do not turn
The current of your heart from me so soon.
O! save, in charity,
The quickest pulse for me.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

IV

Save it for me, sweet love! though music breathe
Voluptuous visions into the warm air;
Though swimming through the dance's dangerous
wreath,
Be like an April day,
Smiling and cool and gay,
A temperate Lilly, temperate as fair;
Then, Heaven! there will be
A warmer June for me.

V

Why, this—you'll say, my Fanny! is not true:
Put your soft hand upon your snowy side,
Where the heart beats: confess—tis nothing new—
Must not a woman be
A feather on the sea,
Sway'd to and fro by every wind and tide?
Of as uncertain speed
As blow-ball from the mead?

VI

I know it—and to know it is despair
To one who loves you as I love, sweet Fanny!
Whose heart goes fluttering for you every where,
Nor, when away you roam,
Dare keep its wretched home,
Love, love alone, his pains severe and many.
Then, loveliest! keep me free,
From torturing jealousy.

VII

Ah! if you prize my subdued soul above
The poor, the fading; brief, pride of an hour;
Let none profane my Holy See of love,
Or with a rude hand break
The sacramental cake
Let none else touch the just new-budded flower;
If not—may my eyes close,
Love! on their lost repose.
SONNET

O soft embalmer of the still midnight,
Shutting, with careful fingers and benison,
Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close
In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes,
Or wait the "Amen," ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities.
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,—
Save me from curious Conscience, that still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key defly in the oiled wards,
And seal the hushed Casket of my Soul.

SONG

I
Hush! hush! tread softly! hush, hush my dear!
All the house is asleep, but we know very well
That the jealous, the jealous old bald-pate may hear,
Thou'rt'ye paddled his night-cap—O sweet Isabel!
Thou'rt'ye feet are more than light on a Fairy's feet,
Who dances on bubbles where brooklets meet,—
Hush, hush! soft tiptoe! hush, hush my dear!
For less than a nothing the jealous can hear.

II
No leaf doth tremble, no ripple is there
On the river,—all's still, and the night's sleepy eye
Closes up, and forgets all its Leithian care,
Charm'd to death by the drone of the humming Mayfly;
And the Moon, whether prudish or complaisant,
Has fled to her bower, well knowing I want
No light in the dusk, no torch in the gloom,
But my Isabel's eyes, and her lips pul'd with bloom.

III
Lift the latch! ah gently! ah tenderly—sweet!
We are dead if that latchet gives one little clik!
Well done—now those lips, and a flowery seat—
The old man may sleep, and the planets may wink;

ODE ON INDOLENCEx

"They tell not, neither do they spin."

I
One morn before me were three figures seen,
With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-faced;
And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
In placid sandals, and in white robes graced;
They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
When shifted round to see the other side;
They came again; as when the urn once more
Is shifted round, the first seen shades return,
And they were strange to me, as may betide
With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.

II
How is it, Shadows! that I knew ye not?
How came ye muffled in so hush a mask?
Was it a silent deep-disguised plot
To steal away, and leave without a task
My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour;
The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
Benumb'd my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;
Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower:
Of why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness?
KEATS

III
A third time pass’d they by, and, passing, turn’d
Each one: the face a moment whilsts to me;
Then faded, and to follow them I burn’d
And ach’d for wings because I knew the three;
The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name;
The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
And ever watchful with a fatigued eye;
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
Is heap’d upon her, maiden most unmeek,—
I knew to be my demon Poesy.

IV
They faded, and, forsooth! I wanted wings:
O folly! What is love! and where is it?
And for that poor Ambition! it springs
From a man’s little heart’s short fever-fit;
For Poesy!—no,—she has not a joy,—
At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,
And evenings steep’d in honied indolence;
O, for an age so shelter’d from annoy,
That I may never know how change the moons,
Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!

V
And once more came they by:—alas! wherefore?
My sleep had been embroider’d with dim dreams;
My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o’er
With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled beams:
The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
Tho’in her lids hung the sweet tears of May;
The open casement press’d a new-leaf’d vine,
Let in the budding warmth and throistle’s lay;
O Shadows! ’twas a time to bid farewell!
Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

VI
So, ye three Ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;
For I would not be dieted with praise,
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce!
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;
Farewell! I yet have visions for the night,
And for the day faint visions there is store;
Vanish, ye Phantoms! from my idle spright,
Into the clouds, and never more return!

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

SONNET
Why did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell:
No God, no Demon of severe response,
Deigns to reply from heaven or from Hell.
Then to my human heart I turn at once.
Heart! Thou and I are here sad and alone;
I say, why did I laugh? O mortal pain!
O Darkness! Darkness! ever must I moan,
To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain.
Why did I laugh? I know this Being’s lease,
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads;
Yet would I on this very midnight cease,
And the world’s gaudy ensigns see in shreds;
Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
But Death intenser—Death is Life’s high meed.

SONNET
A DREAM, AFTER READING DANTE’S EPISTLE OF PAULO AND FRANCESCA
As Hermes once took to his feathers light,
When lulled Argus, baffled, swoon’d and slept,
So on a Delphic reed, my idle spright
So play’d, so charm’d, so conquer’d, so bereft
The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes;
And, seeing it asleep, so flew away—
Not to pure Isla with its snow-cold skies,
Nor unto Tempe where Love griev’d a day;
But to that second circle of sad hell,
Where ’mid the gust, the whirlwind, and the flame
Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell
Their sorrows. Pale were the sweet lips I saw,
Pale were the lips I kiss’d, and fair the form
I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

AN EXTENPORE
FROM A LETTER TO GEORGE KEATS AND HIS WIFE
When they were come into the Fairy’s Court
They rang—no one at home—all gone to sport
And dance and kiss and love as faeries do
For Fairies be as humans, lovers true—
Amid the woods they were, so lone and wild,
Where even the Robin feels himself exil’d
And where the very brooks as if afraid
Hurry along to some less magic shade.
KEATS

"No one at home!" the fretful princess cried
"And all for nothing such a drear[y] ride,
And all for nothing my new diamond cross,
No one to see my Persian feathers toe,
No one to see my Ape, my Dwarf, my Fool,
Or how I pace my Otaheitean mule.
Ape, Dwarf and Fool, why stand you gaping there?
Burst the door open, quick—or I declare
I'll switch you soundly and in pieces tear."

The Dwarf began to tremble and the Ape
Star'd at the Fool, the Fool was all agape,
The Princess grasped her switch, but just in time
The dwarf with piteous face began to rhyme.
"O mighty Princess did you ne'er protest
What your poor servants know but too too well?
Know you the three great crimes in fairy land?
The first, alas! poor Dwarf, I understand—
I made a whipstock of a fairy's wand—

The next is snoring in their company—

The next, the last, the direst of the three
Is making free when they are not at home.
I was a Prince—a baby prince—my doom
You see, I made a whipstock of a wand—
My top has henceforth slept In fairy land.
He was a Prince, the Fool, a grown up Prince,
But he has never been a King's son since
He fell a snoring at a fairy Ball—
Your poor Ape was a prince and he, poor thing,
Picklock'd a fairy's boudoir—now no king,
But ape—so pray your highness stay awhile;
'Tis sooth indeed, we know it to our sorrow—
Persist and you may be an ape tomorrow.

While the Dwarf spake the Princess still for spite
Feal'd [sic] the brown hazel twig to lilly white,
Clench'd her small teeth, and held her lips apart,
Try'd to look unconcern'd with beating heart,
They saw her highness had made up her mind
And quaver'd like the reeds before the wind,
And they had had it, but, O happy chance!

The Ape for very fear began to dance
And grin'd as all his ugliness did ache—
She said her vixen fingers for his sake,
He was so very ugly: then she took
Her pocket glass mirror and began to look
First at herself and [then] at him and then
She smil'd at her own beauteous face again.

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

Yet for all this—for all her pretty face
She took it in her head to see the place.
Women gain little from experience
Either in Lovers, husbands or expense.
The more the beauty, the more fortune too,
Beauty before the wide world never knew.
So each fair reason—tho' it oft miscarrys,
She thought her pretty face would please the fairies.
"My darling Ape I won't whip you today—
Give me the Picklock, sirrah, and go play."

They all three wept—but counsel was as vain
As crying cup biddie to drops of rain.
Yet lingeringly did the sad Ape forth draw
The Picklock from the Pocket in his Jaw.
The Princess took it and dismounting straight
Trip'd in blue silver'd slippers to the gate
And touch'd the wards, the Door full cou[r]teou[s]ly
Opened—she enter'd with her servants three.
Again it close'd and there was nothing seen
But the Mule grazing on the heritage green.

End of Canto xii

Canto the xiii

The Mule no sooner saw himself alone
Than he prick'd up his Ears—and said "well done!"
At least, unhappy Prince, I may be free—
No more a Prince shall side-saddle me.
O King of Otaheite—tho' a Mule
'Aye every inch a King'—tho' Fortune's fool—
Well done—for by what Mr. Dwarly said
I would not give a sixpence for her head."
Even as he spake he trotted in high glee
To the knotty side of an old Pollard tree
And rub'd [d] his sides against the mossed bark
Till his Girths burst and left him naked stark
Except his Bridle—how get rid of that,
Buckled and tied with many a twist and plait?
At last it struck him to pretend to sleep
And then the thievish Monkeys down would creep
And flinch the unpleasant trammels quite away
No sooner thought of than adown he lay,
Sham'd a good snore—the Monkey-men descended
And whom they thought to injure they befriended.
They hung his Bridle on a toppmost bough
And off he went, run, trot, or anyhow—
Brown is gone to bed—and I am tired of rhyming...
SPENSERIAN STANZAS
ON CHARLES ARMITAGE BROWN

I
He is to weet a melancholy cara:
Thin in the waist, with bushy head of hair,
As hath the seeded thistle when in parle
It holds the Zephyr, ere it sendeth fair
Its light balloons into the summer air;
Thereto his beard had not begun to bloom,
No brush had touch'd his chin or razor sheen;
But new he was and bright as scarf from Persian loom.

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

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

TWO OR THREE
FROM A LETTER TO HIS SISTER
Two or three Posies
With two or three simples—
Two or three Noses
With two or three pimples—
Two or three wise men

POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS

And two or three ninnys—
Two or three purses
And two or three guineas—
Two or three raps
At two or three doors—
Two or three naps
Of two or three hours—
Two or three Cats
And two or three mice—
Two or three sprats
At a very great price—
Two or three sandies
And two or three tabbies—
Two or three dandies
And two Mrs. [Abbeys] mum!
Two or three Smiles
And two or three frowns—
Two or three Miles
To two or three towns—
Two or three pegs
For two or three bonnets—
Two or three dove eggs
To hatch into sonnets.

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

I
Ah, what can all thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering;
The sedge is with'er'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

II
Ah, what can all thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

III
I see a lilly on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.
I met a lady in the meads
Full beautiful, a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

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

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

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

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gaz'd and sigh'd deep,
And there I shut her wild sad eyes—
So kiss'd to sleep.

And there we slumber'd on the moss,
And there I dream'd, ah woe betide,
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
Who cry'd—"La belle Dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!!"
**KLETIS**

On the deep intenser roof,
Arched every way afloat,
Let me breathe upon their skies,
And anger their live tapestries;
Free from cold, and every care,
Of chilly rain, and shivering air.

**ZEPHYR**

Spirit of Fire! away! away!
Or your very roundelay
Will scatter my plumage newly budded
From its quilled sheath, all studded
With the self-same dews that fell
On the Marseirow Asphodel.
Spirit of Fire—away! away!

**BREEMA**

Spirit of Fire—away! away!
Zephyr, blue-eyed Faery, turn,
And see my cool sedge-bury’d urn,
Where it rests its mossy brim.
Mid water-mint and cresses dim;
And the flowers, in sweet troubles,
Lift their eyes above the bubbles,
Like our Queen, when she would please
To sleep, and Oberon will teaze.
Love me, blue-eyed Faery, true!
Soothly I am sick for you.

**ZEPHYR**

Gentile Breema! by the first
Violet young nature nurst,
I will bathe myself with thee,
So you sometimes follow me
To my home, far, far, in west;
Beyond the nimble-wheeled quest
Of the golden-browed sun:
Come with me, o’er tops of trees,
To my fragrant palaces,
Where they ever floating are;
Beneath the cherish of a star
Call’d Vesper, who with silver veil
Ever hides his brilliance pale,
Ever gently-drow’d doth keep
Twilight for the Fayes to sleep.

**POSTHUMOUS AND FUGITIVE POEMS**

Fear not that your watery hair
Will thirst in drouthy ringslets there;
Clouds of stored summer rains
Thou shalt taste, before the slants
Of the mountain, shall they take,
And too unlucent for thee make.
I love thee, crystal Faery, true!
Sooth I am as sick for you!

**SALAMANDER**

Out, ye aguish Fauries, out!
Chilly lovers, what a rout
Keep ye with your frozen breath,
Colder than the mortal death.
Adder-eyed Dusketha, speak,
Shall we leave these, and go seek
In the earth’s wide entrails old
Couches warm as their’s are cold?
O for a fiery gown and thee,
Dusketha, so enchantingly
Freckle-wing’d and lizard-sided!

**DUSKETHA**

By thee, Sprite, will I be guided!
I care not for cold or heat;
Frost and flame, or sparks, or sleet,
To my essence are the same;—
But I honour more the flame.
Sprite of Fire, I follow thee.
Wherever it may be,
To the torrid spouts and fountains,
Underneath earth-quaked mountains;
Or, at thy supreme desire,
Touch the very pulse of fire
With my bare unblinded eyes.

**SALAMANDER**

Sweet Dusketha! paradise!
Off, ye icy Spirits, fly!
Frosty creatures of the sky!

**DUSKETHA**

Breathe upon them, fiery sprite!

**ZEPHYR AND BREEMA**

Away! away! to our delight!
Salamander
Go, feed on icicles, while we
Bedded in tongue-flames will be.

Duskethia
Lead me to those feverous glooms,
Sprite of Fire!

Breama
Me to the blooms,
Blue-eyed Zephyr, of those flowers
Far in the west where the May-cloud lowers;
And the beams of still Vesper, when winds are all wist,
Are shed thro' the rain and the milder mist,
And twilight your floating bowers.

Two Sonnets on Fame

I
Fame, like a wayward Girl, will still be coy
To those who woo her with too slavish knees,
But makes surrender to some thoughtless Boy,
And dotes the more upon a heart at ease;
She is a Gipsy, will not speak to those
Who have not learnt to be content without her;
A Jilt, whose ear was never whisper'd close,
Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her;
A very Gipsy is she, Nilus-born,
Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar;
Ye love-sick Bards, repay her scorn for scorn,
Ye Artists lovelorn, madmen that ye are!
Make your best bow to her and bid adieu,
Then, if she likes it, she will follow you.

II
"You cannot eat your cake and have it too."—Proverb.

How fever'd is the man, who cannot look
Upon his mortal days with temperate blood,
Who vexes all the leaves of his life's book,
And robs his fair name of its maidenhood;
It is as if the rose should pluck herself;
Or the ripe plum finger its misty bloom,
As if a Naiad, like a meddling elf,
Should darken her pure grot with muddy gloom,

Posthumous and Fugitive Poems

But the rose leaves herself upon the briar,
For winds to kiss and grateful bees to feed,
And the ripe plum still wears its dim attire,
The undisturbed lake has crystal space,
Why then should man, teasing the world for grace,
Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed?

Sonnet

On the Sonnet

If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd,
And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet
Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness,
Let us find, if we must be constrain'd,
Sandals more interwoven and complete
To fit the naked foot of Poesy:
Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress
Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd
By ear industrious, and attention meet;
Misers of sound and syllable, no less
Than Midas of his coinage, let us be
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown;
So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
She will be bound with garlands of her own.

Apollo and the Graces

Written to the Tune of the Air in "Don Giovanni"

Apollo
Witcher of the fairest three
To-day will ride with me?
My steeds are all pawing at the threshold of the morn:
Which of the fairest three
To-day will ride with me
Across the gold Autumn's whole Kingdom of corn?

The Graces all answer

I will, I— I— I—
O young Apollo let me fly
Along with thee,
I will—I, I, I,
The many wonders see
I— I— I— I—
And thy lyre shall never have a slackened string:
I, I, I, I,
Thro' the golden day will sing.
YOU SAY YOU LOVE

I

You say you love; but with a voice
Chaster than a nun's, who singeth
The soft Vespers to herself
While the chime-bell ringeth—
O love me truly!

II

You say you love; but with a smile
Cold as sunrise in September,
As you were Saint Cupid's nun,
And kept his weeks of Ember,
O love me truly!

III

You say you love—but then your lips
Coral tinted, teach no blisses,
More than coral in the sea—
They never pout for kisses—
O love me truly!

IV

You say you love; but then your hand
No soft squeeze for squeeze returneth,
It is like a statue's dead—
While mine to passion burneth—
O love me truly!

V

O breathe a word or two of fire!
Smile, as if those words should burn me,
Squeeze as lovers should—O kiss
And in thy heart burn me!
O love me truly!

OTHO THE GREAT

A TRAGEDY

IN FIVE ACTS
DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Ottho the Great, Emperor of Germany.
Ludolph, his Son.
Conrad, Duke of Franconia.
Albert, a Knight, favoured by Ottho.
Siegfried, an Officer, friend of Ludolph.
Theodore, Officers.
Gonfred, an Abbot.
Gersa, Prince of Hungary.
An Hungarian Captain.
Physician.
Page.
Nobles, Knights, Attendants, and Soldiers.
Erminia, Niece of Ottho.
Auranthe, Conrad's Sister.
Ladies and Attendants.

SCENE. The Castle of Friedburg, its vicinity, and the Hungarian Camp.

TIME. One Day.

OTHO THE GREAT

ACT I

SCENE I.—An Apartment in the Castle. Enter Conrad.

Conrad. So, I am safe emerged from these broils!

Amid the wreck of thousands I am whole;
For every crime I have a laurel-wreath,
For every lie a lordship. Not yet has
My ship of fortune furl'd her silken sails,—
Let her glide on! This danger'd neck is saved,
By dexterous policy, from the rebel's axe;
And of my ducal palace not one stone
Is bruised by the Hungarian petards.
Toil hard, ye slaves, and from the miser-earth
Bring forth once more my bullion, treasured deep,
With all my jewell'd salvers, silver and gold,
And precious goblets that make rich the wine.
But why do I stand babbling to myself?
Where is Auranthe? I have news for her
Shall—

Enter Auranthe.

Auranthe. Conrad! what tidings? Good, if I may guess
From your alert eyes and high-lifted brows.
Conrad. You guess aright. And, sister, slurring o'er
Our by-gone quarrels, I confess my heart
Is beating with a child's anxiety,
To make our golden fortune known to you.
Auranthe. So serious?

Conrad. Yes, so serious, that before
I utter even the shadow of a hint
Concerning what will make that sin-worn cheek
Blush joyous blood through every lineament,
You must make here a solemn vow to me.
Auranthe. I prythee, Conrad, do not overact
The hypocrite—what vow would you impose?

Conrad. Trust me for once,—that you may be assur'd
'Tis not confiding to a broken reed,
A poor Court-bankrupt, outwitted and lost,
Revolve these facts in your acutest mood,
KEATS

In such a mood as now you listen to me:—
A few days since, I was an open rebel
Against the Emperor, had suborn’d his son,
Drawn off his nobles to revolt, and shown
Contented fools causes for discontent
Fresh hatch’d in my ambition’s eagle nest—
So thriv’d I as a rebel, and behold
Now I am Otho’s favourite, his dear friend,
His right hand, his brave Conrad.

Auranthe. I confess
You have intrigued with these unsteady times
To admiration; but to be a favourite—
Conrad. I saw my moment. The Hungarians,
Collected silently in holes and corners,
Appear’d, a sudden host, in the open day.
I should have perish’d in our empire’s wreck,
But, calling interest loyalty, swore faith
To most believing Otho; and so help’d
His blood-stain’d ensigns to the victory
In yesterday’s hard fight, that it has turn’d
The edge of his sharp wrath to eager kindness.
Auranthe. So far yourself. But what is this to me
More than that I am glad! I gratulate you.
Conrad. Yes, sister, but it does regard you greatly;
Nearly, momentarily,—aye, painfully!
Make me this vow——

Auranthe. Concerning whom or what?

Conrad. Albert!

Auranthe. I would inquire somewhat of him:
You had a letter from me touching him?
No treason ’gainst his head in deed or word?
Surely you spared him at my earnest prayer?
Give me the letter—it should not exist!
Conrad. At one pernicious charge of the enemy,
I, for a moment-whiles, was prisoner in’t
And riled,—stuff! the horses’ hoofs have minc’d it!
Auranthe. He is alive!

Conrad. He is! but here make oath
To alienate him from your scheming brain,
Divorce him from your solitary thoughts,
And cloud him in such utter banishment,
That when his person meets again your eye,
Your vision shall quite lose its memory,
And wander past him as through vacancy.
Auranthe. I’ll not be perjured.

Conrad. No, nor great, nor mighty;
You would not wear a crown, or rule a kingdom.

OTHO THE GREAT

To you it is indifferent.

Auranthe. What means this?

Conrad. You'll not be perjured! Go to Albert then,
That camp-mushroom—dishonour of our house.
Go, page his dusty heels upon a march,
Furbish his jingling bauble while he sleeps,
And share his moulder ration in a siege.
Yet stay—perhaps a charm may call you back,
And make the widening circles of your eyes
Sparkle with healthy fevers—The Emperor
Hath given consent that you should marry Ludolph!
Auranthe. Can it be, brother? For a golden crown
With a queen’s awful lips I doubly thank you!
This is to wake in Paradise! Farewell
Thou cloud of yesterday—’vas not myself!
Not till this moment did I ever feel
My spirit’s faculties! I’ll flatter you
For this, and be you ever proud of it;
Thou, Jove-like, struck’st thy forehead,
And from the teeming marrow of thy brain
I spring complete Minerva! But the prince—
His highness Ludolph—where is he?

Conrad. I know not:
When, lackeying my counsel at a beck,
The rebel lords, on bended knees, received
The Emperor’s pardon, Ludolph kept aloof,
Sole, in a stiff, fool-hardy, sulky pride;
Yet, for all this, I never saw a father.
In such a sickly longing for his son
We shall soon see him, for the Emperor
He will be here this morning.

Auranthe. That I heard
Among the midnight rumours from the camp.

Conrad. You give up Albert to me?

Auranthe. Harm him not!

Conrad. E’en for his highness Ludolph’s sake...
I would not aught suffer any wrong.

Conrad. Have I not laboured, plotted—?

Auranthe. See you spare him?

Conrad. Nor be pathetic, my kind benefactor,
On all the many honties of your hand,—
’Twas for yourself you laboured—not for me!
Do you not count, when I am queen, to take
Advantage of your chance discoveries
Of my poor secrets, and so hold a rod
Over my life?
Conrad. Let not this slave—this villain—
Be cause of feud between us. See! he comes!
Look, woman, look, your Albert is quite safe!
In haste it seems. Now shall I be in the way,
And wish'd with silent curses in my grave,
Or side by side with whelmed mariners.

Enter Albert.

Albert. Fair on your graces fall this early morrow!
So is it like to do, without my prayers,
For your right noble names, like favourite tunes,
Have fall'n full frequent from our Emperor's lips,
High commented with smiles.

Auranthe. Noble Albert!

Conrad (aside). Noble! Auranthe. Such salutation argues a glad heart
In our prosperity. We thank you, sir.

Albert. Lady! O, would to Heaven your poor servant
Could do you better service than mere words!
But I have other greeting than mine own,
From no less man than Otho, who has sent
This ring as pledge of dearest amity;
'Tis chosen I hear from Hymen's jewelry,
And you will prize it, lady, I doubt not,
Beyond all pleasures past, and all to come.
To you great duke—

Conrad. To me! What of me, ha?

Albert. What pleas'd your grace to say?

Conrad. Your message, sir!

Albert. You mean not this to me?

Conrad. Sister, this way;
For there shall be no "gentle Aurbanks" now,
No "sweet Auranthes!"

[Exeunt Conrad and Auranthe.

Albert (cursus). The duke is out of temper; if he knows
More than a brother of a sister ought,
I should not quarrel with his peevishness.
Auranthe—Heaven preserve her always fair!—
Is in the heady, proud, ambitious vein,
I bicker not with her,—bid her farewell!
She has taken flight from me, then let her soar,—
He is a fool who stands at pining gaze!
But for poor Ludolph, he is food for sorrow:
No levelling bluster of my licens'd thoughts,
No military swagger of my mind,
Can smoother from myself the wrong I've done him,—

OTHO THE GREAT

Without design, indeed,—yet it is so,—
And opliate for the conscience have I none!—

SCENE II.—The Court-yard of the Castle.

Marital Music. Enter, from the outer gate, Otho, Nobles, Knights, and Attendants. The Soldiers halt at the gate, with Banners in sight.

Otho. Where is my noble herald?

Enter Conrad, from the Castle, attended by two Knights and Servants. Albert following.

Auranthe. Our intent imperial?
    Lest our rent banners, too o' the sudden shown,
    Should fright her silken casements, and dismay
    Her household to our lack of entertainment.

A victory! Conrad. God save illustrious Otho!

Otho. Aye, Conrad, it will pluck out all grey hairs;
    It is the best physician for the spleen;
The courtliest inviter to a feast;
The subtlest excuser of small faults;
And a nice judge in the age and smack of wine.

Enter, from the Castle, Auranthe, followed by Pages holding up her robes, and a train of Women. She kneels.

Hail my sweet hostess! I do thank the stars,
    Or my good soldiers, or their ladies' eyes,
    That, after such a merry battle fought,
    I can, all safe in body and in soul,
    Kiss your fair hand and lady fortune's too.
    My ring! now, on my life, it doth rejoice
    These lips to feel 't on this soft ivory!
    Keep it, my brightest daughter; it may prove
    The little prologue to a line of Kings;
    I strove against thee and my hot-blood son,
    Dull blockhead that I was to be so blind,
    But now my sight is clear; forgive me, lady.

Auranthe. My lord, I was a vassal to your frown,
And now your favour makes me but more humble;
In wintry winds the simple snow is safe,
But fadeth at the greeting of the sun:
    Unto thine anger I might well have spoken,
    Taking on me a woman's privilege,
    But this so sudden kindness makes me dumb.

Otho. What need of this? Enough, if you will be
    A potent tutress to my wayward boy,
    And teach him, what it seems his nurse could not,
To say, for once, I thank you, Sigifred!  
Albert. He has not yet return'd, my gracious liege.  
Otho. What then! No tidings of my friendly Arab?  
Conrad. None, mighty Otho.

[To one of his Knights, who goes out.]
Send forth instantly  
An hundred horsemen from my honoured gates,  
To scour the plains and search the cottages.  
Cry a reward to him who shall first bring  
News of that vanished Arabian,  
A full-brain'd helmet of the purest gold.  
Otho. More thanks, good Conrad; for, except my son's,  
There is no face I rather would behold  
Than that same quick-eyed pagan's. By the saints,  
This coming night of banquets must not light  
Her dazzling torches; nor the music breathe  
Smooth, without clashing cymbal, tones of peace  
And in-door melodies; nor the ruddy wine  
Ebb spouting to the lees; if I pledge not;  
In my first cup, that Arab!  

Albert. Mighty Monarch,  
I wonder not this stranger's victor-deeds  
So hang upon your spirit. Twice in the night  
It was my chance to meet his olive brow,  
Triumphant in the enemy's shattered rhomb;  
And, to say truth, in any Christian arm  
I never saw such prowess.  
Otho. Did you ever?  
O, 'tis a noble boy!—tut!—what do I say?  
I mean a triple Saladin, whose eyes,  
When in the glorious scuffle they met mine,  
Seem'd to say—'Sleep, old man, in safety sleep;  
I am the victory!'  
Conrad. Pity he's not here.  
Otho. And my son too, pity he is not here.  
Lady Auranthe, I would not make you blush,  
But can you give a guess where Ludolph is?  
Know you not of him?  
Auranthe. Indeed, my liege, no secret—  
Otho. Nay, nay, without more words, dost know of him?  
Auranthe. I would I were so over-fortunate,  
Both for his sake and mine, and to make glad  
A father's ears with tidings of his son.  
Otho. I see 'tis like to be a tedious day.  
Were Theodore and Confred and the rest  
Sent forth with my commands?
KEATS

Of all these eyes; pr'ythee command me hence!

Otho. Do not mistake me, Gersa. That you may not,
Come, fair Auranthe, try if your soft hands
Can manage those hard rivets to set free
So brave a prince and soldier.

Auranthe (sees him free). Welcome task!

Gersa. I am wound up in deep astonishment!

Thank you, fair lady, Otho! emperor!

You rob me of myself; my dignity
Is now your infant; I am a weak child.

Otho. Give me your hand, and let this kindly grasp
Live in our memories.

Gersa. In mine it will.

I blush to think of my unchasten'd tongue;

But I was haunted by the monstrous ghost
Of all our slain battalions. Sire, reflect,
And pardon you will grant, that, at this hour,
The bruised remnants of our stricken camp
Are huddling undistinguish'd my dear friends,

With common thousands, into shallow graves.

Otho. Enough, most noble Gersa. You are free
To cheer the brave remainder of your host
By your own healing presence, and that too,

Not as their leader merely, but their king;
For, as I hear, the wily enemy,
Who eas'd the crownet from your infant brows,

Bloody Taraxa, is among the dead.

Gersa. Then I retire, so generous Otho please,

Bearing with me a weight of benefits

Too heavy to be borne.

Otho. It is not so;

Still understand me, King of Hungary,

Nor judge my open purposes awry.

Though I did hold you high in my esteem
For your sell's sake, I do not personate
The stage-play emperor to entrap applause,
To set the silly sort o' the world agape,

And make the politic smile; no, I have heard
How in the Council you condemn'd this war,

Urging the peril of broken faith,—

For that I am your friend.

Gersa. If ever, sire,

You are mine enemy, I dare here swear

'Twill not be Gersa's fault. Otho, farewell!

Otho. Will you return, Prince, to our banqueting?

Gersa. As to my father's board I will return.

Otho. Conrad, with all due ceremony, give


OTHO THE GREAT

The prince a regal escort to his camp;
Albert, go thou and bear him company.

Gersa, farewell!

Gersa. All happiness attend you!

Otho. Return with what good speed you may; for soon

We must consult upon our terms of peace.

[Exeunt Gersa and Albert with others.

And thus a marble column do I build

To prop my empire's dome. Conrad, in thee

I have another steadfast one, to uphold

The portals of my state; and, for my own

Pre-eminence and safety, I will strive

To keep thy strength upon its pedestal.

For, without thee, this day I might have been

A show-monster about the streets of Prague,

In chains, as just now stood that noble prince:

And then to me no mercy had been shown,

For when the conquer'd lion is once dungeon'd,

Who lets him forth again? or dares to give

An old lion sugar-cates of mild reprieve?

Not to thine ear alone I make confession,

But to all here, as, by experience,

I know how the great basement of all power

Is frankness, and a true tongue to the world;

And how intriguing secrecy is proof

Of fear and weakness, and a hollow state.

Conrad, I owe thee much.

Conrad. To kiss that hand,

My emperor, is ample recompense,

For a mere act of duty.

Otho. Thou art wrong;

For what can any man on earth do more?

We will make trial of your house's welcome,

My bright Auranthe!

Conrad. How is Friedburg honoured!

Enter Ethelbert and six Monks.

Ethelbert. The benison of heaven on your head,

Imperial Otho!

Otho. Who stays me? Speak! Quick!

Ethelbert. Pause but one moment, mighty conqueror

Upon the threshold of this house of joy.

Otho. Pray, do not prostrate, good Ethelbert, but speak

What is your purpose.

Ethelbert. The restoration of some captive maids,

Devoted to Heaven's pious ministries,
KEATS

Who, being driven from their religious cells,
And kept in thraldom by our enemy,
When late this province was a lawless spoil,
Still weep amid the wild Hungarian camp,
Though herem'd around by thy victorious arms.

Otho. Demand the holy sisterhood in our name.

From Gersa's tents. Farewell, old Ethelbert.

Ethelbert. The saints will bless you for this pious care.

Otho. Daughter, your hand; Ludolph's would fit it best.

Conrad. No! let the music sound!

[Music. Ethelbert raises his hands; as in benediction of Otho.

Exeunt severally. The scene closes on them.

SCENE III.—The Country, with the Castle in the distance.

Enter Ludolph and Sigfred.

Ludolph. You have my secret; let it not be breath'd.

Sigfred. Still give me leave to wonder that the Prince
Ludolph and the swift Arab are the same.

Still to rejoice that 'twas a German arm
Death doing in a Vandal'd masquerade.

Ludolph. The Emperor must not know it, Sigfred.

Sigfred. I prye thee, why? What happier hour of time
Could thy pleasure's star point down upon from heaven
With silver index, bidding thee make peace?

Ludolph. Still it must not be known, good Sigfred;
The star may point oblique.

Sigfred. If Otho knew
His son to be that unknown Mussulman
After whose spurring heels he sent me forth,
With one of his well-pleas'd Olympian oaths,
The charters of man's greatness, at this hour
He would be watching round the castle walls,
And, like an anxious wader, strain his sight
For the first glimpse of such a son return'd—
Ludolph, that blast of the Hungarians,
That Saracen meteor of the fight,
That silent fury, whose sword lay near the star
Kept danger all aloof from Otho's head,
And left him space for wonder.

Ludolph. Say no more.

Not as a swordman would I pardon claim,
But as a son. The bronze's centurion,
Shaking tell'd in foreign wars, and whose high deeds
Are shaded in a forest of tall spears,
Known only to his troop, hath greater plea

OTHO THE GREAT

Of favour with my sire than I can have.

Sigfred. My lord, forgive me that I cannot see
How this proud temper with clear reason squares.
What made you then, with such an anxious love,
Hover around that life, whose bitter days
You vect with bad revolt? Was it opium,
Or the mad-fumed wine? Nay, do not frown,
I rather would grieve with you than uphold.

Ludolph. I do believe you, No, 'twas not to make
A father his son's debtor, or to heal
His deep heart-sickness for a rebel child.

'Twas done in memory of my boyish days,
Poor cancel for his kindness to my youth,
For all his calming of my childish griefs,
And all his smiles upon my merriment.

No, not a thousand foughten fields could sponge
Those days paternal from my memory,
Though now upon my head he heaps disgrace.

Sigfred. My Prince, you think too harshly—
Ludolph. Can I so?

Hath he not gall'd my spirit to the quick?
And with a sullen rigour obdurate,
Pour'd out a phial of wrath upon my faults?
Hunted me as the Tartar does the boar,
Driven me to the very edge of the world,
And almost put a price upon my head?

Sigfred. Remember how he spared the rebel lords;
Ludolph. Yes, yes, I know he hath a noble nature
That cannot trample on the fallen. But his
Is not the only proud heart in his realm:
He hath wrong'd me, and I have done him wrong;
He hath lov'd me, and I have shown him kindness;
We should be almost equal.

Sigfred. Yet, for all this, I will not:
I would you had appear'd among those lords,
And ta'en his favour.

Ludolph. Has till now I thought
My friend had held poor Ludolph's honour dear.
What! would you have me, before his throne
And kiss the courtier's missal, its silk steps?
Or hug the golden housings of his steed,
Amid a camp, whose steeld swarms I dar'd
But yesterday? And, at the trumpet sound,
Bow like some unknown mercenary's flag,
And lick the scolding gristles? No, not my friend.

I would not, I, be pardoned in the heap,
And bless indemnity with all that scum,—
Those men I mean, who on my shoulders propp’d
Their weak rebellion, winning me with lies,
And pitying forsooth my many wrongs;
Poor self-deceived wretches, who must think
Each one himself a king in embryo,
Because some dozen vassals cry’d—my lord!
Cowards, who never knew their little hearts,
Till flurried danger held the mirror up,
And then they own’d themselves without a blush,
Curling, like spaniels, round my father’s feet.
Such things deserted me and are forgiven,
While I, least guilty, am an outcast still,
And will be, for I love such fair disgrace.

Sigifred. I know the clear truth; so would Otho see,
For he is just and noble. Fain would I
Be pleader for you—

Ludolph. He’ll hear none of it;
You know his temper, hot, proud, obstinate;
Endanger not yourself so uselessly.
I will encounter his thwart spleen myself,
To-day, at the Duke Conrad’s, where he keeps
His crowded state after the victory.
There will I be, a most unwelcome guest,
And parley with him, as a son should do,
Who doubly loathes a father’s tyranny;
Tell him how feeble is that tyranny;
How the relationship of father and son
Is no more valid than a silken leash
Where lions tug adverse, if love grow not
From interchanged love through many years.
Aye, and those turret’d Franconian walls,
Like to a jealous casket, hold my pearl—
My fair Auranthe! Yes, I will be there.

Sigifred. Be not so rash; wait till his wrath shall pass,
Until his royal spirit softly ebbs
Self-influenced; then, in his morning dreams
He will forgive thee, and awake in grief
To have not thy good morrow.

Ludolph. Yes, to-day
I must be there, while her young pulses beat
Among the new-plum’d minions of the war.
Have you seen her of late? No? Auranthe,
Franconia’s fair sister, ’tis I mean.
She should be paler for my troublous days—
And there it is—my father’s iron lips
Have sworn divorcement ’twixt me and my right.

Sigifred (aside). Auranthe! I had hop’d this whim had pass’d.

Ludolph. And, Sigifred, with all his love of justice,
When will he take that grandchild in his arms,
That, by my love I swear, shall soon be his?
This reconciliation is impossible,
For see—but who are these?

Sigifred. They are messengers
From our great emperor; to you, I doubt not,
For couriers are abroad to seek you out.

Enter Theodore and Gonfred.

Theodore. Seeing so many vigilant eyes explore
The province to invite your highness back
To your high dignities, we are too happy.

Gonfred. We have no eloquence to colour justly
The emperor’s anxious wishes.

Ludolph. Go. I follow you.

[Exeunt Theodore and Gonfred,

I play the prude: it is but venturing—
Why should he be so earnest? Come, my friend,
Let us to Friedburg castle.

ACT II

SCENE I.—An Ante-chamber in the Castle.

Enter Ludolph and Sigifred.

Ludolph. No more advices, no more cautioning:
I leave it all to fate—to any thing!
I cannot square my conduct to time, place,
Or circumstances; to me ‘tis all a mist!

Sigifred. I say no more.

Ludolph. It seems I am to wait
Here in the ante-room;—that may be a trifle,
You see now how I dance attendance here,
Without that tyrant temper, you so blame,
Snapping the rein. You have medle’d me
With good advices; and I here remain,
In this most honourable ante-room,
Your patient scholar.

Sigifred. Do not wrong me, Prince.
By Heavens, I’d rather kiss Duke Conrad’s slipper,
When in the morning he doth yawn with pride,
Than see you humbled but a half-degree!
Truth is, the Emperor would fain dismiss
The nobles ere he sees you.
Enter Confred from the Council-room.

Ludolph. Well, sir! What? Confred. Great honour to the Prince! The Emperor, hearing that his brave son had reappeared, Instant dismiss’d the Council from his sight, As Jove fans off the clouds. Even now they pass.

Enter the Nobles from the Council-room. They cross the stage, bowing with respect to Ludolph, he frowning on them. Contra follows. Exeunt Nobles.

Ludolph. Not the discoloured potions of a ten, Which he who breathes feels warning of his death, Could taste so nauseous to the bodily sense, As these prodigious sycophants disgust.

The soul’s fine palate.

Conrad. Welcome, thou younger sceptre to the realm! Strength to thy virgin crown’s golden buds, That they, against the winter of thy sire, May burst, and swell, and flourish round thy brows, Maturing to a weighty diadem!

Yet be that hour far off; and may he live, Who waits for thee, as the chappèd earth for rain. Set my life’s star! I have lived long enough, Since under my glad roof, propitiously, Father and son each other re-possess.

Ludolph. Fine wording, Duke! but words could never yet forestall the fates; have you not learnt that yet? Let me look well; your features are the same; Your gait the same; your hair of the same shade; As one I knew some passed weeks ago. Who sung far different notes into mine ears. I have mine own particular comments on’t; You have your own, perhaps.

Conrad. My gracious Prince, All men may err. In truth I was deceived. In your great father’s nature, as you were. Had I known that of him I have since known, And what you soon will learn, I would have turn’d. My sword to my own throat, rather than held
Its threatening edge against a good King’s quiet.
Or with one word sever’d you, gentle Prince, Who seem’d to me, as rugged times then went, Indeed too much oppress’d. May I be bold.

Otho. Will you make Titan play the lackey-page? To chattering pigmies? I would have you know That such neglect of our high Majesty Annoys all feel of kindred. What is son,— Or friend,—or brother,—or all ties of blood,— When the whole kingdom, centred in ourself, Is rudely slighted? Who am I to wait? By Peter’s chair! I have upon my tongue A word to fright the proudest spirit here!— Death!—and slow tortures to the hardy fool, Who dares take such large charter from our smiles! Conrad, we would be private. Sigfried! Off! And none pass this way on pain of death!

Ludolph. This was but half expected, my good sire, Yet I am griev’d at it, to the full height. As though my hopes of favour had been whole. Otho. How you indulge yourself! What can you hope for? Ludolph. Nothing, my liege; I have to hope for nothing. I come to greet you as a loving son, And then depart, if I may be so free, Seeing that blood of yours in my warm veins Has not yet mitigated into milk. Otho. What would you, sir? Ludolph. A lenient banishment;
So please you let me unmolested pass This Conrad’s gates, to the wide air again. I want no more. A rebel wants no more. Otho. And shall I let a rebel loose again To muster kites and eagles against my head? No, obstinate boy, you shall be kept cag’d up, Serv’d with harsh food, with scum for Sunday-drink.

Ludolph. Indeed! Otho. And chains too heavy for your life: I’ll choose a gadder, whose swart monstrous face Shall be a hell to look upon, and she—

[Exit Confred and Sigfried.]

He’s very close to Otho, a tight leech! Your hand—I go. Hal! here the thunder comes Sullen against the wind! If in two angry brows My safety lies, then Sigfried, I’m safe.
Of Mars, and all the soldiery shall feast
Nobly as Nimrod's masons, when the towers
Of Nineveh new kis'd the parted clouds!
Otho. Large as a God speak out, where all is thine.
Ludolph. Aye, father, but the fire in my sad breast
Is quench'd with inward tears! I must rejoice
For you, whose wings so shadow over me
In tender victory, but for myself
I still must mourn. The fair Auranthe mine!
Too great a boon! I pyt thee let me ask
What more than I know of could so have changed
Your purpose touching her?

Otho. At a word, this:
In no deed did you give me more offense
Than your rejection of Erminia.
To my appalling, I saw but good proof
Of your keen-eyed suspicion,—she is naught!
Ludolph. You are convinc'd?
Otho. Aye, spite of her sweet looks.
O, that my brother's daughter should so fall!
Her fame has pass'd into the grosser lips
Of soldiers in their cups.
Ludolph. 'Tis very sad.
Otho. No more of her. Auranthe—Ludolph, come!
This marriage be the bond of endless peace!

[Exeunt.

SCENE II.—The Entrance of Gersa's Tent in the Hungarian Camp.

Enter Erminia.

Erminia. Where! where! where shall I find a messenger?
A trusty soul? A good man in the camp?
Shall I go myself? Most wondrous wickedness!
O cursed Conrad! devilish Auranthe!
Here is proof palpable as the bright sun
O for a voice to reach the Emperor's ears!

[Shouts in the Camp.

Enter an Hungarian Captain.

Captain. Fair prisoner, hear you those joyous shouts?
The king—aye, now our king,—but still your slave,
Young Gersa, from a short captivity
Has just return'd. He bids me say, bright Dame,
That even the homage of his ranged chiefs
Cures not his keen impatience to behold
Such beauty once again. What ails you, lady?
Erminia. Say, is not that a German, yonder? There!
Captain. Methinks by his stout bearing he should be—

Ludolph. Ha!
Otho. Shall be your fair Auranthe.
Ludolph. Amaze! Amaze!
Otho. To-day you marry her.
Ludolph. This is a sharp jest!
Otho. No. None at all. When have I said a lie?
Ludolph. If I sleep not, I am a waking wretch.
Otho. Not a word more. Let me embrace my child.
Ludolph. I dare not. Twould pollute so good a father!
Oh heavy crime! that your son's blind eyes
Could not see all his parent's love aright,
As now I see it. Be not kind to me—
Punish me not with favour.

Otho. Are you sure, Ludolph, you have no saving plea in store?
Ludolph. My father, none!

Otho. Then you astonish me.
Ludolph. No, I have no plea. Disobedience,
Rebellion, obstinacy, blasphemy,
Are all my counsellors. If they can make
My crooked deeds show good and plausible,
Then grant me loving pardon, but not else,
Good Gods! not else, in any way, my liege!

Otho. You are a most perplexing, noble boy.
Ludolph. You not less a perplexing noble father.

Otho. Well, you shall have free passport through the gates.

Ludolph. Farewell! and by these tears believe,
And still remember, I repent in pain
All my misdeeds!

Otho. Ludolph, I will! I will!
But, Ludolph, ere you go, I would enquire
If you, in all your wandering, ever met
A certain Arab haunting in these parts.
Ludolph. No, my good lord, I cannot say I did.

Otho. Make not your father blind before his time;
Nor let these arms paternal hunger more
For an embrace, to dull the appetite
Of my great love for thee, my supreme child!
Come close, and let me breathe into thine ear
I knew you through disguise. You are the Arab!
You can't deny it.

Ludolph. Happiest of days!
Otho. We'll make it so.

Ludolph. Stead of one fatted calf
Ten hecatombs shall bellow out their last,
Smote 'twixt the horns by the death-stunning mace
Enter Albert.

Lady Erminia! are you prisoner
In this beleaguer'd camp? Or are you here
Of your own will? You pleas'd to send for me.
By Venus, 'tis a pity I knew not
Your plight before, and, by her Son, I swear
To do you every service you can ask.
What would the fairest—?

Erminia. Albert, will you swear?

Albert. I have. Well?

Erminia. Albert, you have fame to lose.
If men, in court and camp, lie not outright,
You should be, from a thousand, chosen forth
To do an honest deed. Shall I confide—?

Albert. Aye, anything to me, fair creature. Do;
Dictate my task. Sweet woman,—

Erminia. Truce with that.

You understand me not; and, in your speech,
I see how far the slander is abroad.
Without proof could you think me innocent?

Albert. Lady, I should rejoice to know you so.

Erminia. If you have any pity for a maid,
Suffering a daily death from evil tongues;
Any compassion for that Emperor's niece;
Who, for your bright sword and clear honesty,
Lifted you from the crowd of common men
Into the lap of honour;—save me, knight!

Albert. How? Make it clear; if it be possible,
I, by the banner of Saint Maurice, swear
To do you right.

Erminia. Possible!—Easy. O my heart!
This letter's not so ill'd but you may read it;—

Possible! There—that letter! Read!—read it.

Albert (reading). "To the Duke Conrad. —Forget the threat you made at parting, and I will forget to send the Emperor letters and papers of your's I have become possessed of. His life is no trifle to me; his death you shall find none to yourself." (Speaks to himself.) 'Tis me—my life that's pleaded for! (Reads.) "He, for his own sake, will be dumb as the grave. Erminia has my shame fix'd upon her, sure as a wen. We are safe.

Aurante.

A she-devil! A dragon! I know her!—

Fire of Hell! Aurante—lewd demons!
Where got you this? Where? When?

Erminia. I found it in the tent, among some spoils
Which, being noble, fell to Gersa's lot.

Come in, and see. (They go in and return.

Albert. Villainy! Villainy!

Conrad's sword, his corselet, and his helm,
And his letter. Caitiff, he shall feel—

Erminia. I see you are thunderstruck. Haste, haste away!

Albert. O I am tortured by this villainy.

Erminia. You needs must be. Carry it swift to Otho;
Tell him, moreover, I am prisoner
Here in this camp, where all the sisterhood,
For'd from their quiet cells, are parcel'd out
For slaves among these Huns. Away! Away!

Albert. I am gone.

Erminia. Swift be your speed! Within this hour
The Emperor will see it.

Albert. Ere I sleep:—

That I can swear.

Gersa (without). Brave captains! thanks. Enough
Of loyal homage now!

Enter Gersa.

Gersa. Hail, royal Hun!

Gersa. What means this, fair one? Why in such alarm?

Who was it hurried by me so distract?

It seemed you were in deep disorder together;

Your doctrine has not been so harsh to him
As to my poor deserts. Come, come, be plain.

I am no jealous fool to kill you both,

Or, for such trifles, rob the adorned world

Of such a beauteous vestal.

Erminia. I grieve, my Lord;

To hear you descend to ribald phrase.

Gersa. This is too much! Hearken, my lady pure!
K E A T S

Erminia. Silence! and hear the magic of a name—
Erminia! I am she,—the Emperor’s niece!
Praise be the Heavens, I now dare own myself!
Gers. Erminia! Indeed! I’ve heard of her.
Prythee, fair lady, what chance brought you here?
Erminia. Ask your own soldiers.
Gers. And you dare own your name.
Erminia. For loveliness you may—and for the rest
My vein is not censorious.
Erminia. Alas! poor me!
Gers. ‘Tis false indeed.
Erminia. Indeed you are too fair:
The swan, soft leaning on her fleady breast,
When to the stream she launches, looks not back
With such a tender grace; nor are her wings
So white as your soul is, if that but be
Twin-picture to your face. Erminia!
Gers. To-day, for the first day, I am a king,
Yet would I give my unworn crown away
To know you spotless.
Erminia. Trust me one day more,
Generously, without more certain guarantee,
Than this poor face you deign to praise so much;
After that, say and do what’er you please.
If I have any knowledge of you, sir,
I think, say I am sure, you will grieve much
To hear my story; O be gentle to me,
For I am sick and faint with many wrongs,
Tir’d out, and weary-worn with contumelies.
Gers. Poor lady!

Enter Ethelbert.

Your prayers, though Ilook’d for you in vain.
Ethelbert. Blessings upon you, daughter! Sure you look
Too cheerful for these foul pernicious days.
Young man, you heard this virgin say ’twas false,
’Tis false, I say. What! can you not employ
Your temper elsewhere, ’mong these burly tents,
But you must taunt this dove, for she hath lost
The Eagle Otho to beat off assault?
Fie! fie! But I will be her guard myself;
In the Emperor’s name, I here demand of you
Herself, and all her sisterhood. She false!
Gers. Peace! peace, old man! I cannot think she is.
Ethelbert. Whom I have known from her first infancy,

O T H O T H E G R E A T

Baptiz’d she in the bosom of the Church,
Watch’d her, as anxious husbandmen the grain,
From the first shoot till the unripe mid-May,
Then to the tender ear of her June day.
Which, lifting sweet abroad its timid green,
Is brightened by the touch of calumni;
You cannot credit such a monstrous tale.
Gers. I cannot. Take her. Fair Erminia,
I follow you to Friedburg,—is not so?
Erminia. Aye, so we purpose.
Ethelbert. Daughter, do you so?
How’s this? I marvel! Yet you look not mad.
Erminia. I have good news to tell you, Ethelbert.
Gers. Ho! ho, there! Guards!
Your blessing, father! Sweet Erminia,
Believe me, I am well nigh sure—
Erminia. Farewell!

Short time will show.

Yes, father Ethelbert,
I have news precious as we pass along:
Ethelbert. Dear daughter, you shall guide me.
Erminia. To no ill.
Gers. Command an escort to the Friedburg lines.

[Execut Chiefs.]

Pray let me lead. Fair lady, forget not
Gers. how he believ’d you innocent.
I follow you to Friedburg with all speed.

[Execut.]

A C T III.

Scene I.—The Country.

Enter Albert.

Albert. O that the earth were empty, as when Cain
Had no perplexity to hide his head!
Or that the sword of some brave enemy
Had put a sudden stop to my hot breath,
And hurl’d me down the illimitable gulph
Of times past, unremember’d! Better so
Than thus fast-timed in a cursed snare,
The white limbs of a wanton. This the end
Of an aspiring life! My boyhood past
In feud with wolves and bears, when no eye saw
The solitary warfare, fraught for love
Of honour; ’mid the growling wilderness.
My sturdier youth, maturing to the sword,
Won by the syren-trumpets, and the ring
Keats

Of shields upon the pavement, when bright-mail'd
Henry the Fowler pass'd the streets of Prague.
Was't to this end I bouted and became
The memial of Mars, and held a spear
Sway'd by command, as corn is by the wind?
Is it for this, I now am lifted up
By Europe's throned Emperor, to see
My honour be my executioner,—
My love of fame, my prized honesty
Put to the torture for confession?
Then the damn'd crime of bursting to the world
A woman's secret!—Though a fiend she be,
Too tender of my ignominious life;
But then to wrong the generous Emperor
In such a searching point, were to give up
My soul for foot-ball at Hell's holiday!
I must confess,—and cut my throat,—to-day?
To-morrow? Ho! some wine!

Enter Sigifred.

Sigifred. A fine humour—
Albert. Who goes there? Count Sigifred! Ha! Ha!
Sigifred. What, man, do you mistake the hollow sky
For a throng'd tavern,—and these stubbed trees
For old serge hangings,—me, your humble friend,
For a poor walter? Why, man, how you stare!
What gipsies have you been carousing with?
No, no more wine; methinks you've had enough.
Albert. You well may laugh and banter. What a fool
An injury may make of a saint man!
You shall know all anon.
Sigifred. Some tavern brawl?
Albert. 'Twas with some people out of common reach;
Revenge is difficult;
Sigifred. I am your friend;
We meet again to-day, and can confer
Upon it. For the present I'm in haste.
Albert. Whither?
Sigifred. To fetch King Grnesa to the feast.
The Emperor on this marriage is so hot,
Pray Heaven it end not in apoplexy!
The very porters, as I pass'd the doors,
Heard his loud laugh, and answer'd in full choir.
I marvel, Albert, you delay so long
From those bright revelries; go; show yourself,
You may be made a duke.
Albert. Aye, very like:

Otho the Great

Pray, what day has his Highness fix'd upon?
Sigifred. For what?
Albert. The marriage. What else can I mean?
Sigifred. To-day! O, I forget; you could not know;
The news is scarce a minute old with me.
Albert. Married to-day! To-day! You did not say so?
Sigifred. Now, while I speak to you, their comely heads
Are bow'd before the mitre.
Albert. Sigifred. What is this?
Albert. Nothing, Sigifred. Farewell!
We'll meet upon our subject. Farewell, count! [Exit.

Sigifred. Is this clear-headed Albert? He brain-turn'd?
'Ts as portentous as a meteor. [Exit.

Scene II.—An Apartment in the Castle.

Enter, as from the Marriage, Otho, Ludolph, Auranthe, Conrad, Nobles, Knights, Ladies, &c. Music.

Otho. Now, Ludolph! Now, Auranthe! Daughter fair!
What can I find to grace your nuptial day
More than my love, and these wide realms in fee?
Ludolph. I have too much.
Auranthe. And I, my love, by far.
Ludolph. Auranthe! I have! O, my bride, my love!
Not all the gane upon us can restrain
My eyes, too long poor exiles from thy face,
From adoration, and my foolish tongue
From uttering soft responses to the love
I see in thy mute beauty beaming forth!
Fair creature, bless me with a single word!
All mine!
Auranthe. Spare, spare me, my Lord! I swoon else.
Ludolph. Sweet beauty! by to-morrow I should die,
Wert thou not mine. [They talk apart.
First Lady. How deep she has bewitch'd him!
First Knight. Ask you for her recipe for love philtres.
Second Lady. They have the Emperor in admiration.
Otho. If ever king was happy, that am I.
What are the cities *yond the Alps to me,
The provinces about the Danube's mouth,
The promise of fair soil beyond the Rhone;
Or routling out of Hyperborean horse,
To those fair children, stars of a new age?
Unless perchance I might rejoice to win
This little ball of earth, and chuck it then
I do play with!
Aurante, Nay, my Lord, I do not know.
Ludolph, Let me not famish.

Otho (to Conrad), Good Franconia,
You heard what oath I swear, as the sun rose,
That unless Heaven would send me back my son,
My Arab—no soft music should enrich
The cool wine, kiss'd off with a soldier's smack;
Now all my empire, barter'd for one feast,
Seems poverty.

Conrad, Upon the neighbour-plain
The heralds have prepared a royal lists;
Your knights, found war-proof in the bloody field,
Speed to the game.

Otho, Well, Ludolph, what say you?
Ludolph, My lord!

Otho, A tourney?
Conrad, Or, if 't please you best—
Ludolph, I want no more!

First Lady. He soars!

Second Lady. Past all reason.

Ludolph, Though heaven's choir
Should in a vast circumference descend
And sing for my delight, I'd stop my ears!
Though bright Apollo's car stood burning here,
And he put out an arm to bid me mount,
His touch an immortality, not I!
This earth, this palace, this room, Aurante!

Otho, This is a little painful; just too much.
Conrad, if he flames longer in this wise,
I shall believe in wizard-woven loves
And old romances; but I'll break the spell.
Ludolph, Otho, He will be calm, anon.
Ludolph, You call'd?
Yes, yes, yes, I offend. You must forgive me;
Not being quite recover'd from the stun
Of your large bounties. A tourney, is it not?

Conrad, The trumpets reach us.

Ethebert (without). On your peril, sirs,
Detain us!

First Voice (without). Let not the abbot pass.
Second Voice (without). No,
On your lives!
First Voice (without). Holy Father, you must not.

Ethebert (without). Otho!

Otho, Who calls on Otho?
Ethebert (without). Ethebert!

Otho, Let him come in.

Enter Ethebert leading in Erminia.

Thou cursed abbot, why
Hast brought pollution to our holy rites?
Hast thou no fear of hangman, or the faggot?
Ludolph, What portent—what strange prodigy is this?
Conrad, Away!

Ethebert, You, Duke?

Erminia, Albert has surely fail'd me!

Look at the Emperor's brow upon me bent!
Ethebert, A sad delay!
Conrad, Away, thou guilty thing!
Ethebert, You again, Duke? Justice, most mighty Otho!
You—go to your sister there and plot again,
A quick plot, swift as thought to save your heads;
For lo! the toils are spread around your den,
The word is all agape to see dragg'd forth
Two ugly monsters.

Ludolph, What means he, my lord?
Conrad, I cannot guess.

Ethebert, Best ask your lady sister, 
Whether the riddle puzzles her beyond
The power of utterance.

Conrad, Foul barbarian, cease;

The Princess faints!

Ludolph, Stab him! O, sweetest wife!

[Attendants bear off Aurante.

Erminia, Alas!
Ethebert, Your wife?

Ludolph, Aye, Satan! does that yerk ye?

Ethebert, Wife! so soon!

Ludolph, Aye, wife! Oh, impudence!

Thou bitter mischief! Venomous mad priest!
How darest thou lift those beetle brows at me?
Me—the prince Ludolph, in this presence here,
Upon my marriage-day, and scandalize
My joys with such opprobrious surprise?
Wife! Why dost linger on that syllable,
As if it were some demon's name pronounc'd?
To summon harmful lightning, and make roar
The sleepy thunder? Hast no sense of fear?
No ounce of man in thy mortality?

Tremble! for, at my nod, the sharpen'd axe
Is to make thy bold tongue quiver to the roots,
Those grey lids wink, and thou not know it more!  
Ethebert. O, poor deceived Prince! I pity thee!  
Great Otho! I claim justice—
Ludolph. Thou shall hav 't!  
Thine arms from forth a pulpit of hot fire  
Shall sprawl distracted! O that that dull cowl  
Were some most sensitive portion of thy life,  
That I might give it to my hounds to tear!  
Thy girdle some fine seazful-pained nerve  
To girth my saddle! And those devil's beads  
Each one a life, that I might, every day,  
Crush one with Vulcan's hammer!  
Otho. Peace, my son:  
You far outstrip my spleen in this affair.  
Let us be calm, and hear the abbott's plea  
For this intrusion.  
Ludolph. I am silent, sire.  
Otho. Conrad, see all depart not wanted here.  
[Exeunt Knights, Ladies, &c.  
Ludolph, be calm. Ethebert, peace awhile.  
This mystery demands an audience  
Of a just judge, and that will Otho be.  
Ludolph. Why has he time to breathe another word?  
Otho. Ludolph, old Ethebert, be sure, comes not  
To hear us for no cause; he's not the man  
To cry himself up an ambassador  
Without credentials.  
Ludolph. I'll chain up myself.  
Otho, Old Abbot, stand here forth. Lady Erminia,  
Sit. And now, Abbot! what have you to say?  
Our ear is open. First we here denounce  
Hard penalties against thee, if he be found  
The cause for which you have disturb'd us here,  
Making our bright hours muddy, be a thing  
Of little moment.  
Ethebert. See this innocent!  
Otho! thou father of the people call'd  
Is her life nothing? Her fair honour nothing?  
Her tears from matins until even-song  
Nothing? Her burst heart nothing? Emperors!  
Is this your gentle niece—the simplest flower  
Of the world's herbal—this fair lily blanch'd  
Still with the dew of piety, this meek lady  
Here sitting like an angel newly-shent,  
Who veils its snowy wings and grows all pale,—  
Is she nothing?  
Otho. What more to the purpose, abbot?
KEATS

Eudolphe. Speak aloud!
Ethelbert. Auranthe, and her brother there.
Conrad. Amaze!
Eudolphe. Throw them from the windows!
Otho. Do what you will!

Otho. What shall I do with them?
Something of quick dispatch, for should she hear,
My soft Auranthe, her sweet mercy would
Prevaril against my fury. Damned priest!
What swift death wilt thou die? As to the lady
I touch her not.

Conrad. Illustrious Otho, stay!
An ample store of misery thou hast,
Choke not the granary of thy noble mind
With more bad bitter grain, too difficult
A cad for the repentance of a man
Grey-growing. To thee only I appeal,
Not to thy noble son, whose yeasting youth
Will clear itself, and crystal turn again.
A young man's heart, by Heaven's blessing, is
Wide, wide, where a thousand new-born hopes
Empurple fresh the melancholy blood:
But an old man's is narrow, tenantless
Of hopes, and stuffed with many memories,
Which, being pleasant, ease the heavy pulse—
Painful, clog up and stagnate. Weigh this matter
Even as a miser balances his coin;
And, in the name of mercy, give command
That your knight Albert be brought here before you.
He will expound this riddle: he will show
A noon-day proof of bad Auranthe's guilt.

Otho. Let Albert straight be summon'd.

Eudolphe. Impossible!

I cannot doubt—I will not—no—to doubt
Is to be ashes!—with'er'd up to death!

Otho. My gentle Eudolphe, harbour not a fear;
You do yourself much wrong.

Eudolphe. O, wretched dolt!
Now, when my foot is almost on thy neck,
Wilt thou infuriate me? Proof! thou fool!
Why wilt thou tease impossibility
With such a thick-skull'd persevering suit?
Fanatic obstinacy! Prodigy!
Monster of folly! Ghost of a turn'd brain!
You puzzle me,—you haunt me,—when I dream

OTHO THE GREAT

Of you my brain will split! Bald sorcerer!
Juggler! May I come near you? On my soul
I know not whether to pity, curse, or laugh.

Enter Otho, and the Nobleman.

Here, Otho, this old phantom wants a proof!
Give him his proof! A camel's load of proofs!

Otho. Albert, I speak to you as to a man
Whose words once uttered pass like current gold;
And therefore fit to calmly put a close
To this brief tempest. Do you stand possess'd
Of any proof against the honourableness
Of Lady Auranthe, our new-spoused daughter?

Albert. You chill me with astonishment. How's this?

My Liege, what proof should I have 'gainst a fame
Impossible of slur?

Erminia. O wickedness!

Ithelbert. Deluded monarch, 'tis a cruel lie.

Otho. Peace, rebel-priest!

Conrad. Insult beyond credence!

Erminia. Almost a dream!

Eudolphe. We have awaken'd from

A foolish dream that from my brow hath wrung
A wrathful dew. O folly! why did I
So act the lion with this silly gnat?
Let them depart. Lady Erminia!
I ever grieve'd for you, as who did not?
But now you have, with such a brazen front,
So most maliciously, so madly striven
To dazzle the soft moon, when tenderest clouds
Should be unloob'd around to curtain her;
I leave you to the desert of the world
Almost with pleasure. Let them be set free
For me! I take no personal revenge
More than against a nightmare, which a man
Forgets in the new dawn.

Eudolphe. Still in extremes! No, they must not be loose.

Ithelbert. Albert, I must suspect thee of a crime
So fiendish—

Otho. Fear'st thou not my fury, monk?

Conrad. be they in your sure custody
Till we determine some fit punishment.
It is so mad a deed, I must reflect
And question them in private; for perhaps,
By patient scrutiny, we may discover

Exit one of the Nobles.

[Exit Ludolph.
KEATS

Whether they merit death, or should be placed
In care of the physicians.

[Exeunt OTHO and Nobles, ALBERT following.]

Conrad. My guards, ho!

Erminia. Albert, wilt thou follow there?
Wilt thou creep dastardly behind his back,
And slink away from a weak woman's eye?
Turn, thou court-Jarus! thou forgetst thyself;
Here is the Duke, waiting with open arms,

[Exeunt Guards.]

To thank thee; here congratulate each other;
Wring hands; embrace; and swear how lucky 'twas
That I, by happy chance, hit the right man
Of all the world to trust in.

Albert. Trust! to me!

Conrad (aside). He is the sole one in this mystery.

Erminia. Well, I give up, and save my prayers for Heaven!

You, who could do this deed, would ne'er relent,
Though, at my words, the hollow prison-vaults
Would groan for pity.

Conrad. Manacle them both!

Ethelbert. I know it—it must be—I see it all!

Albert, thou art the minion!

Erminia. Aah! too plain—

Conrad. Silence! Gag up their mouths! I cannot bear
More of this brawling. That the Emperor
Had plac'd you in some other custody!
Bring them away.

[Exeunt all but ALBERT.]

Albert. Though my name perish from the book of honour,
Almost before the recent ink is dry
And be no more remember'd after death,
Than any drummer's in the muster-roll;
Yet shall I season high my sudden fall
With triumph o'er that evil-witted duke!
He shall feel what it is to have the hand
Of a man drowning, on his hateful throat.

Enter GERSA and SIGIFRED.

Gersa. What discord is at ferment in this house?

Sigifred. We are without conjecture; not a soul
We met could answer any certainty.

Gersa. Young Ludolph, like a fiery arrow, shot
By us.

Sigifred. The Emperor, with cross'd arms, in thought.

Gersa. In one room music, in another sadness,
Perplexity every where!

OTH O T H E R E G R E A T

Albert. A trifle more!

Follow; your presences will much avail
To tune our jarred spirits. I'll explain.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—AURANTHE'S Apartment.

AURANTHE and CONRAD discovered.

Conrad. Well, well, I know what ugly jeopardy
We are cag'd in; you need not pester that
Into my ears. Prythee, let me be spared
A foolish tongue, that I may bethink me
Of remedies with some deliberation.
You cannot doubt but 'tis in Albert's power
To crush or save us?

Auranthe. No, I cannot doubt.

He has, assure yourself, by some strange means,
My secret; which I ever hid from him,
Knowing his mawkish honesty.

Conrad. Curs'd slave!

Auranthe. Ay, I could almost curse him now myself.

Wretched impediment! Evil genius!
A glue upon my wings, that cannot spread,
When they should span the provinces! A snake,
A scorpion, sprawling on the first gold step,
Conducting to the throne, high canopied.

Conrad. You would not hear my council, when his life
 Might have been trodden out, all sure and hush'd;
Now the dull animal forsenth must be
Intreated, managed! When can you contrive
The interview he demands?

Auranthe. As speedily
It must be done as my brildwoman can
Unseen conduct him to me; but I fear
Twill be impossible, while the broad day
Comes through the panes with persecuting glare.
Methinks, if 't now were night I could intrigue
With darkness, bring the stars to second me,
And settle all this trouble.

Conrad. Nonsense! Child!

See him immediately; why not now?

Auranthe. Do you forget that even the senseless door-posts
Are on the watch and gape through all the house?

How many whispers there are about,
Hungry for evidence to ruin me;
Men I have spurn'd, and women I have taunted?
Besides, the foolish prince sends, minute whiles,
His pages—so they tell me—to enquire
After my health, entreating, if I please,
To see me.

Conrad. Well, suppose this Albert here;
What is your power with him?

Auranthe. He should be
My echo, my taught parrot! but I fear
He will be cur enough to bark at me;
Have his own say; read me some silly creed
'Bout shame and pity.

Conrad. What will you do then?

Auranthe. What I shall do, I know not: what I would
Cannot be done; for see, this chamber-floor
Will not yield to the pick-axe and the spade,—
Here is no quiet depth of hollow ground.

Conrad. Sister, you have grown sensible and wise,
Seconding, ere I speak it, what is now,
I hope, resolv'd between us.

Auranthe. Say, what is 't?

Conrad. You need not be his sexton too: a man
May carry that with him shall make him die
Elsewhere,—give that to him; pretend the while
You will to-morrow succumb to his wishes,
Be what they may, and send him from the Castle
On some fool's errand; let his latest groan
Frighten the wolves!

Auranthe. Alas! he must not die!

Conrad. Would you were both heart'd up in stifling lead!
Detested—

Auranthe. Conrad, hold! I would not bear
The little thunder of your fretful tongue,
Tho' I alone were taken in these toils,
And you could free me; but remember, sir,
You live alone in my security:
So keep your wits at work, for your own sake,
Not mine, and be more mannerly.

Conrad. Thou wasp! If my domains were emptied of these folk,
And I had thee to starve—

Auranthe. O, marvellous! But Conrad, now be gone; the Host is look'd for:
Cringe to the Emperor, entertain the Lords,
And, do ye mind, above all things, proclaim
My sickness, with a brother's sadden'd eye,
Condoling with Prince Ludolph. In fit time
Return to me.

Otho the Great

Conrad. I leave you to your thoughts.

Auranthe. (sole.) Down, down, proud temper! down,
Auranthe's pride!

Why do I anger him when I should kneel?
Conrad! Albert! help! help! What can I do?
O wretched woman! lost, wreck'd, swallow'd up,
Accursed, blasted! O, thou golden Crown,
Orbing along the serene armament
Of a wide empire, like a glowing moon;
And thou, bright sceptre! lustrous in my eyes,—
There—as the fabled fair Hesperian tree,
Bearing a fruit more precious! graceful thing,
Delicate, godlike, magic! must I leave
Thee to melt in the visionary air,
Ere, by one grasp, this common hand is made
Imperial? I do not know the time
When I have wept for sorrow; but methinks
I could now sit upon the ground, and shed
Tears, tears of misery. O, the heavy day!
How shall I bear my life till Albert comes?
Ludolph! Erminia! Proofs! O heavy day!
Bring me some mourning weeds, that I may 'tire
Myself, as fits one waiting her own death:
Cut off these curls, and brand this lilly hand,
And throw these jewels from my loathing sight,—
Fetch me a missal, and a string of beads,—
A cup of bitter'd water, and a crust,—
I will confess, O holy Abbot—How!
What is this? Auranthe! thou fool, doth,
Whimpering (idiot! up! up! act and quell!
I am safe! Coward! why am I in fear?
Albert! he cannot stickle, chew the cud
In such a fine extreme,—impossible!
Who knocks? 

[Enter Albert.]

Albert. I have been waiting for you here
With such an aching heart, such swooning throbs
On my poor brain, such cruel—cruel sorrow,
That I should claim your pity! Art not well?

Auranthe. Yes, lady, well.

Albert. You look not so, alas!

But pale, as if you brought some heavy news.

Albert. You know full well what makes me look so pale.

Auranthe. No! Do? Surely I am still to learn
Some horror; all I know, this present, is
I am near hustled to a dangerous gulph,
KEATS

Which you can save me from,—and therefore safe,
So trusting in thy love; that should not make
Thee palse, my Alberta.

Albert. It doth make me freeze.

Auranthe. Why should it, love?

Albert. You should not ask me that.

But make your own heart monitor, and save
Me the great pain of telling. You must know
Auranthe. Something has vexed you, Alberta. There are times
When simplest things put on a sombre cast;
A melancholy mood will haunt a man,
Until most easy matters take the shape
Of unachievable tasks; small rivulets
Then seem impassable.

Albert. Do not cheat yourself.

With hope that gloss of words, or suppliant action,
Or tears, or ravings, or self-terrors'd death,
Can alter my resolve.

Auranthe. You make me tremble;
Not so much at your threats, as at your voice,
Untun'd, and harsh, and barren of all love.

Albert. You suffocate me! Stop this devil's parley,
And listen to me; know me once for all.

Auranthe. I thought I did. Alas! I am deceiv'd.

Albert. No, you are not deceiv'd. You took me for
A man detesting all inhuman crime;
And therefore kept from me your demon's plot
Against Erminia. Silent! Be so still;
For ever! Speak no more; but hear my words,
Thy fate. Your safety I have bought to-day
By blazing a lie, which in the dawn
I'll expiate with truth.

Auranthe. O cruel traitor!

Albert. For I would not set eyes upon thy shame;
I would not see thee dragg'd to death by the hair,
Penanc'd, and taunted on a scaffold!
To-night, upon the skirts of the blind wood
That blackens northward of these horrid towers,
I wait for you with horses. Choose your fate.

Farewell.

Auranthe. Alberta, you jest; I'm sure you must.

You, an ambitious Soldier! I, a Queen,
One who could say,—Here, rule these Provinces!
Take tribute from those cities for thyself!
Empty these armouries, these treasuries,
Muster thy warlike thousands at a nod!
Go! conquer Italy!

OTH O T H E G R E A T

Albert. Auranthe, you have made
The whole world chaff to me. Your doom is fix'd.

Auranthe. Out, villain! dastard!

Albert. Look there to the door!

Who is it?

Auranthe. Conrad, traitor!

Albert. Let him in.

Enter Conrad.

Do not affect amazement, hypocrite,
At seeing me in this chamber.

Conrad. Auranthe?

Albert. Talk not with eyes, but speak your curses out
Against me, who would sooner crush and grind
A brace of toads, than league with them to oppress
An innocent lady, gull an Emperor,
More generous to me than autumn's sun
To ripening harvests.

Auranthe. No more insult, sir!

Albert. Aye, clutch your scabbard; but, for prudence sake,
Draw not the sword; twould make an uproar, Duke,
You would not hear the end of. At nightfall
Your lady sister, if I guess aright,
Will leave this busy castle. You had best
Take farewell too of worldly vanities.


Albert. To-morrow, when the Emperor sends
For loving Conrad, see you fawn on him.

Conrad. Good even!

Auranthe. You'll be seen!

Albert. See the coast clear then.

Auranthe (as he goes). Remorseless Alberta! Cruel,
cruel wretch!

[She lets him out.

Conrad. So, we must lick the dust?

Auranthe. I follow him.

Conrad. How? Where? The plan of your escape?

Auranthe. He waits.

For me with horses by the forest-side,

Conrad. Good, good! he dies. You go, say you?

Auranthe. Perforce.

Conrad. Be speedy, darkness! Tell that comes,

Friends keep you company!

[Exit.

Auranthe. And you! And you!

And all men! Vanish!

[Retires to an inner Apartment.
K E A T S

SCENE II.—An Apartment in the Castle.

Enter LUDOLPH and Page.

Page. Still very sick, my Lord; but now I went
Knowing my duty to so good a Prince;
And there her women in a mournful throng
Stood in the passage whispering: if any
Mou’d twas with careful steps and hush’d as death;
They hid me stop.

Ludolph. Good fellow, once again
Make soft enquiry; prythee be not stay’d
By any hindrance, but with gentlest force
Break through her weeping servants, till thou com’st
Even to her chamber door, and there, fair boy,
If with thy mother’s milk thou hast suck’d in
Any diviner eloquence, woo her ears
With plaints for me more tender than the voice
Of dying Echo, echo’d.

Page. Kindest master!
To know thee sad thus, will unloose my tongue
In mournful syllables. Let my words reach
Her ears and she shall take them coupled with
Moans from my heart and sighs not counterfeit.
May I speed better?

Ludolph. Auranthe! My Life!

[Exit Page.

Long have I lov’d thee, yet till now lov’d not:
Remembering, as I do, hard-hearted times
When I had heard even of thy death perhaps,
And thoughtless, suffered to pass alone
Into Elysium! now I follow thee
A substance or a shadow, where so’er
Thou leadest me, whether thy white feet press
With pleasant weight, the amorous-aching earth,
Or thro’ the air thou piocherest me,
A shade! Yet sadly I predestinate!
O unbenignest Love, why wilt thou let
Darkness steal out upon the sleepless world
So warely: as if night’s chariot wheels
Were clog’d in some thick cloud. O, changeful Love,
Let not her steeds with drowsy-footed pace
Pass the high stars, before sweet embassage
Comes from the pillow’d beauty of that fair
Completion of all delicate nature’s wit.
Pour her faint lips aneek with rubious health
And with thine infant fingers lift the fringe
Of her sick eyelids; that those eyes may glow

OSTO THE GREAT

With wooing light upon me, ere the Morn
Peers with disrelish, grey, barren, and cold.

Enter Gessa and Courtiers.

Otho calls me his Lion—should I blush
To be so tam’d, so—

Gessa. Do me the courtesy
Gentlemen to pass on.

Courtier. We are your servants. [Exeunt Courtiers.

Ludolph. It seems then, Sir, you have found out the man
You would confer with; me?

Gessa. If I break not
Too much upon your thoughtful mood, I will
Claim a brief while your patience.

Ludolph. For what cause
Soc’er I shall be honour’d.

Gessa. I will not less.

Ludolph. What may it be? No trifle can take place
Of such deliberate prologue, serious baviour.
But be it what it may I cannot fail
To listen with no common interest—
For though so new your presence is to me,
I have a soldier’s friendship for your fame—
Please you explain.

Gessa. As thus—for, pardon me,
I cannot in plain terms grossly assault
A noble nature; and would faintly sketch
What your quick apprehension will fill up
So finely I esteem you.

Ludolph. I attend—

Gessa. Your generous Father, most illustrious Otho,
Sits in the Banquet room among his chiefs—
His wine is bitter, for you are not there—
His eyes are fix’d still on the open doors,
And every passer in he frowns upon
Seeing no Ludolph comes.

Ludolph. I do neglect—

Gessa. And for your absence, may I guess the cause?

Ludolph. Stay there! no—guess? more princely you must be—
Than to make guesses at me. ’Tis enough,
I’m sorry I can hear no more.

Gessa. And I
As grieved to force it on you so abrupt;
Yet one day you must know a grief whose sting
Will sharpen more the longer ’tis conceal’d.

Ludolph. Say it at once, sir, dead, dead, is she dead?
KEATS

Gersa. Mine is a cruel task: she is not dead—
And would for your sake she were innocent—
Ludolph. Thou liest! thou amazest me beyond
All scope of thought; confusion my heart's blood
To deadly churning—Gersa you are young
As I am; let me observe you face to face;
Not grey-brow'd like the poisonous Ethelbert,
No rheumed eyes, no furrowing of age,
No wrinkles where all vices nestle in
Like crinkled vermin—no, but fresh and young
And hopeful feature'd. Hail! by heaven you weep
Tears, human tears—Do you repent you then
Of a curse'd torturer's office! Why shouldst join—
Tell me, the league of Devils? Confess—confess
The Lie.

Gersa. Lie!—but begone all ceremonial points
Of honour battallious. I could not turn
My wrath against thee for the orb'd world.
Ludolph. Your wrath, weak boy? Tremble at mine unless
Retraction follow close upon the heels
Of that late stoundling insult: why was my sword
Not done already a sheer judgment on thee?
Despair, or eat thy words. Why, thou wast nigh
Whispering away my reason: hark ye, Sir,
It is no secret;—that Erminia,
Erminia, Sir, was hidden in your tent;
O bless'd asylum! comfortable home!
Begone, I pity thee, thou art a Gull—
Erminia's last new puppet—

Gersa. Furious fire!
Thou mak'st me boil as hot as thou canst flame!
And in thy teeth I give thee back the lie!
Thou liest! Thou, Auranthe's fool, a wittol—
Ludolph. Look! Look at this bright sword;
There is no part of it to the very hilt
But shall indulge itself about thine heart—
Draw—but remember thou must cower thy plumes,
As yesterday the Arab made thee stoop—
Gersa. Patience! not here, I would not spill thy blood
Here underneath this roof where Otho breathes,
Thy father—almost mine—

Ludolph. O faltering coward—

Re-enter Page.

Stay, stay, here is one I have half a word with—
Well—What ails thee child?

Page. My lord,
Aurantius. Yes, he is there.
Go, go,—no blood, no blood; go, gentle Conrad!
Conrad. Farewell.
Aurantius. Farewell, for this Heaven pardon you.

[Exit Conrad.]

Conrad. If he survive one hour, then may I die
In unimagined tortures—o breathe through
A long life in the foulest sink of the world!
He dies—'tis well she do not advertize
The cautiff of the cold steel at his back.

[Exit Aurantius.]

Enter Ludolph and Page.

Ludolph. Miss'd the way, boy, say not that on your peril!
Page. Indeed, indeed I cannot trace them further.
Ludolph. Must I stop here? Here solitary die?
Stifled beneath the thick oppressive shade
Of these dull boughs,—this oven of dark thicket,—
Silent,—without revenge?—peah!—bitter end,—
A bitter death,—a suffocating death,—
A gnawing—silent—deadly, quiet death!
Escap'd?—fled?—vanish'd?—melted into air?
She's gone! I cannot clutch her! no revenge!
A muffled death, ensnar'd in horrid silence!
Suck'd to my grave amid a dreamy calm!
O, where is that illustrious noise of war,
To smoother up this sound of labouring breath,
This rustle of the trees!

[Aurantius shrieks at a distance.]

Page. My Lord, a noise!
Ludolph. This way—hark!
Page. Yes, yes! A hope! A music!

A glorious clamour! How I live again!

[Exeunt.]
KEATS

When one can compass it. Auranthe, try
Your oratory—your breath is not so hitch'd—
Aye, stare for help—

[ALBERT groans and dies.

There goes a spotted soul
Howling in vain along the hollow night—
Hear him—he calls you—Sweet Auranthe, come!
Auranthe. Kill me.

Ludolph. No! What? upon our Marriage-night!
The earth would shudder at so foul a deed—
A fair Bride, a sweet Bride, an innocent Bride!
No, we must revel it, as 'tis in use
In times of delicate brilliant ceremony:
Come, let me lead you to our halls again—
Nay, linger not—make no resistance sweet—
Will you—Ah wretch, thou canst not, for I have
The strength of twenty lions 'gainst a lamb—
Now one adieu for Albert—come away.—

ESC.]

SCENE III.—An inner Court of the Castle.

Enter SIGFRED, GONFRED, and THEODORE meeting.

Theodore. Was ever such a night?
SIGFRED. What horrors more?
Things unbeliev'd one hour, so strange they are,
The next hour stamps with credit.

Theodore. Your last news?
Gonfre. After the Page's story of the death
Of Albert and Duke Conrad?

SIGFRED. And the return
Of Ludolph with the Princess.

Gonfre. No more save
Prince Gersa's freeing Abbot Ethelbert,
And the sweet lady, fair Erminia,
From prison.

Theodore. Where are they now? hat yet heard?
Gonfre. With the sad Emperor they are closeted;
I saw the three pass slowly up the stairs,
The lady weeping, the old Abbot cowl'd.

SIGFRED. What next?

Theodore. I ache to think on't.
Gonfre. Theodore. One while these proud towers are about'd as death.
Gonfre. The next our poor Prince fills the arched rooms
With ghastly ravings.

OTHO THE GREAT

SIGFRED. I do fear his brain.
Gonfre. I will see more. Bear you so stout a heart?

[Exeunt into the Castle.

SCENE IV.—A Cabinet, opening towards a Terrace.

OTHO, ERMINIA, ETHELBERT, and a PHYSICIAN, discovered.

OTHO. O, my poor Boy! my Son! my Son! My Ludolph!
Have ye no comfort for me, ye Physicians
Of the weak Body and Soul?

Ethelbert. 'Tis not the Medicine
Either of heaven or earth can cure unless
Fit time be chosen to administer—

OTHO. A kind forbearance, holy Abbot—come
Erminia, here sit by me, gentle Girl;
Give me thy hand—hast thou forgiven me?

ERMINIA. Would I were with the saints to pray for you!

OTHO. Why will ye keep me from my darling child?

PHYSICIAN. Forgive me, but he must not see thy face—

OTHO. Is then a father's countenance a Gorgon?

Hath it not comfort in it? Would it not
Console my poor Boy, cheer him, heal his spirits?
Let me embrace him, let me speak to him—
I will—Who hinderes me? Who's Emperor?

PHYSICIAN. You may not, Sire—'twould overwhelm him quite,
He is so full of grief and passionate wrath,
Too heavy a sigh would kill him—or do worse.

He must be sav'd by fine contrivances—
And most especially we must keep clear
Out of his sight a Father whom he loves—
His heart is full, it can contain no more,
And do its ruddy office.

Ethelbert. Sage advice;
We must endeavour how to ease and slacken
The tight-wound energies of his despair,
Not make them tenser—

OTHO. Enough! I hear, I hear.

Yet you were about to advise more—I listen.

Ethelbert. This learned doctor will agree with me,
That not in the smallest point should he be thwarted
Or gainsaid by one word—his very motions,
Nods, becks and hints, should be obey'd with care,
Even on the moment: so his troubled mind
May cure itself—

PHYSICIAN. There is no other means.

OTHO. Open the door: let's hear if all is quiet—

PHYSICIAN. Beseech you, Sire, forbear.
KEATS

Erminia.  Do, do.
Otho.  I command!
Open it straight—hush!—quiet—my lost Boy!
My miserable Child!
Ludolph (indistinctly without). Fill, fill my goblet,—
Here's a health!
Erminia.  O, close the door!
Otho, let me hear his voice; this cannot last—
And faint would I catch up his dying words.
Though my own knell they be—this cannot last—
O let me catch his voice—for Io! I hear
This silence whisper me that he is dead!
It is so. Gersa?

Enter GERSA.

Physician. Say, how fares the prince?
Gersa. More calm—his features are less wild and flush'd—
Once he complain'd of weariness—
Physician.  Indeed!
'Tis good—'tis good—let him but fall asleep,
That saves him.

Otho. Gersa, watch him like a child—
Ward him from harm—and bring me better news—
Physician. Humour him to the height, I fear to go;
For should he catch a glimpse of my dull garb,
It might affright him—fill him with suspicion.
That we believe him sick, which must not be—
Gersa. I will invent what soothing means I can.

[Exit GERSA.

Physician. This should cheer up your Highness—weariness
Is a good symptom, and most favourable—
It gives me pleasant hopes. Please you walk forth
Onto the Terrace; the refreshing air
Will blow one half of your sad doubts away.
[Exeunt.

SCENE V.—A Banqueting Hall, brilliantly illuminated, and set forth
with all costly magnificence, with Supper-tables, laden with services
of Gold and Silver. A door in the back scene, guarded by two Sol-
diers. Lords, Ladies, Knights, Gentlemen, &c., whispering sadly,
and ranging themselves; part entering and part discovered.

First Knight. Grievously are we tantaliz'd, one and all—
Sway'd here and there, commanded to and fro
As though we were the shadows of a dream
And link'd to a sleeping fancy. What do we here?
Gonfred. I am no Seer—you know we must obey

OTHO THE GREAT

The prince from A to Z—though it should be
To set the place in flames, I pray hast heard
Where the most wicked Princess is?
First Knight.  There, Sir,
In the next room—have you remark'd those two
Stout soldiers posted at the door?
Gonfred.  For what?

First Lady. How gahst a train!
Second Lady. Sure this should be some splendid burial.
First Lady. What fearful whispering! See, see,—Gersa there,

Enter GERSA.

Gersa. Put on your brightest looks; smile if you can;
Behave as all were happy; keep your eyes
From the least watch upon him; if he speaks
To any one, answer collectely;
Without surprise, his questions, how'er strange.
Do this to the utmost,—though, alas! with me
The remedy grows hopeless! Here he comes,—
Observe what I have said,—show no surprise.

Enter Ludolph, followed by Suzifred and Page.

Ludolph. A splendid company! rare beauties here!
I should have Orphean lips, and Plato's fancy,
Amphion's utterance, toned with his lyre,
Or the deep key of Jove's sonorous mouth,
To give fit salutation. Methought I heard,
As I came in, some whispers,—what of that?
'Tis natural men should whisper; at the kiss
Of Psyche given by Love, there was a buzz
Among the gods!—and silence is as natural.
These draperies are fine, and, being a mortal,
I should desire no better; yet, in truth,
There must be some superious costliness,
Some wider-domed high magnificence!
I would have, as a mortal I may not,
Hanging of heaven's clouds, purple and gold,
Stung from the spheres; gauses of silver mist,
Loop'd up with cords of twisted wreathed light,
And tassel'd round with weeping meteors!
These pendent lamps and chandeliers are bright
As earthly fires from dull cross can be cleansed;
Yet could my eyes drink up intense beams
Undazzled,—this is darkness,—when I close
These lids, I see far fiercer brilliances,—
Skies full of splendid moons, and shooting stars,
KEATS

And spouting exhalations, diamond fires,
And panting fountains quivering with deep glows!
Yes—this is dark—is it not dark?

Sigirfred. My Lord,
'Tis late; the lights of festival are ever
Quench'd in the morn.

Ludolph. 'Tis not to-morrow then?

Sigirfred. 'Tis early dawn.

Gessa. Indeed full time we slept;
Say you so, Prince?

Ludolph. I say I quarrel'd with you;
We did not tilt each other,—that's a blessing,—
Good gods! no innocent blood upon my head!

Sigirfred. Retire, Gessa!

Ludolph. There should be three more here:
For two of them, they stay away perhaps,
Being gloomy-minded, haters of fair revels,—
They know their own thoughts best.

As for the third,
Deep blue eyes—semi-shaded in white lids,
Finish'd with lashes fine for more soft shade,
Completed by her twin-arch'd ebon brows—
White temples of exactest elegance,
Of even mould felicitous and smooth—
Cheeks fashion'd tenderly on either side,
So perfect, so divine that our poor eyes
Are dazzled with the sweet proportioning,
And wonder that 'tis so,—the magic chance!
Her nostrils, small, fragrant, faery-delicate;
Her lips—I swear no human bones e'er wore
So taking a disguise—you shall behold her!
We'll have her presently; aye, you shall see her,
And wonder at her, friends, she is so fair—
She is the world's chief Jewel, and by heaven
She's mine by right of marriage—she is mine!
Patience, good people, in fit time I send
A Summoner—she will obey my call,
Being a wife most mild and dutiful.
First I would hear what music is prepared
To herald and receive her—let me hear!

Sigirfred. Bid the musicians soothe him tenderly.

Ludolph. Ye have none better—no—I am content;
'Tis a rich sobbing melody, with relics
Full and majestic; it is well enough,
And will be sweeter, when ye see her pace
Sweeping into this presence, glisten'd o'er

OTHO THE GREAT

With emptied caskets, and her train upheld
By ladies, habited in robes of lawn,
Sprinkled with golden crescents; (others bright
In silks, with spangles shower'd,) and how'd to
By Duchesses and pearl'd Margravines—
Sad, that the fairest creature of the earth—
I pray you mind me not—'tis sad, I say,
That the extremest beauty of the world
Should so entrench herself away from me,
Behind a barrier of engender'd guilt!

Second Lady. Ah! what a mean!

First Knight. Most piteous indeed!

Ludolph. She shall be brought before this company,
And then—then—

First Lady. He muses.

Gessa. O, Fortune, where will this end?

Sigirfred. I guess his purpose! Indeed he must not have

That pestilence brought in,—that cannot be,
There we must stop him.

Ludolph. I am lost! Hush, hush!

Ludolph. A barrier of guilt! I was the fool.
She was the cheater! Who's the cheater now,
And who the fool? The entrap'd, the caged fool,
The bird-lim'd raven? She shall croak to death
Secure! Methinks I have her in my fist,
To crush her with my heel! Wait! wait! I marvel
My father keeps away: good friend, ah! Sigirfred!
Do bring him to me—and Erminia
I fain would see before I sleep—and Ethelbert,
That he may bless me, as I know he will
Though I have curs'd him.

Sigirfred. Rather suffer me
To lead you to them—

Ludolph. No, excuse me, no—

The day is not quite done—go bring them hither.

Certes, a father's smile should, like sunlight,
Slant on my sheaf'd harvest of ripe bliss—
Besides, I thirst to pledge my lovely Bride
In a deep goblet: let me see—what wine?
The strong Iberian juice, or mellow Greek?
Or pale Calabrian? Or the Tuscan grape?
Or old Etna's pulpy wine presses,
Black stain'd with the fat vintage, as it were
The purple slaughter-house, where Bacchus' self
Prick'd his own swollen veins? Where is my Page?
Ludolph. Be ready to obey me; anon thou shalt
Bear a soft message for me—for the hour
Draws near when I must make a winding up
Of bridal Mysterias—a fine-spun vengeance!
Carve it on my Tomb, that when I rest beneath
Men shall confess—This Prince was gull’d and cheated,
But from the ashes of disgrace he rose
More than a fiery Phoenix—and did burn
His ignominy up in purging fires—
Did I not send, Sir, but a moment past,
For my Father?
Gers. You did.
Ludolph. Perhaps 't would be
Much better he came not.
Gers. He enters now!

Enter Otho, Erminia, Ethelbert, Sigfred, and Physician.

Ludolph. O thou good Man, against whose sacred head
I was a mad conspirator, chiefly too
For the sake of my fair newly wedded wife,
Now to be punish’d, do not look so sad!
Those charitable eyes will thaw my heart,
Those tears will wash away a just resolve,
A verdict ten times sworn! Awake—awake—
Put on a judge’s brow, and use a tongue
Made iron-tern by habit! Thou shalt see
A deed to be applauded, 'scribed in gold!
Join a loud voice to mine, and so denounce
What I alone will execute!
Otho. Dear son,
What is it? By your father’s love, I sue
That it be nothing merciless!
Ludolph. To that demon?
Not so! No! She is in temple-stall
Being garnished for the sacrifice, and I,
The Priest of Justice, will immolate her
Upon the altar of wrath! She stings me through!
—
Even as the worm doth feed upon the nut,
So she, a scorpion, preys upon my brain!
I feel her gnawing here! Let her but vanish,
Then, father, I will lead your legions forth,
Compact in steelded squares, and speared files,
And bid our trumpets speak a fell rebuke
To nations drows’d in peace!
Otho. To-morrow, Son,
Be your word law—forget to-day—

Ludolph. I will
When I have finish’d it—now! now! I'm pight,
Tight-footed for the deed!
Erminia. Alas! Alas!
Ludolph. What Angel’s voice is that? Erminia!
Ah! gentlest creature, whose sweet innocence
Was almost murder’d; I am penitent,
Wilt thou forgive me? And thou, holy Man,
Good Ethelbert, shall I live in peace with you?
Erminia. Die, my lord!
Ludolph. I feel it possible.
Otho. Physician? I fear me he is past my skill.
Otho. Not so!
Ludolph. I see it, I see it—I have been wandering—
Half-mad—not right here—I forget my purpose.
Bestir, bestir, Auranthe! ha! ha! ha!
Youngster! Page! go bid them drag her to me!
Otho. This shall finish it!
Otho. O my Son! my Son!
Sigfred. This must not be—stop there!
Ludolph. Am I obey’d?
A little talk with her—no harm—haste! haste!

Set her before me—never fear I can strike.
Several Voices. My Lord! My Lord!
Gers. Good Prince!
Ludolph. Why do ye trouble me? out—out—out away!
There she is! take that! and that! no, no—
That’s not well done—Where is she?
The doors open. Enter Page. Several women are seen grouped about Auranthe in the inner room.

Page. Alas! My Lord, my Lord! they cannot move her!
Her arms are stiff,—her fingers clenched and cold—
Ludolph. She’s dead!

[Staggers and falls into their arms.]

Ethelbert. Take away the dagger.
Gersa. Softly, so!
Otho. Thank God for that!
Sigfred. I fear it could not harm him.
Gersa. No!—brief be his anguish!
Ludolph. She’s gone—I am content—Nobles, good night!
We are all weary—faint—set ope the doors—
I will to bed!—To-morrow—

[Dies.]

THE CURTAIN FALLS.
KING STEPHEN
A FRAGMENT OF A TRAGEDY
WRITTEN IN NOVEMBER 1819
KING STEPHEN
A FRAGMENT OF A TRAGEDY

ACT I.

SCENE I.—Field of Battle.

Alarum. Enter King Stephen, Knights, and Soldiers.

Stephen. If shame can on a soldier’s vein-swoll’n front
Spread deeper crimson than the battle’s toil,
Blush in your casing helmets! for see, see!
Yonder my chivalry, my pride of war,
Wrench’d with an iron hand from firm array,
Are routed loose about the plashy meads,
Of honour forfeit, O that my known voice
Could reach your dastard ears, and fright you more!
Fly, cowards, fly! Gloucester is at your backs!
Throw your slack bridles o’er the flurried manes,
Ply well the rowel with faint trembling heels,
Scampering to death at last!

First Knight. The enemy
Bears his flaunt standard close upon their rear.
Second Knight. Sure of a bloody prey, seeing the fens
Will swamp them girth-deep.

Stephen. Over head and ears,
No matter! ’Tis a gallant enemy;
How like a comet he goes streaming on.
But we must plague him in the flank,—hey, friends?
We are well breathed,—follow!

Enter Earl Baldwin and Soldiers, as defeated.

Stephen. De Redvers!

What is the monstrous bugbear that can fright
Baldwin?

Baldwin. No scare-crow, but the fortunate star
Of boisterous Chester, whose fell truncheon now
Points level to the goal of victory.
This way he comes, and if you would maintain
Your person unaffronted by vile odds,
KING STEPHEN

And see her enemies havoc'd at her feet.
She grieves most noble Gloucester from her heart,
Intreating him, his captains, and brave knights,
To grace a banquet. The high city gates
Are envious which shall see your triumph pass;
The streets are full of music.

Enter Second Knight.

GLOUCESTER. Whence come you?
SECOND KNIGHT. From Stephen, my good Prince,—Stephen!

GLOUCESTER. Why do you make such echoing of his name?
SECOND KNIGHT. Because I think, my lord, he is no man,
But a fierce demon, 'tainted safe from wounds,
And misbaptized with a Christian name.
GLOUCESTER. A mighty soldier!—Does he still hold out?
SECOND KNIGHT. He shames our victory. His valour still
Keeps elbow-room amid our eager swords,
And holds our bladed falchions all aloof—
His gleaming battle-axe being slaughter-sick,
Smote on the morion of a Flemish knight,
Broke short in his hand; upon the which he flung
The hilt away with such a vengeful force,
It paunch'd the Earl of Chester's horse, who then
Spleen-hearted came in full career at him.
GLOUCESTER. Did no one take him at a vantage then?
SECOND KNIGHT. Three times with tiger leap upon him flew,
Whom, with his sword swift-drawn and nimbly held,
He stung away again, and stood to breathe,
Smiling. Anon upon him rush'd once more
A throng of foes, and in this renew'd strife,
My sword met his and snapped off at the hilt.
GLOUCESTER. Come, lead me to this Mars—and let us move
In silence, not insulting his sad doom
With clamorous trumpets. To the Empress bear
My salutation as befits the time.

Exeunt Gloucester and Forces.

SCENE III.—The Field of Battle. Enter Stephen unarmed.

STEPHEN. Another sword! And what if I could seize
One from Bellora's gleaming armoury,
Or choose the fairest of her sheaved spears!
Where are my enemies? Here, close at hand,
Here come the treasy brood. O for a sword!
I'm faint—a biting sword! A noble sword!
A hedge-stake—or a ponderous stone to hurl
With branny vengeance, like the labourer Cain.
Come on! Farewell my kingdom, and all hail

KING STEPHEN

Take horse, my Lord.

Steph. And which way spur for life?
Now I thank Heaven I am in the toils,
That soldiers may bear witness how my arm
Can burst the meshes. Not the eagle more
Loves to beat up against a tyrannous blast,
Than I to meet the torrent of my foes.
This is a brag,—be 't so,—but if I fall,
Carve it upon my 'scoutcheon'd sepulchre.
Oh, fellow soldiers! Earl of Redvers, back!
Not twenty Earls of Chester shall brow-beat
The diadem.

Scene II.—Another part of the Field.

Trumpets sounding a Victory. Enter Gloucester, Knights, and Forces.

GLOUCESTER. Now may we lift our bruised vizes up,
And take the flattering freshness of the air,
While the wide din of battle dies away
Into times past, yet to be echoed sure
In the silent pages of our chroniclers.

First Knight. Will Stephen's death be mark'd there, my good lord?
Or that we gave him lodging in yon towers?

GLOUCESTER. Fain would I know the great usurper's fate.

Enter two Captains severally.

First Captain. My Lord!
SECOND CAPTAIN. Most noble Earl!

First Captain. What of the King?
SECOND CAPTAIN. The King—
First Captain. The Empress greets—
SECOND CAPTAIN. A hopelesse bustle mid our swarming arms,
And with a nimble savageness attacks,
Escapes, makes fiercer onset, then anew
Eludes death, giving death to most that dare
Trespass within the circuit of his sword;
He must by this have fallen. Baldwin is taken;
And for the Duke of Bretagne, like a stag
He flies, for the Welsh bengels to hunt down.

GLOUCESTER. God save the Empress!

First Captain. Now our dreadst Queen:
What message from her Highness?
SECOND CAPTAIN. Royal Maud
From the thron'd towers of Lincoln hath look'd down,
Like Pallas from the walls of Ilion,

740 KEATS

And which way spur for life?

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What message from her Highness?
SECOND CAPTAIN. Royal Maud
From the thron'd towers of Lincoln hath look'd down,
Like Pallas from the walls of Ilion,
KEATS

Thou superb, plum’d, and helmeted renown,
All hail—I would not truck this brilliant day
To rule in Pylos with a Nestor’s beard—
Come on!

Enter De Kaims and Knights, &c.

De Kaims. Is ’t madness, or a hunger after death,
That makes thee thus unarmed? do thou taunts at us?
Yield, Stephen, or my sword’s point dip in
The gloomy current of a traitor’s heart.
Stephen. Do it, De Kaims, I will not budge an inch.
De Kaims. Yes, of thy madness thou shalt take the meed.
Stephen. Darest thou?
De Kaims. How dare, against a man disarm’d?
Stephen. What weapons has the lion but himself?
Come not near me, De Kaims, for by the price
Of all the glory I have won this day,
Being a king, I will not yield alive
To any but the second man of the realm,
Robert of Gloucester.
De Kaims. Thou shalt vail to me.
Stephen. Shall I, when I have sworn against it, sir?
Thou think’st it brave to take a breathing king,
That, on a court-day bow’d to haughty Maud,
The awed presence-chamber may be bold
To whisper, there’s the man who took alive
Stephen—me—prisoner. Certes, De Kaims,
The ambition is a noble one.
De Kaims. ’Tis true,
And, Stephen, I must compass it.
Stephen. No, no,
Do not tempt me to throttle you on the gorge,
Or with my gaulet crush your hollow breast,
Just when your knighthood is grown ripe and full
For lordship.
A Soldier. Is an honest yeoman’s spear
Of no use at a need? Take that.
Stephen. Ah, dastard!
De Kaims. What, you are vulnerable! my prisoner!
Stephen. No, not yet, I disclaim it, and demand
Death as a sovereign right unto a king
Who ’sains to yield to any but his peer,
If not in title, yet in noble deeds,
The Earl of Gloucester, stab to the hilt, De Kaims,
For I will never by mean hands be led
From this so famous field. Do ye hear! Be quick!

KING STEPHEN

[Trumpets, Enter the Earl of Chester and Knights.

Scene IV.—A Presence Chamber. Queen Maud in a Chair of State, the
Earls of Gloucester and Chester, Lords, Attendants.

Maud. Gloucester, no more: I will beseech that Boulogne:
Set him before me. Not for the poor sake
Of regal pomp and a vain-glorious hour,
As thou with wary speech, yet near enough,
Hast hinted.
Gloucester. Faithful counsel have I given;
If wary, for your Highness’ benefit.
Maud. The Heavens forbid that I should not think so,
For by thy valour have I won this realm,
Which by thy wisdom I will ever keep.
To sage advisers let me ever bend
A meek attentive ear, so that they treat
Of the wide kingdom’s rule and government,
Not trenching on our actions personal.
Advis’d, not school’d, I would be; and henceforth
Spoken to in clear, plain, and open terms,
Not side-ways sermon’d at.
Gloucester. Then, in plain terms,
Once more for the fallen king—
Maud. Your pardon, Brother,
I would no more of that; for, as I said,
’Tis not for worldly pomp I wish to see
The rebel, but as doomed judge to give
A sentence something worthy of his guilt.
Gloucester. If’t must be so, I’ll bring him to your presence.

Maud. A meager summoner might do as well—
My Lord of Chester, is’t true what I hear
Of Stephen of Boulogne, our prisoner,
That he, as a fit penance for his crimes,
Eats wholesome, sweet, and palatable food
Off Gloucester’s golden dishes—drinks pure wine,
Lodges soft?
Chester. More than that, my gracious Queen,
Has anger’d me. The noble Earl, methinks,
Full soldier as he is, and without peer
In counsel, dreams too much among his books.
It may read well, but sure ’tis out of date
To play the Alexander with Darius.
Maud. Truth! I think so. By Heavens it shall not last!
Chester. It would amaze your Highness now to mark
How Gloucester overstrains his courtesy
To that crime-loving rebel, that Boulogne—
Maud. That ingrate!

Chester. For whose vast ingratitude
To our late sovereign lord, your noble sire,
The generous Earl consoled in his mishaps,
And with a sort of lackeying friendliness,
Talks off the mighty frowning from his brow,
Woo's him to hold a duet in a smile,
Or, if it please him, play an hour at chess—
Maud. A perjured slave!

Chester. And for his perjury,
Glocestor has fit rewards—nay, I believe,
He sets his bustling household's wits at work
For flatteries to ease this Stephen's hours,
And make a heaven of his purgatory;
Adorning bondage with the pleasant gloss
Of feasts and music, and all idle shows
Of indoor pageantry; while syren whispers,
Predestin'd for his ear, 'scape as half-check'd
From lips the courtliest and the rubiest
Of all the realm, admiring of his deeds.

Maud. A frost upon his summer!

Chester. A queen's nod
Can make his June December. Here he comes.
POEMS WRITTEN LATE IN 1819

A PARTY OF LOVERS:

"A few Nonsense Verses" sent in a Letter to George Keats.

Pensive they sit, and roll their languid eyes,
Nibble their toast and cool their tea with sighs;
Or else forget the purpose of the night,
Forget their tea, forget their appetite,
See, with cross'd arms they sit—Ah! Happy crew,
The fire is going out and no one rings
For coals, and therefore no coals Betty brings,
A fly is in the milk-pot. Must he die
Circled by a humane society?
No, no; there, Mr. Werter takes his spoon,
Inserts it, dips the handle, and lo! soon
The little straggler, sav'd from perils dark,
Across the teaboard draws a long wet mark.

Romeo! Arise, take snuffers by the handle,
There's a large cauliflower in each candle.
A winding sheet—ah, me! I must away
To No. 7, just beyond the circus gay.
Alas, my friend, your coat sits very well;
Where may your Tailor live? I may not tell.
O pardon me. I'm absent now and then.
Where might my Tailor live? I say again
I cannot tell, let me no more be teased;
He lives in Wapping, might live where he pleased.

SONNET

The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!
Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,
Bright eyes, accomplished shape, and languorous waist!
Faded the flower and all its budding charms,
Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise—
KEATS

Vanish'd unseasonably at shut of eve,
When the dusk holiday—or holynight
Of fragrant-curtain'd love begins to weave.
The woof of darkness thick, for kid delight;
But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,
He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

LINES TO FANNY

What can I do to drive away
Remembrance from my eyes? for they have seen,
Aye, an hour ago, my brilliant Queen!
Touch has a memory. O say, love, say,
What can I do to kill it and be free
In my old liberty?
When every fair one that I saw was fair,
Enough to catch me in but half a snare,
Not keep me there:
When, howe'er poor or particolour'd things,
My muse had wings,
And ever ready was to take her course
Whither I bent her force,
Unintellectual, yet divine to me;—
Divine, I say!—What sea-bird o'er the sea
Is a philosopher the while he goes
Winging along where the great water throes?

How shall I do
To get anew
Those moulted feathers, and so mount once more
Above, above
The reach of flattering Love,
And make him coder lowly while I soar?
Shall I gulp wine? No, that is vulgarism,
A heresy and schism,
Foisted into the canon law of love;—
No,—wine is only sweet to happy men;
More dismal cares
Seize on me unawares,—
Where shall I learn to get my peace again?
To banish thoughts of that most hateful land,
Dungeon of my friends, that wicked strand
Where they were wreck'd and live a wrecked life;
That monstrous region, whose dull rivers pour,
Ever from their sordid urns unto the shore,
Unown'd of any weedy-haired gods;
Whose winds, all zephyrless, hold scouring rods,
THE FALL OF HYPERION

A DREAM

[CANTO I]

Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect; the savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guessest at Heaven; pity these have not
Trac'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf
The shadows of melodious utterance.
But bire of laurel they live, dream, and die;
For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable chain
And dumb enchantment. Who art can say,
"Thou art no Poet—may'st not tell thy dreams?"
Since every man whose soul is not a clod
Hath visions, and would speak, if he had loved,
And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.
Whether the dream now purport'd to rehearse
Be poet's or fanatic's will be known
When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave.

Methought I stood where trees of every clime,
Palm, myrtle, oak, and sycamore, and beech,
With plantain, and spice-blossoms, made a screen;
In neighborhood of fountains (by the noise
Soft-showering in my ears), and, (by the touch
Of scent,) not far from roses. Turning round
I saw an arbour with a drooping roof
Of trellis vines, and bells, and larger blooms,
Like floral censers, swinging light in air;
Before its wreathed doorway, on a mound
Of moss, was spread a feast of summer fruits,
Which, nearer seen, seem'd refuse of a meal
By angel tasted or our Mother Eve;
For empty shells were scattered on the grass,
And grape-stalks but half bare, and remnants more,
Sweet-smelling, whose pure kinds I could not know.
Still was more plenty than the fabled horn
Thrice emptied could pour forth, at banqueting
For Proserpine return'd to her own fields,
Where the white heifers low, and appetite
More yearning than on Earth I ever felt
Growing within, I ate deliciously;
And, after not long, thirsted, for thereby
Stood a cool vessel of transparent juice
Sipp'd by the wander'd bee, the which I took,
And, pledging all the mortals of the world,
And all the dead whose names are in our lips,
Drank. That full draught is parent of my theme.
No Asian poppy nor elixir fine
Of the soon-fading jealous Caliphat;
No poison gender'd in close monkish cell,
To thin the scarlet conclave of old men,
Could so have rapt unwilling life away.
Among the fragrant husks and berries crush'd,
Upon the grass I struggled hard against
The domineering potion; but in vain:
The cloudy swoon came on, and down I sank,
Like a Silenus on an antique vase.
How long I slumber'd 'tis a chance to guess.
When sense of life return'd, I started up
As if with wings; but the fair trees were gone,
The mossy mound and arbour were no more:
I look'd around upon the caried sides
Of an old sanctuary with roof auguest,
Builded so high, it seem'd that film'd clouds
Might spread beneath, as o'er the stars of heaven;
So old the place was, I remember'd none
The like upon the Earth: what I had seen
Of grey cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers,
The superannuations of sunk realms,
Or Nature's rocks told'd hard in waves and winds,
Seem'd but the faulture of deipect things.
To that eternal domed Monument—
Upon the marble at my feet there lay
Store of strange vessels and large draperies,
Which needs had been of dyed asbestos woven,
Or in that place the moth could not corrupt,
So white the linen, so, in some, distinct
Ran imageries from a sombre loom.
All in a mingled heap consus'd there lay
Robes, golden tongs, censer and chafing-dish,
Girdles, and chains, and holy jewels.

Turning from these with awe, once more I rais'd
My eyes to fathom the space every way;

The embossed roof, the silent massy range
Of columns north and south, ending in mist
Of nothing, then to eastward, where black gates
Were shut against the sunrise evermore.—
Then to the west I look'd, and saw far off
An image, huge of feature as a cloud,
At level of whose feet an altar slept,
To be approach'd on either side by steps,
And marble balustrade, and patient travail
To count with toil the innumerable degrees.
Towards the altar sober-paced I went,
Repressing haste, as too unholy there;
And, coming nearer, saw beside the shrine
One ministring; and there arose a flame.—
When in mid-way the sickening East wind
Shifts sudden to the south, the small warm rain
Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers,
And fills the air with so much pleasant health
That even the dying man forgets his shroud;—
Even so that lofty sacrificial fire,
Sending forth Maian incense, spread around
Forgetfulness of everything but bliss,
And clouded all the altar with soft smoke:
From whose white fragrant curtains thus I heard
Language pronounce'd: "If thou canst not ascend
These steps, die on that marble where thou art.
Thy flesh, near cousin to the common dust,
Will parch for lack of nutriment—thy bones
Will wither in few years, and vanish so
That not the quickest eye could find a grain.
Of what thou now art on that pavement cold.
The sands of thy short life are spent this hour,
And no hand in the universe can turn
Thy hourglass, if these gummed leaves be burnt.
"Ere thou canst mount up these immortal steps,"
I heard, I look'd: two senses both at once,
So fine, so subtle, felt the tyranny
Of that fierce threat and the hard task proposed.
Prodigious seem'd the toll; the leaves were yet
Burning—when suddenly a palsied chill
Struck from the paved level up my limbs,
And was ascending quick to put cold grasp
Upon those streams that pulse beside the throat:
I shriek'd, and the sharp anguish of my shriek
Stung my own ears—I strove hard to escape
The numbness, strove to gain the lowest step,
Slow, heavy, deadly was my pace: the cold.
KEATS

Grew stifling, suffocating, at the heart;
And when I clasp'd my hands I felt them not.
One minute before death, my ic'd foot touch'd
The lowest stair; and as it touch'd, Life seem'd
To pour in at the toes: I mounted up,
As once fair angels on a ladder flew
From the green turf to Heaven—"Holy Power,"
Cried I, approach'ing near the horned shrine,
"What am I that should so be saved from death?
"What am I that another death come not
"To choke my utterance sacrilegious, here?"
Then said the veiled shadow—"Thou hast felt
"What 'tis to die and live again before
"Thy fated hour, that thou hast power to do so
"Is thy own safety; thou hast dat'ed on
Thy doom."—"High Prophetess," said I, "purge off,
Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film;"
"None can usurp this height," return'd that shade,
"But those to whom the miseries of the world
"Are misery, and will not let them rest,
"All else who find a haven in the world,
"Where they may thoughtless sleep away their days,
"If by a chance into this fane they come,"
"Rot on the pavement where thou rosetted half;"—
"Are there not thousands in the world," said I,
Encourag'd by the sooth voice of the shade,
"Who love their fellows even to the death,
"Who feel the giant agony of the world,
"And more, like slaves to poor humanity,
"Labour for mortal good? I sure should see
"Other men here; but I am here alone.
"Those whom thou spak'st of are no vision'sies,"
Rejoin'd that voice—"They are no dreamers weak,
"They seek no wonder but the human face;
"No music but a happy-noted voice—
"They come not here, they have no thought to come—
"And thou art here, for thou art less than they—
"What benefit canst thou, or all thy tribe,
"To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing,
"A fever of thyself—think of the Earth;
"What bliss even in hope is there for thee?
"What haven? every creature hath its home;
"Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
"Whether his labours be sublime or low—
"The pain alone; the joy alone; distinct:
"Only the dreamer ventoms all his days,
"Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.

THE FALL OF HYPERION

"Therefore, that happiness be somewhat shar'd,
"Such things as thou art are admitted off,
"Into like gardens thou didst pass erewhile,
"And suffer'd in these temples: for that cause
"Thou standest safe beneath this statue's knees."
"That I am favour'd for unworthiness,
"By such propitious purley medicin'd
"In sickness not ignoble, I rejoice,
"Aye, and could weep for love of such award."
So answer'd I, continuing, "If it please,
"Majestic shadow, tell me: sure not all
"Those melodies sung into the World's ear
"Are useless: sure a poet is a sage;
"A humanist, physician to all men.
"That I am none I feel, as vultures feel
"They are no birds when eagles are abroad.
"What am I then? Thou spakest of my tribe:
"What tribe?" The tall shade veil'd in drooping white
Then spake, so much more earnest, that the breath
Moved the thin linen folds that drooping hung
About a golden censer from the hand
Pendent—"Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?
"The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
"Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes,
"The one pours out a balm upon the World,
"The other vexes it." Then shouted I
Spite of myself, and with a Pythia's spleen
"Apollo! faded! O far flown Apollo!
"Where is thy misty pestilence to creep
"Into the dwellings, through the door crannies
"Of all mock lyrist, large self worshipers
"And careless Hectorers in proud bad verse.
"Though I breathe death with them it will be life
"To see them sprawl before me into graves.
"Majestic shadow, tell me where I am,
"Whose altar this; for whom this incense curls;
"What image this whose face I cannot see,
"For the broad marble knees; and who thou art,
"Of accent feminine so courteous?"

Then the tall shade, in drooping linens veil'd
Spoke out, so much more earnest, that her breath
Stir'd the thin folds of gauze that drooping hung
About a golden censer from her hand
Pendent; and by her voice I knew she shed
Long-treasured tears. "This temple, sad and lone,
"Is all spar'd from the thunder of a war
"Foughten long since by giant hierarchy
"Against rebellion: this old image here,
"Whose carved features wrinkled as he fell,
"Is Saturn's; I Moneta, left supreme
"Sole Priestess of this desolation."—
I had no words to answer, for my tongue
Useless, could find about its roofed home
No syllable of a fit majesty
To make rejoinder to Moneta's morn.
There was a silence, while the altar's blaze
Was fainting for sweet food: I look'd thenceon,
And on the paved floor, where nigh were piled
Faggots of cinnamon, and many heaps
Of other crisp'd spice-wood—then again
I look'd upon the altar, and its horns
Whiten'd with ashes, and its langu'rous flame,
And then upon the offerings again;
And so by turns—till sad Moneta cried,
"The sacrifice is done, but not the less
"Will I be kind to thee for thy good will,
"My power, which to me is still a curse,
"Shall be to thee a wonder, for the scenes
"Still swooning vivid through my globed brain,
"With an electral changing misery,
"Thou shalt with these dull mortal eyes behold,
"Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not.
As near as an immortal's sphere's words
Could to a mother's sonnet, were these last:
And yet I had a terror of her robes
And chiefly of the vails, that from her brow
Hung pale, and curtain'd her in mysteries,
That made my heart too small to hold its blood.
This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
Parted the vails. Then saw I a wan face,
Not pin'd by human sorrows, but bright-blash'd
By an immortal sickness which kills not;
It works a constant change, which happy death
Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
To no death was that visage; it had past
The lily and the snow; and beyond these
I must not think now, though I saw that face—
But for her eyes I should have fled away.
They held me back, with a benignant light,
Soft mitigated by divinest lids
Half-closed, and visionless entire they seem'd
Of all external things—this saw me not,
But in blank splendour, beam'd like the mild moon,
Spreading more shade; the Naiad mid her reeds
Prest her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large footmarks went
No farther than to where old Saturn’s feet
Had rested, and there slept, how long a sleep!
Degraded, cold, upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unseen; and his realmless eyes were closed,
While his bow’d head seem’d listening to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem’d no force could wake him from his place;
But there came one who, with a kindred hand
Touch’d his wide shoulders after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
Then came the griev’d voice of Mnemosyne,
And griev’d I hearken’d. “That divinity
Whom thou saw’st step from yon forlornest wood,
And with slow pace approach our fallen King,
Is Thea, softest-natur’d of our Brood.”
I mark’d the Goddess in fair statuary
Surpassing wan Moneta by the head,
And in her sorrow nearer a woman’s tears.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the wanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press’d upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain;
The other upon Saturn’s bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his hollow ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenor and deep organ tone;
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in this-like accenting; how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods!

“Saturn! look up—and for what, poor lost King?
I have no comfort for thee; no not one;
I cannot say, wherefore thus sleepest thou?
For Heaven is parted from thee, and the Earth
Knows thee not, so afflicted, for a God;
And Ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
Has from thy sceptre pass’d, and all the air

As when upon a tranced summer-night
Forests, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a noise,
Save from one gradual solitary gust,
Swelling upon the silence; dying off;
As if the ethereal air had but one wave;
So came these words, and went; the while in tears
She press’d her fair large forehead to the earth,
Just where her fallen hair might spread in curls,
A soft and silken mat for Saturn’s feet.
Long, long these two were postured motionless,
Like sculpture buldged-up upon the grave
Of their own power. A long awful time
I look’d upon them: still they were the same;
The frozen God still bending to the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet,
Moneta silent. Without stay or prop,
But my own weak mortality, I bore
The load of this eternal quietude,
The unchanging gloom, and the three fixed shapes
Ponderous upon my senses, a whole moon.
For by my burning brain I measured sure
Her silver seasons shedded on the night,
And every day by day methought I grew
More gaunt and ghostly.—Oftentimes I pray’d
Intense, that Death would take me from the Vale
And all its burthens—gasping with despair
Of change, hour after hour I curs’d myself;
Until old Saturn rais’d his faded eyes,
And look’d around and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess at his feet.
As the moist scent of flowers, and grass, and leaves,
Fills forest dells with a pervading air,
Known to the woodland nostril, so the words
THE FALL OF HYPERION

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

END OF CANTO I

CANTO II

"Morte, that thou may’st understand aright,
"I humanize my sayings to thine ear,
"Making comparisons of earthly things;
"Or thou might’st better listen to the wind,
"Whose language is to thee a barren noise,
"Though it blows legend-laden thro’ the trees—
"In melancholy realms big tears are shed,
"More sorrow like to this, and such like woos,
"Too huge for mortal tongue, or pen of scribe.
"The Titans fierce, self hid or prison bound,
"Groan for the old allegiance once more,
"Listening in their doom for Saturn’s voice.
"But one of our whole eagle-broided still keeps
"His sov’reignty, and rule, and majesty;
"Blazing Hyperion on his orb’d fire
"Still sits, still snuffs the incense teeming up
"From Man to the Sun’s God: yet unsecure.
"For as upon the earth fire prodigies
"Fright and perils, so also shudders he:
"Nor at dog’s howl or gloon-bird’s Even screech,
"Or the familiar visitings of one
"Upon the first toll of his passing bell:
"But horrors, portioned to a giant nerve,
"Make great Hyperion ache. His palace bright,
"Bastion’d with pyramids of glowing gold,
"And touch’d with shade of bronzed obeliaks,
"Glares a blood-red thro’ all the thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries:
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush angrily; when he would taste the wreaths
Of incense breathed aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate takes
Savour of poisonous brass and metals sick.
Wherefore when harbour’d in the sleepy West,
After the full completion of fair day,
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He paces through the pleasant hours of ease
With strides colossal, on from hall to hall;
While far within each aisle and deep recess
His winged minions in close clusters stand
‘Amaz’d, and full of fear; like anxious men,
Who on a wide plain gather in sad troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, roused from icy trance,
Goes, step for step, with Thea from yon woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Is slopeing to the threshold of the West.—
‘Thither we tend.’—Now in clear light I stood,
Reliev’d from the dusk vale. Mnemosyne
Was sitting on a square-edg’d polish’d stone,
That in its lucid depth reflected pure
Her priestess-garments.—My quick eyes ran on
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bow’rs of fragrant and enwreathed light
And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades.
Anon rush’d by the bright Hyperion;
His flaming robes stream’d out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire.
That scared away the meek ethereal hours,
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared.
THE CAP AND BELLS
OR THE JEALOUSIES

A FAIRY TALE—UNFINISHED

I

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

II

This was a crime forbidden by the law;
And all the priesthood of his city wept;
For ruin and dismay they well foresaw,
If impious prince no bound or limit kept,
And fairy Zendervester overstept;
They wept, he sin'd, and still he would sin on,
They dreamt of sin, and he sin'd while they slept;
In vain the pulpit thunder'd at the throne,
Caricature was vain, and vain the tart lampoon.

III

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

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

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

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

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

THE CAP AND BELLS

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

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

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

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

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

XIII

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

XIV

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

XV

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

XVI

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

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XIX

"Monstrous affair! Pahaw! pah! what ugly minx
Will they fetch from Imaus for my bride?
Alas! my wearied heart within me sinks,
To think that I must be so near allied
To a cold dullard say,—ah, woe betide!
Ah, fairest of all human loveliness!
Sweet Bertha! what crime can it be to glide
About the fragrant plesings of thy dress,
Or kiss shine eyes, or count thy locks, tress after tress?"
So said, one minute's while his eyes remain'd
Half lidded, piteous, languid, innocent;
But, in a wink, their splendour they regain'd,
Sparkling revenge with amorous fury blunt.
Love thwart'd in bad temper off has vent;
He rose, he stamp'd his foot, he rang the bell,
And order'd some death-warrants to be sent
For signature,—somewhere the tempest fell,
As many a poor felon does not live to tell.

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

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

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

XXVIII

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

XXIX

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

XXX

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

XXXI

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

THE CAP AND BELLS

XXXII

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

XXXIII

"Gad! he's oblig'd to stick to business!
For chalk, I hear, stands at a pretty price;
And as for aqua vitae—there's a mess!
The deuts a(apart) of mice,
Our barber tells me too, are on the rise,—
Tinder's a lighter article,—nitre pure
Goes off like lightning,—grains of Paradise
At an enormous figure!—stars not sure!—
Zodiac will not move without a sly douceur!"

XXXIV

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

XXXV

It was indeed the great Magician,
Feeling, with careful toe, for every stair,
And retrograding careful as he can,
Backwards and downwards from his own two pair:
"Salpietro!" exclaim'd Hum, "is the dog there?
He's always in my way upon the mat!"
"He's in the kitchen, or the Lord knows where,"—
Replied the Swiss,—"the nasty, yelping brat!"
"Don't beat him!" return'd Hum, and on the floor came pat.
Then facing right about, he saw the Page,
And said: "Don't tell me what you want, Eban;
The Emperor is now in a huge rage,—
'Tis nine to one he'll give you the rattan!
Let us away!" Away together ran
The plain-dress'd sage and spangled blackamoor,
Nor rested till they stood to cool, and fan,
And breathe themselves at the Emperor's chamber door,
When Eban thought he heard a soft imperial sneer.

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

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

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

Then turning round, he saw those trembling two:
"Eban," said he, "as slaves should taste the fruits
Of diligence, I shall remember you
To-morrow, or the next day, as time suits,
In a linger conversation with my nutes,—
Begone!—for you, Childean! here remain!
Fear not, quake not, and as good wine recruits
A conjurer's spirits, what cup will you drain?
Sherry in silver, hock in gold, or glass'd champagne?"

"Commander of the Faithful!" answer'd Hum,
"In preference to these, I'll merely taste
A thimble-full of old Jamaica rum."
"A simple boon!" said Eflinan; "thou may'st
Have Nantz, with which my morning-coffee's laced."
"I'll have a glass of Nantz, then," said the Seer,—
"Made racy,—(sure my boldness is misplaced!)—
With the third part,—(yet that is drinking dear!)—
Of the least drop of crème de citron, crystal clear."

"I pledge you, Hum! and pledge my dearest love,
My Bertha! " 'Bertha! Bertha!' cried the sage,
"I know a many Berthas!" "Mine's above
All Berthas!" sighed the Emperor. "I engage,"
Said Hum, "in duty, and in vassalage,
To mention all the Berthas in the Earth;—
There's Bertha Watson,—and Miss Bertha Page,—
This fan'd for languid eyes, and that for mirth,—
There's Bertha Blount of York,—and Bertha Knox of Perth."

"You seem to know!" "I do know," answer'd Hum,
"Your Majesty's in love with some fine girl
Named Bertha; but her surname will not come,
Without a little conjuring," "'Tis Pearl,
'Tis Bertha Pearl that makes my brains so whirl;
And she is softer, fairer than her name!"
"Where does she live?" ask'd Hum. "Her fair locks curl
So brightly, they put all our fays to shame!—
Live?—O! at Canterbury, with her old grand-dame."
"Good! good!" cried Hum, "I've known her from a child! She is a changeling of my management;
She was born at midnight in an Indian wild;
Her mother's screams with the striped tiger's blent,
While the torch-bearing slaves a balloo sent.
Into the jungles; and her palanquin,
Rested amid the desert's dreamerim,
Snook with her agony, till fair were seen
The little Bertha's eyes oped on the stars serene.

"I can't say," said the monarch; "that may be
Just as it happen'd, true or else a balm!
Drink up your brandy, and sit down by me,
Feel, feel my pulse, how much in love I am;
And if your science is not all a sham,
Tell me some means to get the lady here."
"Upon my honour! said the son of Cham,
"She is my dainty changeling, near and dear,
Although her story sounds at first a little queer."

"Convey her to me, Hum, or by my crown,
My sceptre, and my cross-surmounted globe,
I'll knock you"—"Does your majesty mean—down?
No, no, you never could my feelings probe!
To such a depth! The Emperor took his robe,
And went up into his purple palatine,
While Hum continued, shamming half a sob,—
"In Canterbury doth your lady shine?
But let me cool your brandy with a little wine."

Whereat a narrow Flemish glass he took,
That once belonged to Admiral de Witt,
Admir'd it with a connoisseeuring look,
And with the rippet charet crownd it,
And ere one lively bead could burst and slit,
He turn'd it quickly, nimbly upside down,
His mouth being held conveniently fit
To catch the treasure: "Rest in all the town!"
He said, smack'd his moist lips, and gave a pleasant frown.

"Ah! good my Prince, weep not!" And then again
He fill'd a bumper. "Great Sire, do not weep!
Your pulse is shocking, but I'll ease your pain."
"Fetch me that Ottoman, and prithee keep
Your voice low," said the Emperor; "and steep
Some lady's fingers nice in Candy wine;
And prithee, Hum, behind the screen do peep
For the rose-water vase, magician mine!
And sponge my forehead,—so my love doth make me pine.

"Ah, cursed Bellanaine!" "Don't think of her,
Rejoin'd the Mago, "but on Bertha muse;
For, by my choicest best barometer,
You shall not throttled be in marriage noose;
I've said it, Sire; you only have to choose
Bertha or Bellanaine." So saying, he drew
From the left pocket of his threadbare hose,
A sampler hoarded slyly, good as new,
Holding it by his thumb and finger full in view.

"Sire, this is Bertha Pearl's neat handy-work,
Her name, see here, Midsummer, ninety-one."
Eftsoons snatch'd it with a sudden jerk,
And went as if he never would have done,
Honouring with royal tears the poor homespun;
Whereon were broder'd tigers with black eyes,
And long-tail'd pheasants, and a rising sun,
Plenty of posies, great stalks, butterflies
Bigger than stalks,—a moon,—with other mysteries.

The monarch handled o'er and o'er again
These day-school hieroglyphics with a sigh;
Somewhat in sadness, but pleas'd in the main,
Till this oracular couplet met his eye
Astonished—Cupid I, do thee defy!
It was too much. He shrunk back in his chair,
Crew pale as death, and fainted—very nigh!
"Pho! nonsense!" exclam'd Hum, "now don't despair;
She does not mean it really. Cheer up heartily there!"
LII

"And listen to my words. You say you won't,
On any terms, marry Miss Bellanaine;
It goes against your conscience—good! Well, don't.
You say you love a mortal. I would fain
Persuade your honour's highness to refrain
From peccadilloes. But, Sire, as I say,
What good would that do? And, to be more plain,
You would do me a mischief some odd day,
Cut off my ears and hands, or head too, by my lay!

LIII

"Besides, manners forbid that I should pass any
Vile stricutures on the conduct of a prince
Who should indulge his genius, if he has any,
Not, like a subject, foolish matters mince.
Now I think on't, perhaps I could convince
Your Majesty there is no crime at all
In loving pretty little Bertha, since
She's very delicate,—not over tall.—
A fairy's hand, and in the waist, why—very small."

LIV

"Ring the repeater, gentle Hum!
"Tis five,
Said gentle Hum; "the nights draw in space;
The little birds I hear are all alive;
I see the dawning touch'd upon your face;
Shall I put out the candles, please your Grace?"
"Do put them out, and, without more ado,
Tell me how I may that sweet girl embrace,—
How you can bring her to me." "That's for you,
Great Emperor! to adventure, like a lover true."

LV

"I fetch her!"—"Yes, an't like your Majesty;
And as she would be frighten'd wide awake
To travel such a distance through the sky,
Use of some soft manoeuvre you must make,
For your convenience, and her dear nerves' sake;
Nice way would be to bring her in a swoon,
Anon, 'I'll tell what course we best to take;
You must away this morning." "Hum! so soon?"
"Sire, you must be in Kent by twelve o'clock at noon."
“Leave her to me,” rejoined the magician;
“But how shall I account, illustrious sirs!
For thine imperial absence? Pho! I can
Say you are very sick, and bar the way
To your so loving courtiers for one day;
If either of their two archbishops’ grace
Should talk of extreme unction, I shall say
You do not like cold pig with Latin phrases,
Which never should be used but in alarming cases.”

“Open the window, Hum; I’m ready now!”
“Zooks!” exclaimed Hum, as up the sash he drew.
“Behold, your Majesty, upon the brow
Of yonder hill, what crowds of people!”
“Where!”
The monster’s always after something new,
Return’d his Highness, “they are piping hot
To see my piggany Bellanaine. Hum! do
Tighten my belt a little,—so, so,—not
Too tight,—the book,—my wand!—so, nothing is forgot.”

“Wounds! how they shout!” said Hum, “and there,—see, see!
The Ambassadors return’d from Pigmo!
The morning’s very fine,—uncommonly!
See, past the skirts of you white cloud they go,
Ting in it with soft crimson! Now below
The sable-pointed heads of fire and pines
They dip, move on, and with them moves a glow
Along the forest side! Now amber lines
Reach the hill top, and now throughout the valley shines.”

“Why, Hum, you’re getting quite poetical!
Those now you managed in a special style.”
“If ever you have leisure, Sire, you shall
See scraps of mine will make it worth your while,
Tit-bits for Phoebeus,—yes, you well may smile,
Hark! Hah! the bells!”
“A little further yet,
Good Hum, and let me view this mighty coil.”
Then the great Emperor, full graceful set
His elbow for a prop, and snuff’d his mignonette.

The morn is full of holiday; loud bells
With rival clamours ring from every spire;
Cunningly-station’d music dies and swells
In echoing places; when the winds aspire,
Light flags stream out like gauzy tongues of fire;
A metropolitan murmur, lifeful, warm.
Comes from the northern suburbs; rich attire
Freckles with red and gold the moving swarm;
While here and there clear trumpets blow a keen alarm.

And now the fairy escort was seen clear,
Like the old pageant of Aurora’s train,
Above a pearl-built minster, hovering near;
First wily Craftantick, the chamberlain,
Balanced upon his grey-grown plumes twain,
His slender wand officially reveal’d;
Then black gnomes scattering sixpences like rain;
Then pages three and three; and next, slave-held,
The Inman’s scutcheon bright,—one mouse in aargent field.

Gentlemen pensioners next; and after them,
A troop of winged Janitaries flew;
Then Slaves, as presents bearing many a gem;
Then twelve physicians fluttering two and two;
And next a chaplain in a cassock new;
Then Lords in waiting; then (what head not reaps
For pleasure?)—the fair Princess in full view,
Borne upon wings,—and very pleas’d she feels
To have such splendour dance attendance at her heels.

For there was more magnificence behind;
She waved her handkerchief, “Ah, very grand!”
Cried Effim an, and clos’d the window-blind;
“And, Hum, we must not shilly-shally stand,—
Adieu! adieu! I’m off for Angle-land!
I say, old Hecum, have you such a thing
About you,—feel your pockets, I command,—
I want, this instant, an invisible ring,—
Thank you, old mummy!—now securely I take wing.”
LXVIII

Then Elfin man swift vaulted from the floor,
And lighted graceful on the window-sill;
Under one arm the magic book he bore,
The other he could wave about at will;
Pale was his face, he still look'd very ill:
He bow'd at Belladine, and said—"Poor Bell!
Farewell! farewell! and if for ever! still
For ever fare thee well!"—and then he fell
A laughing—snapp'd his fingers!—shame it is to tell!

LXIX

"By'r Lady! he is gone!" cries Hum, "and I—
(I own it)—have made too free with his wine;
Old Craftian will smoke me. By the bye—
This room is full of jewels as a mine,—
Dear valuable creatures, how ye shine!
Sometime to-day I must contrive a minute,
If Mercury propitiously incline,
To examine his scrutine, and see what's in it,
For of superfluous diamonds I as well may thin it.

LXX

"The Emperor's horrid bad; yes, that's my cue!"
Some histories say that this was Hum's last speech;
That, being fuddled, he went reeling through
The corridor, and scarce upright could reach
The stair-head, that being glittered as a leech,
And as'd, as we ourselves have just now said,
To manage stairs reversely, like a peach
Too ripe, he fell, being puzzled in his head
With liquor and the staircase: verdict—found stone dead.

LXXI

This as a falsehood Craftian to treats;
And as his style is of strange elegance,
Gentle and tender, full of soft conceits,
(Much like our Boswell's,) we will take a glance
At his sweet prose, and, if we can, make dance
His woven periods into careless rhyme;
O, little faery Pegasus! rear—prance—
Trot round the quarto—ordinary time!
March, little Pegasus, with pawing hoof sublime!

LXXII

Well, let us see,—tenth book and chapter nine,—
Thus Craftian pursues his diary:—
"Twas twelve o'clock at night, the weather fine,
Latitude thirty-six; our scouts descri
A flight of starlings making rapidly
Towards Thet, Mem.—birds fly in the night;
From twelve to half-past—wings not fit to fly
For a thick fog—the Princess sulky quite
Call'd for an extra shawl, and gave her nurse a bite.

LXXIII

"Five minutes before one—brought down a moth
With my new double-barrel—stew'd the thighs
And made a very tolerable broth—
Princess turn'd dainty,—to our great surprise,
Alter'd her mind, and thought it very nice:
Seeing her pleasant, tried her with a pun,
She frown'd; a monstrous owl across us flies
About this time,—a sad old figure of fun;
Bad omen—this new match can't be a happy one.

LXXIV

"From two till half-past, dusky way we made,
Above the plains of Gobi,—desert, bleak;
Beheld afar off, in the hooded shade
Of darkness, a great mountain (strange to speak),
Spitting, from forth its sulphur-baked peak,
A fan-shap'd burst of blood-red, arrowy fire,
Turban'd with smoke, which still away did reek,
Solid and black from that eternal pyre,
Upon the laden wind that scantily could respire.

LXXV

"Just upon three o'clock a falling star
Created an alarm among our troop,
Kill'd a man-cook; a page, and broke a jar,
A tureen, and three dishes, at one swoop,
Then passing by the Princess, sing'd her hoop:
Could not conceive what Coraline was at,
She clapp'd her hands three times and cried out 'Whoop!'
Some strange Omanian custom. A large bat
Came sudden 'fore my face, and brush'd against my hat.
KEATS

LXXVI

"Five minutes thirteen seconds after three,
Far in the west a mighty fire broke out,
Conjectur'd, on the instant, it might be
The city of Balk—twas Balk beyond all doubt:
A Griffin, wheeling here and there about,
Kept reconnoitering us—doubled our guard—
Lighted our torches, and kept up a shout,
Till the Prince very scar'd—
And many on their marrow-bones for death prepar'd.

LXXVII

"At half-past three arose the cheerful moon—
Bivouack'd for four minutes on a cloud—
Where from the earth we heard a lively tune
Of tambourines and pipes, serene and loud,
While on a flowery lawn a brilliant crowd
Cinque-parted dance'd, some half asleep reposèd
Beneath the green-fan'd cedars, some did shroud
In silken tents, and 'mid light fragrance dozed,
Or on the open turf their soothed eyelids closed.

LXXVIII

"Dropp'd my gold watch, and kill'd a kettle-drum—
It went for appoxley—foolish folks!—
Left it to pay the piper—a good sum—
(I've got a conscience, maugre people's jokes;)
To scrape a little favour 'gan to coax
Her Highness' pug-dog—got a sharp rebuff—
She wish'd a game at whist—made three revokes—
Turn'd from myself, her partner, in a huff;
His majesty will know her temper time enough.

LXXIX

"She cried for chess—I play'd a game with her—
Casted her king with such a vixen look,
It bodes ill to his Majesty—(refer
To the second chapter of my fortith book,
And see what holly-toity airs she took).
At half-past four the moron essay'd to beam—
Saluted, as we pass'd, an early rook—
The Princess fell asleep, and, in her dream,
Talk'd of one Master Hubert, deep in her esteem.

THE CAP AND BELLs

LXXX

"About this time,—making delightful way,—
Snel'd a quill-feather from my lirborne wing—
Wish'd, trusted, hop'd 'twas no sign of decay—
Thank heaven, I'm hearty yet!—'twas no such thing:—
At five the golden light began to spring,
With fiery shoulder through the bloomed east;
At six we heard Panthea's churches ring—
The city all her unlim'd swarms had cast,
To watch our grand approach, and hail us as we pass'd.

LXXXI

"As flowers turn their faces to the sun,
So on our flight with hungry eyes they gaze,
And, as we shap'd our course, this, that way run,
With mad-cap pleasure, or hand-clasp'd amaze;
Sweet in the air a mild-ton'd music plays,
And progresses through its own labyrinth;
Buds gather'd from the green spring's middle-days,
They scatter'd, daisy, primrose, hyacinth—
Or round white columns wreath'd from capital to plinth.

LXXXII

"Onward we floated o'er the paling streets,
That seem'd throughout with upheld faces paved;
Look where we will, our bird's-eye vision meets
Legions of holiday, bright standards waved,
And fluttering ensigns emulously waved
Our minute's glance; a busy thunderous roar,
From square to square, among the buildings raved,
As when the sea, at flow, gluts up once more
The craggy hollowness of a wild reeled shore.

LXXXIII

"And 'Bellanaine for ever!' shouted they,
While that fair Princess, from her winged chair, Bow'd low with high demeanour, and, to pay Their new-bloom'd loyalty with guerdon fair,
Still emptied, at meet distance, here and there, A plenty horn of jewels. And here I (Who wish to give the devil her due) declare Against that ugly piece of calumny,
Which calls them Highland pebble-stones not worth a fly.
LXXXIV

"Still 'Bellalaine!' they shouted, while we glide
'Slant to a light Ionic portico,
The city's delicacy, and the pride
Of our Imperial Basilic, a row
Of lords and ladies, on each hand, make show
Submissive of knee-bent obeisance,
All down the steps; and, as we enter'd, lo!
The strangest sight—the most unlook'd-for chance—
All things turn'd topsy-turvy in a devil's dance.

LXXXV

"'Stead of his anxious Majesty and court
At the open doors, with wide saluting eyes,
Conjurer and scape-graces of every sort,
And all the smooth routine of gallantries,
Was seen, to our immoderate surprise,
A motley crowd thick gather'd in the hall,
Lords, scullions, deputy-scullions, with wild cries
Stunning the vestibule from wall to wall,
Where the Chief Justice on his knees and hands doth crawl.

LXXXVI

"Counts of the palace, and the state purveyor
Of moth's-down, to make soft the royal beds,
The Common Council and my fool Lord Mayor
Marching a-row, each other slipshod treads;
Powder'd bag-wigs and ruffly-tuffy heads
Of cinder wenches meet and soil each other;
Tee crush'd with heel ill-natur'd fighting breeds,
Frill-rumpling elbows brew up many a bother,
And fists in the short ribs keep up the yell and pother.

LXXXVII

"A Poet, mounted on the Court-Clown's back,
Rode to the Princess swift with spurring heels,
And close into her face, with rhyming clack,
Began a Prothalamion;—she reeks,
She falls, she faints! while laughter peals
Over her woman's weakness. 'Where! cried I,
'Where is his Majesty? No person feels
Inclin'd to answer; wherefore instantly
I plung'd into the crowd to find him or to die.

THE CAP AND BELLS

LXXVII

"Jestling my way I gain'd the stairs, and ran
To the first landing, where, incredible!
I met, far gone in liquor, that old man,
That vile impostor Hum,—"
So far so well,—
For we have prov'd the Magus never fell
Down stairs on Cauthicanto's evidence;
And therefore duly shall proceed to tell,
Plain in our own original mood and tense,
The sequel of this day, though labour 'tis immense!

LINES SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED TO FANNY BRAWNE

'Twas living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And in the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou would'st wish thine own heart dry of blood
So in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience-calm'd—see here it is—
I hold it towards you.

SONNET

Written on a Blank Page in Shakespeare's Poems,
 facit "A Lover's Complaint"

Blest star, would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung a' foot the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremita,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swear to death.
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<td>Happy, happy glowing fire!</td>
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<td><strong>O golden tongued Romance, with serene lute!</strong></td>
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<td>He is fair, a merry, melancholy carle</td>
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<td>Hence Burgundy, Clare, and Port</td>
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<td>Here all the summer could I stay</td>
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<td>Highmindedness, a jealousy for good</td>
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<td><strong>One morn before me were three figures seen,</strong></td>
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<td>How many birds gild the lapses of time!</td>
<td><strong>Peace! and dest thou with thy presence bless</strong></td>
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<td>Hush, hush! tread softly! hush, hush, my dear</td>
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<td>I cry your mercy—pity—love—aye, love</td>
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<td>If by dull rhymes our English must be chal'd</td>
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<td>If shame can on a soldier's swoln' front</td>
<td><strong>O sovereign power of love! O grief! O balm!</strong></td>
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<td><strong>O Thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang</strong></td>
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<td>In short, convince you that however wise</td>
<td><strong>Over the Hill and over the Dale,</strong></td>
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<td>In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch</td>
<td><strong>O were I one of the Olympian twelve,</strong></td>
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<td>In thy western halls of gold</td>
<td><strong>Praise they sit, and roll their lingual eyes,</strong></td>
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<td>I stood tip-toe upon a little hill</td>
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<td>It keeps eternal whisperings around</td>
<td><strong>Read me a lesson, Muse, and speak it loud!</strong></td>
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<td>Just at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings</td>
<td><strong>St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!</strong></td>
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<td>Keen, fitful gusts are whispering here and there</td>
<td><strong>Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,</strong></td>
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<td>King of the stormy sea!</td>
<td><strong>Shed no tear—O shed no tear!</strong></td>
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<td>Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair</td>
<td><strong>Small, busy Flaneurs play through the fresh laid coals,</strong></td>
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<td>Let! I must tell a tale of Chivalry!</td>
<td><strong>So, I am safe emerged from these broil's.</strong></td>
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<td>Love in a hut, with water and a crust</td>
<td><strong>Sot of the old moon-mountains African!</strong></td>
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<td>Many the wonders I this day have seen</td>
<td><strong>Souls of Poets! do not tell a tale of Chivalry!</strong></td>
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<td>Minutes are flying swiftly, and as yet</td>
<td><strong>Spencer! a jealous honourer of thine,</strong></td>
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<td>Mortal, that thou mayst understand art,</td>
<td><strong>Spent here that reignest!</strong></td>
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<td>Mother of Hermes! and still youthful Mars</td>
<td><strong>Standing aloof in slight ignorance,</strong></td>
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<td>Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold</td>
<td><strong>Still very sick my Lord; but now I went</strong></td>
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<td>Mine of my native land! loftiest Muse!</td>
<td><strong>Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong,</strong></td>
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<td>My heart aches, and a drowsy numbers pain</td>
<td><strong>The church bells toll a melancholy round,</strong></td>
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<td>My spirit is too weak—mortality</td>
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<td>Nature withheld Cassandra in the skies,</td>
<td><strong>The Gothic Ganges, now in moss covered,</strong></td>
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<td>No more advice, no more cautioning:</td>
<td><strong>The poetry of earth is never dead:</strong></td>
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<td>No, no, go not to Lether, neither twist</td>
<td><strong>There are who lord it over their fellow-men,</strong></td>
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<td>Not Aladdin's magic</td>
<td><strong>There is a charm in feeding slow over a silent plain,</strong></td>
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<td>Not those days are gone away</td>
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<td>Now, Ludolph! Now, Aurantine! Daughter fair!</td>
<td><strong>The stranger lighted from his steed,</strong></td>
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<td>Now may we lift our bruised visors up</td>
<td><strong>The sun, with his great eye,</strong></td>
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<td>Now morning from her orient chamber came</td>
<td><strong>The town, the churchyard, and the setting sun,</strong></td>
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<td>Nymph of the downward smile and sideelong glance</td>
<td><strong>This little tale is like a little cope,</strong></td>
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<td>O Arethusa, peerless nymph! why fear</td>
<td><strong>This small ancient throne is of quietness,</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>O blush not so! O blush not so!</td>
<td><strong>This in alternate uproar and sad peace,</strong></td>
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PREFACE BY MRS. SHELLEY

TO FIRST COLLECTED EDITION, 1839

OBSTACLES have long existed to my presenting the public with a perfect edition of Shelley's Poems. These being at last happily removed, I hasten to fulfil an important duty,—that of giving the productions of a sublime genius to the world, with all the correctness possible, and of, at the same time, detailing the history of those productions, as they sprang, living and warm, from his heart and brain. I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his private life, except inasmuch as the passions which they engendered inspired his poetry. This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the errors of action committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary. Whatever faults he had ought to find extenuation among his fellows, since they prove him to be human; without them, the exalted nature of his soul would have raised him into something divine.

The qualities that struck any one newly introduced to Shelley were,—First, a gentle and cordial goodness that animated his intercourse with warm affection and helpful sympathy. The other, the eagerness and ardour with which he was attached to the cause of human happiness and improvement; and the fervent eloquence with which he discussed such subjects. His conversation was marked by its happy abundance, and the beautiful language in which he clothed his poetic ideas and philosophical notions. To delineate life of its misery and its evil was the ruling passion of his soul; he dedicated to it every power of his mind, every pulsation of his heart. He looked on public freedom as the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind; and thus any new-sprung hope of liberty inspired a joy and an exultation more intense and wild than he could have felt for any personal advantage. Those who have never experienced the workings of passion on general and unselfish subjects cannot understand this; and it must be difficult of comprehension to the younger generation rising around, since they cannot remember the scorn and hatred with which the partisans of reform were regarded some few years ago, nor the persecutions to which they were exposed. He had been from youth the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution; and believing firmly in the justice and excellence of his views, it cannot be wondered that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems from which he had himself suffered. Many advantages
attended his birth; he spurned them all when balanced with what he considered his duties. He was generous to imprudence, devoted to heroism.

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

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

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

No poet was ever warmed by a more genuine and unforced inspiration. His extreme sensibility gave the intensity of passion to his intellectual pursuits; and rendered his mind keenly alive to every perception of outward objects, as well as to his internal sensations. Such a gift is, among the sad vicissitudes of human life, the disappointments we meet, and the gloating sense of our own mistakes and errors, fraught with pain; calling from such, he delivered up his soul to poetry, and the pictures, when he sheltered himself, from the influence of human sympathies, in the wildest regions of fancy. His imagination has been termed too brilliant, his thoughts too subtle. He loved to idealize reality; and this is a taste shared by few. We are willing to have our passions whisms excited into possession; this gratifying to the vanity of; but few of our exertions were not made in vain, and in the progress of the liberty he so fondly loved.

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

He died, and his place, among those who knew him intimately, has
PREFACE BY MRS. SHELLEY

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

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

Se al seguir son tardi,
Forse avverrà che 'l bel nome gentile
Conاصرerò con questa stanza pena.

POSTSCRIPT IN SECOND EDITION OF 1839

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

Two poems are added of some length, Swelfoot the Tyrant and Peter Bell the Third. I have mentioned the circumstances under which they were written in the notes; and need only add that they are conceived in a very different spirit from Shelley's usual compositions. They are specimens of the burlesque and fanciful; but, although they adopt a familiar style and homely imagery, there shine through the radiance of the poet's imagination the earnest views and opinions of the politician and the moralist.

At my request the publisher has restored the omitted passages of Queen Mab. I now present this edition as a complete collection of my husband's poetical works, and I do not foresee that I can hereafter add to or take away a word or line.

Putney, November 6, 1839.

PREFACE BY MRS. SHELLEY

TO THE VOLUME OF POSTHUMOUS POEMS

PUBLISHED IN 1824

In nobil sangue vita umile e queta,
Ed in alto intelletto un puro cor;
Fruita secole in sal giovanni fior,
E in aspetto penoso anima lieta.—PETRARCA.

It had been my wish, on presenting the public with the Posthumous Poems of Mr. Shelley, to have accompanied them by a biographical notice; as it appeared to me that at this moment a narration of the events of my husband's life would come more gracefully from other hands than mine, I applied to Mr. Leigh Hunt. The distinguished friendship that Mr. Shelley felt for him, and the enthusiastic affection with which Mr. Leigh Hunt clings to his friend's memory, seemed to point him out as the person best calculated for such an undertaking. His absence from this country, which prevented our mutual explanation, has unfortunately rendered my scheme abortive. I do not doubt that on some other occasion he will pay this tribute to his lost friend, and sincerely regret that the volume which I edit has not been honoured by its insertion.

Concerning the solitary position in which Mr. Shelley lived was the occasion that he was personally known to few; and his fearless enthusiasm in the cause which he considered the most sacred upon earth, the improvement of the moral and physical state of mankind, was the chief reason why be, like other illustrious reformers, was pursued and harried and calumni. No man was ever more devoted than he to the endeavour of making those around him happy; no man ever possessed friends more unforgivably attached to him. The ungrateful world did not feel his loss, and the gap it made seemed to close as quickly over his memory as the murderous sea above his living frame. Hereafter men will lament that his transcendent powers of intellect were extinguished before they had bestowed on them their choicest treasures. To his friends his loss is irremediable: the wise, the brave, the gentle, is gone for ever! He is to them as a bright vision, whose radiant track, left behind in the memory, is worth all the realities that society can afford. Before the critics contradict me, let them appeal to any one who had ever known him. To see him was to love him: and his presence, like Ithuriel's spear, was alone sufficient to disclose the falsehood of the tale which his enemies whispered in the ear of the ignorant world.

His life was spent in the contemplation of Nature, in arduous study, or in acts of kindness and affection. He was an elegant scholar and a profound metaphysician; without possessing much scientific knowledge, he was unrivalled in the justness and extent of his observations on natural objects; he knew every plant by its name, and was familiar with the history and habits of every production of the earth; he could interpret
without a fault each appearance in the sky; and the varied phenomena of
heaven and earth filled him with deep emotion. He made his study and
reading-room of the shadowed caves, the stream, the lake, and the water-
fall. Ill health and continual pain preyed upon his powers; and the soli-
tude in which we lived, particularly on our first arrival in Italy, although
congenial to his feelings, must frequently have weighed upon his spirits;
those beautiful and affecting Lines written in Dejection near Naples were
composed at such an interval; but, when in health, his spirits were
buoyant and youthful to an extraordinary degree.

Such was his love for Nature that every page of his poetry is associated,
in the minds of his friends, with the loveliest scenes of the countries which
he inhabited. In early life he visited the most beautiful parts of this
country and Ireland. Afterwards the Alps of Switzerland became his
inspirers. Prometheas Unbound was written among the deserted and flower-
grown ruins of Rome, and when he made his home under the Pisan hills,
their roofless hovels harboured him as he composed the Witch of Atlas,
Adonais, and Hellen. In the wild but beautiful Bay of Spezia, the winds
and waves which he loved became his playmates. His days were chiefly
spent on the water; the management of his boat, its alterations and im-
provements, were his principal occupation. At night, when the unclouded
moon shone on the calm sea, he often went alone in his little shallop to the
rocky caves that bordered it, and, sitting beneath their shelter, wrote the
Triumph of Life, the last of his productions. The beauty and strangeness
of this lonely place, the refined pleasure which he felt in the companions-
ship of a few selected friends, our entire sequestration from the rest of
the world, all contributed to render this period of his life one of con-
tinued enjoyment. I am convinced that the two months we passed there
were the happiest which he had ever known; his health even rapidly im-
proved, and he was never better than when I last saw him, full of spirit
and joy, embark for Leghorn, that he might there welcome Leigh Hunt
to Italy. I was to have accompanied him; but illness confined me to my
room, and thus put the seal on my misfortune. His vessel bore out of sight
with a favouring wind, and I remained awaiting his return by the breakers
of that sea which was about to engulf him.

He spent a week at Pisa, employed in kind offices toward his friends,
and enjoying with keen delight the renewal of their intercourse. He then
embarked with Mr. Williams, the chosen and beloved sharer of his plea-
sures and of his fate, to return to us. We waited for them in vain: the sea
by its restless moaning seemed to desire to inform us of what we would
not learn—but a veil may well be drawn over such misery. The real
anguish of those moments transcended all the fictions that the most
glowing imagination ever portrayed; our seclusion, the savage nature of
the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, and our immediate vicinity
to the troubled sea, combined to imbue with strange horror our days of
uncertainty. The truth was at last known—a truth that made our loved
and lovely Italy appear a tomb, its sky a pall. Every heart echoed the
deep lament, and my only consolation was in the praise and earnest
love that each voice bestowed and each countenance demonstrated for him
we had lost—not, I fondly hope, for ever; his unearthly and elevated
nature is a pledge of the continuance of his being, although in an altered
form. Rome received his ashes; they are deposited beneath its weed-
grown wall, and 'the world's sole monument' is enriched by his remains.

I must add a few words concerning the contents of this volume. Julian
and Maddalo, the Witch of Atlas, and most of the Translations, were
written some years ago; and, with the exception of the Cyclops, and the
Scenes from the Magico Prodigioso, may be considered as having re-
ceived the author's ultimate corrections. The Triumph of Life was his
last work, and was left in so unfinished a state that I arranged it in its
present form with great difficulty. All his poems which were scattered
in periodical works are collected in this volume, and I have added a
reprint of Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude: the difficulty with which a
copy can be obtained is the cause of its publication. Many of the Mis-
cellaneous Poems, written on the spur of the occasion, and never re-
touched, I found among his manuscript books, and have carefully
copied. I have subjoined, whenever I have been able, the date of their
composition.

I do not know whether the critics will reprehend the insertion of some
of the most imperfect among them; but I frankly own that I have been
more actuated by the fear lest any monument of his genius should escape
me than the wish of presenting nothing but what was complete to the
faddish reader. I feel secure that the lovers of Shelley's poetry (who
know how, more than any poet of the present day, every line and word
he wrote is instinct with peculiar beauty) will pardon and thank me: I
consecrate this volume to them.

The size of this collection has prevented the insertion of any prose
pieces. They will hereafter appear in a separate publication.

MARY W. SHELLEY.

London, June 1, 1834.
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POSTHUMOUS FRAGMENTS OF MARGARET NICHOLSON.

Advertisement
War

FRAGMENT: Supposed to be an Epithalamium of Francis Ravalliac and Charlotte Corday
Despair
Fragment
The Spectral Horseman
Melody to a Scene of Former Times
Stanza from a Translation of the Marseillaise Hymn
Bigotry’s Victim

On an Icicle that clung to the Grass of a Grave

Love
On a Fête at Carlton House: Fragment
To a Star
To Mary, who died in this opinion
A Tale of Society as it is: From Facts, 1814
To the Republicans of North America
To Ireland
On Robert Emmet’s Grave
The Retrospect: Cym Elan, 1812
Fragment of a Sonnet: To Harriet
To Harriet

SONNET: To a Balloon laden with Knowledge
SONNET: On launching some Bottles filled with Knowledge into the Bristol Channel

The Devil’s Walk
Fragment of a Sonnet: Farewell to North Devon
On leaving London for Wales
The Wandering Jew’s Soliloquy
ALASTOR

OR

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

PREFACE

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

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

"The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust,
Burn to the socket!
December 14, 1815.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quae erant, quid amarem, amans amare.
The Confessions of St. Augustine.

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

Mother of this unfathomable world! For ever my solemn litany I have loved Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps, And my heart ever gazes on the depth Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed In channels and on coffins, where black death Keeps record of the trophies won from thee, Hoping to still these obstinate questionings Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost

ALASTOR; OR SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

Thy messenger, to render up the tale Of what we are. In lone and silent hours, When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness, Like an inspired and desperate alchemist, Staking his very life on some dark hope, Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks With my most innocent love, until strange tears Uniting with those breathless kisses, made Such magic as compels the charmed night To render up thy charge:—and, though ne'er yet Thou hast unveiled thy immost sanctuary, Enough from incommunicable dream, And twilight phantasms, and deep noon-day thought, Has shone within me, that serenely now And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre Suspended in the solitary dome Of some mysterious and deserted fane, I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain May modulate with murmurs of the air, And motions of the forests and the sea, And voices of living beings, and woven hymns Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb No human hands with pious reverence reared, But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness,— A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath, The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:— Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no mourn hard Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh. He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude. Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes, And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes. The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn, And Silence, too enamoured of that voice, Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream, His infancy was nurtured. Every sight And sound from the vast earth and ambient air, Sent to his heart its choicest impulses. The fountains of divine philosophy Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
SHELLEY

Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home.
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has sought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocent hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts where'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake; suspend
Her timid steps to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step
Obsequent to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Babel, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids.
Memphis and Thebes, and whatso'er of strange
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,
Dark Ethiopia in her desert hills
Conceals, Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble daemons watch

ALASTOR: OR SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspected he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

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

The Poet wandered on, through Arabia
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aerial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way:
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web.
Of many-coloured wool and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire: wild numbers then
SHELLEY
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching wires
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose, As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burden: at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her painted bosom: . . . . she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended: in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realness of dream that restful shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! Alas!
Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,

ALASTOR; OR SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth.
While death's blue vault, with loathful vapours hung,
Where every shade which the soul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conducts, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart,
The insatiate hope which it awakened, stung
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast.
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
Over the wide airy wilderness: thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Starting with careless step the moonlight snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shuddering the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornes seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Bathe, and where the desolate tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair
Sere by the autumn of strange suffering
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, gone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
SHELLEY

His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitor. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had passed
In its career: the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after-times; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

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

Startled by his own thoughts he looked around.
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Of dark sound or awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.

ALASTOR; OR SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

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

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters sped
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave running on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he saw:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes the Poet saw
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in diakos wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
SHELLEY

Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean: safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form,
Had been an elemental god.

At midnight

The moon arose: and lo! the eternal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shine
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves
Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?

The boat fled on, the boiling torrent drove—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspension on the sweep of the smooth wave.

The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
In gulph the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed. —Vision and Lore
The Poet cried aloud, 'I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long!'

The boat pursued

The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably the Poet's path, as led
With alternating dash the gnarled roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. If the midst was left,
Reflected, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.

Seized by the sway of the ascending stream
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,

ALASTOR; OR SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glossy quiet mild those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulf embosom it?

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

The noonday sun

Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of their airy rocks
Mocking its means, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and intercepted leaves
Wove twilight through the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light by the way of the ascending stream
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
SHELLEY

Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks, and, as gnomes infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noontday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vapiduous shapes half seen; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or, painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Uncensorious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence; and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or ensnaring light.

ALASTOR; OR SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;—
But, undulating woods, and silent well,
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

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

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

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The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Grey rocks did peep from the sparse moss, and stemmed
The struggling brooks; tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghostly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs:—so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odourous winds
And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and, its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
Mid toppling stones, black guls and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems, with its accumulated crags,
To overhang the world: for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response, at each pause
In most familiar cadence, with the howl
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine
And torrent, were not all;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves for ever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor; and here
The children of the autumn whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or otherwise pale,
Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude:—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfailing storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying check,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

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

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

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

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which whoseoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation; which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not the high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woeful
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery.
Shelley

Their own cold powers, Art and eloquence,
And all the shows of the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woeful death of tears; when all
Is left at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not soles or grums,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

Note on Alastor, by Mrs. Shelley

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

This is neither the time nor place to speak of the misfortunes that chequered his life. It will be sufficient to say that, in all he did, he at the time of doing it believed himself justified to his own conscience; while the various ills of poverty and loss of friends brought home to him the sad realities of life. Physical suffering had also considerable influence in causing him to turn his eyes inward; inclining him rather to brood over the thoughts and emotions of his own soul than to glance abroad, and to make, as in Queen Mab, the whole universe the object and subject of his song. In the Spring of 1815 an eminent physician pronounced that he was dying rapidly of a consumption; abscesses were formed on his lungs, and he suffered acute spasms. Suddenly a complete change took place; and, though through life he was a martyr to pain and debility, every symptom of pulmonary disease vanished. His nerves, which nature had formed sensitive to an unexampled degree, were rendered still more susceptible by the state of his health.

As soon as the peace of 1814 had opened the Continent, he went abroad. He visited some of the more magnificent scenes of Switzerland, and returned to England from Lucerne, by the Reuss and the Rhine. The river-navigation enchanted him. In his favourite poem of The Last Man, his imagination had been excited by a description of such a voyage. In the summer of 1815, after a tour along the southern coast of Devonshire and a visit to Clifton, he rented a house on Bishopgate Heath, on the borders of Windsor Forest, where he enjoyed several months of comparative health and tranquil happiness. The latter summer months were

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

warm and dry. Accompanied by a few friends, he visited the source of the Thames, making a voyage in a wherry from Windsor to Cricklade. His beautiful stanzas in the churchyard of Lechlade were written on that occasion. Alastor was composed on his return. He spent his days under the oak-shades of Windsor Great Park; and the magnificent woodland was a fitting study to inspire the various descriptions of forestscenery we find in the poem.

None of Shelley's poems is more characteristic than this. The solemn spirit that reigns throughout, the worship of the majesty of nature, the broodings of a poet's heart in solitude—the mingling of the exulting joy which the various aspects of the visible universe inspires with the sad and struggling pangs which human passion imparts—give a touching interest to the whole. The death which he had often contemplated during the last months as certain and near he here represented in such colours as had, in his lonely musings, soothed his soul to peace. The versification sustains the solemn spirit which breathes throughout: it is peculiarly melodious. The poem ought rather to be considered didactic than narrative: it was the outpouring of his own emotions, embodied in the purest form he could conceive, painted in the ideal hues which his brilliant imagination inspired, and softened by the recent anticipation of death.

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

A FRAGMENT

Part I

Neue taintum prodesse voti,
Quantum scire licet. Venit acta omnium
Congerient, miserumque premunt tot seacula pectus.
Lucan, Phars. v. 176.

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One pale as yonder wan and hallowed moon,
With lips of lurid blue,
The other glowing like the vital morn,
When throned on ocean's wave,

It breathes over the world.

Yet both so passing strange and wonderful!

Hath then the iron-sceptred Skeleton,
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres,
To the hell dogs that cough beneath his throne
Cast that fair prey? Must that divinest form,
Which love and admiration cannot view

Without a beating heart, whose azure veins

5

10
SHELLEY

Steal like dark streams along a field of snow,
Whose outline is as fair as marble clothed
In light of some sublimest mind, decay?
Nor putrefaction's breath
Leave aught of this pure spectacle
But loathsomeless and ruin?—
Spare aught but a dark theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it but that dowry-winged slumberers
Have charmed their nurse coy Silence near her lids
To watch their own repose?
Will they, when morning's beam
Flows through those wells of light,
Seek far from noise and day some western cave,
Where woods and streams with soft and pausing winds
A lulling murmur weave?—
Ianthe doth not sleep
The dreamless sleep of death:
Nor in her moonlight chamber silently
Doth Henry hear her regular pulses throb,
Or mark her delicate cheek
With interchange of hues mock the broad moon,
Outwatching weary night,
Without assured reward.
Her dewy eyes are closed;
On their translucent lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs that burn below
With unapparent fire,
The baby Sleep is pillowed:
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Twining like tendrils of the paraite
Around a marble column,

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
'Tis like a wondrous strain that sweeps
Around a lonely ruin
When west winds sigh and evening waves respond
In whispers from the shore;
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Which from the unseen lyres of dels and groves
The genii of the breezes sweep.
Floating on waves of music and of light,
The chariot of the Daemon of the World
Descends in silent power:
Its shape reposed within: slight as some cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of day

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

When evening yields to night,
Bright as that fibrous woof when stars indue
Its transitory robe.
Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful
Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light
Check their unearthly speed; they stop and fold
Their wings of braided air:
The Daemon leaning from the ethereal car
Gazed on the slumbering maid.
Human eye hath ne'er beheld
A shape so wild, so bright, so beautiful,
As that which o'er the maiden's charmed sleep
Waving a starry wand,
Hung like a mist of light.
Such sounds as breathed around like odorious winds
Of wakening spring arise
Filling the chamber and the moonlight sky.
Maiden, the world's supremest spirit
Beneath the shadow of her wings
Folds all thy memory doth inherit
From ruin of divinest things,
Feelings that lure thee to betray,
And light of thoughts that pass away.
For thou hast earned a mighty boon,
The truths which wisest poets see
Dimly, thy mind may make its own,
Rewarding its own majesty,
Entranced in some diviner mood
Of self-oblivious solitude.

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

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

All that inspires thy voice of love,
Or speaks in thy unclosing eyes,
Or through thy frame doth burn or move,
Or think, or feel, awake, arise!
SHELEY

Spirit, leave for mine and me
Earth's unsubstantial mimicry!

It ceased, and from the mute and moveless frame
A radiant spirit arose,
All beautiful in naked purity.
Robed in its human hues it did ascend,
Disparting as it went the silver clouds,
It moved towards the car, and took its seat
Beside the Daemon shape.

Obedient to the sweep of airy song,
The mighty ministers
Unfurled their prismatic wings.
The magic car moved on;
The night was fair, innumerable stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault;
The eastern wave grew pale
With the first smile of morn.
The magic car moved on.
From the swift sweep of wings
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew;
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now far above a rock the utmost verge
Of the wide earth it flew,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Frowned over the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's stormy path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous ocean lay.
Its broad and silent mirror gave to view
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tingeing those fleecy clouds
That cradled in their folds the infant dawn.
The chariot seemed to fly
Through the abyss of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour;
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.
As they approached their goal,
The winged shadows seemed to gather speed.
The sea no longer was distinguished; earth
SHELLEY

Over the sinking sphere:
Thou must have marked the billowy mountain clouds,
Edged with intolerable radiancy,
Towering like rocks of jet
Above the burning deep:
And yet there is a moment
When the sun’s highest point
Peers like a star o’er ocean’s western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery purple gleam
Like fairy lands girt by some heavenly sea:
Then has thy rapt imagination soared
Where in the midst of all existing things
The temple of the mightiest Daemon stands.

Yet not the golden islands
That gleam amid you flood of purple light,
Nor the feathery curtains
That canopy the sun’s resplendent couch,
Nor the burnished ocean waves
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As the eternal temple could afford.
The elements of all that human thought
Can frame of lovely or sublime, did join
To rear the fabric of the fane, nor aught
Of earth may image forth its majesty.
Yet likest evening’s vault that fairy hall,
As heaven low resting on the wave it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome;
And on the verge of that obscure abyss
Where crystal battlements o’erhang the gulf
Of the dark world, ten thousand spheres diffuse
Their lustre through its adamantine gates.

The magic car no longer moved;
The Daemon and the Spirit
Entered the eternal gates.
Those clouds of airy gold
That slept in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy,
With the ethereal footsteps trembled not;
While slight and odorous mists
Floated to strains of thrilling melody
Through the vast columns and the pearly shrines.

The Daemon and the Spirit
Approached the overhanging battlement,

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

Below lay stretched the boundless universe!
There, far as the remotest line
That limits swift imagination’s flight,
Utilizing orbs mingled in mazy motion,
Immutably fulfilling
Eternal Nature’s law.
Above, below, around,
The circling systems formed
A wilderness of harmony,
Each with undeviating aim
In eloquent silence through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.—

Awhile the Spirit paused in ecstasy.
Yet soon she saw, as the vast spheres swept by,
Strange things within their belted orbs appear.

Like animated frenzies, dimly moved
Shadows, and skeletons, and friendly shapes,
Thronging round human graves, and o’er the dead
Sculpturing records for each memory
In verse, such as malignant gods pronounce,
Blasting the hopes of men, when heaven and hell
Confounded burst in ruin o’er the world:
And they did build vast trophies, instruments
Of murder, human bones, barbaric gold,
Skins torn from living men, and towers of skulls
With sightless holes gazing on blinder heaven,
Mites, and crowns, and brazen chariots stained
With blood, and sculls of mystic wickedness,
The sanguine codes of venerable crime.
The likeness of a throned king came by,
When these had passed, bearing upon his brow
A threefold crown; his countenance was calm,
His eye severe and cold; but his right hand
Was charged with bloody coin, and he did gnaw
By fits, with secret smiles, a human heart
Concealed beneath his robe; and motley shapes,
A multitude of bough, around him kneel,
With bosoms bare, and bowed heads, and false looks
Of true submission, as the sphere rolled by.
Brocking no eye to witness their foul shame,
Which human hearts must feel, while human tongues
Tremble to speak, they did rage horribly,
Breathing in self-contempt loose blasphemies
Against the Daemon of the World, and high
Hurling their armed hands where the pure Spirit,
Serenely inaccessible secure,
SHELLEY
Stood on an isolated pinnacle,
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Necessity's unchanging harmony.

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

Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams,
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes, that the proud Power of Evil
Shall not for ever on this fairest world
Shake pestilence and war, or that his slaves
With blasphemy for prayer, and human blood
For sacrifice, before his shrine for ever
In adoration bend, or Erebos
With all its handed fiends shall not uprise
To overwhelm in envy and revenge
The dauntless and the good, who dare to hurl
Defiance at his throne, girl tho' it be
With Death's omnipotence. Thou hast beheld
His empire, o'er the present and the past;
It was a desolate sight—now gaze on mine,
Futurity. Thou hoary giant Time,
Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,—
And from the cradles of eternity,
Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
Thy glorious destiny!

The Spirit saw
The vast frame of the renovated world
Smile in the lap of Chaos, and the sense

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD
Of hope thro' her fine texture did suffuse
Such varying glow, as summer evening casts
On undulating clouds and deepening lakes.
Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits,
Was the sweet stream of thought that with wild motion
Flowed o'er the Spirit's human sympathies.
The mighty tide of thought had paused awhile,
Which from the Daemon now like Ocean's stream
Again began to pour.—

To me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep—
Space, matter, time and mind—let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope,
All things are recreated, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life:
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
Rewarding her with their pure perfection:
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad:
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glows in the fruits, and mantles on the stream;
No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the undecaying trees;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And Autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of Spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint and blushes into love.

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

The vast tract of the parched and sandy waste
Now teems with countless rills and shady woods,
Corn-fields and pastures and white cottages;
And where the startled wilderness did hear
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
Hymning his victory, or the milder snake
Crushing the bones of some frail antelope
Within his brazen folds—the dewy lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sunrise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother’s door,
Share with the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet, his morning’s meal.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
Has seen, above the illimitable plain,
Morning on night and night on morning rise,
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
Its shadowy mountains on the sunbright sea,
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind
In melancholy loneliness, and swept
The desert of those ocean solitudes,
But vocal to the sea-bird’s harrowing shriek,
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds
Of kindlest human impulses respond:
Those lonely realms bright garden-Isles begem,
With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
And fertile valleys, resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
To meet the kisses of the flowerets there.

Man chief perceives the change, his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.
Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
Lowered o’er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardest herb that braces the frost
Basked in the moonlight’s ineffactual glow.
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night;
Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest and disease,

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

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

Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with stainless body and mind;
Blest from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.
He, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which from the exhaustless lore of human seal
Dawns on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness gift
With self-examining eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age,
And man, once fleeting o’er the transient scene
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth: no longer now
He slays the beast that sports around his dwelling
And horribly devours its mangled flesh,
Or drinks its vital blood, which like a stream
Of poison thro’ his fevered veins did flow
Feeding a plague that secretly consumed
His feeble frame, and kindling in his mind
Hatred, despair, and fear and vain belief,
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.
No longer now the winged habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror: man has lost
His desolating privilege, and stands
An equal amidst equals: happiness
And science dawn though late upon the earth;
SHELLEY

Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;  
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here;  
Reason and passion cease to combat there;  
Whilst mind unfettered o'er the earth extends  
Its all-subduing energies, and wields  
The sceptre of a vast dominion there.

Mild is the slow necessity of death:  
The tranquil spirit falls beneath its grasp,  
Without a groan, almost without a fear,  
Resolved in peace to the necessity,  
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,  
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.  
The deadly germs of languor and disease  
Waste in the human frame, and Nature gifts  
With choicest boon her human worshippers,  
How vigorous now the athletic form of age!  
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!  
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, or care,  
Had stamped the seal of grey deformity  
On all the mingling lineaments of time.  
How lovely the intrepid front of youth!  
How sweet the smiles of taintless infancy.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,  
Fearless and free the ruddy children play,  
Weaving ray chaplets for their innocent brows  
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,  
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom:  
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,  
There rust amid the accumulated ruins  
Now mingling slowly with their native earth:  
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once  
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity  
With a pale and sickly glare, now freely shines  
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness:  
No more the shuddering voice of hourest despair  
Peals through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes  
Of Ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds  
And merriment are resonant around.

The fanes of Fear and Falsehood bear no more  
The voice that once waked multitudes to war  
Thundering thro' all their aisles: but now respond  
To the death dirge of the melancholy wind:  
It was a sight of awfulness to see  
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

So sumptuous, yet withal so perishing!  
Even as the corpse that rests beneath their wall.  
A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death  
To-day, the breathing marble glows above  
To decorate its memory, and tongues  
Are busy of its life: to-morrow, worms  
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.  
These ruins soon lose not a wreck behind:  
Their elements, wide-scattered o'er the globe,  
To happier shapes are moulded, and become  
Ministrant to all blissful impulses:  
Thus human things are perfected, and earth,  
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,  
Is strengthened in all excellence, and grows  
Fairest and nobler with each passing year.

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

Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,  
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue  
The gradual paths of an aspiring change:  
For birth and life and death, and that strange state  
Before the naked powers that thru' the world  
Wander like winds have found a human home,  
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge  
The restless wheels of being on their way,  
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,  
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal:  
For birth but wakes the universal mind  
Whose mighty streams might else in silence flow  
Thru' the vast world, to individual sense  
Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape  
New modes of passion to its frame may lend;  
Life is its state of action, and the store  
Of all events is aggregated there  
That variegate the eternal universe;  
Death is a gate of dreaminess and gloom,  
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies  
And happy resons of eternal hope.  
Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on:
SHELLEY

Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,
To feed with kindliest dews its favourite flower.
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,
Lighting the green wood with its sunny smile.

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch flares;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
For what thou art shall perish utterly,
But what is thine may never cease to be;
Death is no foe to virtue: earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
And pressing the truth of visioned bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
Hopes that not vainly thou, and living fire
Of mind as radiant and as pure as thou,
Have shone upon the paths of men—return,
Surpassing Spirit, to that world, where thou
Art destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose pity would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease:
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received: virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

The Daemon called its wingèd ministers.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the crystal battlement,
Bending her beauteous eyes in thankfulness.
The burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of Heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew:
The mighty globes that rolled
Around the gate of the Eternal Fane
Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
Such tiny twinkles as the planet pins
That ministering on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.
Earth floated then below:
The chariot paused a moment;
The Spirit then descended:
And from the earth departing
The shadows with swift wings
Speeded like thought upon the light of Heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then,
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame:
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed;
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained:
She looked around in wonder and beheld
Henry, who knelted in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
And the bright beaming stars
That through the casement shone.

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

A POEM IN TWELVE CANTOS

"Οφαιδέν δε βρον ήν θύμα γάλακτος απόμοο
περαίνεν πρός άγγελον
πάντοιον ρακελ' οίον πάντοσθο λόγον έν εχύοις
ες Τραπεζφεν άγονα έπαναν έδον.
Πεζ. Πεζ. x.

PREFACE

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

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

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

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilised mankind produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected as it was impossible to realise. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then miracle and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revolution occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues, and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France, was terrible, and felt in the remotest corners of the civilised world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by absolute perseverence and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men have intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But, on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the same eagerness for good overleaped the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus, many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of
all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics, and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary Poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character; designing that, even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words to divert the attention of the reader, from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust them according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a Poet, without which genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education, indeed, can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea, and the solitude of forests: Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc, I have been a wanderer among distant fields, I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war; cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living monuments of our history. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me, like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense; and have read the Poets and the Historians and the Metaphysicians whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth, as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer do not in themselves constitute men Poets, but only prepares them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contended spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live; though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakespeare, Spenser, the dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon; the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded;—all resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakespeare than Shakespeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler nor the sublimest genius of any era can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the

1 I ought to except Sir W. Drummond's Academic Questions: a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.  
2 It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr. Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of population. This concession answers all the objections from his doctrine unfavorable to human improvement, and reduces the Essay on Population to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of Political Justice.

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

4 Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.
the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These
wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of
sophisms, in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of
slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence
in the imaginations of men, which, arising from the enslaved com-
nunities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations
in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise
and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe?
The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps
would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The Poem now presented to the Public occupied little more than six
months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with
unmitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and
candid criticism on my own work as it grew under my hands. I would will-
ingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long
labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that, if I should gain
something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness
and energy of imagery and language as it flowed fresh from my mind.

And, although the mere composition occupied no more than six months,
the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

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

DEDICATION

There is no danger to a man, that knows
What life and death is; there's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful
That he should stop to any other law.—CHAPMAN.

TO MARY —

1

So now my summer task is ended, Mary,
And I return to thee, nine own heart's home;
As to his Queen some victor Knight of Fairy,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome;
SHELLEY

Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become
A star among the stars of mortal night,
If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy beloved name, thou Child of love and light.

II

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

III

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

IV

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

V

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind;
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

Now has descended a serener hour,
And with inconstant fortune, friends return;
Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says:—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

The music of his home:—unwonted fears
Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughtful cares,
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

XIV

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

CANTO I

I

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

II

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

III

Hark! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps
Earth and the ocean. See! the lightnings yawn
Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lashed deeps
Glitter and boil beneath: it rages on,
S E L L E Y

One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,
Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by.

There is a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth, to spy
What calm has fall’n on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains,
Dark, vast, and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its fountains,
Comes forth, whilst with the speed its frame doth quiver,

T H E R E V O L T O F I S L A M

Sails, oars, and stream, tending to one endeavour;
So, from that chasm of light a winged Form
On all the winds of heaven approaching ever
Floated, dilating as it came: the storm
Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and warm.

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

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

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

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

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

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere
Only, 'twas strange to see the red commotion
Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere

Of sunset sweep, and their fierce roar to hear
Amid the calm: down the steep path I wound
To the sea-shore—the evening was most clear
And beautiful, and there the sea I found
Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

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

It seemed that this fair Shape had looked upon
That unimaginable fight, and now
That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
As brightly it illustrated her woe;
For in the tears which silently to flow
Poured out, its lustre hung; she watching o'er
The foam-wreaths which the faint tide wave below
Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily,
And after every groan looked up over the sea.

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

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I hear, alone,
What made its music more melodious be,
The pity and the love of every tone;
SHELLEY

But to the Snake those accents sweet were known
His native tongue and hers; nor did he beat
The hoar spray idly then, but winding on
Through the green shadows of the waves that meet
Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

XX

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

XXX

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

XXII

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

XXIII

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
But its own curved prow of thin moonstone,
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
To catch those gentlest winds which are not known

THE REvolt OF ISLAM

To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
With which it cleaves the sparkling sea; and now
We are embarked—the mountains hang and frown
Over the starry deep that gleams below,
A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

XXIV

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

XXV

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

XXVI

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

XXVII

'Thus evil triumphed, and the Spirit of evil,
One Power of many shapes which none may know,
One Shape of many names; the Fiend did revel
In victory, reigning o'er a world of woe,
SHELLEY

For the new race of man went to and fro,
Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
And hating good—for his immortal foe,
He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
To a dire Snake, with man and beast unrecoumened.

XXVIII

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

XXIX

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

XXX

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

XXXI

In the world's youth his empire was as firm
As its foundations—Soon the Spirit of Good,
Though in the likeness of a leathsome worm,
Sprang from the billows of the formless flood,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Which shrank and fled; and with that Fiend of blood
Renewed the doubtful war... Thrones then first shook,
And earth's immense and trampled multitude
In hope on their own powers began to look,
And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook.

XXXII

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

XXXIII

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

XXXIV

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

XXXV

List, stranger, list, mine is an human form,
Like that thou leastest—touch me! shrink not now!
My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but warm
With human blood.—'Twas many years ago,
THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

I saw, and started from my cottage-hearth;
And to the clouds and waves in nameless gladness,
Shrunk, till they caught immeasurable might—
And laughed in light and music: soon, sweet madness
Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

XL

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

XLI

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

XLII

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

XLIII

‘And said: “A Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden,
How wilt thou prove thy worth?” Then joy and sleep
Together fled, my soul was deeply laden,
And to the shore I went to muse and weep;
SHELLEY

But as I moved, over my heart did creep
A joy less soft, but more profound and strong
Than my sweet dream; and it forbade to keep
The path of the sea-shore: that Spirit's tongue
Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along.

XLIV

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

XLV

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

XLVI

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

XLVII

'Tho'fearest not then the Serpent on thy heart?'
'Fear it!' she said, with brief and passionate cry,
And spake no more: that silence made me start—
I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky;
Beneath the rising moon seen far away,
Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high,
Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
On the still waters—these we did approach away.

XLVIII

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

XLIX

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

L

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

LI

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

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

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

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

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne,
Reared on a pyramidal like sculptured flame,
Distinct with circling steps which rested on
Their own deep fire—soon as the Woman came

Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's name
And fell; and vanished slowly from the sight.
 Darkness arose from her dissolving frame,
Which gathering, filled that dome of woven light,
Blotting its spher'd stars with supernatural light.

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

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

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

I looked, and lo! one stood forth eloquently,
His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow
Which shadowed them was like the morning sky,
The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when in their flow
SHELLEY

Through the bright air, the soft winds as they blow
Wake the green world—his gestures did obey.
The oracular mind that made his features glow,
And where his curv'd lips half-open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous way.

LX

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

CANTO II

I

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

II

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

III

I heard, as all have heard, the various story
Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
False disputants on all its hopes and fears,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Victims who worshipped ruin,—chroniclers
Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state
Yet, fluttering power, had given its ministers
A throne of judgement in the grave:—twas fate,
That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe
Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,
And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
SHELLEY

The worship thence which they each other taught.
Well might men loathe their life, well might they turn
Even to the ills again from which they sought
Such refuge after death!—well might they learn
To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern!

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
Nor had I heard the story of their deeds;
But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
The language which they speak; and now, to me
The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds,
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scolls of mortal mystery.

XII

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

XIII

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

XIV

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

XV

One summer night, in commune with the hope
Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins gray
I watched, beneath the dark sky's starry cope;
And ever from that hour upon me lay
SHELLEY

The burden of this hope, and night or day,
In vision or in dream, clove to my breast:
Among mankind, or when gone far away
To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a guest
Which followed where I fled, and watched when I did rest.

XVI

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

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XIX

Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow,
I must have sought dark respite from its stress
In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow—
For to tread life's dismaying wilderness

THE REvolt OF ISLAM

Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
Amid the snares and scoffs of human kind,
Is hard—but I betrayed it not, nor less
With love that scorned return, sought to unbind
The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX

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

XXI

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

XXII

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

XXIII

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

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

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

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

XXVII
And soon I could not have refused her—thus
For ever, day and night, we two were ne'er
Parted, but when brief sleep divided us:
And when the pauses of the fulling air

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM
Of noon beside the sea, had made a lair
For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept,
And I kept watch over her slumberers there,
While, as the shifting visions o'er her swept,
Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept.

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

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

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

XXXI
And this beloved child thus felt the sway
Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud
The very wind on which it rolls away:
Hers too were all my thoughts, ere yet, endowed
SHELLEY

With music and with light, their fountains flowed
In poesy; and her still and earnest face,
Palpit with feelings which intensely glowed,
Within, was turned on mine with speechless grace,
Watching the hopes which there her heart had learned to trace.

XXXII

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

XXXIII

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

XXXIV

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

XXXV

Within that fairest form, the female mind
Untainted by the poison-clouds which rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find:
But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,

THE REvolt OF ISLAM

Victorious Evil, which had disposed
All native power, had those fair children torn,
And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest,
And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
Till they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI

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

XXXVII

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

XXXVIII

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

XXXIX

I smiled, and spake not.—Wherefore dost thou smile
At what I say? Laon, I am not weak,
And though my cheek might become pale the while,
With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
SHELLEY

Through their array of banded slaves to wreak
Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek
To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XLII

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

XLIII

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

XLIV

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

XLVII

"Can man be free if woman be a slave?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air,
To the corruption of a closed grave!
Can they whose mates are bears, condemned to bear

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Scorn, heavier far than told or anguish, dare
To trample their oppressors? in their home
Among their babes, thou knowest a curse would wear
The shape of woman—hoary Crime would come
Beleagued, and Fraud rebuild religion's tottering dome.

XLIV

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

XLV

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

XLVI

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

XLVII

"We part!—O Laon, I must dare nor tremble
To meet those looks no more!—Oh, heavy stroke!
Sweet brother of my soul! can I dissemble
The agony of this thought?—As thus she spoke
SHELLEY

The gathered sobs her quivering accents broke, 1085
And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
I remained still for tears—sudden she woke 1086
As one awakes from sleep, and wildly pressed
My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possessed.

XLVII

'We part to meet again—but yon blue waste, 1090
Yon desert wide and deep holds no recess,
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced
We might survive all ills in one caress:
Nor doth the grave—I fear 'tis passionless—
Nor yon cold vacant Heaven:—we meet again
Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless
Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain
When these dismembered bones are trodden in the plain.'

XLIX

I could not speak, though she had ceased, for now 1100
The fountains of her feeling, swiftly deep,
Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow;
So we arose, and by the starlight steep
Went homeward—neither did we speak nor weep,
But, pale, were calm with passion—thus subdued
Like evening shades that o'er the mountains creep,
We moved towards our home; where, in this mood,
Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

CANTO III

I

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

II

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
More time than might make gray the infant world,
Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space:
When the third came, like mist on breezes curled,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled:
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna; drooping briony, peared
With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered wave,
Hung, where we sate to taste the joys which Nature gave.

III

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

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

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

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

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

X
These words had fallen on my unheeding ear,
Whilst I had watched the motions of the crew
With seeming-casual glance; not many were
Around her, for their comrades just withdrew

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM
To guard some other victim—so I drew
My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly
All unaware three of their number slew,
And grasped a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry
My countrymen invoked to death or liberty!

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

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

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

XIV
They raised me to the platform of the pile,
That column's dizzy height:—the grate of brass
Through which they thrust me, open stood the while,
As to its ponderous and suspended mass,
SHELLEY

With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!
With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound:
The grate, as they departed to repass,
With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
Of their retreating steps in the dense gloom were drowned.

XV

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

XVI

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

XVII

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

XVIII

I watched, until the shades of evening wrapped
Earth like an exhalation—then the bark
Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapped.
It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark.

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark
Its path no more!—I sought to close mine eyes,
But like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark;
I would have risen, but ere that I could rise,
My parched skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX

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

XX

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

XXX

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

XXII

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
Burst o'er the golden isles—a fearful sleep,
Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn
Of the riven soul, sent its foul dreams to sweep
SHELLEY

With whirlwind swiftness—a fall far and deep,—
A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness—
These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep
Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness,
A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless!

XXIII

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

XXIV

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

XXV

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

XXVI

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue,
The dwelling of the many-coloured worm,
Hung there; the white and hollow cheek I drew
To my dry lips—what radiance did inform

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Those slyly eyes? whose was that withered form?
Alas, alas! it seemed that Cythna's ghost
Laughter in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
Within my teeth!—A whirlwind keen as frost
Then in its sinking gulls my sickening spirit tossed.

XXVII

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

XXVIII

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

XXIX

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

XXX

As, lifting me, it fell!—What next I heard,
Were billows leaping on the harbour-bar,
And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly stirred
My hair;—I looked abroad, and saw a star
S H E L L E Y

Shining beside a sail, and distant far
That mountain and its column, the known mark
Of those who in the wide deep wandering are,
So that I feared some Spirit, fell and dart;
In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish dark.

XXXI

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

XXXII

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

XXXIII

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

XXXIV

And then the night-wind steaming from the shore,
Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,
And the swift boat the little waves which bore,
Were cut by its keen keel, though slantingly;

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
The myrtle-blossoms staring the dim grove,
As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
On sidelong wing, into a silent cove,
Where oaken pines a shade under the starlight wove.

CANTO IV

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

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

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

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

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

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
In converse with the dead, who leave the stamp
Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
When they are gone into the senseless damp

Of graves;—his spirit thus became a lamp
Of splendour, like to those on which it fed:
Through peopled haunts, the City and the Camp,
Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,
And all the ways of men among mankind he read.

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

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

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

'Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoever my wakened thoughts create
Out of the hopes of thine aspirations bold,
SHELLEY

Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore
Doctrines of human power my words have told,
They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

XIII

‘In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
My writings to their babes, no longer blind;
And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
And vows of faith each to the other bind;
And marriagable maidens, who have pinned
With love, till life seemed melting through their look,
A warmer zeal, a nobler hope now fast;
And every bosom thus is rapt and shock,
Like autumn’s myriad leaves in one swolen mountain-brook.

XIV

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

XV

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

XVI

‘For I have been thy passive instrument’—
(As thus the old man spake, his countenance
Gleamed on me like a spirit’s)— thou hast lent
To me, to all, the power to advance

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Towards this unforeseen deliverance
From our ancestral chains—ay, thou didst rear
That lamp of hope on high, which time nor chance
Nor change may not extinguish, and my share
Of good, was o’er the world its gathered beams to bear.

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XIX

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

XX

‘The wild-eyed women throng around her path:
From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor’s wrath,
Or the caresses of his sated lust
SHELLEY

They congregate:—in her they put their trust;
The tyrants send their armed slaves to quell
Her power:—they, even like a thunder-gust
Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
Of that young maiden’s speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

XXI

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

XXII

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

XXIII

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

XXIV

‘Blood soon, although unwillingly, to shed,
The free cannot forbear—the Queen of Slaves,
The hoodwinking Angel of the blind and dead,
Custom, with iron mace points to the graves

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Where her own standard desolately waves
Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.
Many yet stand in her array:—she paves
Her path with human hearts,” and o’er it flings
The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

XXV

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

XXVII

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

XXVIII

‘Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
As night and day those ruthless bands around
The watch of love is kept:—a trance which awes
The thoughts of men with hope—as, when the sound
Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds confound,
Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear
Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound,
The conquerors pause, and oh! may freemen never
Clasp the relentless knees of Dread the murderer!

XXVIII

‘If blood be shed, ’tis but a change and choice
Of bonds,—from slavery to cowardice
A wretched fall!—Uplift thy charmed voice!
Four on those evil men the love that lies
SHELLEY

Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes—
Arise, my friend, farewell!—As thus he spake,
From the green earth lightly I did arise,
As one out of dim dreams that doth awake;
And looked upon the depth of that repose lake.

XXX

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

XXX

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

XXXI

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

XXXII

Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged man
I left, with interchange of looks and tears,
And lingering speech, and to the Camp began
My way. O'er many a mountain-chain which rears

T H E R E V O L T O F I S L A M

Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit hears
My frame: o'er many a dale and many a moor,
And gaily now seems serene earth wears
The blossomy spring’s star-bright investiture,
A vision which fought sad from sadness might allure.

XXXIII

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

XXXIV

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

CANTO V

I

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

II

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

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

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

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

Thus, while with rapid lips and earnest eyes
We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict spread
As from the earth did suddenly arise;
From every tent roused by that clamour dread,
SHELLEY

But ye have quenched them—there were smiles to steep
Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe;
And those whom love did set his watch to keep
Around your tents, truth's freedom to bestow,
Ye stabbed as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now.

XI

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

XII

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

XIII

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

XIV

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation,
Towards the City then the multitude,
And I among them, went in joy—a nation
Made free by love;—a mighty brotherhood

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Linked by a jealous interchange of good;
A glorious pageant, more magnificent
Than kingly slaves arrayed in gold and blood,
When they return from carnage, and are sent
In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement.

XV

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

XVI

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

XVII

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

XVIII

And they, and all, in one loud symphony
My name with Liberty commingling, lifted
'The friend and the preserver of the free!
The parent of this joy!' and fair eyes gifted
SHELLEY

With feelings, caught from one who had uplifted
The light of a great spirit, round me shone;
And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted
Like restless clouds before the steadfast sun,—
Where was that Maid? I asked, but it was known of none.

XIX

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

XX

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

XXI

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

XXII

She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet
When human steps were heard,—he moved nor spoke,
Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet
The gaze of strangers—our loud entrance wove

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
The calm of its recesses,—like a tomb
Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
Of footfalls answered, and the twilight's gloom
Lay like a channel's mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII

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

XXIV

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

XXV

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

XXVI

I led him forth from that which now might seem
A gorgeous grave: through portals sculptured deep
With imagery beautiful as dream
We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
SHELLEY

Over its unregarded gold to keep
Their silent watch.—The child trod faintingly,
And as she went, the tears which she did weep
Glanced in the starlight; wildered seemed she,
And when I spoke, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII

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

XXVIII

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

XXIX

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

XXX

And he was faint withal: I sate beside him
Upon the earth, and took that child so fair
From his weak arms, that ill might none beside him
Or her;—when food was brought to them, her share

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

To his averted lips the child did hear,
But, when she saw he had enough, she ate
And wept the while;—the lonely man's despair
Hunger then overcame, and of his state
Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sailed.

XXXI

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

XXXII

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

XXXIII

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

XXXIV

'What call ye justice? Is there one who ne'er
In secret thought has wished another's ill?—
Are ye all pure? Let those stand forth who hear,
And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill,
THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

I went,—it was a sight which might avail
To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
Now first from human power the reverend veil
Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb
Four forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom:

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

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

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

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethean joy! so that all those assembled
Cast off their memories of the past wornout;
Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
SHELLEY

And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled;
So with a beating heart I went, and one,
Who having much, covets yet more, resembled;
A lost and dear possession, which not won,
He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII

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

XLIV

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

XLV

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

XLVI

Like music of some minstrel heavenly-gifted,
To one whom friends enthral, this voice to me;
Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
I was so calm and joyous.—I could see

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

The platform where we stood, the statues three
Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine,
The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea;
As when eclipse hath passed, things sudden shine
To men’s astonished eyes most clear and crystalline.

XLVII

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

XLVIII

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

XLIX

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

L

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

Beside that Image then I sate, while she
Stood, mid the throngs which ever ebbed and flowed,
Like light amid the shadows of the sea
Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd
That touch which none who feels forgets, bestowed;
And whilst the sun returned the steadfast gaze
Of the great Image, as o'er Heaven it glode.
That rite had place; it ceased when sunset's blaze
Burned o'er the isles. All stood in joy and deep amaze—
When in the silence of all spirits there
Laone's voice was felt, and through the air
Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently fair:

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

'O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven!
Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being,
Lo! thou dost re-ascend the human heart,
Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert
In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
The shade of thee—now, millions start

To feel thy lightnings through them burning:
Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure,
Or Sympathy the sad tears turning
To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,
Descends amidst us—Scorn, and Hate,
Revenge and Selfishness are desolate—
A hundred nations swear that there shall be
Pity and Peace and Love, among the good and free!

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

'My brethren, we are free! the plains and mountains,
The grey sea-shore, the forests and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers;—man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow;
For oft we still must weep, since we are human.
A stormy night's serenest morrow,
Whose showers are pity's gentle tears,
Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
Like infants without hopes or fears,
And whose beams are joys that lie
In blended hearts, now holds dominion;
The dawn of mind, which upwards on a pinion
Borne, swift as sunrise, far illumines space,
And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace!

'My brethren, we are free! The fruits are flowing
Beneath the stars, and the night winds are flowing
SHELLEY

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

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

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

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

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

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

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

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

Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
Or poison none this festal did pollute,
But piled on high, an overflowing store
Of pomegranates, and citrons, fairest fruit,
Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
Accursed fire their mild juice could transmute
Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
In baskets; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet.

Laone had descended from the shrine,
And every deepest look and holiest mind
Fed on her form, though now those tones divine
Were silent as she passed; she did unwind
SHELLEY

Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
She mixed; some impulse made my heart refrain
From seeking her that night, so I reclined
Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
A festal watchfire burned beside the dusky main.

LVIII

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

CANTO VI

I

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

II

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

III

Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
Resounded: and—"They come! to arms! to arms!
The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name! to arms!"

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

In vain: for Panic, the pale fiend who charms
Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept
Like waves before the tempest—these alarms
Came to me, as to know their cause I kept
On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept!

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

For now the despot's bloodhounds with their prey
Unarmed and unaware, were going deep
Their glutiny of death: the loose array
Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep,
SHELLEY

And with loud laughter for their tyrant reap
A harvest sown with other hopes, the while,
Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep
A killing rain of fire—when the waves smile
As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano-isle,

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

For ever while the sun was climbing Heaven
The horseman hewed our unarmed myriads down
Safely, though when by thirst of carnage driven
Too near, those slaves were swiftly overthrown

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

By hundreds leaping on them:—flesh and bone
Soon made our ghastly ramparts; then the shaft
Of the artillery from the sea was thrown
More fast and fiery, and the conquerors laughed
In pride to bear the wind our screams of torment waft.

XII

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

XIII

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

XIV

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

XV

Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind
Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood,
To mutual ruin armed by one behind
Who sits and scoffs—that friend so mild and good,
SHELLEY

Who like its shadow near my youth had stood,
Was stabb'd—my old preserver's hoary hair
With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strewed
Under my feet!—I lost all sense or care,
And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI

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

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XX

And its path made a solitude—I rose
And mark'd its coming: it relax'd its course
As it approach'd me, and the wind that flows
Through night, bore accents to mine ear whose force
Might create smiles in death—the Tartar horse
Paused, and I saw the shape its might which sway'd,
And heard her musical pants, like the sweet source
Of waters in the desert, as she said
'Mount with me, Lao! now!'—I rapidly obey'd.

XXI

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

XXII

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

XXIII

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

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

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

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

Within that ruin, where a shattered portal
Looks to the eastern stars, abandoned now
By man, to be the home of things immortal,
Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go,
SHELLEY

Which we together passed, their hopes and fears,
The blood itself which ran within our frames,
That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts expressed by them, our very names,
And all the winged hours which speechless memory claims,

XXXII

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

XXXIII

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

XXXIV

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

XXXV

Was it one moment that confounded thus
All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
Unutterable power, which shielded us
Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Into a wide and wild oblivion
Of tumult and of tenderness? or now
Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
The seasons, and mankind their changes know,
Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below?

XXXVI

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

XXXVII

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

XXXVIII

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

XXXIX

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
Of interchanged vows, which, with a rite
Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.—
Few were the living hearts which could unite

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Like ours, or celebrate a bridal-night
With such close sympathies, for they had sprung
From linked youth, and from the gentle might
Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long,
Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest, strong.

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

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

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

Since she had food,—therefore I did awaken
The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane
Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
SHELLEY

And upon me, close to the waters where
I stooped to slake my thirst;—I shrink to taste,
For the salt bitterness of blood was there;
But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste
If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII

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

XLIX

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

L

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

LX

As thus she spake, she grasped me with the strength
Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth
She led, and over many a corpse—at length
We came to a lone hut where on the earth

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Which made its floor, she in her ghastly mirth
Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
Had piled three heaps of leaves, making a death
Among the dead—round which she set in state
A ring of cold, stiff babes; silent and stark they sate.

LII

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

LIII

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

LIV

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

LV

Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom,
And sweetest kisses past, we two did share
Our peaceful meal:—as an autumnal blossom
Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air,
SHELLEY

After cold showers, like rainbows woven there,
Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit
Mantled, and in her eyes, an atmosphere
Of health, and hope; and sorrow quenched near it,
And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

CANTO VII

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

One was she among many there, the thrills
Of the cold Tyrant's cruel lust: and they
Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls;
But she was calm and sad, musing alway

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On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
The Tyrant heard her singing to her lute
A wild, and sad, and spirit-thrilling lay,
Like winds that die in wastes—one moment mute
The evil thoughts it made, which did his breast pollute.

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

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

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

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

XII
'And then,' she said, 'he laid me in a cave
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,
A fountain round and vast, in which the wave
Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM
Down which, one moment resting, he did flee,
Winning the adverse depth; that spacious cell
Like an hypaethric temple wide and high,
Whose aery dome is inaccessible,
Was pierced with one round cleft through which the sunbeams fell.

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

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

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

XVI
'Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing,
The eagle, and the fountain, and the air;
Another frenzy came—there seemed a being
Within me—a strange load my heart did bear,
SHELLEY

As if some living thing had made its lair
Even in the fountains of my life,—a long
And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,
Then grew, like sweet reality among
Dim visionary woes, an unceasing throng.

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XXIX

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

XX

'I watched the dawn of her first smiles, and soon
When zenith-stars were trembling on the wave,
Or when the beams of the invisible moon,
Or sun, from many a prism within the cave

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Their gem-born shadows to the water gave,
Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand,
From the swift lights which might that fountain pave,
She would mark one, and laugh, when that command
Slighting, it lingered there, and could not understand.

XXI

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

XXII

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

XXIII

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

XXIV

'I was no longer mad, and yet methought
My breasts were swollen and changed:—in every vein
The blood stood still one moment, while that thought
Was passing—with a gush of sickening pain.
SHELLEY

It ebbed even to its withered springs again:
When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned
From that most strange delusion, which would fail
Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearned
With more than human love,—then left it unreturned.

XXV

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

XXVI

'Time passed; I know not whether months or years;
For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made
Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears:
And I became at last even as a shade,
A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have preyed,
Till it be thin as air; until, one even,
A Nautilus upon the fountain played.

Spreading his azure sail where breath of Heaven
Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

XXVII

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

XXVIII

'This wakened me, it gave me human strength;
And hope, I knew not whence or wherefore, rose,
But I resumed my ancient powers at length;
My spirit felt again like one of those

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
Of humankind their prey—what was this cave?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX

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

XXX

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

XXXI

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

XXXII

'And on the sand would I make signs to range
These woods, as they were woven, of my thought;
Clear, elemental shapes, whose smallest change
A subtler language within language wrought:
SHELLEY

The key of truths which once were dimly taught
In old Crotota;—and sweet melodies
Of love, in that lorn solitude I caught
From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
Shone through my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize.

XXXIII

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

XXXIV

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

XXXV

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

XXXVI

'All is not lost! There is some recompense
For hope whose fountain can be thus profound,
Even throned Evil's splendid impotence,
Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Of hymns to truth and freedom—the dread bound
Of life and death passed fearlessely and well,
Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
Racks which degraded woman's greatness tell,
And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII

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

XXXVIII

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

XXXIX

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

XL

'My spirit moved upon the sea like wind
Which round some thorny cape will lag and hover,
Though it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
The strength of tempest: day was almost over,
SHELLEY

When through the fading light I could discover
A ship approaching—its white sails were fed
With the north wind—its moving shade did cover
The twilight deep;—the Mariners in dread
Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

XLI

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

CANTO VIII

I

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

II

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

III

‘We passed the islets, borne by wind and stream,
And as we sailed, the Mariners came near
And thronged around to listen;—in the gleam
Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

May not attain, and my calm voice did rear;
Ye all are human—you broad moon gives light
To millions who the selfsame likeness wear,
Even while I speak—beneath this very night,
Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight.

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

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

X

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

XI

"O Love, who to the hearts of wandering men
Art as the calm to Ocean's weary waves!
Justice, or Truth, or Joy! those only can
From slavery and religion's labyrinth caves

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.
To give to all an equal share of good,
To track the steps of Freedom, though through graves
She pass, to suffer all in patient mood,
To weep for crime, though stained with thy friend's dearest
blood,—

XII

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

XIII

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

XIV

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

XV

"Woman!—she is his slave, she has become
A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn,
The outcast of a desolated home;
Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves have worn
SHELLEY

Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn,
As calm decks the false Ocean—well ye know
What Woman is, for none of Woman born,
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

XVI

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

XVII

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

XVIII

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

XIV

"Disguise it not—we have one human heart—
All mortal thoughts confess a common home:
Blush not for what may to thyself impart
Stains of inevitable crime: the doom

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Is this, which has, or may, or must become
Thine, and all humankind’s? Ye are the spoil
Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb,
Thou and thy thoughts and they, and all the toil
Wherewith ye twine the rings of life’s perpetual coil.

XX

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

XXI

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

XXII

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

XXIII

"Speak thou! whence come ye?"—A Youth made reply:
"Wearily, wearily o’er the boundless deep
We sail;—thou readest well the misery
Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep
SHELLEY

Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,
Or dare not write on the dishonoured brow;
Even from our childhood have we learned to steep
The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
And never dreamed of hope or refuge until now.

XXIV

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

XXV

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

XXVI

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

XXVII

"Recede not! pause not now! Thou art grown old,
But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth
Are children of one mother, even Love:—behold!
The eternal stars gaze on us! Is the truth

THEREvolOf ISLAM

Within your soul? care for your own, or ruth
For others' sufferings? do ye thirst to hear
A heart which not the serpent Custom's tooth
May violate?—Be free, and even here,
Swear to be firm till death!" They cried "We swear! We swear!"

XXVIII

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

XXIX

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

XXX

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

CANTO IX

I

'That night we anchored in a woody bay,
And sleep no more around us dared to hover
Than, when all children's doubts and fear has passed away,
It shades the couch of some unresting lover,
SHELLEY

Whose heart is now at rest: thus night passed over
In mutual joy:—around, a forest grew
Of poplar and dark oaks, whose shade did cover
The waning stars pranked in the waters blue,
And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew.

II

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

III

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

IV

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

V

'We reached the port.—Alas! from many spirits
The wisdom which had waked that cry, was fled,
Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits
From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Upon the night's devouring darkness shed:
Yet soon bright day will burst—even like a chasm
Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead,
Which wrap the world; a wide enthusiasm,
To cleanse the fevered world as with an earthquake's spasm!

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

'But soon my human words found sympathy
In human hearts: the purest and the best,
As friend with friend, made common cause with me,
And they were few, but resolute;—the rest,
SHELLEY

Ere yet success the enterprise had blessed,
Leagued with me in their hearts,—their meals, their slumber,
Their hourly occupations, were possessed
By hopes which I had armed to overnumber
Those hosts of meaner cares, which life's strong wings encomber.

X

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

XI

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

XII

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

XIII

'The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear,
The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event—
That pernicious and custom, gold and prayer,
And whatsoever, when force is impotent,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

To fraud the scripture of the world has lent,
Might, as he judged, confirm his falling sway.
Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent
To curse the rebels,—To their gods did they
For Earthquake, Plague, and Want, kneel in the public way.

XIV

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

XV

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

XVI

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

XVII

'And gold was scattered through the streets, and wine
Flowed at a hundred feasts within the wall,
In vain! the steady towers in Heaven did shine
As they were wont, nor at the priestly call
SHELLEY

Lea Plague her banquet in the Ethiop’s hall,
Nor Famine from the rich man’s portal came,
Where at her ease she ever preys on all
Who throng to kneel for food: nor fear nor shame,
Nor faith, nor discord, dimmed hope’s newly kindled flame.

XVIII

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

XIX

‘The rest thou knowest.—Lo! we two are here—
We have survived a ruin wide and deep—
Strange thoughts are mine.—I cannot grieve or fear,
Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep.
I smile, though human love should make me weep.
We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
And I do feel a mighty calmness creep
Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-morrow.

XX

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

XXI

‘The blasts of Autumn drive the winged seeds
Over the earth,—next come the snows, and rain,
And frosts, and storms, which dreary Winter leads
Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train;

XXII

Behold! Spring sweeps over the world again,
Shedding soft dews from her ethereal wings;
Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain,
And music on the waves and woods she slings.
And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

XXIII

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

XXIV

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

XXV

‘The seeds are sleeping in the soil: meanwhile
The Tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey,
Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
Because they cannot speak; and, day by day,
The moon of wasting Science wanes away
Among her stars, and in that darkness vast
The sons of eon violence and wrong are pray,
And gray Priests triumph, and like blight or blast
A shade of selfish care o’er human looks is cast.

XXV

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

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

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

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

XXIX
'So be the turf heaped over our remains
Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot,
What'er it be, when in these mingling veins
The blood is still, be ours; let sense and thought

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Pass from our being, or be numbered not
Among the things that are; let those who come
Behind, for whom our steadfast will has bought
A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
Insult with careless tread, our undivided tomb.

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

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

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

XXXIII
'These are blind fancies—reason cannot know
What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive;
There is delusion in the world—and woe,
And fear, and path—we know not whence we live,
SHELLEY

Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give
Their being to each plant, and star, and beast,
Or even these thoughts.—Come near me! I do weave
A chain I cannot break—I am possessed
With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human breast.

XXXIV

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

XXXV

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

XXXVI

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

CANTO X

I

Was there a human spirit in the steed,
That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,
He broke our linked rest? or do indeed
All living things a common nature own,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

And thought erect an universal throne,
Where many shapes one tribute ever bear?
And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan
To see her sons contend? and makes she bare
Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores may share?

II

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

III

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

IV

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

V

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

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

'Buť first, go slay the rebels—why return
The victor bands?' he said, 'millions yet live,
Of whom the weakest with a word might turn
The scales of victory yet;—let none survive

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

But those within the walls—each fifth shall give
The expiation for his brethren here.
Go forth, and waste and kill!'—'O king, forgive
My speech,' a soldier answered—but we fear
The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near;

X

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

XI

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

XII

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

XIII

Day after day the burning sun rolled on
Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
A lamp of Autumn, ripening with its flame.
SHELLEY

The few lone ears of corn;—the sky became
Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast
Languished and died,—the thirsting air did claim
All moisture, and a rotting vapour passed
From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV

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

XV

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

XVI

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

XVII

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare;
So on those strange and congregation hosts
Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Groaned with the burden of a new despair;
Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
Feeds from her thousand breasts, though sleeping there
With lidless eyes, lie Faith, and Plague, and Slaughter,
A ghastly brood; conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

XVIII

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

XIX

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

XX

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

XXI

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well
Was choked with rotting corpses, and became
A cauldron of green mist made visible
At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
SHELLEY

Seeking to quench the agony of the flame,
Which raged like poison through their bursting veins;
Naked they were from torture, without shame,
Spotted with nameless scars and lurid stains,
Childhood, and youth, and age, writhing in savage pains.

XXII

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

XXIII

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

XXIV

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

XXV

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely light
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
That lingered on his lips, the warrior’s might

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Was loosed, and a new and ghastlier night
In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes; he fell
Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright
Among the guests, or raving mad, did tell
Strange truths; a dying seer of dark oppression’s hell.

XXVI

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

XXVII

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

XXVIII

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

XXIX

‘Well didst thou loosen on this impious City
Thine angels of revenge: recall them now;
Thy worshippers, abused, here kneel for pity;
And bind their souls by an immortal vow:
SHELLEY

We swear by thee! and to our oath do thou
Give sanction, from thine hell of fiends and flame,
That we will kill with fire and torments slow,
The last of those who mocked thy holy name,
And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim.

XXX

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

XXXI

And Oromaeze, Joshua, and Mahomet,
Moses and Buddha, Zerdust, and Brah, and Foh,
A tumult of strange names, which never met
Before, as watchwords of a single woe,
Arose; each raging votary 'gan to throw
Aloft his armed hands, and each did bowl
'Our God alone is God'!—and slaughter now
Would have gone forth, when from beneath a cowl
A voice came forth, which pierced like ice through every soul.

XXXII

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

XXXIII

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear,
Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
Even where his idol stood; for, far and near

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
That faith and tyranny were trampled down;
Many a pale victim, doomed for truth to share
The murderer's cell, or see, with helpless groan,
The priests his children drag for slaves to serve their own.

XXXIV

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

XXXV

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

XXXVI

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

XXXVII

'Ay, there is famine in the gulf of hell,
Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn,—
Their lurid eyes ANSIJest those who fell
By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn,
SHELLEY

Are in their jaws! they hunger for the spawn
Of Satan, their own brethren, who were sent
To make our souls their spoil. See! see! they fawn
Like dogs, and they will sleep with luxury spent,
When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent!

XXXVIII

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

XXXIX

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

XL

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

XLI

’Twas morn.—At noon the public crier went forth,
Proclaiming through the living and the dead
‘The Monarch saith, that his great Empire’s worth
Is set on Laon and Laone’s head:

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

He who but one yet living here can lead,
Or who the life from both their hearts can wring,
Shall be the kingdom’s heir, a glorious need!
But he who both alive can slay bring,
The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal King.’

XLII

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

XLIII

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

XLIV

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

XLV

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

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

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

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

CANTO XI
I
She saw me not,—she heard me not,— alone
Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood;
She spake not, breathed not, moved not,—there was thrown
Over her look, the shadow of a mood

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM
Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
A thought of voiceless depth;—she stood alone,
Above, the Heavens were spread;—below, the flood
Was murmuring in its caves;—the wind had blown
Her hair apart, through which her eyes and forehead shone.

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

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

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

V
Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
Was now heard there,—her dark and intricate eyes
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
Absorbed the glories of the burning skies,
SHELLEY

Which, mingling with her heart’s deep ecstasies, Burst from her looks and gestures; —and a light Of liquid tenderness, like love, did rise From her whole frame, an atmosphere which quite Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

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

IX

Not death— death was no more refuge or rest; Not life — it was despair to be! — not sleep, For fiends and chariots of fire had dispossessed All natural dreams: to wake was not to weep,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

But to gaze mad and pallid, at the leap To which the Future, like a snaky scourge, Or like some tyrant’s eye, which aye doth keep Its withering beam upon his slaves, did urge Their steps; they heard the roar of Hell’s sulphurous surge.

X

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

XI

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

XII

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

XIII

And many, from the crowd collected there, Joined that strange dance in fearful sympathies; There was the silence of a long despair, When the last echo of those terrible cries
SHELLEY

Came from a distant street, like agonies
Stifled afar.—Before the Tyrant’s throne
All night his aged Senate sat; their eyes
In stony expectation fixed; when one
Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and alone.

XIV

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

XV

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

XVI

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

XVII

‘Ye seek for happiness—alas, the day!
Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold,
Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway
For which, O willing slaves to Custom old,

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Severe taskmistress! ye your hearts have sold.
Ye seek for peace, and when ye die, to dream
No evil dreams: all mortal things are cold
And senseless them; if sought survive, I deem
It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem.

XVIII

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

XIX

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

XX

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

XXI

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

XXII

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

XXIII

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

XXIV

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

XXV

'With me do what you will. I am your foe!  
The light of such a joy as makes the stare  
Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow,  
Shone in a hundred human eyes—Where, where

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Is Lao? Haste! fly! drag him swiftly here!  
We grant thy boon.—'I put no trust in ye,  
Swear by the Power ye dread.'—'We swear, we swear!'  
The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly,  
And smiled in gentle pride, and said, 'Lo! I am he!'

CANTO XII

I

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

II

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

III

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

IV

Tumult was in the soul of all beside,  
Ill joy, or doubt, or fear; but those who saw  
Their tranquil victim pass, felt wonder glide  
Into their brain, and became calm with awe.—
SHELLEY

See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw,
A thousand torches in the spacious square,
Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
Await the signal round: the morning fair
Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare.

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

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

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

They fly,—the torches fall—a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant!—they recede!
For ere the cunyon’s roar has died, they hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

Dark and gigantic, with the tempest’s speed,
Bursts through their ranks: a woman sits thereon,
Fairer, it seems, than aught that earth can breed,
Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn,
A spirit from the caves of daylight wandering gone.

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

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

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

‘Were it not impious,’ said the King, ‘to break
Our holy oath?’—‘Impious to keep it, say!’
Shrieked the exulting Priest—‘Slaves, to the stake
Bind her, and on my head the burden lay

VIII

IX

X

XI

XII
Of her just torments:—at the Judgement Day
Will I stand up before the golden throne
Of Heaven, and cry, "To thee did I betray
An Infidel; but for me she would have known
Another moment's joy! the glory be thine own!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approached, borne by the musical air
Along the waves which sung and sparkled under
Its rapid keel—a winged shape sate there,
SHELLEY

A child with silver-shining wings, so fair,
That as her bark did through the waters glide,
The shadow of the lingering waves did wear
Light, as from starry beams; from side to side,
While veering to the wind her plumes the bark did guide.

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

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

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

XXIV
Then the bright child, the plumed Seraph came,
And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on mine,
And said, 'I was disturbed by tremulous shame
When once we met, yet knew that I was thine

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

From the same hour in which thy lips divine
Kindled a clinging dream within my brain,
Which ever waked when I might sleep, to twine
Thine image with her memory dear—again
We meet; exempted now from mortal fear or pain.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows,
Mile after mile we sailed, and 'twas delight
To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
Over the grass; sometimes beneath the night
SHELLEY

Of wide and vaulted caves, whose roofs were bright
With starry gems, we fled, whilst from their deep
And dark-green shades, shades beautiful and white,
Amid sweet sounds across our path would sweep,
Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.

XXXVII

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

XXXVIII

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

XXXIX

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

XL

The torrent of that wide and raging river
Is passed, and our aerial speed suspended,
We look behind; a golden mist did quiver
Where its wild surges with the lake were blended,—
at that time, gave tokens that he shared for a period the more abstract and etherealised inspiration of Shelley. The saddest events awaited his return to England; but such was his fear to wound the feelings of others that he never expressed the anguish he felt, and seldom gave vent to the indignation roused by the persecutions he underwent; while the course of deep unexpressed passion, and the sense of injury, engendered the desire to embody themselves in forms deated of all the weakness and evil which clung to real life.

He chose therefore for his hero a youth nourished in dreams of liberty, some of whose actions are in direct opposition to the opinions of the world; but who is animated throughout by an ardent love of virtue, and a resolution to confer the boon of political and intellectual freedom on his fellow-creatures. He created for this youth a woman such as he delighted to imagine—full of enthusiasm for the same objects; and they both, with will unvanquished, and the deepest sense of the injustice of their cause, met adversity and death. There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower-prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at Eton, had often stood by to be friend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration.

During the year 1817 we were established at Marlow in Buckinghamshire. Shelley's choice of abode was fixed chiefly by this town being at so great distance from London, and its neighbourhood to the Thames. The poem was written in his boat, as it floated under the bee-cherry-groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty. The chalk hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech; the wilder portion of the country is rendered beautiful by exuberant vegetation; and the cultivated part is peculiarly fertile. With all this wealth of Nature which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourishes around, Marlow was inhabited (I hope it is altered now) by a very poor population. The women are lacemakers, and lose their health by sedentary labour, for which they were very ill paid. The Poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. The changes produced by peace following a long war, and a bad harvest, brought with them the most heart-rending evils to the poor. Shelley afforded what alleviation he could. In the winter, while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthamia, caught while visiting the poor cottages. I mention these things—for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow-creatures gives a thousandfold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race.

The poem, bold in its opinions and uncompromising in their expression, met with many censures, not only among those who allow of no virtue but such as supports the cause they espouse, but even among those whose opinions were similar to his own. I extract a portion of a letter written in answer to one of these friends. It best details the impulses of Shelley's mind, and his motives: it was written with entire reserve; and is therefore a precious monument of his own opinion of his powers, of the purity of his designs, and the ardent with which he clung, in adversity and through the valley of the shadow of death, to views from which he believed the permanent happiness of mankind must eventually spring.

'Marlow, Dec. 11, 1817.

I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express. But I think you are mistaken in some points with regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of The Revolt of Islam; but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem; and this reassures me, in some degree at least. The poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I engaged in this task, resolved to leave some record of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling—as real, though not so prophetic—as the communications of a dying man, I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless; but, when I consider contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I own I was filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists; in sympathy, and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinction of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course, I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But, when you advert to my Chancery-paper, a cold, forced, unimpasioned, insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument, and to the little scrap about Mandeville, which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes' thought to express, as specimens of my powers more favorable than that which grew as it were from "the agony and bloody sweat" of intellectual travail; surely I must feel that, in some manner, either I am mistaken in believing that I have any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it. Yet, after all, I cannot but be conscious, in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquillity which is the attribute and accompaniment of power. This feeling alone would make my most kind and wise admonitions, on the subject of the economy of intellectual force, valuable to me. And, if I live, or if I see
any trust in coming years, doubt not but that I shall do something, whatever it may be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits. [Shelley to Godwin.]

PRINCE ATHANASE

A FRAGMENT

PART I

There was a youth, who, as with toil and travel, Had grown quite weak and gray before his time; Nor any could the restless griefs unravel Which burned within him, withering up his prime And goading him, like fiends, from land to land. Not his the load of any secret crime,

For nought of ill his heart could understand, But pity and wild sorrow for the same;— Not his the thirst for glory or command; Baffled with blast of hope-consumming shame; Nor evil joys which fire the vulgar breast, And quench in speedy smoke its feeble flame,

Had left within his soul their dark unrest: Nor what religion fables of the grave Frighted he,—Philosophy's accepted guest. For none than he a purer heart could have, Or that loved good more for itself alone; Of nought in heaven or earth was he the slave.

What sorrow, strange, and shadowy, and unknown, Sent him, a hopeless wanderer, through mankind?— If with a human sadness he did groan,

1 The idea Shelley had formed of Prince Athanase was a good deal modelled on Adonze. In the first sketch of the poem, he named it Pandemos and Urania. Athanase seeks through the world the One whom he may love. He meets, in the ship in which he is embarked, a lady who appears to him to embody his ideal of love and beauty. But she proves to be Pandemos, or the earthly and unworthy Venus; who, after disappointing his cherished dreams and hopes, deserts him. Athanase, crushed by sorrow, pine and dies. On his deathbed, the lady who can

PRINCE ATHANASE

He had a gentle yet aspiring mind; Just, innocent, with varied learning fed; And such a glorious consolation find

In others' joy, when all their own is dead: He loved, and laboured for his kind in grief, And yet, unlike all others, it is said

That from such toil he never found relief. Although a child of fortune and of power, Of an ancestral name the orphan chief,

His soul had wedded Wisdom, and her dower Is love and justice, clothed in which he sate Apart from men, as in a lonely tower,

Pitying the tumult of their dark estate,— Yet even in youth did he not e'er abuse The strength of wealth or thought, to consecrate

Those false opinions which the harsh rich use To blind the world they famish for their pride; Nor did he hold from any man his dues,

But, like a steward in honest dealings tried, With those who toiled and wept, the poor and wise, His riches and his cares he did divide.

Fearless he was, and scornimg all disguise, What he dared do or think, though men might start, He spoke with mild yet unaverted eyes;

Liberal he was of soul, and frank of heart, And to his many friends—all loved him well— Whate'er he knew or felt he would impart,

If words he found those inmost thoughts to tell; If not, he smiled or wept; and his weak foes He neither spurned nor hated—though with fell

And mortal hate their thousand voices rose, They passed like aimless arrows from his ear— Nor did his heart or mind its portal close

To those, or them, or any, whom life's sphere May comprehend within its wide array. What sadness made that vernal spirit sere?
He knew not. Though his life, day after day,
Was falling like an un replenished stream,
Though in his eyes a cloud and burthen lay,
Through which his soul, like Vesper’s serene beam
Fiercing the chasms of ever rising clouds,
Shone, softly burning; though his lips did seem
Like reeds which quiver in impetuous floods;
And through his sleep, and o’er each waking hour,
Thoughts after thoughts, unresting multitudes,
Were driven within him by some secret power,
Which bade them blaze, and live, and roll afar,
Like lights and sounds, from haunted tower to tower
O’er castled mountains borne, when tempest’s war
Is leved by the night-contending winds,
And the pale dalesmen watch with eager ear;—
Though such were in his spirit, as the fiends
Which wake and feed an everliving woe,—
What was this grief, which ne’er in other minds
A mirror found,—he knew not—none could know;
But on who’er might question him he turned
The light of his frank eyes, as if to show
He knew not of the grief within that burned,
But asked forbearance with a mournful look;
Or spoke in words from which none ever learned
The cause of his disquietude; or shook
With spasms of silent passion; or turned pale:
So that his friends soon rarely undertook
To stir his secret pain without avail;—
For all who knew and loved him then perceived
That there was drawn an adamantine veil
Between his heart and mind,—both unrelieved
Wrought in his brain and bosom separate strife.
Some said that he was mad, others believed
That memories of an antennatal life
Made this, where now he dwelt, a penal hell;
And others said that such mysterious grief
From God’s displeasure, like a darkness, fell
On souls like his, which owned no higher law
Than love; love calm, steadfast, invincible
By mortal fear or supernatural awe;
And others,—’Tis the shadow of a dream
Which the veiled eye of Memory never saw,
But through the soul’s abyss, like some dark stream
Through shattered mines and caverns underground,
Rolls, shaking its foundations; and no beam
Of joy may rise, but it is quenched and drowned
In the dim whirlpools of this dream obscure;
Soon its exhausted waters will have found
A lair of rest beneath thy spirit pure,
O Athanase!—in one so good and great,
Evil or tumult cannot long endure.’
So spake they: idly of another’s state
Bubbling vain words and fould philosophy;
This was their consolation; such debate
Men held with one another; nor did he,
Like one who labours with a human woe,
Decline this talk: as if its theme might be
Another, not himself, he to and fro
Questioned and canvassed it with subtlest wit;
And none but those who loved him best could know
That which he knew not, how it galled and bit
His weary mind, this converse vain and cold;
For like an eyeless nightmare grief did sit
Upon his being; a snake which fold by fold
Pressed out the life of life, a clinging fiend
Which clenched him if he stirred with deadlier hold;—
And so his grief remained—let it remain—untold.

The Author was pursuing a fuller development of the ideal character of Athanase, when it struck him that in an attempt at extreme refinement and analysis, his conceptions might be betrayed into assuming a morbid character. The reader will judge whether he is a loser or gainer by the difference. [Shelley’s Note.]
SHELLEY

PART II

FRAGMENT I

PRINCE ATHANASE had one beloved friend,
An old, old man, with hair of silver white,
And lips where heavenly smiles would hang and blend

With his wise words; and eyes whose arrowy light
Shone like the reflex of a thousand minds.
He was the last whom superstition’s blight

Had spared in Greece—the blight that cramps and blinds,—
And in his olive bower at Chnoe
Had sate from earliest youth. Like one who finds
A fertile island in the barren sea,
One mariner who has survived his mates
Many a drear month in a great ship—so he

With soul-sustaining songs, and sweet debates
Of ancient lore, there fed his lonely being;—
‘The mind becomes that which it contemplates.’—

And thus Zonoras, by forever seeing
Their bright creations, grew like wisest men;
And when he heard the crack of nations fleeing
A bloodier power than ruled thy ruins then,
O sacred Hellas! many weary years
He wandered, till the path of Laian’s glen

Was grass-grown—and the unremembered tears
Were dry in Laian for their honoured chief,
Who fell in Byzant, pierced by Moslem spears:—

And as the lady looked with faithful grief
From her high lattice o’er the rugged path,
Where she once saw that horseman toll, with brief
And blighting hope, who with the news of death
Struck body and soul as with a mortal blight,
She saw between the chestnuts, far beneath,
An old man toiling up, a weary wight;
And soon within her hospitable hall
She saw his white hairs glittering in the light

PRINCE ATHANASE

Of the wood fire, and round his shoulders fall;
And his wan visage and his withered mien,
Yet calm and gentle and majestic.

And Athanase, her child, who must have been
Then three years old, sat opposite and gazed
In patient silence.

FRAGMENT II

Suck was Zonoras; and as daylight finds
One amaranth glittering on the path of frost,
When autumn nights have nipped all weaker kinds,

Thus through his age, dark, cold, and tempest-tossed,
Shone truth upon Zonoras; and he filled
From fountains pure, nigh overgrown and lost,
The spirit of Prince Athanase, a child,
With soul-sustaining songs of ancient lore
And philosophic wisdom, clear and mild.

And sweet and subtle talk they evermore,
The pupil and the master, shared; until,
Sharing that undiminishing store,

The youth, as shadows on a grassy hill
Outrun the winds that chase them, soon outran
His teacher, and did teach with native skill
Strange truths and new to that experienced man;
Still they were friends, as few have ever been
Who mark the extremes of life’s discordant span.

So in the caverns of the forest green,
Or on the rocks of echoing ocean hoar,
Zonoras and Prince Athanase were seen

By summer woodmen; and when winter’s roar
Sounded o’er earth and sea its blast of war,
The Balearic fisher, driven from shore,

Hanging upon the peaked wave afar,
Then saw their lamp from Laian’s turret gleam,
Piercing the stormy darkness, like a star
Which pours beyond the sea one steadfast beam,
Whilst all the constellations of the sky
Seemed reeling through the storm... They did but seem—

For, lo! the wintry clouds are all gone by,
And bright Arcturus through yon pines is glancing,
And far o'er southern waves, immovably
Belted Orion hangs—warm light is flowing
From the young moon into the sunset's clasp,—
'O, summer eve! with power divine, bestowing

On thine own bird the sweet enthusiasm
Which overflows in notes of liquid gladness,
Filling the sky like light! How many a spasm

Of fevered brains, oppressed with grief and madness,
Were lulled by thee, delightful nightingale,—
And those soft waves, murmuring a gentle sadness,—

And the far sighings of yon piny dale
Made vocal by some wind we feel not here,—
I bear alone what nothing may avail

'To lighten—a strange load!—No human ear
Heard this lament; but o'er the visage wan
Of Athanase, a ruffling atmosphere

Of dark emotion, a swift shadow, ran,
Like wind upon some forest-hosomed lake,
Glassy and dark.—And that divine old man

Beheld his mystic friend's whole being shake,
Even where its inmost depths were gloomiest—
And with a calm and measured voice he spoke,

And, with a soft and equal pressure, pressed
That cold lean hand:—Dost thou remember yet
When the curved moon then lingering in the west

'Paused, in yon waves her mighty horns to wet,
How in those beams we walked, half resting on the sea?
'Tis just one year—sure thou dost not forget—

'Then Plato's words of light in thee and me
LINGERED LIKE MOONLIGHT IN THE MOONLESS EAST,
For we had just then read—thy memory

PRINCE ATHANASE

Is faithful now—the story of the feast;
And Athan and Dosithea seemed
From death and dark forgetfulness released....

AND WHEN THE OLD MAN SAW THAT ON THE GREEN
Leaves of his opening a blight had lighted
He said: 'My friend, one grief alone can wean

A gentle mind from all that once delighted:
Thou lovest, and thy secret heart is laden
With feelings which should not be unrequited.'

And Athanase... then smiled, as one o'erladen
With iron chains might smile to talk (?) of bands
Twined round her lover's neck by some blithe maiden,
And said....

FRAGMENT IV

'TWAS AT THE SEASON WHEN THE EARTH UPSPRINGS
From slumber, as a sphered angel's child,
Shadowing its eyes with green and golden wings,

Stands up before its mother bright and mild,
Of whose soft voice the air expectant seems
So stood before the sun, which shone and smiled

To see it rise thus joyous from its dreams,
The fresh and radiant Earth. The hoary grove
Waxed green—and flowers burst forth like starry beams;—

The grass in the warm sun did start and move,
And sea-buds burst under the waves serene:—

How many a one, though none be near to love,

LOVES THEN THE SHADE OF HIS OWN SOUL, HALF SEEN
In any mirror—or the spring's young minions,
The winged leaves amid the copses green;—

How many a spirit then puts on the pinions
Of fancy, and outstrips the lagging blast,
And his own steps—and over wide dominions

Sweeps in his dream-drained chariot, far and fast,
More fleet than storms—the wide world shrinks below,
When winter and despondency are past.
PRINCE ATHANASE

That which from thee they should implore:—the weak
Alone kneel to thee, offering up the hearts
The strong have broken—yet where shall any seek
A garment whom thou clothest not? the darts
Of the keen winter storm, barred with frost,
Which, from the everlasting snow that parts
The Alps from Heaven, pierce some traveller lost
In the wide waved interminable snow
Ungarmented, 

ANOTHER FRAGMENT (A)

Yes, often when the eyes are cold and dry,
And the lips calm, the Spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the blood of agony

Trembling in drops on the discoloured skin
Of those who love their kind and therefore perish
In ghastly torture—a sweet medicine

Of peace and sleep are tears, and quietly
Them soothe from whose uplifted eyes they fall
But ...

ANOTHER FRAGMENT (b)

Her hair was brown, her spherèd eyes were brown,
And in their dark and liquid moisture swam,
Like the dim orb of the eclipsed moon;
Yet when the spirit flashed beneath, there came
The light from them, as when tears of delight
Double the western planet's serene flame.

ROSALIND AND HELEN

A MODERN ECLOGUE

ADVERTISEMENT

The story of Rosalind and Helen is, undoubtedly, not an attempt in the highest style of poetry. It is in no degree calculated to excite profound meditation; and if, by interesting the affections and amusing the imagination, it awakens a certain ideal melancholy favourable to the reception of more important impressions, it will produce in the reader all that the writer experienced in the composition. I resigned myself, as I
When evening fell upon our common home,
When for one hour we parted,—
I would not chide thee, though thy
And not my scorned self who
Rosalind. Is it a dream, or do I see
And hail frail Helen? I would flee
Thy sweet voice to each tone of
Remember, this is Italy,
And we are exiles. Talk with me
Of that our land, whose wilds and
Floods, barren and dark although they be,
And those dearer than these chestnut woods:
Those heathy paths, that inland
Stream, and the blue mountains, shapes
Which seem the like wrecks of childhood's sunny
Dream: Which that we have abandoned
Now, weighs on the heart like that
Whence altered friendship leaves. I seek
No more our youthful intercourse.
That cannot be! Rosalind, speak,
Speak to me. Leave me not.—When

Even here where now we meet. It
Still
Too much of suffocating sorrow!
In the dell of yon dark chestnut
Wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own. The ghost of
Peace
Will not desert this spot. Tomorrow,
If thy kind feelings do not cease,
We may sit here.
Rosalind. Thou lead, my sweet,
And I will follow.
Henry. "Tis Fenicia's seat
Where are you going? This is not the way,
Mamma; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.
Helen. Yes: I know: I was bewildered. Kiss me, and be gay,
Dear boy: why do you sob?
Henry. I do not know:
But it might break any one's heart to see
You and the lady cry so bitterly.
Helen. It is a gentle child, my friend.
Go home, Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.
We only cried with joy to see each other;
We are quite merry now: Good-night.

Lifted a sudden look upon his
mother,
And in the gleam of forced and
hollow joy
Which lightened o'er her face,
Laughed with the gleam
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,
And whispered in her ear, 'Bring
home with you

wrote, to the impulse of the feelings which moulded the conception of the story; and this impulse determined the pauses of a measure, which only pretends to be regular inasmuch as it corresponds with, and expresses, the irregularity of the imaginations which inspired it.

I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller to add to this collection. One, which I sent from Italy, was written after a day's excursion among those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat, and where is now the sepulchre, of Petrarch. If any one is inclined to condemn the insertion of the introductory lines, which image forth the sweet relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn on the highest peak of those delightful mountains, I can only offer as my excuse, that they were not erased at the request of a dear friend, with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value, and who would have had more right than any one to complain, that she has not been able to extinguish in me the very power of delineating sadness.

Naples, Dec. 20, 1818.

ROSEALIND, HELEN AND HER CHILD

Scene, the Shore of the Lake of Como

Helen. Come hither, my sweet Rosalind.
'Tis long since thou and I have met;
And yet methinks it were unkind
Those moments to forget.
Come sit by me. I see thee stand 5
By this lone lake, in this far land,
Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,
Thy sweet voice to each tone of
Even United, and thine eyes replying
To the hues of yeon fair heaven. 10
Come, gentle friend; wilt sit by me?
And be as thou wert wont to be
Ere we were disinclined?
None doth behold us now: the power
That led us forth at this lone hour
Will be but ill requited 16
If thou depart in scorn: oh! come,
And talk of our abandoned home.

1 'Lines written among the Euganean Hills.'
SHELLEY

That sweet strange lady-friend,
Then off he flew,
But stopped, and beckoned with
A meaning smile,
Where the road turned. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way 98
Beneath the forest's solitude.
It was a vast and antique wood,
Thro' which they took their way;
And the gray shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did
Still deeper solitude.
Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around;
Through which slow shades were
Wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came, To a stone seat beside a spring,
O'er which the columned wood did
frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,
Man's early race once knelt beneath 116
The overhanging deity.
O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
Now spangled with rare stars. The snake,
The pale snake, that with eager breath
Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake,
Is beaming with many a mingled hue,
Shed from yon dome's eternal blue.
When he floats on that dark and
Lucid flood.
In the light of his own loveliness;
And the birds that in the fountain dip
Their plumes, with fearless fellowship
Above and round him wheel and
hover;
The fitful wind is heard to stir
One solitary leaf on high;
The chirping of the grasshopper 125
Fills every pause. There is emotion
In all that dwells at noontide here;
Then, through the intricate wild wood,
A maze of life and light and motion
Is woven. But there is stillness now:
Gloom, and the trance of Nature
A snake is in his cave asleep.
The birds are on the branches dreaming:
Only the shadows creep;
Only the glow-worm is gleaming:
Only the owls and the nightingales
Wake in this dell when daylight fails,
And gray shades gather in the woods:
And the owls have all fled far away
In a merrier glen to hunt and play,
For the moon is veiled and sleeping now.

Rosalind and Helen

The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there;
Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair!
A fearful tale! The truth was worse: 155
For here a sister and a brother
Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude:
For beneath you we lay,
Had they resigned to one another
Body and soul. The multitude: 161
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabbed and trampled on its mother;
But the youth, for God's most holy grace, 165
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow 170
As soothed her own dark lot,
Duly each evening from her home,
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hours of day were pale;
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her;
Now, where some sudden impulse calls
Following. He was a gentle boy 180
And in all gentle sports took joy;
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float,
If some invisible breeze might stir
Its marble calm; and Helen smiled
Through tears of awe on the gay child,
To think that a boy as fair as he,
In years which never more may be,
By that same fount, in that same wood,
The like sweet fancies had pursued;
And that a mother, lost like her,
Had mournfully sat watching him.
Then all the scene was wont to swim
Through the mist of a burning tear.

For many months had Helen known
This scene; and now she thither turned
Her footsteps, not alone.
The friend whose falsehood she had
Mourned, Sate with her on that seat of stone.
Silent they sate; for evening, 201
And the power its glimpses bring
Had, with one awful shadow, quelled
The passion of their grief. They sate
With linked hands, for unreplied
Had Helen taken Rosalind's,
Like the autumn wind, when it unbinds
The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair,
Which is twined in the sultry summer air.
Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre, 210
Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
And the sound of her heart that ever beat,
As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,
Till her thoughts were free to flow;
And from her labouring bosom now
Like the bursting of a prisoned flame,
The voice of a longpent sorrow came.

Rosalind, I saw the dark earth fall upon
The coffin; and I saw the stone laid over him whose cold breast
Had pillow'd to its nightly rest!
Thou knowest not, thou canst not know
My agony, Oh! I could not weep:
The sources whence such blessings flow
Were not to be approached by me!
But I could smile, and I could sleep.
Though with a self-accusing heart,
In morning's light, in evening's gloom,
I watched,—and would not thence depart—

My husband's unalmomed tomb;
My children knew their sire was gone,
But when I told them,—'he is dead,'—
They laughed aloud in frantic glee,
They clapped their hands, and leaped about,
Answering each other's ecstasy
With many a prank and merry shout.

But I sat silent and alone,
Wrapped in the morn of mourning weed.
They laughed, for he was dead:
but I,
Sate with a heart and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,
Low muttering o'er his loathed name;
Till from that self-contention came
Remorse where sin was none: a hell
Which in pure spirits should not dwell.

I'll tell thee truth: He was a man
Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
Yet full of guile: his pale eyes ran
With tears, which each some falsehood told,
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek:
He was a coward to the strong:
He was a tyrant to the weak,
On whom his vengeance he would wreak:
For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
From many a stranger's eye would dart,
And on his memory cling, and follow
His soul to its home so cold and hollow.

He was a tyrant to the weak,
And we were such, alas the day!
Oft, when my little ones at play,
Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
Or if they listened to some tale of travelers, or of fairy land,—
When the light from the wood-fire's dyeing brand
Flashed on their faces,—if they heard
Or thought they heard upon the stair
His footstep, the suspended word,
Died on my lips: we all grew pale;

The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
If it thought it heard its father near;
And my two wild boys would near my knee
Cling, cowed and covering fearfully.

I'll tell thee truth: I loved another.
His name in my ear was ever ringing:
His form to my brain was ever clinging:
Yet if some stranger breathed that name,
My lips turned white, and my heart beat fast:
My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame,
My days were dim in the shadow cast
By the memory of the same!
Day and night, day and night,
He was my breath and life and light,
For three short years, which soon were passed.

On the fourth, my gentle mother
Led me to the shrine, to be shown
His swan bride eternally.
And now we stood on the altar stair,
When my father came from a distant land,
And with a loud and fearful cry
Rushed between us suddenly.
I saw the stream of his thin gray hair,
I saw his lean and lifted hand,
And heard his words,—and live!
Oh God! Wherefore do I live?—'Hold, hold,'
He cried,—'I tell thee 'tis her brother!'
Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
Of you churchyard rests in her shroud so cold:
I am now weak, and pale, and old:
We were once dear to one another, I and that corpse! Thou art our child?

Then with a laugh both long and wild
The youth upon the pavement fell:
They found him dead! All looked on me,
The spasms of my despair to see:
But I was calm, I went away:
I was clammy-cold like clay!
I did not weep: I did not speak:
But day by day, week after week,
I walked about like a corpse alive!
Alas! sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone: it did not break.

My father lived a little while,
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woeful smile!
When he was in the churchyard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread.

My mother looked at me, and said
Faint words of cheer, which only meant
That she could die and be content;
So I went forth from the same church door
To another husband's bed.

And this was he who died at last,
When weeks and months and years had passed,
Through which I firmly did fulfill
My duties, a devoted wife,
With the stern step of vanquished will,
Walking beneath the night of life,
Whose hours extinguished, like slow rain
Failing for ever, pain by pain,
The very hope of death's dear rest;
Which, since the heart within my breast
Of natural life was dispossessed,
Its strange sustainer there had been.

Where flowers were dead, and grass was green
Upon my mother's grave,—that mother
Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make
My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
Was my vowed task, the single care
Which once gave life to my despair,—
When she was a thing that did not stir
And the crawling worms were cradling her
To a sleep more deep and so much sweeter
Than a baby's rocked on its nurse's knee,
I lived: a living pulse then beat
Beneath my heart that awakened me.

What was this pulse so warm and free?
Alas! I knew it could not be
My own dull blood: 'twas like a thought
Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
Under my bosom and in my brain,
And crept with the blood through every vein;
And hour by hour, day after day,
The wonder could not charm away,
But lath in sleep, my wakeful pain,
Until I knew it was a child,
And then I wept. For long, long years
These frozen eyes had shed no tears:

But now—'twas the season fair and mild
When April has wrested itself to May:
I sate through the sweet sunny day
By my window bowed round with leaves,
And down my cheeks the quick tears fell
Like twinkling rain-drops from the eaves,
When warm spring showers are passing o'er:
O Helen, none can ever tell
The joy it was to weep once more!

I wept to think how hard it were
To kill my babe, and take from it
The sense of light, and the warm air,
And my own fond and tender care.
And love and smiles; ere I knew yet
That these for it might, as for me,
Be the masks of a grimming mockery.

And haply, I would dream, 'twere sweet
To feed it from my faded breast,
Or mark my own heart's restlessness
If rock it to its untroubled rest,
And watch the growing soul beneath
Dawn in faint smiles; and hear its breath,
Half interrupted by calm sighs,
And search the depth of its fair eyes
For long departed memories;
And so I lived till that sweet soul
Was lightened. Darkly forward flowed
The stream of years, and on it bore
Two shapes of gladness to my sight;
Two other babes, delightful more

In my lost soul's abandoned night,
Than their own country ships may be
Sailing towards wrecked mariners,
Who cling to the rock of a wintry sea.
For each, as it came, brought soothing tears,
And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
Sucking the sullen milk away
About my frozen heart, did play,
And weaned it, oh how painfully!
As they themselves were weaned each one
From that sweet food,—even from the thirst
Of death, and nothingness, and rest,
Strange inmate of a living breast!
Which all that I had undergone
Of grief and shame, since she who first
The gates of that dark refuge closed,
Came to my sight, and almost burst
The seal of that Lethean spring;
But these fair shadows interposed:
For all delights are shadows now!
And from my brain to my dull brow
The heavy tears gather and flow:
I cannot speak: Oh let me weep!

The tears which fell from her wan eyes
Glimmered among the moonlight dew:
Her deep heart sobbed and heavy sighed
Their echoes in the darkness threw.
When she grew calm, she thus did keep
The tenor of her tale:

He died: 420

But he was bowed and bent with fears,
Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
Which, like fierce fever, left him weak.
And his sweet life and blossoming cheek
Were warped in spasm by hollow sneers;
And selfish cares with barren plough,
Not age, but lined his narrow brow.
And soul and cruel thoughts, which fed
Upon the withering life within,
Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
Whether his ill were death or sin
None knew, until he died indeed,
And then men owned they were the same.

Seven days within my chamber lay
That course, and my baby made holiday:
At last, I told them what is death:
The eldest, with a kind of shame,
Came to my knees with silent beating heart;
And sate apace between my feet,
And soon the others left their play,
And sate there too. It is unmeet
To shed on the brief flower of youth
The withering knowledge of the grave;
From me remorse then wrung that truth.
I could not hear the joy which gave
Too just a response to mine own.
In vain, I shone not with a song;
And in their artless looks I saw,
Between the mists of fear and awe,
That my own thought was theirs;

Expressed it not in words, but said,
Each in its heart, how every day
Will pass in happy work and play,  465
Now he is dead and gone away. A
After the funeral all our kin
Assembled, and the will was read.
My friend, I tell thee, even the dead
Have strength, their putrid shreds within,
To blast and torture. Those who live
Still fear the living, but a curse
Is merciless, and power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil.
He reaps from those who groan and toil,
Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child! my tale grows old
With grief, and staggers: let it reach
The limits of my feeble speech.
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.
Thou knowest what a thing is Poverty
Among the fallen on evil days:
'Tis Crime, and Fear, and In-famy.
And Handless Want in frozen ways
Wandering ungarmented, and Fain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain
Foul Self-contempt, which drowns in snears
Youth's starlight smile, and makes his tears
First like hot gall, then dry for ever!
And well thou knowest a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported, if e'er again I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birthplace did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told,
They should inherit nought: and he
To whom next came their patri-mony
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold,
Aye watched me, as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony;
And with close lips and anxious brow
Stood canvassing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man's caution just did call;
For in that killing lie 'twas said—
'She is adulterous, and doth hold
In secret that the Christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need
That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire."
Friend, he was sheltered by the grave,
And therefore dared to be a liar!
In truth, the Indian on the pyre
Of her dead husband, half consumed,
As well might there be false, as to those abhorred embraces doomed,
Far worse than fire's brief agony.
As to the Christian creed, if true
Or false, I never questioned it:
I took it as the vulgar do;
Nor my vexed soul had leisure yet
To doubt the things men say, or deem
That they are other than they seem.
All present who those crimes did hear,
In feigned or actual scorn and fear,
Men, women, children, shrank away,
Whispering with self-contented pride,
Which half suspects its own base lie.
I spoke to none, nor did abide,
But silently I went my way,
Nor noticed I where joyously I sate my two younger babies at play,
In the court-yard through which I passed;
But went with footsteps firm and fast
Till I came to the brink of the ocean green,
And there, a woman with gray hairs,
Who had my mother's servant been,
Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
Made me accept a purse of gold,
Half of the earnings she had kept
To restore her when weak and old.
With woe, which never sleeps or sleeps,
I wander now. 'Tis a vain thought—
But on yon alp, whose snowy head
Mid the azure air is islanded,
(We see it o'er the flood of cloud)
Which sunrise from its eastern caves
Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
Hung with its precipices proud,
From that gray stone where first we met
There—now who knows the dead feel nought?—
Should be my grave; for he who yet Is my soul's soul, once said:
'Twere sweet
'Mid stars and lightnings to abide,
And winds and lulling snores, that beat
With their soft flakes the mountain wide,
Where weary meteor lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close;
And all things strong and bright and pure,
And ever during, aye endure:
Who knows, if one were buried there,
But these things might our spirit make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake?
Then 'twas a wild and playful saying,
At which I laughed, or seemed to laugh:
They were his words, now heed my praying,
And let them be my epitaph.
 Thy memory for a term may be My monument. Wilt remember me?
I know thou wilt, and canst forgive.
Whilst in this erring world to live,
My soul disdained not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught
And much less thee.
Helen, O speak not so,
But come to me and pour thy woe
Into this heart, full though it be,
Ay, overflowing with its own.
I thought that grief had severed me
From all beside who weep and groan;
Its likeness upon earth to be,
Its express image; but thou art
More wretched. Sweet! We will not
Henceforth, if death be not divi-
sion;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.
But wilt thou hear since last we parted
All that has left me broken hearted?
Rosalind. Yes, speak. The faint-
est stars are scarcely shorn
Of their thin beams by that delu-
sive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like
The light
Of early love, soon lost in total
night.
Helen. Alas! Italian winds are
mild,
But my bosom is cold—wintry
cold—
When the warm air weaves, among
the fresh leaves,
Soft music, my poor brain is
wild,
And I am weak like a nursing
child,
Though my soul with grief is grey
and old.
Rosalind. Weep not at thine own
words, though they must make
Me weep. What is thy tale?
Helen. I fear 'twill shake
Thy gentle heart with tears. Thou
well
Rememberest when we met no
more,
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me
sore
With grief; a wound my spirit
bore
Indigantly, but when he died
With him lay dead both hope and
pride.
Alas! all hope is buried now.

But then men dreamed the aged
earth
Was labouring in that mighty birth,
Which many a poet and a sage
Has ever foreseen—the happy
age
When truth and love shall dwell
below
Among the works and ways of
men;
Which on this world not power but
will
Even now is wanting to fulfill.
Among mankind what thence be-
fell
Of strife, how vain, is known too
well;
When Liberty's dear paean fell
'Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and line-
age high,
Yet through those dungeon walls
there came
Thy thrilling light, O Liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight
flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth;
And filled him, not with love, but
faith,
And hope, and courage mute in
death;
For love and life in him were
twins,
Born at one birth: in every other
first life then love its course be-
gins,
Though they be children of one
mother;
And so through this dark world
they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet:
But he loved all things ever. Then
He passed amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armed
power
Pleading for a world of woe:
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge
trails to and fro;
'Mid the passions wild of human
kind
He stood, like a spirit calming
them;
For, it was said, his words could
bind
Like music the lulled crowd, and
stem
That torrent of unquiet dream,
Which mortals truth and reason
dream;
But is revenge and fear and
pride;
Joyous he was; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet
mouth.
As where the evening star may
walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendour quiver.
His very gestures touched to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before: his presence
stung
The torturers with their victim's
pain,
And none knew how, and through
their ears,
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlocked the hearts of those who
keep
Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
Men wondered, and some sneered to
see,
One sow what he could never reap:
For he is rich, they said, and
young,
And might drink from the depths
of luxury.
If he seeks Fame, Fame never
crowned
The champion of a trampled creed:
If he seeks Power, Power is en-
throned
Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to
feed
Which hungry wolves with praise
and spoil,
Those who would sit near Power
must toll;
And such, there sitting, all may
see.
What seeks he? All that others seek
He casts away, like a vile weed
Which the seas casts unreturn-
ingly.
That poor and hungry men should
break
The laws which wreak them toll
and scorn,
We understand; but Lionel
We know is rich and nobly born.
So wondered they: yet all men
loved
Young Lionel, though few ap-
proved;
All but the priests, whose hatred
fell
Like the unseen blight of a smil-
ing day,
The withering honey dew, which
clings
Under the bright green buds of
May,
Whilst they unfold their emerald
wings;
For he made verses wild and queer
On the strange creeds priests hold
so dear,
Because they bring them land and
gold.
Of devils and saints and all such
gear,
He made tales which whose heard
or read
Would laugh till he were almost
dead.
So this grew a proverb: 'Don't get
old
Till Lionel's "Banquet in Hell"
you hear,
And then you will laugh yourself
young again.'
So the priests hated him, and he
Repaid their hate with cheerful
glee.

Ah, smiles and joyance quickly
died,
For public hope grew pale and dim
In an altered time and tide,
And in its wasting withered him,
As a summer flower that blows too
soon
Droops in the smile of the waning
moon,
When it scatters through an April
night
The frozen dews of wrinkling
blight.
None now hoped more. Gray
Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne; 760
And Faith, the Python, undefeated,
Even to its blood-stained steps
dragged on
Her soul and wounded train, and
men
Were trampled and deceived again,
And words and shows again could
bind
The wailing tribes of human kind
In scorn and famine. Fire and
blood
Raged round the raging multitude,
To fields remote by tyrants sent.
To be the scorned instrument 710
With which they drag from mines of
gore
The chains their slaves yet ever
wore:
And in the streets men met each
other,
And by old altars and in halls,
And smiled again at festivals, 715

But each man found in his heart's
brother
Cold cheer; for all, though half de-
cieved,
The outworn creeds again believed,
And the same round anew began,
Which the weary world yet ever
ran.

Many then wept, not tears, but
gall
Within their hearts, like drops which
fall
Wasting the fountain-stone away.
And in that dark and evil day
Did all desires and thoughts, that
claim
Men's care—ambition, friendship,
fame,
Love, hope, though hope was now
despair—
Indue the colours of this change,
As from the all-surrounding air
The earth takes hues obscure and
strange,
When storm and earthquake linger
there
And so, my friend, it then befell
To many, most to Lionel,
Whose hope was like the life of
youth
Within him, and when dead, be-
came
A spirit of unresting flame,
Which gouted him in his distress
Over the world's vast wilderness.
Three years he left his native land,
And on the fourth, when he returned,
None knew him: he was stricken
deep
With some disease of mind, and
turned
Into aught unlike Lionel.
On him, on whom, did he pause in
sleep.
Serenest smiles were wont to keep
And, did he wake, a winged hand
Of bright persuasions, which had
feed
On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,
Kept their swift pinions half out-
spread,
To do on men his least com-
mand— 720
On him, whom once 'twas paradise
Even to behold, now misery lay:
In his own heart 'twas paradoles,
To all things else none may express
Its innocence and tenderness.

'Twas said that he had refuge
sought
In love from his unquiet thought
In distant lands, and been deceived
By some strange show; for there were
found, 759
Blotted with tears as those relieved
By their own words are wont to do,
These mournful verses on the
ground,
By all who read them blotted too.

'Twas said that he had refuge
sought
In love from his unquiet thought
In distant lands, and been deceived
By some strange show; for there were
found, 759
Blotted with tears as those relieved
By their own words are wont to do,
These mournful verses on the
ground,
By all who read them blotted too.
Floating amid the sunny skies,
Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
Yet o'er his talk, and looks, and mien,
Tempering their loveliness too keen,
Past woes its shadow backward threw,
Till like an exhalation, spread
From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
They did become infectious; sweet
And subtle mist of sense and thought:
Which wrapped us soon, when we might meet,
Almost from our own looks and aught
The wide world holds. And so, his mind
Was healed, while mine grew sick with fear;
For ever now his health declined,
Like some frail bark which cannot bear
The impulse of an altered wind,
Though prosperous: and my heart grew full
'Mid its new joy of a new care:
For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,
As rose-o'ershadowed lines are; 830
And soon his deep and sunny hair,
In this alone less beautiful,
Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
The blood in his translucent veins
Beat, not like animal life, but love
Seemed now its sullen springs to move,
825
When life had failed, and all its pains:
And sudden sleep would seize him oft
Like death, so calm, but that a tear,
His pointed eyelashes between. 839

Would gather in the light serene
Of smiles, whose lustre bright and soft
Beneath lay undulating there;
His breath was like an inconstant flame,
As eagerly it went and came; 835
And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
Till, like an image in the lake
Which rains disturb, my tears would break
Then he would bid me not to weep,
The shadow of that slumber deep:
And say with flattery false, yet sweet,
That death and he could never meet,
If I would not part with him.
And so we loved, and did unite
All that in us was yet divided; 845
For when he said, that many a rite
By men to bind but once provided,
Could not be shared by him and me,
Or they would kill him in their glee,
I shuddered, and then laughing staid;
'With we will have rites our faith to bind,
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind.'

Twas sunset as I spoke: one star
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of miracle sent,
Seized upon Lionel, and bore
His chained limbs to a dreary tower,
In the midst of a city vast and wide.

For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy,
For which, though his soul must be roasted
In hell's red lakes immortally,
Yet even on earth must he abide 865
The vengeance of their slaves: a trial.
I think, men call it. What avail
Are prayers and tears, which chase
denial
From the fierce savage, nursed in hate?
What the knave soul that pleading and pale
Makes wan the quivering cheek, which late
It painted with its own delight?
We were divided. As I could,
I stilled the tinging of my blood,
And followed him in their despite.

As a widow follows, pale and wild,
The murderers and corse of her only child;
And when we came to the prison door
And I prayed to share his dungeon floor
With prayers which rarely have been spurred,
And when men drove me forth
Stared with blank frenzy on the sky,
A farewell look of love he turned,
Half calming me; then gazed awhile,
As if thro' that black and massy pile,
And thro' the crowd around him there,
And thro' the dense and murky air,
And the thronged streets, he did not stay,
What poets know and prophesy;

And said, with voice that made them shiver
And clang like music in my brain,
And which the mute walls spoke again
Prolonging it with deepened strain:
'Fear not, the tyrants shall rule for ever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death:
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
And their swords and their scythes I floating see,
Like wrecks in the surge of eternity.'

I dwelt beside the prison gate,
And the strange crowd that out and in
Passed, some, no doubt, with mine own fate,
Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din,
But the fever of care was louder within.

Soon, but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence;
I saw his thin and languid form,
As leaning on the jailor's arm, 910
Whose hardened eyes grew moist
The while,
To meet his mute and faded smile,
And hear his words of kind farewell,
He tottered forth from his damp cell,
Many had never wept before, 915
From whom fast tears then gushed and fell:
Many will relent no more,
Who sobbed like infants then: aye, all
Who thronged the prison's stony hall,
The rulers or the slaves of law, 929
Felt with a new surprise and awe
That they were human, till strong shame
Made them again become the same.
The prison blood-hounds, huge and grim,
From human looks the infection caught,
And fondly crouched and fawned on him;
And men have heard the prisoners say,
Who in their rotting dungeons lay,
That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept
Their trampled bosoms almost slept:
Where, like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide torn and bleeding,—
Because their jailors' rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway.
I know not how, but we were free:
And Lionel sate alone with me,
As the carriage drove thro' the streets apace;
And we looked upon each other's face;
And the blood in our fingers intertwined
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came
Thro' the veins of each united frame.
So thro' the long long streets we passed
Of the million-peopled City vast;
Which is that desert, where each one
Seeks his mate yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourned of none;
Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green,
And then I sunk in his embrace,
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love: and so we travelled
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns, and villages, and towers,
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon.
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedge-row brier,
And there were odours then so made
The very breath we did inspire
A liquid element, whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtle wing,
Fluctuated and mingled far away.
Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
And when the evening star came forth
Above the curve of the new bent moon
And light and sound ebbed from the earth,
Like the tide of the full and weary sea
To the depths of its tranquillity.
Our natures to its own repose
Did the earth's breathless sleep attend
Like flowers, which on each other close
Their languid leaves when daylight's gone,
We lay, till new emotions came,
Which seemed to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,
A life in life, a second birth
In worlds divine, more fair than earth,
Which, like two strains of harmony
That mingle in the silent sky
Then slowly disunite, passed by
And left the tenderness of tears,
A soft oblivion of all fears,
A sweet sleep: so we travelled on,
Till we came to the home of Lionel,
Among the mountains wild and lone,
Beside the hoary western sea,
Which near the verge of the echoing shore
The mazy forest shadowed o'er.
The ancient steward, with hair all hoar,
As we ascended, wept to see
His master changed so fearfully:
And the old man's sobs did awaken me
From my dream of unremaining gladness;
The truth flashed o'er me like quick madness
When I looked, and saw that there was death
On Lionel: yet day by day
He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
And in my soul I dared to say,
Nothing so bright can pass away:
Death is dark, and foul, and dull,
But he is—O how beautiful!
Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which he's was loud, became more low:
And the light which flashed through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose-like hues which flow
From sunset o'er the Alpine snow:
And death seemed not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Lingered, a mist of sense and thought.
When the summer wind faint odours brought
From mountain flowers, even as it passed
His cheek would change, as the noonday sea
Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.
If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
You might see his colour come and go,
And the softest strain of music made
Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade
Amid the dew of his tender eyes;
And the breath, with intermitting flow,
Made his pale lips quiver and part.
You might hear the beatings of his heart,
Quick, but not strong; and with my tresses
When oft he playfully would bind
In the bowers of mossy lonelineses
His neck, and win me so to mingle
In the sweet depth of woven roses,
And our faint limbs were intertwined,
Alas! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein,
Like a captive in dreams of liberty,
Who beats the walls of his stony cell,
But his, it seemed already free,
Like the shadow of fire surrounding me!
On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
That spirit as it passed, till soon,
As a frail cloud wandering o’er the moon,
Beneath its light invisible,
Is seen when it folds its gray wings again.
To alight on midnight’s dusky plain,
I lived and saw, and the gathering soul
Passed from beneath that strong control,
And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
Of all the woes that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle wood,
On a green and sea-girt promontory
Not far from where we dwelt, there stood
In record of a sweet sad story,
An altar and a temple bright.
Circled by steps, and o’er the gate
Was sculptured, ‘To Fidelity.’
And in the shrine an image sat,
All veiled: but there was seen the light
Of smiles, which faintly could
A mingled pain and tenderness Through that ethereal drapery,
The left hand held the head, the right—
Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
You might see the nerves quivering within—
Was forcing the point of a barbed dart
Into its side—convulsing heart,
An unskilled hand, yet one in cell.
With genius, had the marble warmed
With that pathetic life. This tale
It told: A dog had from the sea,
When the tide was raging furiously,
Dragged Lionel’s mother, weak and pale,
Then died beside her on the sand,
And she that temple thence had planned;
But it was Lionel’s own hand
Had wrought the image. Each new moon
That lady did, in this lone fame,
The rites of a religion sweet,
Whose god was in her heart and brain—
The season’s loveliest flowers were strewn
On the marble floor beneath her feet,
And she brought crowns of sea-buds white,
Whose odour is so sweet and faint,
And weeds, like branching chrysan-
Woven in devices fine and quaint.
And tears from her brown eyes did stain
The altar: need but look upon
That dying statue fair and wan,
It tears should cease, to weep again:
And rare Arabian odours came,
Through the myrtle copies stem-
From the hissing frankincense,
Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean foam,
Hung in dense flocks beneath the
That ivory dome, whose azure might
With golden stars, like heaven, was bright—
O’er the split cedar’s pointed flame.

And the lady’s harp would kindle there,
The melody of an old air,
Softer than sleep: the villagers
Mired their religion up with her,
And as they listened round, shed tears.

One eve he led me to this fame:
Daylight on its last purple cloud
Was lingering gray, and soon her strain
The nightingale began: now loud,
Climbing in circles the windless sky,
Now dying music; suddenly
Tis scattered in a thousand notes,
And now to the hushed ear it floats
Like field smells known in infancy,
Then failing, soothes the air again.
We sat within that temple lone,
Pavilioned round with Parian stone:
His mother’s harp stood near, and oft
I had awakened music soft
Amid its wires: the nightingale
Was passing in her heaven-taught tale:
‘Now drain the cup,’ said Lionel,
Which the poet-bird has crowned so well
With the wine of her bright and liquid song.

Hearst thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding min-
Hearest thou not, that those who die
Awaken in a world of ecstasy?
That love, when limbs are inter-
And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
And thought, to the world’s dim boundaries clinging,

And music, when one beloved is singing,
Is death? Let us drain right joy-

The cup which the sweet bird fills for me.
He paused, and to my lips he bent
His own: like spirit his words went
Through all my limbs with the speed of fire;
And his keen eyes, glittering through mine,
Filled me with the flame divine,
Which in their orbs was burning far.
Like the light of an unmeasured star,
In the sky of midnight dark and deep:

Yes, ’twas his soul that did inspire Sounds, which my skill could never awaken;
And first, I felt my fingers sweep
The harp, and a long quivering cry
Burst from my lips in symphony:
The dusk and solid air was shaken,
As swift and swifter the notes came
From my touch, that wandered like quick flame,
And from my bosom, labouring
With some unutterable thing:
The awful sound of my own voice made
My faint lips tremble; in some mood
Of wordless thought Lionel stood
So pale that even beside his cheek
The snowy column from its shade
Caught whiteness: yet his counten-
ance
Raised upward, burned with radi-
Ness.

Of spirit-piercing joy, whose light,
Like the moon struggling through the night
Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break
With beams that might not be concealed.
I paused, but soon his gestures kindled
New power, as by the moving wind
The waves are lifted, and my song
To low soft notes now changed and dwindled,
And from the twinkling wires among,
My languid fingers drew and flung
Circles of life-dissolving sound, 1196
Yet faint; in airy rings they bounded.
My Lionel, who, as every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his men
Sunk with the sound relaxedly;
And slowly now he turned to me.
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy: with looks serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace,
And my wild song then died away
In murmurs: words I dare not say
We mixed, and on his lips mine fed
Till they methought felt still and cold:
'What is it with thee, love?' I said.
No word, no look, no motion! yes,
There was a change, but spare to guess,
Nor let that moment's hope be told.
I looked, and knew that he was dead,
And fell, as the eagle on the plain
Falls when her life deserts her brain,
And the mortal lightning is veiled again.

O that I once again were mad! 1190
And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
For I would live to share thy woe.
Sweet boy, did I forget thee too?
Alas, we know not what we do
When we speak words.

No memory more
Is in my mind of that sea shore
Madness came on me, and a troop
Of misty shapes did seem to sit
Beside me, on a vessel's poop,
And the clear north wind was driving it.

Then I heard strange tongues, and
did not know strange flowers.
And the stars methought grew unlike ours,
And the azure sky and the stormless sea
Made me believe that I had died,
And waked in a world, which was to me
Dear hell, though heaven to all beside;
Then a dead sleep fell on my mind,
Whilst animal life many long years
Had rescue from a chain of tears;
And when I woke, I went to find
That the same lady, bright and wise,
With silver locks and quick brown eyes
The mother of my Lionel,
Had tended me in my distress,
And died some months before.

Wonder, but far more peace and joy
Brought in that hour my lovely boy;
For through that trance my soul had well
The impress of thy being kept;
And if I waked, or if I slept,
No doubt, though memory faithless be,
Thy image ever dwelt on me;

And thus, O Lionel, like thee
Is our sweet child. 'Tis sure most strange
I knew not of so great a change,
As that which gave him birth, who now
Is all the solace of my woe.

That Lionel great wealth had left
By will to me, and that of all
The ready legs of law bereft
My child and me, might well befall.
But let me think not of the scorn,
Which from the meanness I have borne,
When, for my child's beloved sake,
I mixed with slaves, to vindicate
The very laws themselves do make:
Let me not say scorn is my fate,
Lest I be proud, suffering the same
With those who live in deathless fame.

She ceased.—'Lo, where red morning thru' the woods
Is burning o'er the dew,' said Rosalind.
And with these words they rose, and towards the flood
Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves
Now wind
With equal steps and fingers interwoven.
Thence to a lonely dwelling, where the shore
Is shadowed with deep rocks, and cypresses
Cleaves with their dark green cones the silent skies,
And with their shadows the clear depths below,
And where a little terrace from its bower
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon-dowers,
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o'er
The liquid marble of the windless lake.
And where the aged forest's limbs
Look hour,
Under the leaves which their green garments make,
They come: 'tis Helen's home, and clean and white,
Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
In some such solitude, its casements bright
Shone through their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
And even within 'twas scarce like Italy.
And when she saw how all things
There were planned, 1260
As in an English home, dim memory
Disturbed poor Rosalind: she stood
As one
Whose mind is where his body cannot be.
Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
And said, 'Observe, that brow was
Rosalind's,
Those lips were his, and so he ever kept
One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
You cannot see his eyes, they are two wells
Of liquid love: let us not wake him yet.'
But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept.
A shower of burning tears, which fell upon
His face, and so his opening lashes shone
With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together
Thenceforth, changed in all else, yet friends again—
Such as they were, when o'er the mountain heather
They wandered in their youth, through sun and rain,
And after many years, for human things
Change even like the ocean and the wind,
Her daughter was restored to Rosalind,
And in their circle thence some visits
Of joy 'mid their new calm would intervene:
A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came.
And Helen's boy grew with her, and they fed
From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
Like springs which mingle in one flood became,
And in their union soon their parents saw
The shadow of the peace denied to them.
And Rosalind, for when the living stem
Is cankered in its heart, the tree must fall,
Died ere his time; and with deep grief and awe
The pale survivors followed her remains
Beyond the region of dissolving rains.

Up the cold mountain she was wont to call
Her tomb; and on Chiavenna's precipice
They raised a pyramid of lasting ice,
Whose polished sides, ere day had 1260
Caught the first glow of the unseen sun,
The last, when it had sunk; and thro' the night
The charioteers of Arctos wheels round
Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home,
Whose sad inhabitants each year would come,
With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
Filled the frore air with uncustomed light:
Such flowers, as in the wintry memory bloom
Of one friend left, adorned that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
Whose sufferings too were less,
Death slower led
Into the peace of his dominion cold:
She died among her kindred, being old,
And know, if that love die not in the dead
As in the living, none of mortal kind
Are blest, as now Helen and Rosalind.

Rosalind and Helen was begun at Marlow, and thrown aside—till I found it; and, at my request, it was completed. Shelley had no care for any of his poems that did not emanate from the depths of his mind and develop some high or abstruse truth. When he does touch on human life and the human heart, no pictures can be more faithful, more delicate, more subtle, or more pathetic. He never mentioned Love but he shed a grace borrowed from his own nature, that scarcely any other poet has bestowed, on that passion. When he spoke of it as the law of life, which inasmuch as we rebel against we err and injure ourselves and others, he promulgated that which he considered an irrefragable truth. In his eyes it was the essence of our being, and all woe and pain arose from the war made against it by selfishness, or insensibility, or mistake. By reverting in his mind to this first principle, he discovered the source of many emotions, and could disclose the secrets of all hearts; and his delineations of passion and emotion touch the finest chords of our nature.

Rosalind and Helen was finished during the summer of 1818, while we were at the baths of Lucca.

JULIAN AND MADDAŁO

A CONVERSATION

PREFACE

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
The goats with the green leaves of budding Spring,
Are saturated not—not Love with tears.—Vincent's Galatea.

Count Maddalo is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune; who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition prays upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the conceited and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample; for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation
Julian is an Englishman of good family, passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible the pleasur reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

Of the Maniac. I can give no information. He seems, by his own account, to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart.

I rode one evening with Count Maddalo

Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow

Of Adria towards Venice: a bare strand

Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,

Matled with thistles and amphibious weeds,

Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,

Is this; an uninhabited sea-side,

Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,

Abandons; and no other object breaks

The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes

Broken and un repaired, and the tide makes

A narrow space of level sand thereon,

Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down.

This ride was my delight. I love all waste

And solitary places; where we taste

The pleasure of believing what we see

Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:

And such was this wide ocean, and this shore

More barren than its billows; and yet more

Than all, with a remembered friend I love

To ride as then I rode: — for the winds drove

The living spray along the sunny air

Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,

Striped to their depths by the awakening north;

And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth

Harmonising with solitude, and sent

Into our hearts aerial merriment.

So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought,

Winging itself with laughter, lingered not.

But flew from brain to brain,—such glee was ours,

Charged with light memories of remembered hours,

None slow enough for sadness: till we came

Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.

This day had been cheerful but cold, and now

The sun was sinking, and the wind also,

Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be

Talk interrupted with such raillery

As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn

The thoughts it would extinguish:—’twas forlorn,

Yet pleasant; such as once, so poets tell,

The devils held within the dale of Hell

Concerning God, freewill and destiny:

Of all that earth has been or yet may be,

All that vain men imagine or believe,

Or hope can paint or suffering may achieve,

We descanted, and I (for ever still)

Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)

Argued against despondency, but pride

Made my companion take the darker side.

The sense that he was greater than his kind

Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind

By gazing on its own exceeding light.

Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,

Over the horizon of the mountains:—Oh,

How beautiful is sunset, when the glow

Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,

Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!

Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers

Of cities they encircle!—it was ours

To stand on thee, beholding it: and then,

Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men

Were waiting for us with the gondola.—

As those who pause on some delightful way

Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood

Looking upon the evening, and the flood

Which lay between the city and the shore,

Paved with the image of the sky ... the hoar

And airy Alps towards the North appeared

Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared

Between the East and West; and half the sky

Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry
SHELLEY

Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep West into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many-folded hills; they were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
As seen from Lido thro' the harbour piles,
The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—
And then—as if the Earth and Sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering as from waves of flame
Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made,
Their very peaks transparent: 'Ere it fade,'
Said my companion, 'I will show you soon
A better station'—so, o'er the lagune
We glided; and from that funeral bark
I leant, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven.

I was about to speak, when—'We are even
Now at the point I meant,' said Maddalo,
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
'Look, Julian, on the west; and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell.'
I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island: such a one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,
A windowless, deformed and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung;
We could just hear its horrid and iron tongue:
The broad sun sunk behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief—'What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,'
Said Maddalo, 'and ever at this hour
Those who may cross the water, hear that bell
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell,
To vespers.'—'As much skill as need to pray
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they
to their stern maker,' I replied. 'O ho!
You talk as in years past,' said Maddalo.
'Tis strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs—if you can't swim
Beware of Providence.' I brooded on him,

JULIAN AND MADDAVO

But the gay smile had faded in his eye.
'And such,'—he cried, 'is our mortality,
And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine!—
And like that black and dreary bell, the soul,
Hung in a heaven-illumined tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart and pray—as madmen do
For what? they know not,—till the night of death
As sunset that strange vision, severeth
Our memory from itself, and us from all
We sought and yet were baffled.' I recall
The sense of what he said, although I mar
The force of his expressions. The broad star
Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill,
And the black bell became invisible,
And the red tower looked gray, and all between
The churches, ships and palaces were seen
Huddled in gloom;—'Into the purple sea
The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
Conveyed me to my lodging by the way.

The following morn was rainy, cold and dim:
Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him,
And whilst I waited with his child I played;
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made,
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being,
Graceful without design and unforeseeing,
With eyes—Oh speak not of her eyes!—which seem
Twin mirrors of Italian Heaven, yet gleam
With such deep meaning, as we never see
But in the human countenance: with me
She was a special favourite: I had nursed
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
To this bleak world; and she yet seemed to know
On second sight her ancient playfellow,
Less changed than she was by six months or so;
For after her first shyness was worn out
We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,
When the Count entered. Salutations past—
'The word you spoke last night might well have cast
A darkness on my spirit—if man be
The passive thing you say, I should not see
Much harm in the religions and old saws
(Tho' I may never own such leaden laws)
Which break a teachless nature to the yoke:
Mine is another faith!'—thus much I spoke
SHELLEY

And noting he replied not, added: ‘See
This lovely child, chaste, innocent and free;
She spends a happy time with little care,
While we to such sick thoughts subjected are
As came on you last night— it is our will
That thus enchains us to permitted ill—
We might be otherwise—we might be all
We dream of happy, high and majestic.
Where is the love, beauty, and truth we seek
But in our mind? and if we were not weak
Should we be less in deed than in desire?’

‘Ay, if we were not weak—and we aspire
How vainly to be strong!’ said Maddalo:
‘You talk Utopia,’ ‘It remains to know,’
I then rejoined, ‘and those who try may find
How strong the chains are which our spirit bind;
Brittle perchance as straw . . . We are assured
Much may be conquered, much may be endured,
Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
That we have power over ourselves to do
And suffer—what, we know not till we try;
But something nobler than to live and die—
So taught those kings of old philosophy
Who reign'd, before Religion made men blind;
And those who suffer with their suffering kind
Yet feel their faith, religion.’ ‘My dear friend,’
Said Maddalo, ‘my judgement will not bend
To your opinion, though I think you might
Make such a system refutation-tight
As far as words go. I knew one like you
Who to this city came some months ago,
With whom I argued in this sort, and he
Is now gone mad—and so he answered me,—
Poor fellow! but if you would like to go
We'll visit him, and his wild talk will show
How vain are such aspiring theories.’

‘I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
And that a want of that true theory, still,
Which seeks a “soul of goodness” in things ill
Or in himself or others, has thus bowed
His being—there are some by nature proud,
Who patient in all else demand but this—
To love and be beloved with gentleness;
And being scorned, what wonder if they die
Some living death? this is not destiny
But man’s own wilful ill.’

As thus I spoke

JULIAN AND MADALO

Servants announced the gondola, and we
Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
Sailed to the island where the madhouse stands.
We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,
Fierce yells and howlings and lamentings keen,
And laughter where complaint had merrier been,
Moons, shrieks, and curses, and blaspheming prayers
Accosted us. We climbed the lofty stairs
Into an old courtyard. I heard on high,
Then, fragments of most touching melody,
But looking up saw not the singer there—
Through the black bars in the tempestuous air
I saw, like weeds on a wrecked palace growing,
Long tangled locks flung wildly forth, and flowing,
Of those who on a sudden were beguiled
Into strange silence, and looked forth and smiled
Hearing sweet sounds. —Then I: ‘Methinks there were
A cure of these with patience and kind care,
If music can thus move . . . but what is he
Whom we seek here?’ ‘Of his sad history
I know but this,’ said Maddalo: ‘he came
To Venice a dejected man, and fame
Said he was wealthy, or he had been so;
Some thought the loss of fortune wrought him woe;
But he was ever talking in such sort
As you do—far more sadly—he seemed hurt,
Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,
To bear but of the oppression of the strong,
Or those absurd decepts (I think with you
In some respects, you know) which carry through
The excellent impostors of this earth
When they surface detection—he had worth,
Poor fellow! but a humorist in his way’—
‘Alas, what drove him mad?’ ‘I cannot say:
A lady came with him from France, and when
She left him and returned, he wandered then
About you lonely isles of desert sand
Till he grew wild—he had no cash or land
Remaining,—the police had brought him here—
Some fancy took him and he would not bear
Removal; so I fitted up for him
Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim,
And sent him busts and books and urns for flowers,
Which had adorned his life in happier hours,
And instruments of music—you may guess
A stranger could do little more or less
For one so gentle and unfortunate:
SHELLEY

And those are his sweet strains which charm the weight
From madmen's chains, and make this Bell appear
A heaven of sacred silence, hushed to hear:

'Nay, this was kind of you—he had no claim,
As the world says'—None—but the very same
Which I on all mankind were I as he
Fallen to such deep reverse;—his melody
Is interrupted—now we hear the din
Of madmen, shriek on shriek, again begin;
Let us now visit him; after this strain
He ever communes with himself again,
And sees nor hears not any.' Having said
These words we called the keeper, and he led
To an apartment opening on the sea—
There the poor wretch was sitting mournfully
Near a piano, his pale fingers twined
One with the other, and the ozone and wind
Rushed through an open casement, and did sway
His hair, and starred it with the brackish spray;
His head was leaning on a music book,
And he was muttering, and his lean limbs shook;
His lips were pressed against a folded leaf
In hue too beautiful for health, and grief
Smiled in their motions as they lay apart—
As one who wrung from his own fervid heart
The eloquence of passion, soon he raised
His sad meek face and eyes lustrous and glazed
And spoke—sometimes as one who wrote, and thought
His words might move some heart that heeded not,
If sent to distant lands; and then as one
Reproaching deeds never to be undone
With wondering self-compasion; then his speech
Was lost in grief, and then his words came each
Unmodulated, cold, expressionless,—
But that from one jarred accent you might guess
It was despair made them so uniform:
And all the while the loud and gusty storm
Hissed through the window, and we stood behind
Stealing his accents from the envious wind
Unseen. I yet remember what he said
Distinctly; such impression his words made.

'Month after month,' he cried, 'to bear this load
And as a jade urged by the whip and goad
To drag life on, which like a heavy chain
Lengthens behind with many a link of pain!—
And not to speak my grief—O, not to dare

JULIAN AND MADDALO

To give a human voice to my despair,
But live and move, and, wretched thing! smile on
As if I never went aside to groan,
And wear this mask of falsehood even to those
Who are most dear—not for my own repose—
Alas! no scorn or pain or hate could be
So heavy as that falsehood is to me—
But that I cannot bear more altered faces
Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces,
More misery, disappointment, and mistrust
To own me for their father . . . Would the dust
Were covered in upon my body now!
That the life ceased to toil within my brow!
And then these thoughts would at the least be fled;
Let us not fear such pain can vex the dead.

'What Power delights to torture us? I know
That to myself I do not wholly owe
What now I suffer, though in part I may.
Alas! none strewed sweet flowers upon the way
Where wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain
My shadow, which will leave me not again—
If I have erred, there was no joy in error,
But pain and insult and unrest and terror;
I have not some do, bought patience
With pleasure, and a dark yet sweet offence,
For them,—if love and tenderness and truth
Had overlived hope's momentary youth,
My creed should have redeemed me from repenting;
But loathed scorn and outrage unrelenting
Met love excited by far other seeming
Until the end was gained . . . as one from dreaming
Of sweetest peace, I woke, and found my state
Such as it is—

'O Thou, my spirit's mate
Who, for thou art compassionate and wise,
Wouldst pity me from thy most gentle eyes
If this sad writing thou shouldst ever see—
My secret groans must be unheard by thee,
Thou wouldst weep tears bitter as blood to know
Thy lost friend's incommunicable woe.

'Ye few by whom my nature has been weighed
In friendship, let me not that name degrade
By placing on your hearts the secret load
Which crushes mine to dust. There is one road
To peace and that is truth, which follow yet
Love sometimes leads astray to misery.
Yet think not though subdued—and I may well
Say that I am subdued—that the full Hell
Within me would infect the untainted breast
Of sacred nature with its own unrest;
As some perverted beings think to find
In scorn or hate a medicine for the mind
Which scorn or hate have wounded—O how vain!
The dagger heals not but may rend again...
Believe that I am ever still the same
In creed as in resolve, and what may tame
My heart, must leave the understanding free,
Or all would sink in this keen agony—
Nor dream that I will join the vulgar cry;
Or with my silence sanction tyranny;
Or seek a moment’s shelter from my pain
In any madness which the world calls gain,
Ambition or revenge or thoughts as stern
As those which make me what I am; or turn
To avarice or misanthropy or lust...
Heap on me soon, O grave, thy welcome dust!
Toll then the dungeon may demand its prey,
And Poverty and Shame may meet and say—
Halting beside me on the public way—
“That love-devoted youth is ours—let’s sit
Beside him—he may live some six months yet.”
Or the red scaffold as our country bends,
May ask some willing victim, or ye friends
May fall under some sorrow which this heart
Or hand may share or vanish or avert;
I am prepared—in truth with no proud joy—
To do or suffer aught, as when a boy
I did devote to justice and to love
My nature, worthless now!

‘I must remove
A veil from my pent mind.’ ‘Tis torn aside!

O, pallid as Death’s dedicated bride,
Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,
Am I not wan like thee? at the grave’s call
I haste, invited to thy wedding-bell
To greet the ghostly paramour, for whom
Thou hast deserted me... and made the tomb
Thy bridal bed... But I beside your feet
Will lie and watch ye from my winding-sheet—
Thus... wide awake tho’ dead... yet stay, O stay!
Go not so soon—I know not what I say—
Hear but my reasons... I am mad, I fear,
My fancy is o’erwrought... thou art not here...

Pale art thou, ‘tis most true... but thou are gone,
Thy work is finished... I am left alone!

‘Nay, was it I who wroth thee to this breast
Which, like a serpent, thou envenomest
As in repayment of the warmth it lent?
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content?
Did not thy love awaken mine? I thought
That thou wert she who said, “You kiss me not
Ever, I fear you do not love me now”—
In truth I loved even to my overthrow
Her, who would fain forget these words: but they
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.

‘You say that I am proud—that when I speak
My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break
The spirit it expresses... Never one
Humbled himself before, as I have done!
Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
Turns, though it wound not—then with prostrate head
Sinks in the dust and withers like me—and dies?
No: wears a living death of agonies!
As the slow shadows of the pointed grass
Mark the eternal periods, his pangs pass
Slow, ever-moving,—making moments be
As mine seem—each an immortality!

‘That you had never seen me—never heard
My voice, and more than all had ne’er endured
The deep pollution of my loathed embrace—
That your eyes ne’er had lied love in my face—
That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root
With mine own quivering fingers, so that ne’er
Our hearts had for a moment mingled there
To disunite in horror—these were not
With thee, like some suppressed and hideous thought
Which flits atwray our musings, but can find
No rest within a pure and gentle mind...
Thou sealedst them with many a bare broad word,
And sear’dst my memory o’er them,—for I heard
And can forget not... they were ministered
One after one, those curses. Mix them up
Like self-destroying poisons in one cup.
And they will make one blessing which thou ne'er
Didst imprecate for, on me,—death.

A cruel punishment for one most cruel,
If such can love, to make that love the fuel
Of the mind's hell; hate, scorn, remorse, despair:
But me—whose heart a stranger's tear might wear
As water-drops the sandy fountain-stone,
Who loved and pitted all things, and could mean
For woes which others hear not, and could see
The absent with the glance of phantasy,
And with the poor and trampled sit and weep,
Following the captive to his dungeon deep;
Me—who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth,
And was to thee the flame upon thy hearth,
When all beside was cold—that thou on me
Shouldst rain these plagues of blistering agony—
Such curses are from lips once eloquent
With love's too partial praise—let none relent
Who intend deeds too dreadful for a name
Henceforth, if an example for the same.
They seek ... for thou on me lookedst so, and so—
And didst speak thus ... and thus ... I live to show
How much men bear and die not!

'Thou wilt tell,
With the grimace of hate, how horrible
It was to meet my love when thine grew less;
Thou wilt admire how I could e'er address
Such features to love's work ... this taunt, though true,
(For indeed Nature nor in form nor hue
Bestowed on me her choicest workmanship)
Shall not be thy defence... for since thy lip
Met mine first, years long past, since thine eye kindled
With soft fire under mine, I have not dwindled
Nor changed in mind or body, or in aught
But as love changes what it loveth not
After long years and many trials.

'How vain
Are words! I thought never to speak again,
Not even in secret,—not to my own heart—
But from my lips the unwilling accents start,
And from my pen the words flow as I write,
Dazzling my eyes with scalding tears... my sight

Fear me not... against thee I would not move
A finger in despite. Do I not live
That thou mayst have less bitter cause to grieve?
I give thee tears for scorn and love for hate;
And that thy lot may be less desolate
Than his on whom thou tramplest, I refrain
From that sweet sleep which medicines all pain.
Then, when thou speakest of me, never say
'He could forgive not.' Here I cast away
All human passions, all revenge, all pride;
I think, speak, act no ill; I do but hide
Under these words, like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me—quick and dark
The grave is yawning... as its roof shall cover
My limbs with dust and worms under and over
So let Oblivion hide this grief... the air
Closes upon my accents, as despair
Upon my heart—let death upon despair!

He ceased, and overcame learnt back awhile,
Then rising, with a melancholy smile
Went to a sofa, and lay down, and slept
A heavy sleep, and in his dreams he wept
And muttered some familiar name, and we
Wept without shame in his society.
I think I never was impressed so much;
The man who were not, must have lacked a touch
Of human nature... then we lingered not,
Although our argument was quite forgot,
SHELLEY

But calling the attendants, went to dine.
At Maddedo's; yet neither cheer nor wine
Could give us spirits, for we talked of him
And nothing else, till day-light made stars dim;
And we agreed his was some dreadful ill.
Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,
By a dear friend; some deadly change in love
Of one vowed deeply which he dreamed not of;
For whose sake he, it seemed, had fixed a blot
Of falsehood on his mind which flourished not
But in the light of all- beholding truth;
And having stumped thisanker on his youth
She had abandoned him—and how much more
Might be his woe, we guessed not— he had store
Of friends and fortune once, as we could guess
From his nice habits and his gentleness;
These were now lost . . . it were a grief indeed
If he had changed one unsustaining reed
For all that such a man might else adorn.
The colours of his mind seemed yet unworn;
For the wild language of his grief was high,
Such as in measure were called poetry;
And I remember one remark which then
Maddedo made. He said: 'Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong,
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.'

If I had been an unconnected man
I, from this moment, should have formed some plan
Never to leave sweet Venice,—for to me
It was delight to ride by the lone sea;
And then, the town is silent—one may write
Or read in gondolas by day or night,
Having the little brazen lamp alight,
Unseen, uninterrupted; books are there,
Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair
Which were twin-born with poetry, and all
We seek in towns, with little to recall
Regrets for the green country. I might sit
In Maddedo's great palace, and his wit
And subtle talk would cheer the winter night
And make me know myself, and the firelight
Would flash upon our faces, till the day
Might dawn and make me wonder at my stay;
But I had friends in London too: the chief
Attraction here, was that I sought relief

JULIAN AND MADDALO

From the deep tenderness that maniac wrought
Within me—'twas perhaps an idle thought—
But I imagined that if day by day
I watched him, and but seldom went away,
And studied all the beatings of his heart
With zeal, as men study some stubborn art
For their own good, and could by patience find
An entrance to the caverns of his mind,
I might reclaim him from his dark estate:
In friendships I had been most fortunate—
Yet never saw I one whom I would call
More willingly my friend; and this was all
Accomplished not; such dreams of baseless good
Oft come and go in crowds or solitude
And leave no trace—but what I now designed
Made for long years impression on my mind.
The following morning, urged by my affairs,
I left bright Venice.

After many years
And many changes I returned; the name
Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same;
But Maddedo was travelling far away
Among the mountains of Armenia.
His dog was dead. His child had now become
A woman; such as it has been my doom
To meet with few,—a wonder of this earth,
Where there is little of transcendent worth,—
Like one of Shakespeare's women: kindly she,
And, with a manner beyond courtesy,
Received her father's friend; and when I asked
Of the born maniac, she her memory task'd,
And told as she had heard the mournful tale:
'That the poor sufferer's health began to fail
Two years from my departure, but that then
The lady who had left him, came again.
Her mien had been imperious, but she now
Looked meek—perhaps remorse had brought her low.
Her coming made him better, and they stayed
Together at my father's—for I played,
As I remember, with the lady's shawl—
I might be six years old—but after all
She left him . . . 'Why, her heart must have been tough: How did it end?' 'And was not this enough? They met—they parted—Child, is there no more?'
Something within that interval which bore
The stamp of why they parted, how they met:
Yet if thine aged eyes disdain to wet
Those wrinkled cheeks with youth's remembered tears,
Ask me no more, but let the silent years
Be closed and cered over their memory
As you mute marble where their corpses lie.'
I urged and questioned still, she told me how
All happened—but the cold world shall not know.

CANCELLED FRAGMENTS OF JULIAN AND MADDALO

"What think you the dead are?" 'Why, dust and clay,
What should they be?" 'Tis the last hour of day.
Look on the west, how beautiful it is
Vaulted with radiant vapours! The deep bliss
Of that unutterable light has made
The edges of that cloud fade
Into a hue, like some harmonious thought,
Wasting itself on that which it had wrought,
Till it dies and between
The light hues of the tender, pure, serene,
And infinite tranquillity of heaven.
Ay, beautiful but when not...'

'Perhaps the only comfort which remains
Is the unheeded clanking of my chains,
The which I make, and call it melody.'

NOTE BY MRS. SHELLEY

From the Baths of Lucca, in 1818, Shelley visited Venice; and, circumstances rendering it eligible that we should remain a few weeks in the neighbourhood of that city, he accepted the offer of Lord Byron, who lent him the use of a villa he rented near Este; and he sent for his family from Lucca to join him.

I Capucini was a villa built on the site of a Capuchin convent, demolished when the French suppressed religious houses; it was situated on the very overhanging brow of a low hill at the foot of a range of higher ones. The house was cheerful and pleasant; a vine-trellised walk, a pergola, as it is called in Italian, led from the hall-door to a summer-house at the end of the garden, which Shelley made his study, and in which he began the Prometheus; and here also, as he mentions in a letter, he wrote Julian and Maddalo. A slight ravine, with a road in its depth, divided the garden from the hill, on which stood the ruins of the ancient castle of Este, whose dark massive wall gave forth an echo, and from whose ruined crevices owls and bats flitted forth at night, as the crescent moon sunk behind the black and heavy battlements. We looked from the garden over the wide plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Apennines, while to the east the horizon was lost in misty distance. After the picturesque but

LIMITED VIEW OF MOUNTAIN, RAVINE, AND CHESTNUT-WOOD, AT THE BATHS OF LUCCA, THERE WAS SOMETHING INFINITELY GRATIFYING TO THE EYE IN THE WIDE RANGE OF PROSPECT COMMANDED BY OUR NEW ABODE.

Our first misfortune, of the kind from which we soon suffered even more severely, happened here. Our little girl, an infant in whose small features I fancied I traced great resemblance to her father, showed symptoms of suffering from the heat of the climate. Teething increased her illness and danger. We were at Este, and when we became alarmed, hastened to Venice for the best advice. When we arrived at Fusina, we found that we had forgotten our passport, and the soldiers on duty attempted to prevent our crossing the laguna; but they could not resist Shelley's petulancy at such a moment. We had scarcely arrived at Venice before life fled from the little sufferer, and we returned to Este to weep her loss.

After a few weeks spent in this retreat, which was interspersed by visits to Venice, we proceeded southward.

PRoMETheUS UNBOUnD

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A Lyrical Drama

In Four Acts

Audaces Hanc Amphiaras, Sub Terram Abside?

Preface

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

I have presumed to employ a similar licence. The Prometheus Unbound of Eschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Eschylus: an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we
could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

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

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

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and mode of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true, that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the compound of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.
Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, a passion for reforming the world: what passion inclines him to write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my althoerence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealism of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Eschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so considerable, 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 pike they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

PROMETHEUS. APOLLO. HERCULES.
DEMOCRAT. MERCURY. THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER.
JUPITER. ASIA. THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
THE EARTH. PANTEIA. THE SPIRIT OF THE MOON.
OCEAN. IONE. SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.

SPIRITS. ECHIUS. FAUNS. FURIES.

ACT I

SCENE.—A Revine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus. Prometheus is discovered bound to the precipice. Panthea and Ione are seated at his feet. Time, night. During the Scene, morning slowly breaks.

Prometheus. Monarch of Gods and Demons, and all Spirits
But One, who thorng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things

Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requiest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyesless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
Of mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments ayed by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire:—
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I designed to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

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

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

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

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

Second Voice (from the Springs).
Thunderbolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,
Thro' a city and a solitude.

Third Voice (from the Air).
I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
Its wastes in colours not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan.

Fourth Voice (from the Whirlwinds).
We had soared beneath these mountains
Unresting ages; nor had thunder,
Nor ye volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under
Ever made us mute with wonder.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

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

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

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

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

The Earth. The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried, 'Misery!' then; the hollow Heaven replied,
'Misery!' And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, 'Misery!'
Prometheus. I heard a sound of voices: not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan? He who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,
Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,
Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorres the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone, who checked,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses:
When Plague had fallen on man, and beast, and worm,
And Famine; and black blight on herb and tree;
And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
With grief; and the thin air, my breath, was stained
With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer; ay, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains, and caves, and winds, and you wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
But dare not speak them.

Venerable mother!
All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

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

*Prometheus.*

Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil, pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.

Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear!

*Ione.*

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

*Panthea.*

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven;
The shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven,
A sceptre of pale gold
To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud
His veined hand doth hold.

Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

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

*Prometheus.* Tremendous Image, as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

*The Earth.* Listen! And though your echoes must be mute,
Gray mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophectic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what ye cannot speak,

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

*Panthea.* See, how he lifts his mighty looks, the Heaven
Darksens above.

*Prometheus Unbound.*

Ione.

He speaks! O shelter me!

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

*Phantasm.*

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

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

This unchanging head while thou must reign on high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord: O, thou,
Who fittest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and heaven do bow
In fear and worship: all-prevailing foe!

I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;
Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony;
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse,
Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good;
Both infinite as is the universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.

An awful image of calm power
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally;
SHELLEY

And after many a false and fruitless crime
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space
and time.

Prometheus. Were these my words, O Parent?
The Earth. They were thine.
Prometheus. It doth repent me: words are quick and vail;
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

The Earth.

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

First Echo.
Lies fallen and vanquished!

Second Echo.
Fallen and vanquished!

Ione.

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

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

Ione.

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

Panthea.

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven's bounds.

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

Panthea.

The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.
First Fury. Ha! I scent life!
Second Fury. Let me but look into his eyes!
Third Fury. The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses, to a death-bird after battle.
First Fury. Darest thou delay, O Herald! take cheer, Hounds
Of Hell: what if the Son of Maia soon
Should make us food and sport—who can please long
The Omnipotent?
Mercury. Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wall,
Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise! and Gorgon,
Chimera, and thou Sphinx, substlet of fiends
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate:
These shall perform your task.
First Fury. Oh, mercy! mercy!
We die with our desire: drive us not back!
Mercury. Crouch then in silence.

Aweful Sufferer!

To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more: aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent; as thy clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years
From which there is no refuge, long have taught
And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so! there's a secret known
SHELLEY

To thee, and to none else of living things, Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven, The fear of which perplexes the Supreme: Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer, And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane, Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart: For benefits and meek submission tame The fiercest and the mightiest.

Prometheus. Evil minds Change good to their own nature. I gave all He has; and in return he chains me here Years, ages, night and day: whether the Sun Split my parched skin, or in the moony night The crystal-winged snow clung round my hair: Whilst my behovel race is trampled down By his thought-executing ministers. Such is the tyrant's recompense: 'tis just: He who is evil can receive no good; And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost, He can feel hate, fear, shame; not gratitude: He but requires me for his own misdeed.

Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge. Submission, thou dost know I cannot try:

For what submission but that fatal word, The death-seal of mankind's captivity, Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword, Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept, Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.

Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned In brief Omnipotence: secure are they:

For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down Fity, not punishment, on her own wrongs, Too much avenged by those who err. I wait, Enduring thus, the retributive hour Which since we spake is even nearer now.

But hark, the hell-hounds clamour: fear delay:

Behold! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown. Mercury, Oh, that we might be spared: I to inflict And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:

Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power? Prometheus. I know but this, that it must come. Mercury. Alas!

Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain? Prometheus. They last while Jove must reign: nor more, nor less

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Do I desire or fear.

Mercury. Yet pause, and plunge

Into Eternity, where recorded time,

Even all that we imagine, age on age,

Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind

Flags wearily in its unending flight,

Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless;

Perchance it has not numbered the slow years

Which thou must spend in torture, unprievied?

Prometheus. Perchance no thought can count them, yet they pass.

Mercury. If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the while

Lapped in voluptuous joy?

Prometheus. I would not quit

This bleak ravine, these unprievied pains.

Mercury. Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

Prometheus. Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,

Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,

As light in the sun, throned: how vain is talk!

Call up the fiends.

Tone. O, sister, look! White fire

Has cloven to the roots you huge snow-loaded cedar;

How fearfully God's thunder howls behind!

Mercury. I must obey his words and thine; alas!

Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart!

Panthea. See where the child of Heaven, with winged feet,

Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

Tone. Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes

Lest thou behold and die: they come they come Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,

And hollow underneath, like death.

First Fury. Prometheus!

Second Fury. Immortal Titan!

Third Fury. Champion of Heaven's slaves!

Prometheus. He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,

Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms.

What and who are ye? Never yet there came Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming Hell

From the all-miscreative brain of Jove;

Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,

Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,

And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

First Fury. We are the ministers of pain, and fear,

And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,

And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue

Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,

We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

Prometheus. Oh! many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings.
But why more hideous than your loathed selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep?

Second Fury. We knew not that: Sisters, rejoice, rejoice!
Prometheus. Can aught exult in its deformity?
Second Fury. The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,
Gazing on another: so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aereal crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.
Prometheus. I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.
First Fury. Thou thinkst we will rend thee bone from bone.
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?
Prometheus. Pain is my element, as hate is thine;
Ye rend me now: I care not.

Second Fury. Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?
Prometheus. I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.
Third Fury. Thou think'st we will live through thee, one
by one,
Like animal life, and though we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men:
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And soul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony?
Prometheus. Why, we are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting thorns within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

Chorus of Furies.
From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,
Come, come, come!
Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,

When cities sink howling in ruin; and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck;
Come, come, come!

Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead;
Leave the hatred, as in ashes
Fire is left for future burning:
It will burst in bloodier flashes
When ye stir it, soon returning:
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits, sense-enchanted,
Misery's yet unkindled fuel:
Leave Hell's secrets half uncharmed
To the maniac dreamer; cruel
More than ye can be with hate
Is he with fear.

Come, come, come!
We are streaming up from Hell's wide gate
And we burthen the blast of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

Ione. Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.
Panthée. These solid mountains quiver with the sound
Even as the tremulous air: their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

First Fury.
Your call was as a winged car
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;
It rapped us from red gulfs of war.

Second Fury.
From wide cities, famine-wasted;

Third Fury.
Groans half heard, and blood untasted;

Fourth Fury.
Kingly conclave stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold;

Fifth Fury.
From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—
SHELLEY

A Fury.
Speak not: whisper not:
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

A Fury.
Tear the veil!

Another Fury.
It is torn.

Chorus.
The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou wakenedst for man?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.
One came forth of gentle worth
Smiling on the sanguine earth;
His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.
Hark that outcry of despair!
'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
Wailing for the faith he kindled:
Look again, the flames almost
To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
The survivors round the embers
Gather in dread.
Joy, joy, joy!
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

Semichorus I.
Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.
Grant a little respite now:
See a disenchanted nation

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Springs like day from desolation;
To Truth its state is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;
A legioned band of linked brothers
Whom Love calls children—

Semichorus II.
'Tis another's:
See how kindred murder kin;
'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin:
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within:
Till Despair smother
The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.

[All the Poets vanish, except one]

Tone. Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan
Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
And beasts hear the sea roar in inland caves.
Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him?

Pantæa. Alas! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

Tone. What didst thou see?
Pantæa.
A woful sight: a youth
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

Tone. What next?
Pantæa.
The heaven around, the earth below
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
And some appeared the work of human hearts.
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles:
And other sights too foul to speak and live
We were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth; those groans are grief enough.

Fury. Behold an emblem: those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.

Prometheus. Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood; it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
So thy sick throes shackle not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
O, horrible! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse. I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home;
SHELLEY
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind;
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells:
Some—Hear I not the multitude laugh loud?
Impaled in lingering fire: and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.

Prometheus. Worse?

Fury. In each human heart terror survives
The ravin it has gorged: the loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true:
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanses of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt: they know not what they do.

Prometheus. Thy words are like a cloud of winged snakes;
And yet I pity those they torture not.

Fury. Thou pitiest them? I speak no more! 

Prometheus. Ah woe!

Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever!
I close my fearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumed mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave,
The grave hides all things beautiful and good:
I am a God and cannot find it there,
Nor would I seek it: for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are.

Prometheus. Alas! what savest thou more?

Prometheus. There are two woes:

To speak, and to behold; thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords, they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry:
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND
Among them: there was strife, deceit, and fear:
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

The Earth, I felt thy torture, son; with such mixed joy
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding aether: they behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future: may they speak comfort to thee!

Panthea. Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
Thronging in the blue air!

Ione. And see! more come,
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And, hark! is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? Is it the waterfall?

Panthea. 'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

Chorus of Spirits.
From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed mortality;
And we breathe, and sicken not,

The atmosphere of human thought:
Be it dim, and dank, and gray,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;

Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene;
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,

As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave;

We make there our liquid air,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element:
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!

Ione. More yet come, one by one: the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.
FIRST SPIRIT.

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.

From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—

Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!
Till they faded through the sky;
And one sound, above, around,
One sound beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 'twas the soul of Love;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

SECOND SPIRIT.

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
Which rocked beneath, immovably;
And the triumphant storm did fly,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between, with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half:
I heard the thunder hearseously laugh:
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath a hell of death
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split,
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

THIRD SPIRIT.

I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed;
When a Dream with plumes of flame,
To his pillow hovering came,
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade, its lustre made,
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet:

PROVIDENCE UNBOUND

I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

FOURTH SPIRIT.

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aerial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wilderesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of Immortality!
One of these awakened me,
And I sped to succour thee.

IONE.

Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
Corne, as two doves to one beloved nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere?
And, hark! their sweet, sad voices! 'tis despair
Mingled with love and then dissolved in sound.

PANTHEON. Canst thou speak, sister? all my words are drowned.
Ione. Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,
Orange and azure deepening into gold;
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Hast thou beheld the form of Love?

FIFTH SPIRIT.

As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wilderesses,
That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses:
His footsteps paved the world with light; but as I passed 'twas fading,
And hollow Ruin yawned behind: great sages bound in madness.
And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished, unbraving
Gleamed in the night; I wandered o'er, till thou, O King of
sadness,
Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

**Sixth Spirit.**
Ah, sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
It walks not on the earth; it floats not on the air,
But treads with lulling footstep, and fans with silent wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear;
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aerial joy, and call the monster, Love;
And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet.

**Chorus.**
Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,
Following him, destroyingly,
On Death's white and winged steed,
Which the fleetest cannot flee,
Trampling down both flower and weed,
Man and beast, and soul and fair,
Like a tempest through the air;
Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb.

**Prometheus.** Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

**Chorus.**
In the atmosphere we breathe,
As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
From Spring gathering up beneath,
Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow:
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

**Jove.** Where are the Spirits fled?

**Pantæa.** Only a sense
Remains of them, like the omnipotence
Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,

**Prometheus Unbound**
Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.

**Prometheus.** How fair these airborn shapes! and yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,
Astral who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still; alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart;
Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief
If slumber were denied not. I would faint
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things:
There is no agency, and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.

**Pantæa.** Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?

**Prometheus.** I said all hope was vain but love: thou lovest.

**Pantæa.** Deeply in truth; but the eastern star looks white,

And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the aether
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

**End of the First Act.**

**ACT II**

**Scene I.**—*Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian Caucasus. Asia alone.*

**Asia.** From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended:
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart;
Which should have learnt repose: thou hast descended
Cradled in tempests; thou dest wake, O Spring!
O child of many winds! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet;
Like genius, or like joy which riseth up
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desert of our life.
This is the season, this the day, the hour;
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,
Too long desired, too long delaying, come!
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl!
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains: through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it: now it wanes: it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air:
'Tis lost! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
The roseate sunlight quivers: hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn?

I feel, I see
Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,
Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.
Beloved and most beautiful, whoarest
The shadow of that soul by which I live,
How late thou art! the spherical sun had climbed
The sea; my heart was sick with hope, before
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

Panthea. Pardon, great Sister! but my wings were faint
With the delight of a remembered dream,
As are the noontide plumes of summer winds
Satiate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy
Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,
Both love and we familiar to my heart
As they had grown to thine: erewhile I slept
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom:
But not as now, since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse; since dissolv'd
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
Was troubled and yet sweet; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

Asia. Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.

Panthea. As I have said

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linked sleep.
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not,
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form.
Which lives unhanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy:
'Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me.'
I lifted them: the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire; an atmosphere
Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm seer of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorbed, until it passed,
And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
And tremulous as they, in the deep night
My being was condensed; and as the rays
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
Like footsteps of weak melody: thy name
Among the many sounds alone I heard
Of what might be articulate; though still
I listened through the night when sound was none.
Ione wakened then, and said to me:
'Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night?
I always knew what I desired before,
Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
But now I cannot tell thee what I seek;
I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet
Even to desire: it is thy sport, false sister;
Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,
Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
And mingled it with thine: for when just now
We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
SHELLEY

The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
Quivered between our intertwining arms.
I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
But lied to thee.

Asia. Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air: I feel them not: Oh, lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul!

Panthea. I lift them though they droop beneath the load
Of that they would express: what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?

Asia. Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
Contracted to two circles underneath
Their long, fine lashes; dark, far, measureless,
Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.

Panthea. Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed?

Asia. There is a change: beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
Prometheus, it is thee! depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build o'er the waste world? The dream is told.
What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air,
For through its gray robe gleams the golden dew
Whose stars the moon has quenched not.

Dream. Follow! Follow!

Panthea. It is mine other dream.

Asia. It disappears.

Panthea. It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on your lightning-blasted almond-tree,
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost:
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

Asia. As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among these lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young gray dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind;
And the white dew on the new-bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently;
And there was more which I remember not:
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Aurh the purple mountain slope, was written
Follow, O, FOLLOW! as they vanished by:
And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamped, as with a withering fire;
A wind arose among the pines; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewells of ghosts,
Were heard: O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME!
And then I said: 'Panthen, look on me.'
But in the depth of those belovèd eyes
Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

Echo. Follow, follow!

Panthea. The crags, this clear spring morning, mock
our voices
As they were spirit-tongued.

Asia. It is some being
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds! O, list!

Echoes (unseen).

Echoes we; listen!
We cannot stay:
As dew-stars glisten
Then fade away—
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Hark! Spirits speak. The liquid responses
Of their aereal tongues yet sound.

Panthea. I hear.

Echoes.

O, follow, follow,
As our voice receded
Through the caverns hollow,
Where the forest spreadeth;
(More distant.)

O, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Through the noontide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mock the gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean!
Asia. Shall we pursue the sound? It grows more faint
And distant.
Panthea. List! the strain floats nearer now.

Echoes.
In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken;
Child of Ocean!
Asia. How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind!

Echoes.
O, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noontide dew;
By the forest, lake, and fountains,
Through the many-folded mountains;
To the rents, and guls, and chasms,
Where the Earth repose from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now;
Child of Ocean!
Asia. Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

Scene II.—A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns. Asia and Panthea pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock listening.

Semichorus I. of Spirits.
The path through which that lovely twin
Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor saith, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifled along the earth-creeping breeze,
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel, blown anew;
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone;
Or when some star of many a one

That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the deep through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite;
And the gloom divine is all around,
And underneath is the mossy ground.

Semichorus II.
There the voluptuous nightingales,
Are awake through all the broad noonday.
When one with bliss or sadness falls,
And through the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom;
Another from the swinging blossom,
Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,
'Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

Semichorus I.
There those enchanted eddies play
Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way;
As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thraw:
And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined soft emotion,—
Attracts, impels them; those who saw
Say from the breathing earth behind
There steams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
Believe their own swift wings and feet
The sweet desires within obey;
And so they float upon their way,
Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
Sucked up and hurrying: as they fleet
Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

First Faun. Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
Which make such delicate music in the woods?
We haunt within the least frequented caves
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft:
Where may they hide themselves?

Second Faun. 'Tis hard to tell:
I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere
Which moonshine kindles through the woven leaves;
And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.

First Faun. If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms or within the bells
Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,
Or on their dying odours, when they die,
Or in the sunlight of the sphere'd dew?

Second Faun. Ay, many more which we may well divine.
But, should we stay to speak, moonlight would come,
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood: delightful strains which cheer
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

Scene III.—A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.

Panthea. Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy.

That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication; and uplift,
Like Mænads who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!
The voice which is contagion to the world.

Asia. Sit throne for such a Power! Magnificent!
How glorious art thou, Earth! And if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lover still,
Though evil stain its work, and it should be
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
I could fall down and worship that and thee.

Even now my heart adores: 'Wonderful!
Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain:
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
Under the curling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
Punctured by the dark and blooming forests,
In twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
Of cataracts from their thaw-clown ravines,
Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
Awful as silence. Hark! the rushing snow!
The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass,
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

Panthea. Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
In crimson foam, even at our feet! it rises
As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon
Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

Asia. The fragments of the clouds are scattered up;
The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair;
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes; my brain
S H E L L E Y

Grows dizzy; see'st thou shapes within the mist?
Panthea. A countenance with beckoning smiles: there burns
An azure fire within its golden locks!
Another and another: hark! they speak!

Song of Spirits.
To the deep, to the deep,
Down, down!
Through the shade of sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life;
Through the veil and the bar
Of things which seem and are
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down!

While the sound whirls around,
Down, down!
As the fawn draws the bough,
As the lightning the vapour,
As a weak moth the taper;
Death, despair; love, sorrow;
Time both; to-day, to-morrow;
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
Down, down!

Through the gray, void abyss,
Down, down!
Where the air is no prism,
And the moon and stars are not,
And the cavern-calls are not
The radiance of Heaven,
Nor the gloom to Earth given,
Where there is One pervading, One alone,
Down, down!

In the depth of the deep,
Down, down!
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,
The last look Love remembers,
Like a diamond, which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down!

We have bound thee, we guide thee;
Down, down!
SHELLEY

Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down.
Demogorgon. He reigns.
Asia. I feel, I know it: who?
Demogorgon. He reigns.
Asia. Who reigns? There was the Heaven and earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
Of the earth’s primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them
And semivital worms: but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, ‘Let man be free,’
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;
And Jove now reigns; for on the race of man
First famine, and then till, and then disease,
Stirreth, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves:
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad disquietude, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which led them mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legions hope
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Anaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire which like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The brow of man; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all sublimest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o’er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hearts first mimicked and then mocked,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
Changes his livery, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea:
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-winged chariots of the Ocean,
And the Cela knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure aether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain: but who rains down
Evil, the immemorial plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven, ay, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

Demogorgon. All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou knowest if Jove be such or no.
Asia. Whom calledst thou God?

Demogorgon. I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.
Asia. Who is the master of the slave?

Demogorgon. If the abyss
Could vomit forth its secrets: ... But a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.

Asia. So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.

One more demand; and do thou answer me
As mine own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?

Demogorgon. Behold!

Asia. The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds
Which trample the dim winds; in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.

Some look behind, as fends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.

Demogorgon. These are the immortal Hours,
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

Asia. A spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf,
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak!

Spirit. I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect: ere youe planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.
Asia. What meanest thou?

Panthea. That terrible shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
Terrified: watch its path among the stars
Blackening the night!

Asia. Thus I am answered: strange!

Panthea. See, near the verge, another chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope;
How its soft smiles attract the soul as light
Lures winged insects through the lampless air.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Spirit.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is brightening
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire: and their speed makes night kindle;
If fear: they outstrip the Typhon;
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon:
We shall rest from long labours at noon:
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.—The Car pauses within a Cloud on the top of a snowy
Mountain. Asia, Panthea, and the Spirit of the Hour.

Spirit.

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to expire;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire:
They shall drink the hot speed of desire!

Asia. Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.

Spirit. Alas! it could not.

Panthea. Oh Spirit! pause, and tell wheresoe the light
Which fills this cloud? the sun is yet unrisen.

Spirit. The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aerial hue
Of fountain-gazing rises fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.

Panthea. Yes, I feel—
Asia. What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.

Panthea. How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thine uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veiled shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
AMES THEUS UNBOUND

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lov'st
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

Asia.

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.

It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven;

Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnacle gilded,
The boat of my desire is guided:

Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:

Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day;
A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lift by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
SHELLEY

Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III

Scene I.—Heaven. Jupiter on his Throne; Thetis and the other
Deities assembled.

Jupiter. Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me; alone
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up inscription, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's covet, fear;
And though my curses through the pendulous air,
Like snow on herless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it; though under my wrath's night
It climbs the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepessed, yet soon to fall:
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
To redescend, and trample out the spark.
Pour forth heaven's wine, Icean Ganymede,
And let it fill the Dædal cups like fire,
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
As dew from earth under the twilight stars:
Drink! be the nectar circling through your veins
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice
Like music from Elysian winds.

And thou
Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
Thetis, bright image of eternity!

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

When thou didst cry, 'Insufferable might!
God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
The penetrating presence; all my being,
Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
Sinking through its foundations!' even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either, which, unboided now,
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends.
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Grinding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
Victory! victory! I feel thou not, O world,
The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
Olympus?

[The Car of the Hour arrives. Demogorgon descends,
and moves towards the Throne of Jupiter.

Awdy shape, what art thou? Speak!

Demogorgon. Eternity. Demand no other name. Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
Or reassemble, or hold, succeeding thee:
Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhes till they are dead,
Put forth thy might.

Jupiter.

Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
I trample thee! thou lingerest?

Mercy! mercy!

No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,
That thou wouldest make mine enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What then art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!

Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspite
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.

Ai! Ai!

The elements obey me not. I sink
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

SCENE II.—The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis. Ocean is discovered reclining near the Shore; Apollo stands beside him.

Ocean. He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown?

Apollo. Ay, when the strife was ended which made din
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell:
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

Ocean. He sunk to the abyss? To the dark void?

Apollo. An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Or even on the aerial ice clings over it.

Ocean. Henceforth the fields of heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will beave, unstained with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
Swayed by the summer air; my streams will flow
Round many-peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles; and from their glassy thrones
Blue Proteus and his humd nymphs shall mark
The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see
The floating back of the light-laden moon
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea;
Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
And desolation, and the mingled voice
Of slavery and command; but by the light
Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
And sweetest music, such as spirits love.

Apollo. And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
Darkens the sphere I guide; but list, I hear
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
That sits i' the morning star.

Ocean. Thou must away;
Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell;
The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
With azure calm out of the emerald urns
Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
With garlands tied and starry sea-flower crowns,
Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.

[A sound of waves is heard.
It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell.

Farewell.

Apollo. Farewell.

SCENE III.—Caucasus. Prometheus, Hercules, Ione, the Earth, Spirits, Asia, and Panthea, borne in the Car with the Spirit of the Hour. Hercules unbinds Prometheus, who descends.

Hercules. Most glorious among Spirits, thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
And thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.

Prometheus. Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
And long delayed.
Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of beauty unheheld: and ye,
Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, through your love and care:
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curb out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veined emerald, and a fountain
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light:
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own:
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability?
And if ye sigh, then I will smile; and thou,
Ione, shalt chant fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be;
And hither come, sped on the charmed winds,
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower atreat Enna feeds,
At their known island-homes in Elmera,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Himself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
And lovely apparitions—dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright
From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality.—
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of all that man becomes, the mediators
Of that best worship love, by him and us
Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
And, veil by veil, evil and error fall:
Such virtue has the cave and place around.

Turning to the Spirit of the Hour.
For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curved shell, which Proteus old
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Ione, Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell;
See the pale azure fading into silver
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light;
Looks it not like fulled music sleeping there?

Spirit, It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean;
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange,
Prometheus. Go, borne over the cities of mankind
On whirlwind-footed coursers: once again
Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world;
And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
As thunder mingled with clear echoes: then
Return; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.
And thou, O, Mother Earth!—

The Earth. I hear, I feel;
Thy lips are on me, and their touch runs down
Even to the adamantine central gloom.
Along these marble nerves; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
And through my withered, old, and icy frame
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
Folded in my sustaining arms; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take
And interchange sweet nutriment; to me
Shall they become like sister-anteleopes
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
Nursed among lilies near a primming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
Under the stars like balm: night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose;
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy:
And death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
Folding her child, says, 'Leave me not again,'

Asit. Oh, mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
Cry they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
Who die?

The Earth. It would avail not to reply:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life:
They sleep, and it is lifted: and meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun’s
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, ay, even
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
And thou! There is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee;
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
A violet’s exhalation, and it fills
With a serener light and crimson air
Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around;
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,
And the dark linked ivy tangling wild,
And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
As they rain through them, and bright golden globes
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven,
And through their veined leaves and amber stems
The flowers whose purple and translucid bowls
Stand ever mantling with aereal dew,
The drink of spirits; and it circles round,
Like the soft waveling wings of noonday dreams,
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise! Appear!

[A SPIRIT RISES IN THE LIKENESS OF A WINGED CHILD.

This is my torch-bearer;
Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
On eyes from which he kindled it anew
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nyssa, Mænæad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
Trampling the torrent streams and glossy lakes
With feet unfat, unwearied, undelaying,
And up the green ravine, across the vale,

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
Where ever lies, on unceasing waves,
The image of a temple, built above,
Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
And populous with most living imagery,
Praetitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
It is deserted now, but once it bore
Thy name, Prometheus; there the emulous youths
Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom
The lamp which was thine emblem; even as those
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
Into the grave, across the night of life,
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
Beside that temple is the destined cave.

Scene IV.—A Forest. In the Background a Cave. PROMETHEUS, ASIA,
PANTHEA, IONE, and the SPIRIT of the EARTH.

Jove. Sister, it is not earthly: how it glides
Under the leaves! how on its head there burns
A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams
Are twined with its fair hair! how, as it moves,
The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass!

Knowest thou it?

Panthæa. It is the delicate spirit
That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets; and sometimes
It floats along the spray of the salt sea,
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
 Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned
It loved our sister Asia, and it came
Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
As one bit by a dípas, and with her
It made its childish confidence, and told her
All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
Yet idly reason what it saw; and called her—
For whence it sprang it knew not, nor do I—
Mother, dear mother.
The Spirit of the Earth (running to Asia). Mother, dearest mother:

May I then talk with thee as I was wont?
May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy?
May I then play beside thee the long noons,
When work is none in the bright silent air?
Asia. I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth
Can cherish thee unenvied, speak, I pray:
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

Spirit of the Earth. Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child
Cannot be wise like thee, within this day;
And happier too; happier and wiser both,
Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks over the green world:
And that, among the haunts of humankind,
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man;
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
(Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee),
When false or frowning made me sick at heart
To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen.

Well, my path lately lay through a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it:
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate:
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
A long, long sound, as it would never end:
And all the inhabitants leaped suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
Passed floating through the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them; and those
From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

After some foul disguise had fallen, and all
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again: and when the dawn
Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
Could e'er be beautiful? yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape or hue:
All things had put their evil nature off:
I cannot tell my joy, when e'er a lake
Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward
And thinning one bright bough of amber berries,
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky.
So, with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all.

Asia. And never will we part, till thy chaste sister
Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon
Will look on thy more warm and equal light
Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow
And love thee.

Spirit of the Earth. What; as Asia loves Prometheus?

Asia. Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.
Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With spherical fires the interstellar air?

Spirit of the Earth. Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp
'Tis hard I should go darkling.

Asia. Listen; look! [The Spirit of the Hour enters.

Prometheus. We feel what thou hast heard and seen: yet speak.

Spirit of the Hour. Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change: the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the spheric world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe:
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My courser sought their birthplace in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire;
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
SHELEY
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel,—
In memory of the tidings it has borne.—
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphibian snake
The likeness of those winged steeds will mock
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear?
As I have said, I floated to the earth:
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
'All hope abandon ye who enter here,'
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the object of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the writh crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill;
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the yet it breathes,
Yet question that unmeet hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
SHELLEY

ACT IV

SCENE.—A Part of the Forest near the Cave of Prometheus. Panthea and Ione are sleeping; they awaken gradually during the first Song.

Voice of unseen Spirits.

The pale stars are gone!
For the sun, their swift shepherd,
To their folds them compelling,
In the depths of the dawn,
Hastens, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.
But where are ye?

A Train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly, singing.

Here, oh, here:
We bear the bier
Of the Father of many a cancelled year
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
Be the faded flowers
Of Death’s bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours!

Haste, oh, haste!
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven’s blue waste.
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony!

Ione.

What dark forms were they?

Panthea.

The past Hours weak and gray,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together.
From the conquest but One could foil.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Ione.

Have they passed?

Panthea.

They have passed;
They outspeeded the blast,
While ’tis said, they are fled:

Ione.

Whither, oh, whither?

Panthea.

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

Voice of unseen Spirits.

Bright clouds float in heaven,
Dew-stars gleam on earth,
Waves assemble on ocean,
They are gathered and driven
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
They shake with emotion,
They dance in their mirth.
But where are ye?

The pine boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness,
The billows and fountains
Fresh music are flinging,
Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness.
But where are ye?

Ione. What charioteers are these?

Panthea. Where are their chariots?

Semichorus of Hours.

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep
Which covered our being and darkened our birth
In the deep.

A Voice.

In the deep?
Semichorus II.
Oh, below the deep.

Semichorus I.
An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who walked as his brother slept,
Found the truth.

Semichorus II.
Worse than his visions were!

Semichorus I.
We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;
We have known the voice of Love in dreams;
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

Semichorus II.
As the billows leap in the morning beams!

Chorus.
Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Fierce with song heaven’s silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flies,
To check its flight ere the cave of Night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A Voice.
Unite!

Panthea. See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

Chorus of Spirits.
We join the thong
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

Chorus of Spirits and Hours.
Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony!

Chorus of Spirits.
Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hour deep to colonize;
Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight,
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight;
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

Chorus of Hours.
Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart, and some remain.

Semichorus I.
We, beyond heaven, are driven along:

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Semichorus II.
Us the enchantments of earth retain:

Semichorus I.
Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

Semichorus II.
Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light.

Semichorus I.
We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

Semichorus II.
We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

Chorus of Hours and Spirits.
Break the dance, and scatter the song,
Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

Panthæa. Ha! they are gone!
Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness?

Panthæa. As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!

Ione.
Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound?

Panthæa. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Æolian modulation.

Ione. Listen too,
How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, sliver, icy, keen, awakening tones,
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

Panthea. But see where through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet
Under the ground and through the windless air.

Lone. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the Mother of the Months is borne
By ebbing light into her western cave.
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams;
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods,
Distinctly seen through that dusky airy veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchantor's glass;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunderstorm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind;
Within it sits a winged infant, white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, wool of ethereal pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Dole
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
With fire that is not brightness; in its hand
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheeled clouds, which as they roll
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

Panthea. And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,
Whose vaupors clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kindly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
Planks turned to marble; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythed chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin!
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes and fames; prodigious shapes
Huddled in gray annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard, black deep; and over these,
The anatomies of unknown winged things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, body chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the torture strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags; and over these
The jagged alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapped deluge round it like a cloak, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished; or some God
Whose throne was in a comet, passed and cried,
'Be not!' And like my words they were no more.

The Earth.

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exaltation not to be confined!
Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

The Moon.

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
SHELLEY

Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis love, all love!

The Earth.

It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakens a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being:
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;
Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven
Gilding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even,
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move:

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is poured;
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linked thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-winged ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear;
Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with Delphic harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on!
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air.
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.

The Moon.

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

The Earth.

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the moon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleecè of fire and amethyst.

The Moon.

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine!

The Earth.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,
SHELLEY

Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

The Moon.

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers’ lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full!

Thou art speeding round the sun
Brightest world of many a one;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given;
I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
Magnet-like of lovers’ eyes;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Maenad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmean forest.

Brother, where so’er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,
As a lover or a chameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet’s gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
As a gray and watery mist
Grows like solid amethyst

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

Atheart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow—
The Earth.

And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.
Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
Through isles for ever calm;
Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride’s deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose trampling fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

Panthea. I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.

Ione. Ah me! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph’s limbs and hair.

Panthea. Peace! peace! A mighty Power, which is as darkness,
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight: the bright visions,
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

Ione. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

Panthea. An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

Demogorgon.

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies:

The Earth.

I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

Demogorgon.

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee;
SHELLEY

Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:

The Moon.
I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee!

Demogorgon.

Ye Kings of suns and stars, Demons and Gods,
Aethereal Dominations, who possess
Elysian, wearliss, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A Voice from above.
Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

Demogorgon.

Ye happy Dead, whom beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered—

A Voice from beneath.
Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

Demogorgon.

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead; from heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A confused Voice.
We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

Demogorgon.

Spirits, whose homes are flesh: ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish; ye living leaves and buds;
Lightning and wind; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes:—

A Voice.
Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

Demogorgon.

Man, who erst once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and a deceiver: a decay;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day:

NOTE ON PROMETHEUS UNBOUND, BY MRS. SHELLEY

On the 12th of March, 1818, Shelley quitted England, never to return. His principal motive was the hope that his health would be improved by a milder climate; he suffered very much during the winter previous to his emigration, and this decided his vacillating purpose. In December, 1817, he had written from Marlow to a friend, saying:

"My health has been materially worse. My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to such a state of unnatural and keen excitement that, only to instance the organ of sight, I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission, is my condition. The hours devoted to study are selected with vigilant caution from among these periods of endurance.

Demogorgon.

This is the day, which down the void abyss
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
O dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the path over Destruction's strength;
And if, with Infiniter, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasps her with his length;
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

All.

Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

Demogorgon.

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It is not for this that I think of travelling to Italy, even if I knew that Italy would relieve me. But I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack, and although at present it has passed away without any considerable vestige of its existence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumptive. It is to my advantage that this malady is in its nature slow, and, if one is sufficiently alive to its advances, is susceptible of cure from a warm climate. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, it would be my duty to go to Italy without delay. It is not mere health, but life, that I should seek, and that not for my own sake—I feel I am capable of trampling on all such weakness: but for the sake of those to whom my life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honour, and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse.'

In almost every respect his journey to Italy was advantageous. He left behind friends to whom he was attached; but cares of a thousand kinds, many springing from his lavish generosity, crowded round him in his native country, and, except the society of one or two friends, he had no compensation. The climate caused him to consume half his existence in helpless suffering. His dearest pleasure, the free enjoyment of the scenes of Nature, was marred by the same circumstance.

He went direct to Italy, avoiding even Paris, and did not make any pause till he arrived at Milan. The first aspect of Italy enchanted Shelley; it seemed a garden of delight placed beneath a clearer and brighter heaven than any he had lived under before. He wrote long descriptive letters during the first year of his residence in Italy, which, as compositions, are the most beautiful in the world, and show how truly he appreciated and studied the wonders of Nature and Art in that divine land.

The poetical spirit within him speedily revived with all the power and with more than all the beauty of his first attempts. He meditated three subjects as the groundwork for lyrical dramas. One was the story of Tasso; of this a slight fragment of a song of Tasso remains. The other was one founded on the Book of Job, which he never abandoned in idea, but of which no trace remains among his papers. The third was the Prometheus Unbound. The Greek tragedians were now his most familiar companions in his wanderings, and the sublime majesty of Aeschylus filled him with wonder and delight. The father of Greek tragedy does not possess the pathos of Sophocles, nor the variety and tenderness of Euripides; the interest on which hefocused his dramas has often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and thrones of gods and demi-gods: such fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley.

We spent a month at Milan, visiting the lake of Como during that interval. Thence we passed in succession to Pisa, Leghorn, the baths of Lucca, Venice, Eate, Rome, Naples, and back again to Rome, whether we returned early in March, 1823. During all this time Shelley meditated the subject of the drama, and wrote portions of it. Other poems were composed during this interval, and while at the Bagni di Lucca he translated Plato's Symposium. But, though he diversified his studies, his thoughts was in the Prometheus. At last, when at Rome, during a bright and beautiful Spring, he gave up his whole time to the composition. The spot selected for its study was, as he mentions in his preface, the mountainous rocks of the baths of Caracalla. These are little known to the ordinary visitor at Rome. He describes them in a letter, with that poetry and delicacy and truth of description which render his narrated impressions of scenery of unequalled beauty and interest.

At first he completed the drama in three acts. It was not till several months after, when at Florence, that he conceived that a fourth act, a sort of hymn of rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophecies with regard to Prometheus, ought to be added to complete the composition.

The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity: God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

'Brought death into the world and all our woe.'

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these Notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on was the image of One warring with the Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it, but by—even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity; a victim full of fortitude and hope and spirit of triumph emanating from a reliance in the ultimate omnipotence of Good. Such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealized image of the same subject. He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind, beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulcan to pour his still-renewed heart. There was a prophecy allude in heaven portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus; and the god offered freedom from torture on condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the, destroyed the, and set him free; and Thetis was married to Peleus, the father of Achilles.
Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his peculiar views. The son greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone Evil, and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture; till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceannides, is the wife of Prometheus—she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the benefactor of mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the Fourth Act, the Poet gives further scope to his imagination, and idealizes the scene. He has, as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth, the guide of our planet through the realms of sky; while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of Evil in the superior sphere.

Shelley develops, more particularly, in the lyrics of this drama, his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the Creation. It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of Man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of Mind and Nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.

More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real—to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery.

I find in one of his manuscript books some remarks on a line in the <i>Edipus Tyrannus</i>, which show at once the critical subtlety of Shelley's mind, and explain his apprehension of those minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, which he pronounces, in the letter quoted in the note to the <i>Revolt of Islam</i>, to comprehend all that is sublime in man.

"In the Greek Shakespeare, Sophocles, we find the image, Ποίησις δ' οἴκεις ἐλεύθης φροντίδος πλάνως:

a line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry; yet how simple are the images in which it is arrayed!

"Coming to many ways in the wandrings of careful thought."

If the words οἴκεις and πλάνως had not been used, the line might have been explained in a metaphorical instead of an absolute sense, as we say "ways and means," and "wanderings" for error and confusion. But they mean literally paths or roads, such as we tread with our feet; and wanderings, such as a man makes when he loses himself in a desert, or roams from city to city—as Edipus, the speaker of this verse, was destined to wander, blind and asking charity. What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which is here made its symbol; a world within a world in which he who seeks some knowledge with respect to what he ought to do searches throughout, as he would search the external universe for some valued thing which was hidden from him upon its surface.

In reading Shelley's poetry, we often hear similar verses, resembling, but not imitating the Greek in this species of imagery; for, though he adopted the style, he gifted it with that originality of form and colouring which spring from his own genius.

In the <i>Prometheus Unbound</i>, Shelley fulfills the promise quoted from a letter in the Note on the <i>Revol of Islam</i>: The tone of the composition is calmer and more majestic, the poetry more perfect as a whole, and the imagination displayed at once more pleasantly beautiful and more varied and distant. The description of the Hours, as they are seen in the case of Demogorgon, is an instance of this—it fills the mind as the most charming picture—we long to see an artist at work to bring to our view the cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds

Which trample the dim winds; in each there stands
A wild-eyed character urging their flight
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars;
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before.
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair; they all
Swoop down unheard.

Through the whole poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world.

England had been rendered a painful residence to Shelley, as much by the sort of persecution with which in those days all men of liberal opinions were beset. While correcting the proofsheets of that poem, it struck me that the poet had indulged in an exaggerated view of the evils of restored despotism; which, however injurious and degrading, were less openly sanguinary than the triumphs of anarchy, such as it appeared in France at the close of the last century. But at this time a book of <i>Spanish Life</i>, translated by Lieutenant Crawford from the German of Dr. Huber, of Rostock, fell into my hands. The account of the triumph of the priests and the serviles, after the French invasion of Spain in 1823, bears a stern and frightful resemblance to some of the descriptions of the massacres of the patriots in the <i>Revol of Islam</i>. 
THE CENCI
A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS

DEDICATION, TO LEIGH HUNT, Esq.

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

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

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honourable, innocent and brave; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil; one who knows better how to receive, and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners I never knew; and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

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

All happiness attend you! Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Rome, May 29, 1819.

PREFACE

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII, in the year 1599. The story is, that an old man having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children, which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden, who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue.1

Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as

1 The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.
among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge, that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true: thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into grand improvisations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and men which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an unyielding persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But if the nation in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act Lucrècia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an exposituation with Cenci after having administered the oaths, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached strophe or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murderer should be judged to be of that nature.¹

¹ An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in El Purgatorio de San Patricio de Calderón; the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.
penetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects, I have written more carelessly; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men, and that our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted; I need not be assured that success is a very different matter; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

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

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

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

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE.**

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.

GIACOMO, his Sons.

BERNARDO, a Sergeant.

CARDINAL CAMILLO.

ORSINO, a Prelate.

SAVELLA, the Pope's Legate.

OLIMPIO, an Assassin.

MARZIO, a Servant to Cenci.

ANDREA, Servant to Cenci.

LUCCETTA, Wife of Cenci, and Step-mother of his children.

BEATRICE, his Daughter.

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

**TIME.** During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

**ACT I.**

**SCENE I.**—An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.

Enter COUNT CENCI, and CARDINAL CAMILLO.

Camillo. That matter of the murder is hushed up.

If you consent to yield his Holiness

Your lie that lies beyond the Pincian gate.—

It needed all my interest in the conclave

To bend him to this point: he said that you

Bought perilous impunity with your gold;

That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded

Enriched the Church, and respite from hell

An erring soul which might repent and live:—

But that the glory and the interest

Of the high throne he fills, little consist

With making it a daily mart of guilt

As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

Cenci. The third of my possessions—let it go!

Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines.
The next time I compounded with his uncle:
I little thought he should outwit me so!

Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life;—it angers me!

Respite me from Hell!—So may the Devil
Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope Clement,
And his most charitable nuncios, pray
That the Apostle Peter and the Saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

Camillo. Oh, Count Cenci!
So much that thou mightst honourably live
And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
And with thy God, and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Through those snow white and venerable hairs!—
Your children should be sitting round you now,
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
Talk with me, Count,—you know I mean you well.
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth
Watching its bold and bad career, as men
Watch meteors, but it vanished not,—I marked
Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
Do I behold you in dishonoured age
Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

Cenci. For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fel beyond the Pincian.—Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
But pleasure; and I fed on honey sweets:
Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees,
And I grew tired:—yet, till I killed a foe,
And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth,
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals,
The dry fixed eyeball; the pale quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within me,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.
Camillo. Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me;
I thank my God that I believe you not.

Enter ANDREA.

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

Cenci. Bid him attend me in
The grand salon.

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

[Exit Camillo.

Cenci. The third of my possessions! I must use
Close husbandry, or, old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursed sons;
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off;
And meaning if I could to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse.
If dead and damned:—then, as to Beatrice—

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

Enter CENCI.

Cenci. My Lord?
Andrea. Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening:—no, at midnight and alone.
[Exit.

Scene II.—A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter BRATRICE and ORSINO, as in conversation.

Beatrice. Pervert not truth,
Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation:—stay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress;—two long years are past
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.
Orsino. You said you loved me then.
Beatrice. You are a Priest,
Speak to me not of love.
Orsino. I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a Priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some strick deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?
Beatrice. As I have said, speak to me not of love.
Had you a dispensation I have not;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe my life, and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino! All the love that once
I felt for you, is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but hollie,
Even as a sister or a spirit might;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.
You have a sly, equivocating vein
That suits me not.—Ah, wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? Even now you look on me
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah, no! forgive me; sorrow makes me seem
Sterner than else my nature might have been;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forebode,—but what can they forebode
Worse than I now endure?
Orsino. All will be well.

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

Beatrice. Your zeal for all I wish,—Ah me, you are cold!

Your utmost skill . . . speak but one word . . . (aside) Alas!

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

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

Orsino. Farewell. (Exit Beatrice.) I know the Pope
Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue
Of many a wealthy see; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition:
He might bestow her on some poor relation
Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,
And I should be debarred from all access,
Then as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration—
Old men are testy and will have their way;
A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,
And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content if on my conscience
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
From the devices of my love—a net
From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear

THE CENCI

Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts.—Ah, no! A friendless girl
Who clings to me, as to her only hope:
I were a fool, not less than if a panther
Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,
If she escape me.

[Exit.

SCENE III.—A Magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace. A Banquet. Enter
Cenci, Lucretia, Beatrice, Orsino, Camillo, Nobiles.

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

First Guest. In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
Too sprightly and companionable a man,
To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.
(To his Companion.) I never saw such blithe and open cheer
In any eye!

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

Cenci. It is indeed a most desired event.
If, when a parent from a parent's heart
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
And when he rises up from dreaming it;
One supplication, one desire, one hope,
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard—
And suddenly beyond his dearest hope
It is accomplished, he should then rejoice,
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment,—
Then honour me thus far—for I am he.

Beatrice (to Lucretia). Great God! How horrible! Some
dreadful ill
**SHELLEY**

Must have befallen my brothers.

*Lucretia.*  
35  
Fear not, Child;  
He speaks too frankly.  
*Beatrice.*  
Ahi! My blood runs cold.  
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,  
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.  
*Cenci.*  
Here are the letters brought from Salamanca;  
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God!  
I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,  
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.  
My disobedient and rebellious sons  
Are dead!—Why, dead!—What means this change of cheer?  
You hear me not, I tell you they are dead;  
And they will need no food or raiment more:  
The tapers that did light them on the dark way  
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not  
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.  
Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous glad.

[Lucretia sinks, half fainting; Beatrice supports her.]

*Beatrice.*  
It is not true!—Dear lady, pray look up.  
Had it been true, there is a God in Heaven,  
He would not live to boast of such a boon.  
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.  
*Cenci.*  
Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call  
To witness that I speak the sober truth;  
And whose most favouring Providence was shown  
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco  
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,  
When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy,  
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano  
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man.  
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival;  
All in the same hour of the same night;  
Which shows that Heaven has special care of me,  
I beg those friends who love me, that they mark  
The day a feast upon their calendars.

It was the twenty-seventh of December:  
Aye, read the letters if you doubt my oath.  
[The Assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.]

*First Guest.*  
Oh, horrible! I will depart—  
*Second Guest.*  
And I!—  
*Third Guest.*  
I do believe it is some jest; though faith!  
*Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.  
I think his son has married the Infanta,  
Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado;  
*Tis but to season some such news; stay, stay!

**THE CENCI**

I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.  
*Cenci.*  
(Responsive.)  
Filing a bowl of wine, and lifting it up.)  
Oh, thou bright wine whose purple splendour leaps  
And bubbles gayly in this golden bowl  
Under the amplitight, as my spirits do,  
To hear the death of my accursed sons!  
Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,  
Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,  
And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,  
Who, if a father's ures, as men say,  
Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,  
And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,  
Now triumphs in my triumph!—But thou art  
Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,  
And I will taste who other light them.

*Here, Andrea! Bear the bowl around.*  
*A Guest (rising).*  
Thou wretch!  
Will none among this noble company  
Check the abandoned villain?

*Camillo.*  
For God's sake  
Let me dismiss the guests! You are insane,  
Some ill will come of this.  
*Second Guest.*  
Seize, silence him!  
*First Guest.*  
I will!  
*Third Guest.*  
And I!  
*Cenci.*  
(addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture).  
Who moves? Who speaks?  
(turning to the Company)

'tis nothing.

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

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

*Beatrice.*  
I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;  
What, although tyranny and impious hate  
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair?  
What, if 'tis he who cloathed us in these limbs  
Who tortures them, and triumphs? What, if we,  
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,  
His children and his wife, whom he is bound  
To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find  
No refuge in this merciless wide world?  
O think what deep wrongs must have blotted out  
First love; then reverence in a child's prone mind,  
Till it this vanquish shame and fear? O think!  
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Shelley

Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!
Have excused much, doubted; and when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love, and tears
To soften him, and when this could not be
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights
And lifted up to God, the Father of all,
Passionate prayers: and when these were not heard
I have still borne,—until I meet you here,
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.
O Prince Colonna, thou art near kinsman,
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain,
Camillo, thou art chief justice,
Take us away!

Cenci. (He has been conversing with Camillo during the first part of Beatrice's speech; he hears the conclusion, and now advances.) I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps
Of their own throats—before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

Beatrice (not noticing the words of Cenci). Dare no one look on me?
None answer. Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit?
O God! That I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed spring
Were fading on my grave! And that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all!
Camillo. A bitter wish for one so young and gentle;
Can we do nothing?

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

A Cardinal. And I.

Cenci. Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!
Beatrice. Retire thou, impious man! Ay, hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience
Who art a torturer? Father, never dream
Though thou mayst overbear this company,
But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me!

The Cenci

Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step;
Seek out some dark and silent corner, there,
Bow thy white head before offended God,
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

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

[Execute all but Cenci and Beatrice.

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

[To Beatrice.

Thou painted viper!

Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!
I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
Now get thee from my sight!

[Exit Beatrice.

Here, Andrea,
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening; but I must;
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do.—

[Drinking the wine.

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

[Exit.

End of the first act.

Act II

Scene I.—An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter Lucretia and Bernardo.

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

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

Lucretia, Alas! Poor boy, what else couldst thou have done?

Beatrice. (in a hurried voice), Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?

Ah, not! that is his step upon the stairs;
'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door;
Mother, if I to thee have ever been
A dutiful child, now save me! Thou, great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost Thou indeed abandon me? He comes;
The door is opening now; I see his face;
He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
Even as he did after the feast last night.

Enter a Servant.

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

Servant. My master bids me say, the Holy Father
Has sent back your petition thus unopened. (Giving a paper)
And he demands at what hour 'twere secure
To visit you again?

Lucretia. At the Ave Mary. [Exit Servant.

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

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

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

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

Lucretia. Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?
He stayed not after that accursed feast
One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

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

Beatrice (speaking very slowly with a forced calmness). It was
one word, Mother, one little word;
One look, one smile. (Warily) Oh! He has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
Ditch-water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten.—He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,
And I have never yet despaired—but now!

What could I say?

Ah, not! 'tis nothing new.
The sufferings we all share have made me wild;
He only struck and cursed me as he passed;
He said, he looked, he did,—nothing at all
Beyond his want, yet it disordered me.
Alas! I am forgetful of my duty,
I should preserve my senses for your sake.

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

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

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

_Lucrècia._ My dear, dear children!

_Enter Cenci, suddenly._

_Cenci._

Come hither! [She shrinks back, and covers her face.

_Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair;_ 105

Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
On what I meant; whilst I looked to hide
That which I came to tell you—but in vain.

_Beatrice (wildly, staggering towards the door)._ O that the earth
would gape! Hid me, O God!

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

_To BERNARDO._

_Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!_ 115

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

_Lucrècia._ (advancing mildly towards him). O husband! Pray forgive poor Beatrice.

_She meant not any ill._ 120

_Cenci._

Nor you perhaps?
Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
Particrude with his alphabet? Not Glacoma?
Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope?
Whom in one night merciful God cut off:
Innocent lambs! They thought not any ill.

**THE CENCI**

You were not here conspiring? You said nothing
Of how I might be dungeon'd as a madman;
Or be condemned to death for some offence,
And you would be the witnesses?—This failing,
How just it was to hire assassins, or
Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
Or smother me when overcome by wine?
Seeing we had no other judge but God,
And He had sentenced me, and there were none
But you to be the executioners
Of His decree enregistered in Heaven?
Oh, no! You said not this?

_Lucrècia._

So help me God,
I never thought the things you charge me with!
_Cenci._ If you dare speak that wicked lie again
I'll kill you, What! It was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
You did not hope to stir some enemies
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
What every nerve of you now trembles at?
You judged that men were holier than they are;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

_Lucrècia._ Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
Nor do I think she designed anything
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

_Cenci._ Blaspheming liar! You are damned for this!
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you:
For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things—not question which that I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out; you know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrelia;
'Tis safely walled, and moated round about:
Its dungeons underground, and its thick towers
Never told tales; though they have heard and seen

What might make dumb things speak.—Why do you linger?
Make speediest preparation for the journey!

_Edit LUCETTA._

The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets;
I see the bright sky through the window panes:
It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears,
And every little corner, o'er and down,
Is penetrated with the insolent light.

Come darkness! Yet, what is the day to me?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
THE CENCI

Their fathers’ hearts to madness and despair,
Requiting years of care with contumely.
I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
And thus he is exasperated to ill.
In the great war between the old and young
I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
Will keep at least blameless neutrality.

Enter ORSINO.

You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words,
Orsino. What words?
Giacomo. Alas, repeat them not again!
There then is no redress for me, at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink.—But, say,
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father’s eye.
The memorable torturers of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on the meanest slave
What these endure; shall they have no protection?
Camillo. Why, if they would petition to the Pope
I see not how he could refuse it—yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as ’twere, the shadow of his own.
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay.

Giacomo. But you, Orsino,
Have the petition: wherefore not present it?
Orsino. I have presented it, and backed it with
My earnest prayers, and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it—in truth they might well baffle
Any belief—have turned the Pope’s displeasure
Upon the accusers from the criminal:
So I should guess from what Camillo said.
Giacomo. My friend, that palace-walking devil Gold
Has whispered silence to his Holiness:
And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.
What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father’s holy name,
Or I would—

[Stops abruptly.

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

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

Orsino. But a friend's bosom 
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind 
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day, 
And from the all-communicating air. 
You look what I suspected— 
Giacomo. Spare me now! 
I am as one lost in a midnight wood, 
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger 
The path across the wilderness, lest be, 
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer. 
I know you are my friend, and all I dare 
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee. 
But now my heart is heavy, and would take 
 Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care. 
Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell! 
I would that to my own suspected self 
I could address a word so full of peace. 

Orsino. Farewell!—Be your thoughts better or more bold. 

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo 
To seed his hope with cold encouragement: 
It fortunately serves my close designs 
That 'tis a trick of this same family 
To analyse their own and other minds, 
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will 
Dangerous secrets: for it tempts our powers, 
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done, 
Into the depth of darkest purposes: 
So Cenci fell into the pit; even I, 
Since Beatrice unvelled me to myself, 
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun, 
Show a poor figure to my own esteem, 
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do

As little mischief as I can; that thought 
Shall fee the accuser conscience. 

(After a pause.) Now what harm 
If Cenci should be murdered?—Yet, if murdered, 
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take 
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril 
In such an action? Of all earthly things 
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words; 
And such is Cenci: and while Cenci lives 
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave 
If a priest wins her.—Oh, fair Beatrice! 
Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee 
Could but despise danger and gold and all 
That frown between my wish and its effect, 
Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape. 
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar, 
And follows me to the resort of men, 
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams, 
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire; 
And if I strike my dump and dizzy head 
My hot palm scorches it: her very name, 
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart 
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably 
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights 
Till weak imagination half possesses 
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer 
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours: 
From the unravell'd hopes of Giacomo 
I must work out my own dear purposes. 
I see, as from a tower, the end of all: 
Her father dead; her brother bound to me 
By a dark secret, surer than the grave; 
Her mother scared and unexpecting 
From the dread manner of her wish achieved: 
And she!—Once more take courage, my faint heart; 
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee? 
I have such foresight as assures success: 
Some unheeld divinity doth ever, 
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds 
To black suggestions; and he prospers best, 
Not who becomes the instrument of ill, 
But who can flatten the dark spirit, that makes 
Its empire and its prey of other hearts 
Till it became his slave... as I will do. 

[Exit.]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.
THE CENCI

Lucretia. My dearest child, what has your father done?
Beatrice (doubtfully). Who art thou, questioner? I have no father.
(Aside.) She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me. It is a pitiful office. (To Lucretia, in a slow, subdued voice.) Do you know I thought I was that wretched Beatrice Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales From hall to hall by the entangled hair; At others, pens up naked in damp cells Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there, Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story So did I overact in my sick dreams, That I imagined... no, it cannot be! Horrible things have been in this wide world, Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived Than ever there was found a heart to do. But never fancy imagined such a deed. As... Who art thou? Swear to me, ere I die With fearful expectation, that indeed Thou art not what thou seemest... Mother! Lucretia. Oh! My sweet child, know you... Beatrice. Yet speak it not: For this if this be truth, that other too Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth, Linked with each lasting circumstance of life, Never to change, never to pass away. Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace; Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice. I have talked some wild words, but will no more. Mother, come near me: from this point of time, I am... [Her voice dies away faintly.] Lucretia. Alas! What has befallen thee, child? What has thy father done? Beatrice. What have I done? Am I not saint? Is it my crime That one with white hair, and impious brow, Who tortured me from my forgotten years, As parents only dare, should call himself My father, yet should be!—Oh, what am I? What name, what place, what memory shall be mine? What retrospects, outward even despair? Lucretia. He is a violent tyrant, surely, child: We know that death alone can make us free;
HIS DEATH OR OURLS. BUT WHAT CAN HE HAVE DONE
OF DEADLIER OUTRAGE OR WORSE INJURY?
THOU ART UNLIKE THYSELF; THINE EYES SHOOT FORTH
A WANDERING AND STRANGE SPIRIT. SPEAK TO ME,
UNLOCK THOSE PALPID HANDS WHOSE FINGERS TWINE
WITH ONE ANOTHER.

BEATRICE. 'TIS THE RESTLESS LIFE
TORTURED WITHIN THEM. IF I TRY TO SPEAK
I SHALL Go MAD. AY, SOMETHING MUST BE DONE;
WHAT, YET I KNOW NOT... SOMETHING WHICH SHALL MAKE
THE THING THAT I HAVE SUFFERED BUT A SHADOW
IN THE DREAD LIGHTNING WHICH AVENGE IT;
BRIEF, RAPID, IRREVERSIBLE, DESTROYING
THE CONSEQUENCE OF WHAT IT CANNOT CURE.
SOME SUCH THING IS TO BE ENDURED OR DONE:
WHEN I KNOW WHAT, I SHALL BE STILL AND CALM,
AND NEVER ANYTHING WILL MOVE ME MORE.

BUT NOW!—O BLOOD, WHICH ART MY FATHER'S BLOOD,
CIRCLING THROUGH THESE CONTAMINATED VEINS,
IF THOU, POURED FORTH ON THE POLLUTED EARTH,
COULD WASH AWAY THE CRIME, AND PUNISHMENT
BY WHICH I SUFFER... NO, THAT CANNOT BE!
MANY MIGHT DIALOGUE, A GOD ABOVE
WHO SEES AND PERMITS EVIL, AND SO DIE:
THAT FAITH NO AGONY SHALL OBSCURE IN ME.

LUCRETIA. IT MUST INDEED HAVE BEEN SOME BITTER WRONG;
YET WHAT, I DARE NOT GUESS. OH, MY LOST CHILD,
HIDE NOT IN PROUD IMPECEPTIBLE GRIEF
THY SUFFERINGS FROM MY FEARS.

BEATRICE. I HIDE THEM NOT.
WHAT ARE THE WORDS WHICH YOU WOULD HAVE ME SPEAK?
I, WHO CAN FEIGN NO IMAGE IN MY MIND
OF THAT WHICH HAS TRANSFORMED ME: I, WHOSE THOUGHT
IS LIKE A GHOST SHROUDED AND FOLDED UP
IN ITS OWN FORMLESS HORROR: OF ALL WORDS,
THAT MINISTER TO MORTAL INTERCOURSE,
WHICH WOULDST THOU HEAR? FOR THERE IS NONE TO TELL
MY MISERY: IF ANOTHER EVER KNEW
AIGHT LIKE TO IT, SHE DIED AS I WILL DIE,
AND LEFT IT, AS I MUST, WITHOUT A NAME.

DEATH! DEATH! OUR LAW AND OUR RELIGION CALL THEE
A PUNISHMENT AND A REWARD... OH, WHICH
HAVE I DESERVED?

LUCRETIA. THE PEACE OF INNOCENCE;
TILL IN YOUR SEASON YOU BE CALLED TO HEAVEN.
WHATEVER YOU MAY HAVE SUFFERED, YOU HAVE DONE
NO EVIL. DEATH MUST BE THE PUNISHMENT
Bailling belief, and overpowering speech;
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapped
In hideous hints... Oh, most assured redress!
Orsino. You will endure it then?
Beatrice. Endure?—Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.
[Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.]
Ay,
All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishing mist
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other?
Orsino. Should the offender live?
Triumph in his misdeed? and make, by use,
His crime, what'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element; until thou mayst become
Utterly lost; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest?
Beatrice (to herself). Mighty death!
Thou double-visaged shadow? Only judge!
Rightful arbiter!
Lucretia. If the lightning
Of God has ever descended to avenge... 180
Orsino. Blaspheme not! His high Providence commits
Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs
Into the hands of men; if they neglect
To punish crime...
Lucretia. But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock, with gold, opinion, law, and power?
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? If because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange, and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief? O God!
If, for the very reasons which should make
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?
Orsino. Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.
Lucretia. How?
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not... but I think it might be good
To...
Orsino. Why, his late outrage to Beatrice;
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her

Only one duty, how she may avenge:
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel...
Lucretia. For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource
Will arise thence, where every other one
Might find them with less need.
Orsino. Then...
Beatrice. Peace, Orsino!
And, honoured Lady, while I speak, I pray,
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement; both for what is past,
And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburthened soul,
And be... what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will,
And have at length determined what is right.
Art thou my friend, Orsino? False or true?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.
Orsino. I swear
To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.
Lucretia. You think we should devise
His death?
Beatrice. And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.
Orsino. And yet most cautious.
Lucretia. For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy
For that which it became themselves to do.
Beatrice. Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
What are the means?
Orsino. I know two dull, fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.
Lucretia.
To-morrow before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petræa, in the Apulian Appennines.
If he arrive there ... 
Beatrice.
He must not arrive.
Orsino. Will it be dark before you reach the tower?
Lucretia. The sun will scarce be set.
Beatrice. But I remember
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Cling to the mass of life; yet clinging, leans;
And leaning, makes more dark the dreadful abyss
In which it fears to fall: beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns ... below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade.
By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.
Orsino. Before you reach that bridge make some excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until ... 
Beatrice. What sound is that?
Lucretia. Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
Returned ... Make some excuse for being here.
Beatrice. (To Orsino, as she goes out.) That step we hear
approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.

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

THE CENCI

Enter Giacomo, in a hurried manner.

How! Have you ventured hither? Know you then
That Cenci is from home?
Giacomo. I sought him here;
And now must wait till he returns.
Orsino. Great God! Weigh you the danger of this rashness?
Giacomo. Ay! Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man; the oppressor to the oppressed;
The slanderer to the slandered; toe to toe:
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say. I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;
But only my fair fame; only one heart
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee,
Or I will ... God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man?
Orsino. Be calm, dear friend.
Giacomo. Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.

This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,
And my wife smiled; and my heart knew repose.
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Confered this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sat sad together
Soliciting our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons,
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too: but soon returned again;
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
'Give us clothes, father! Give us better food!
What you in one night squandered were enough
For months!' I looked, and saw that home was hell.
And to that hell will I return to more
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me
I will, reversing Nature's law 

Orioso.

The compensation which thou seest here
Will be denied.

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

Orioso. It must be fear itself, for the bare word
Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it: what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplished.

Giacomo. Is he dead?

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

Giacomo. What outrage?

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

THE CENCI

Giacomo. It is enough. My doubts are well appeased;
There is a higher reason for the act
Than mine; there is a holier judge than me,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitted it
With needless tears! Fair sister, thou in whom
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
Did not destroy each other! Is there made
Ravage of thee? O, heart, I ask no more
Justification! Shall I wait, Orioso,
Till he return, and stab him at the door?

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

Enter Beatrice.

Beatrice. 'Tis my brother's voice! You know me not?
Giacomo. My sister, my lost sister!

Beatrice. Lost indeed!

I see Orioso has talked with you, and
That you conjecture things too horrible
To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,
He might return: yet kiss me; I shall know
That then thou hast consented to his death.
Farewell, farewell! Let pity to God,
Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
And all things that make tender hardest hearts
Make thine hard, brother. Answer not . . . farewell.

[Exeunt severely.

SCENE II.—A mean Apartment in Giacom's House. GIACOMO alone.

Giacomo. 'Tis midnight, and Orioso comes not yet.
[Thunder, and the sound of a storm.

What! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man? If so, the shaft
Of mercy-winged lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep:
They are now living in unmeaning dreams:
But I must wake, still doubting if that died
Be just which is most necessary. O,
Thou unreplenishing lamp! whose narrow fire
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
SHELLEY

Devouring darkness hovers! Thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
Did I not heed thee, wouldst thou fail and be
As thou hast never been! So wastes and sinks
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine:
But that no power can fill with vital oil
That broken lamp of flesh. Hail! 'tis the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold:
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death:
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness which now stands
Naked before Heaven's judgement seat!

[A bell strikes.]

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

Enter ORSINO.

Speak! I am come
To say he has escaped.

GIACOMO. Escaped!

ORSINO. And safe
Within Petrelia. He passed by the spot
Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.
GIACOMO. Are we the fools of such contingencies?
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,
Which seemed to howl in his knell, is the loud laughter
With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth
Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done
But my repentance.

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

ORSINO. Why, what need of this?
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,
Giacomo. If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands...

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

Giacomo. And all
Forgotten: Oh, that I had never been!

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV

SCENE I.—An Apartment in the Castle of Petrelia. Enter Cenci.

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

Enter Lucretia.

Thou loathed wretch!

Hide thee from my abhorrence: fly, beggar!
Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

Lucretia. Oh, Husband! I pray for thine own wretched sake
I speed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary gray;
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,
Plty thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage: so that she may tempt thee not
To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

Cenci. What! like her sister who has found a home
To mock my hate from without prosperity?
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee
And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid, her death in excess of it. Go,
Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

Lucretia. She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence

THE CENCI

She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
'Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear
If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
Harden his dying heart!

Cenci. Why—such things are... No doubt divine revelations may be made.
'Tis plain I have been favoured from above,
For when I cursed my sons they died.—Ay... so...
As to the right or wrong, that's talk... repenance...
Repentance is an easy moment's work
And more depends on God than me. Well... well...
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul.

[A pause; Lucretia approaches anxiously, and then shrinks back as he speaks.]

One, two; Ay... Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled: and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave:
Beatrice shall, if there he skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming: to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will beseech
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb,
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna,
I will pile up my silver and my gold;
My costly robes, paintings and tapestries;
My parchments and all records of my wealth,
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name;
Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of him who wielded it;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask of it me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound;
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outstrip my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure...

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

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

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

Cenci. Andrea! Go call my daughter,
And if she comes not tell her that I come.
What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step,
Through infamies unheard of among men:
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be... What? Canst thou guess?
She shall become (for what she most abhors
Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
All she appears to others; and when dead,
As she shall die unsheathed and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God,
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth;
Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

Enter Andrea.

Andrea. The Lady Beatrice...

Cenci. Speak, pale slave! What
Said she?

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

Cenci. Go thou quick, Lucretia,
Tell her to come; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent; and say, moreover,
That if she come not I will curse her.

Ha!

With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-struck armed victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
Be he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers

The Cenci

Awe her before I speak? For I on them
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

Enter Lucretia.

Well; what? Speak, wretch!

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

Cenci (kneeling). God!
Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which Thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil
Which sprang from me as from a hell, was meant
To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illuminate this dark world;
If nursed by Thy selectest dew of love
Such virtues blossom in her as should make
The peace of life, I pray Thee for my sake,
As Thou the common God and Father art
Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
The blistering drops of the Maremman's dew,
Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathed lameness! All-beholding sun,
Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams!

Lucretia. Peace! Peace!
For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.
When high God grants He punishes such prayers.

Cenci (keeping up, and throwing his right hand towards Heaven).
He does His will, I mine! This in addition,
That if she have a child...

Lucretia. Horrible thought!

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

(Exit Lucretia.)

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

Enter Lucretia.

What? Speak!

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

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

(Exit Lucretia.)

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

Enter Beatrice and Lucretia, below.

BEATRICE. They come not yet.

LUCRETTIA. Tis scarce midnight.

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

LUCRETTIA. The minutes pass...

If he should wake before the deed is done?

BEATRICE. O, mother! He must never wake again.

What thou hast said persuades me that our act
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell
Out of a human form.

LUCRETTIA. Tis true he spoke
Of death and judgement with strange confidence
For one so wicked; as a man believing
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.
And yet to die without confession...

BEATRICE. Oh!

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

Enter Olimpio and Marzio, below.

LUcretia. See,

They come.

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

Olimpio. How feel you to this work?

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

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

MARZIO. Is that their natural hue?

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

MARZIO. You are inclined then to this business?

Olimpio. Ay.

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

Enter Beatrice and Lucretia, below.

BEATRICE. Are ye resolved?

Noble ladies!
SHELLEY

Olimpio. Is he asleep?
Marzio. Is all

Quiet?
Lucretia. I mixed an opiate with his drink: He sleeps so soundly...

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

Olimpio. We are resolved.
Marzio. As to the bow this act

Be warranted, it rests with you.

Beatrice. Well, follow!

Olimpio. Hush! Hark! What noise is that?

Marzio. Ha! some one comes!

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

[Exeunt.

SCENE III.—An Apartment in the Castle. Enter Beatrice and Lucretia.

Lucretia. They are about it now.

Beatrice. Nay, it is done.

Lucretia. I have not heard him groan.

Beatrice. He will not groan.

Lucretia. What sound is that?

Beatrice. List! 'tis the tread of feet About his bed.

Lucretia. My God!

If he be now a cold stiff corpse... His thin gray hair, his stern and reverend brow, His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast, And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
SHELLEY

Beatrice (giving them a bag of coin). Here, take this gold, and hasten to your homes. And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed By that which made me tremble, wear thou this! [Clothes him in a rich mantle.]

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

[A horn is sounded.]

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

Beatrice. Some tedious guest is coming.

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

[Exeunt Olimpio and Marzio.]

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

SCENE IV.—Another Apartment in the Castle. Enter on one side the Legate Savella, introduced by a Servant, and on the other Lucrezia and Bernardo.

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

Lucretia (in a hurried and confused manner). I think he sleeps; Yet wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile, He is a wicked and wrathful man; Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night, Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams, It were not well; indeed it were not well. Wait till day break ... (aside) O, I am deadly sick!

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

Lucretia (with increased agitation). I dare not rouse him: I know none who dare

'Twere perilous; ... you might as safely waken A serpent; or a corpse in which some fiend Were laid to sleep.

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

Lucretia (aside). O, terror! O, despair! (To Bernardo.) Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to Your father's chamber.

[Exeunt Savella and Bernardo.]

Enter Beatrice.

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

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

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

Voices. Murder! Murder! Murder!

[Exeunt Bernardo and Savella.]

Savella (to his followers). Go search the castle round; sound the alarm; Look to the gates that none escape!
Beatrice. What now? 
Bernardo. I know not what to say — my father’s dead. 
Beatrice. How? dead! he only sleeps; you mistake, brother. 
His sleep is very calm, very like death; 
’Tis wonderfull how well a tyrant sleeps. 
He is not dead? 
Bernardo. Dead; murdered. 
Lucretia (with extreme agitation). Oh no, no, 
He is not murdered though he may be dead; 
I have alone the keys of those apartments. 
Savella. Hail! Is it so? 
Beatrice. My Lord, I pray excuse us; 
We will retire; my mother is not well. 
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror. 
[Excust Lucretia and Beatrice. 
Savella. Can you suspect who may have murdered him? 
Bernardo. I know not what to think. 
Savella. Can you name any who had an interest in his death? 
Bernardo. Alas! 
I can name none who had not, and those most 
Who most lament that such a deed is done; 
My mother, and my sister, and myself. 
Savella. ’Tis strange! There were clear marks of violence. 
I found the old man’s body in the moonlight 
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber, 
Among the branches of a pine: he could not 
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped 
And effortless; ’tis true there was no blood . . . 
Favour me, Sir; it much imports your house 
That all should be made clear; to tell the ladies 
That I request their presence. 
[Exit Bernardo. 

Enter Guards bringing in Marzo. 

Guard. We have one. 
Officer. My Lord, we found this ruffian and another 
Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt 
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci: 
Each had a bag of coin; this fellow wore 
A gold-inwoven robe, which shining bright 
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon 
Betrayed them to our notice: the other fell 
Desperately fighting. 
Savella. What does he confess? 
Officer. He keeps firm silence; but these lines found on him 
May speak. 

THE CENCI

Savella. Their language is at least sincere. [Reads. 
‘To the Lady Beatrice. 
‘That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture 
may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother’s desire, those who will 
speak and do more than I dare write . . .’ 
‘Thy devoted servant, Orsino.’ 

Enter Lucretia, Beatrice, and Bernardo. 

Knowest thou this writing, Lady? 
Beatrice. No. 
Savella. Not thou? 
Lucretia. (Her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation.) 
Where was it found? What is it? It should be 
Orsino’s hand! It speaks of that strange horror 
Which never yet found utterance, but which made 
Between that hapless child and her dead father 
A gulf of obscure hatred. 
Savella. Is it so? 
Is it true, Lady, that thy father did 
Such outrages as to awaken in thee 
Unfilial hate? 
Beatrice. Not hate, twas more than hate: 
This is most true, yet wherewith question me? 
Savella. There is a deed demanding question done; 
Thou hast a secret which will answer not. 
Beatrice. What sayest? My Lord, your words are bold and rash. 
Savella. I do arrest all present in the name 
Of the Pope’s Holiness. You must to Rome. 
Lucretia. O, not to Rome! Indeed we are not guilty. 
Beatrice. Guilty! Who dares talk of guilt? My Lord, 
I am more innocent of parricide 
Than is a child born fatherless . . . Dear mother, 
Your gentleness and patience are no shield 
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie, 
Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws, 
Rather will ye who are their ministers, 
Bar all access to retribution first, 
And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do 
What ye neglect, removing familiar things 
To the redress of an unfounted crime, 
Make ye the victims who demanded it 
Culprits? ’Tis ye are culprits! That poor wretch 
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed, 
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was 
A sword in the right hand of justest God. 
Wherefore should I have wielded it? Unless
THE CENCI

Self-accusation from our agony!
Will Giacomo be there? Orsino? Marzio?
All present; all confronted; all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing
Which is in every heart! O, misery!

[She faints, and is borne out.]

Savella. She faints: an ill appearance this.

Beatrice. My Lord,

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

[Exeunt.]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V

SCENE I.—An Apartment in Orsino's Palace. Enter Orsino and Giacomo.

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

Orsino. It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

Giacomo. To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind Nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overwearied age;
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes . . .

Orsino. You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.

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

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

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

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

*Giacomo.* Rather expire in tortures, as I may.

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

*Orsino.* Put up your weapon.

Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend,
Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed

Was but to try you. As for me, I think,
Thankless affection led me to this point,
From which, if my firm temper could repent,
I cannot now reclude. Even whilst we speak
The ministers of justice wait below:
They grant me these brief moments. Now if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, 't were best to pass
Out at the portal, and avoid them so.

*Giacomo.* O, generous friend! How canst thou pardon me?
Would that my life could purchase thine!

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

*Exit Giacomo.*

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

[A shout is heard.]

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

[Exit.]
Scene II.—A Hall of Justice. Camillo, Judges, &c., are discovered seated; Marzio is led in.

First Judge. Accused, do you persist in your denial? I ask you, are you innocent, or guilty? I demand who were the participators In your offence? Speak truth and the whole truth. Marzio. My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing; Olimpio sold the robe to me from which You would infer my guilt.

Second Judge. Away with him! First Judge. Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack’s kiss Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner, That you would banly lover’s talk with it Till it wind out your life and soul? Away! Marzio. Spare me! O, spare! I will confess.

First Judge. Then speak. Marzio. I strangled him in his sleep. First Judge. Who urged you to it? Marzio. His own son Giacomo, and the young prelate Orsino sent me to Petrella; there The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I And my companion forthwith murdered him. Now let me die.

First Judge. This sounds as bad as truth. Guards, there, Lead forth the prisoner!

Enter Lucretia, Beatrice, and Giacomo, guarded.

Look upon this man; When did you see him last? Beatrice. We never saw him. Marzio. You know me too well, Lady Beatrice. Beatrice. I know thee! How? where? when? Marzio. Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes To kill your father. When the thing was done You clothed me in a robe of woven gold And bade me thrive: how I have thriven, you see. You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia, You know that what I speak is true.

[Beatrice advances towards him; he covers his face, and shrinks back.]

Oh, dart

The terrible resentment of these eyes On the dead earth! Turn them away from me! They wound: ’twas torture forced the truth. My Lords,

Having said this let me be led to death. Beatrice. Poor wretch, I pity thee: yet stay awhile. Camillo. Guards, lead him not away. Beatrice. You have a good repute for gentleness And wisdom: can it be that you sit here To countenance a wicked farce like this? When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart And bade to answer, not as he believes, But as those may suspect or do desire Whose questions thence suggest their own reply: And that in peril of such hideous torments As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now The thing you surely know, which is that you, If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel, And you were told: ‘Confess that you did poison Your little nephew; that fair blue-eyed child Who was the lodestar of your life;’—and though All see, since his most swift and piteous death, That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time, And all the things hoped for or done therein Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief, Yet you would say, ’I confess anything’ And beg from your tormentors, like that slave, The refuge of dishonourable death. I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert My innocence.

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

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

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

Beatrice. What evidence? This man's?

Judge. Even so.

Beatrice (to Marzio). Come near. And who art thou thus chosen
forth
Out of the multitude of living men
To kill the innocent?

Marzio. I am Marzio,

Thy father's vessel.

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

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

(To Marzio.)

What! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?

Marzio. Oh!

Spare me! My brain swims round . . . I cannot speak . . .
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away! Let her not look on me!

I am a guilty miserable wretch;
I have said all I know; now, let me die!

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

(Turning to Marzio.) And thou . . .

Marzio. Oh, spare me! Speak to me no more!

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

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

Camillo. Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice,

He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.

Beatrice. O thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay;
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years,
And so my lot was ordered, that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drop, each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul;
And my untainted fame; and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart;
But the wound was not mortal; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift.
To our great father, who in pity and love,
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation;
And art thou the accuser? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth:
Worse than a bloody hand in a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say: 'My maker,
I have done this and more; for there was one
Who was most pure and innocent on earth;
And because she endured what never any
Guilty or innocent endured before:
Because her wrongs could not be told, not thought;
Because thy hand at length did rescue her;
'I with my words killed her and all her kin.'
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slight
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house, and stainless fame!
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,
Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood
All that which shows like innocence, and is,
Hear me, great God! I swear, most innocent,
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
And that which now compels thee to reply
To what I ask: Am I or am I not
A parricide?

Marzio. Thou art not!

Judge. What is this?
THE CENCI

SCENE III.—The Cell of a Prison. Beatrice is discovered asleep on a couch, Enter Bernardino.

Bernardo. How gently slumbers rests upon her face, 160 Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged. After such torments as she bore last night. How light and soft her breathing comes. Ay me! Methinks that I shall never sleep again. But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest From this sweet folded flower, thus . . . wake! awake! What, sister, canst thou sleep? Beatrice (awaking) . . . I was just dreaming That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest This cell seems like a kind of Paradise After our father's presence.

Bernardo. Dear, dear sister, Would that thy dream were not a dream! O God! How shall I tell? Beatrice. What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother? 170 Bernardo. Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst I stand considering what I have to say My heart will break. Beatrice. See now, thou mak'st me weep: How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child, If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say. Bernardo. They have confessed; they could endure no more The tortures . . . Beatrice. Ha! What was there to confess? 175 They must have told some weak and wicked lie To flatter their tormentors. Have they said That they were guilty? O white innocence, That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide Thine awful and serenest countenance From those who know thee not!

Enter Judge with Lucretia and Giacomo, guarded.

Ignotle hearts!

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

Giacomo. They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains:
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.
Lucrècia. Oh, speak the truth! Let us all quickly die;
And after death, God is our judge, not they;
He will have mercy on us.

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

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

Beatrice. The rack henceforth into a spinning-wheel!
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed . . . not me!
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,
And of the soul; ay, of theinnmost soul,
Which weeps within tears of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their desired selves.

And with considering all the wretched life
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the oppressed . . . such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me?

Judge. Art thou not guilty of thy father's death?

Beatrice. Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God
That He permitted such an act as that

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

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

Beatrice. Oh, tear him not away!

Judge. Guards, do your duty.

Bernardo (embracing Beatrice). Oh! would ye divide
Body from soul?

Officer. That is the headsman's business.

[Exeunt all but Lucrècia, Beatrice, and Giacomo.]

Giacomo. Have I confessed? Is it all over now?
No hope! No refuge! O weak, wicked tongue
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been
Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister;
Ay! thee! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black guilty world, to that which I
So will deserve! My wife! my little ones!

Destitute, helpless, and I . . . Father! God!
Canst Thou forgive even the unforgiving,
When their full hearts break thus, thus!

Lucrècia. [Covers his face and weeps.

O my child!

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

Beatrice. What twas weak to do,
'Tis weaker to lament, once being done;
Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of His wrath,
Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
Let us not think that we shall die for this,
Brother, sit near me; give me your right hand,
You had a manly heart. Bear up! Bear up!
O dearest Lady, put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile:
Your eyes look pale, hollow and overworn,
With heaviiness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monody,
Such as our country gossips sing and spin.
Till they almost forget they live; lie down!
So, that will do. Have I forgot the words?
Faith! They are sadder than I thought they were.

SONG

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
When my life is laid aspeet?
Little cares for a smile or a tear,
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier?
Farewell! Heigho!
What is this whispers low?
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear;
And bitter poison within thy tear.
Sweet sleep, were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain;
When to wake? Never again.
O Word! Farewell!
Listen to the passing bell!
It says, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart.

Scene IV.—A Hall of the Prison. Enter Camillo and Bernardino.

Camillo. The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.

Beatrice. I hardly dare to fear

Camillo. May God in heaven be less inexorable

Beatrice (wildly).

My God! Can it be possible I have

To die so suddenly? So young to go

Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!

To be nailed down into a narrow place;

To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more

Blithe voice of living thing; must not again

Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—

How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be . . .
What? Oh, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world;
The wide, gray, lambless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be... my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in gray hairs and wrinkles, he should come
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent.
On Earth, and ever present? Even though dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of Death's untroubled realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh, whither, whither?

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

Beatrice. 'Tis past!
Whatever comes my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill:
How tedious, false and cold seem all things. I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man;
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God,
I hope I do trust in Him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

[During the latter speeches Giacomo has retired conversing
with Camillo, who now goes out; Giacomo advances.

Giacomo. Know you not, Mother... Sister, know you not?
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.

Lucretia. Child, perhaps
It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years:
Oh, what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.
Enter Camillo and Guards.

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

Béatrice. Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now;
And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child:
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou hastest us; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow.
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do; fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!
Béatrice. I cannot say, farewell!
Camillo. Oh, Lady Béatrice!

NOTE ON THE CENCI, BY MRS. SHELLEY

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

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

The subject he had suggested for a tragedy was Charles I.; and he had written to me: 'Remember, remember Charles I. I have been already imagining how you would conduct some scenes. The second volume of St. Leon begins with this proud and true sentiment: "There is nothing which the human mind can conceive which it may not execute." Shakespeare was only a human being.' These words were written in 1818, while we were in Lombardy, when he little thought how soon a work of his own would prove a proud comment on the passage he quoted. When in Rome, in 1819, a friend put into our hands the old manuscript account of the story of the Cenci. We visited the Colonna and Doria palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found; and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever I felt my incompetence; but I entreated him to write it instead; and he began, and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived, and gifted with poetic likeness. This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of the scenes together. I speedily saw the great mistake we had made, and triumphed in the discovery of the new talent brought to light from that mine of wealth (never, alas, through his untimely death, worked to its depths)—his richly gifted mind.

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

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

"I am exceedingly interested in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or not. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present; founding my hopes on this—that, as a composition, it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have been acted, with the exception of Remorse; that the interest of the plot is incredibly greater and more real; and that there is nothing beyond what the multitude are contented to believe that they can understand, either in imagery, opinion, or sentiment. I wish to preserve a complete incognito, and can trust to you that, whatever else you do, you will at least favour me on this point. Indeed, this is essential, deeply essential, to its success. After it had been acted, and successfully (could I hope for such a thing), I would own it if I pleased, and use the celebrity it might acquire to my own purposes.

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

The play was accordingly sent to Mr. Harris. He pronounced the subject to be so objectionable that he could not even submit the part to Miss O'Neill for perusal, but expressed his desire that the author would write a tragedy on some other subject, which he would gladly accept. Shelley printed a small edition at Leghorn, to ensure its correctness;

1 In speaking of his mode of treating this main incident, Shelley said that it might be remarked, that in the course of the play, he had never mentioned expressly Cenci's worst crime. Every one knew what it must be, but it was never named in words—the nearest allusion to it being that portion of Cenci's curse beginning—"

"That, if she have a child," etc.
THE MASK OF ANARCHY

WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE MASSACRE AT MANCHESTER

I
As I lay asleep in Italy
There came a voice from over the Sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

II
I met Murder on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh—
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven blood-hounds followed him:

III
All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

IV
Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.

V
And the little children, who
Round their feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

VI
Clothed with the Bible, as with light
And the shadows of the night,
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocriy
On a crocodile rode by.

VII
And many more destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.

VIII
Last came Anarchy: he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

IX
And he wore a kingly crown;
And in his grasp a sceptre shone;
On his brow this mark I saw—
'I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!'
Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the earth their pale brows bowed;
Like a bad prayer not over loud,
Whispering—'Thou art Law and God.'——

Then all cried with one accord, 70
'Thou art King, and God, and Lord;
Anarchy, to thee we bow,
Be thy name made holy now!'

And Anarchy, the Skeleton,
Bowed and grinned to every one, 75
As well as if his education
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

For he knew the Palaces
Of our Kings were rightly his;
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,
And the gold-inwoven robe.

So he sent his slaves before
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,
And was proceeding with intent
To meet his pensioned Parliament.

When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope, she said:
But she looked more like Despair,
And she cried out in the air:

'My father Time is weak and gray
With waiting for a better day;
See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands!'
"Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from Toil a thousandfold
More than e'er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old.

"Paper coin—that forgery
Of the title-deeds, which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

"Tis to be a slave in soul
And to hold no strong control
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye.

"And at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain
"Tis to see the Tyrant's crew
Ride over your wives and you—
Blood is on the grass like dew.

"Then it is to feel revenge
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood—and wrong for wrong—
Do not thus when ye are strong.

"Birds find rest, in narrow nest
When weary of their wingèd guest;
Beasts find fare, in woody lair
When storm and snow are in the air.

"Asses, swine, have litter spread
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have a home but one—
Thou, Oh, Englishman, hast none!

"This is Slavery—savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den
Would endure not as ye do—
But such ills they never knew.

"What art thou Freedom? Of could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand—tyrants would flee
Like a dream's dim imagery:

"Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition, and a name
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

"For the labourer thou art bread,
And a comely table spread
From his daily labour come
In a neat and happy home.

"Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
For the trampled multitude—
No—in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see.

"To the rich thou art a check,
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

"Thou art Justice—ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England—thou
Shield'st all the high and low.

"Thou art Wisdom—Freemen never
Dream that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue
Of which Priests make such ado.

"Thou art Peace—never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be
As tyrants wasted them, when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

"What if English toil and blood
Was poured forth, even as a flood?
It availed, Oh, Liberty,
To dim, but not extinguish thee.

"Thou art Love—the rich have kissed
Thy feet, and like him following Christ,
Give their substance to the free
And through the rough world follow thee.

"Or turn their wealth to arms, and make
War for thy beloved sake
On wealth, and war, and fraud—
Whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.

"Science, Poetry, and Thought
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not.

"Spiritus, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless
Art thou—let deeds, not words,
Express Thine exceeding loveliness.

"Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around.

"Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be
Witness the solemnity.

"From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast;
From every hut, village, and town
Where those who live and suffer mean
For others' misery or their own,

"From the workhouse and the prison
Where pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young and old
Groan for pain, and weep for cold—

"From the haunts of daily life
Where is waged the daily strife
With common wants and common cares
Which sows the human heart with tares—
LXX
"Lastly from the palaces
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes, like the distant sound
Of a wind alive around

LXXI
"Those prison halls of wealth and fashion,
Where some few feel such compassion
For those who groan, and toil, and wall
As must make their brethren pale—

LXXII
"Ye who suffer woes untold,
Or to feel, or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold—

LXXIII
"Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free—

LXXIV
"Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,
And wide as targes let them be,
With their shade to cover ye,

LXXV
"Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea,
Troops of armed embazonry.

LXXVI
"Let the charged artillery drive
Till the dead air seems alive
With the clash of clanging wheels,
And the tramp of horses' heels.

LXXVII
"Let the fixed bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood
Looking keen as one for food.

LXXVIII
"Let the horsemen's scimitars
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars
Thirsting to eclipse their burning
In a sea of death and mourning.

LXXIX
"Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war,

LXXX
"And let Paniz, who outspeeds
The career of armed steeds
Pass, a disregarded shade
Through your phalanx undismayed.

LXXXI
"Let the laws of your own land,
Good or ill, between ye stand
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute.

LXXXII
"The old laws of England—they
Whose reverend heads with age are gray,
Children of a wiser day;
And whose solemn voice must be
Thine own echo—Liberty!

LXXXIII
"On those who first should violate
Such sacred heralds in their state
Rest the blood that must ensue,
And it will not rest on you.

LXXXIV
"And if then the tyrants dare
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and main, and hew—
What they like, that let them do.

LXXXV
"With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.

LXXXVI
"Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

LXXXVII
"Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand—
They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street.

NOTE ON THE MASK OF ANARCHY, BY MRS. SHELLEY

Through Shelley's first eager desire to excite his countrymen to resist openly the oppressions existent during 'the good old times' had faded with early youth, still his warmest sympathies were for the people. He was a republican, and loved a democracy. He looked on all human beings as inheriting an equal right to possess the dearest privileges of our nature; the necessaries of life when fairly earned by labour, and intellectual instruction. His hatred of any despotism that looked upon the people as not to be consulted, or protected from want and ignorance, was intense. He was residing near Leighorn, at Villa Volsovano, writing The Cenci, when the news of the Manchester Massacre reached us; it roused in him violent emotions of indignation and compassion. The great truth that the many, if accordant and resolute, could control the few, as was shown some years after, made him long to teach his injured countrymen how to resist. Inspired by these feelings, he wrote the Mask of Anarchy, which he sent to his friend Leigh Hunt, to be inserted in the Examiner, of which he was then the Editor.
‘I did not insert it,’ Leigh Hunt writes in his valuable and interesting preface to this poem, when he printed it in 1832, ‘because I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness of the spirit that walked in this flaming robe of verse.’ Days of outrage have passed away, and with them the exaggeration that would cause such an appeal to the many to be injurious. Without being aware of them, they at one time acted on his suggestions, and gained the day. But they rose when human life was respected by the Minister in power; such was not the case during the Administration which excited Shelley’s abhorrence.

The poem was written for the people, and is therefore in a more popular tone than usual: portions strike as abrupt and unpollished, but many stanzas are all his own. I heard him repeat, and admire, those beginning

‘My Father Time is old and gray,’

before I knew to what poem they were to belong. But the most touching passage is that which describes the blessed effects of liberty; it might make a patriot of any man whose heart was not wholly closed against his humbler fellow-creatures.

PETER BELL THE THIRD
BY MICHING MALLECHO, Esq.

Is it a party in a parlour,
Crammed just as they on earth were,
Some sipping punch—some sipping tea;
But, as you by their faces see,
All silent, and all—shamed!

Ophella—What means this, my lord?
Hamlet—Marry, this is Miching Mallecho; it means mischief.

DEDICATION
TO THOMAS BROWN, ESQ., THE YOUNGER, H.F.

Dear Tom—Allow me to request you to introduce Mr. Peter Bell to the respectable family of the Fudges. Although he may fall short of those very considerable personages in the more active properties which characterize the Rat and the Apostle, I suspect that even your, their historian, will confess that he surpasses them in the more peculiarly legitimate qualification of intolerable dullness.

You know Mr. Examiner Hunt; well—it was he who presented me to two of the Mr. Bells. My intimacy with the younger Mr. Bell naturally sprung from this introduction to his brothers. And in presenting him to you, I have the satisfaction of being able to assure you that he is considerably the dullest of the three.

There is this particular advantage in an acquaintance with any one of the Peter Bells, that if you know one Peter Bell, you know three Peter Bells; they are not one, but three; not three, but one. An awful mystery.

which, after having caused torrents of blood, and having been hymned by groans enough to deafen the music of the spheres, is at length illustrated to the satisfaction of all parties in the theological world, by the nature of Mr. Peter Bell.

Peter is a polyhedric Peter, or a Peter with many sides. He changes colours like a chameleon, and his coat like a snake. He is a Proteus of a Peter. He can not only be sublime, pathetic, impressive, profound; then dull; then prosy and dull; and now dull—oh so very dull! it is an ultra-legitimate dulness.

You will perceive that it is not necessary to consider Hell and the Devil as supernatural machinery. The whole scene of my epic is in this world which is—so Peter informed us before his conversion to White Oak.

‘The world of all of us, and where
We find our happiness, or not at all.’

Let me observe that I have spent six or seven days in composing this sublime piece; the orb of my moonlike genius has made the fourth part of its revolution round the dull earth which you inhabit, driving you mad, while it has retained its calmness and its splendour, and I have been fitting this its last phase to occupy a permanent station in the literature of my country.’

Your works, indeed, dear Tom, sell better; but mine are far superior. The public is no judge; posterity sets all to rights.

Allow me to observe that so much has been written of Peter Bell, that the present history can be considered only, like the Iliad, as a continuation of that series of cyclic poems, which have already been candidates for bestowing immortality upon, at the same time that they receive it from his character and adventures. In this point of view I have violated no rule of syntax in beginning my composition with a conjunction; the full stop which closes the poem continued by me being, like the full stops at the end of the Iliad and Odyssey, a full stop of a very qualified import.

Hoping that the immortality which you have given to the Fudges, you will receive from them; and in the firm expectation, that when London shall be an habitation of bitterns; when St. Paul’s and Westminster Abbey stand, shapeless and nameless ruins, in the midst of an unpeopled marsh; when the piers of Waterloo Bridge shall become the nuclei of islets of reeds and osiers, and cast the jagged shadows of their broken arches on the solitary stream, some transatlantic commentator will be weighing in the scales of some new and now unimagined system of criticism, the respective merits of the Bells and the Fudges, and their historians. I remain, dear Tom, yours sincerely,

MICHING MALLECHO.

December 1, 1859.

P.S.—Pray excuse the date of place; so soon as the profits of the publication come in, I mean to hire lodgings in a more respectable street.
PROLOGUE

Peter Bells, one, two and three,
O'er the wide world wandering be.—
First, the antenatal Peter,
Wrapped in weeds of the same metre
The so-long-predetermined raiment 5
Clothed in which to walk his way meant
The second Peter; whose ambition
Is to link the proposition,
As the mean of two extremes—
(This was learned from Aëri’s themes) 10
Shielding from the guilt of schism
The orthodox syllogism;
The First Peter—he who was
Like the shadow in the glass
Of the second, yet unripe, 15
His substantial antitype—
Then came Peter Bell the Second,
Who henceforward must be reckoned
The body of a double soul,
And that portion of the whole 20
Without which the rest would seem
Ends of a disjointed dream.
And the Third is he who has
O'er the grave been forced to pass
To the other side, which is,— 25
Go and try else,—just like this.

Peter Bell the First was Peter
Smugger, milder, softer, neater,
Like the soul before it is
Born from that world into this. 30

PART THE FIRST

DEATH

I

And Peter Bell, when he had been
With fresh-imported Hell-fire warmed,
Grew serious—from his dress and mien
'Twas very plain to be seen
Peter was quite reformed. 5

II

His eyes turned up, his mouth turned down;
His accent caught a nasal twang;
He oiled his hair; * there might be heard
The grace of God in every word
Which Peter said or sang. 10

III

But Peter now grew old, and had
An ill no doctor could unravel;

The next Peter Bell was he,
Predestinate, like you and me,
To good or evil as may come;
His was the severer doom,—
For he was an evil Cotter, 35
And a polygamous Potter.1
And the last is Peter Bell,
Damned since our first parents fell,
Damned eternally to Hell—
Surely he deserves it well! 40

PART THE SECOND

SICKNESS

IV

His holy friends then came about,
And with long preaching and persuasion
Convinced the patient that, without
The smallest shadow of a doubt,
He was predestined to damnation. 20

V

They said—Thy name is Peter Bell;
Thy skin is of a brimstone hue;
Alive or dead—ay, sick or well—
The one God made to rhyme with hell.
The other, I think, rhymes with you.' 25

VI

Then Peter set up such a yell!—
The nurse, who with some water gruel
Was climbing up the stairs, as well
As her old legs could climb them— fell,
And broke them both—the fall was cruel. 30

VII

The Parson from the casement leapt
Into the lake of Windermere—
And many an eel—though no adept
In God’s right reason for it— kept 34
Gnawing his kidneys half a year.

VIII

And all the rest rushed through the door,
And tumbled over one another,
And broke their skulls.—Upon the floor
Meanwhile sat Peter Bell, and swore,
And cursed his father and his mother; 40

IX

And raved of God, and sin, and death,
Blastrhemying like an infidel;
And said, that with his clenched teeth
He’d seize the earth from under
And drag it with him down to hell. 45

X

As he was speaking came a spasm,
And wrenched his gnashing teeth asunder;
Like one who sees a strange phantasm
He lay,—there was a silent chasm 49
Between his upper jaw and under.

XI

And yellow death lay on his face;
And a fixed smile that was not human
Told, as I understand the case,
That he was gone to the wrong place:—
I heard all this from the old woman. 55

XII

Then there came down from Langdale Pike
A cloud, with lightning, wind and hail;
It swept over the mountains like
An ocean,—and I heard it strike
The woods and crags of Grasmere vale.
PART THE SECOND

THE DEVIL.

I

The Devil, I safely can aver,
Has neither hoof, nor tail, nor sting;
Nor is he, as some sages swear,
A spirit, neither here nor there,
In nothing—yet in everything.

II

He is—what we are; for sometimes
The Devil is a gentleman;
At others a bard bartering rhymes
For sack; a statesman spinning
Crimes;
A swindler, living as he can;

III

A thief, who cometh in the night,
With whole boots and net pantaloons,
Like some one whom it were not
To mention; or the luckless wight
From whom he steals nine silver spoons.

IV

But in this case he did appear
Like a slop-merchant from Wapping,
And with smug face, and eye severe,
On every side did perk and peer;
Till he saw Peter dead or napling.

V

He had on an upper Benjamin
(For he was of the driving schism)
In the which he wrapped his skin
From the storm he travelled in,
For fear of rheumatism.

VI

He called the ghost out of the corse;
It was exceedingly like Peter—
Only its voice was hollow and hoarse—
It had a queerish look of course—
Its dress too was a little neater.

VII

The Devil knew not his name and lot;
Peter knew not that he was Bell;
Each had an upper stream of thought;
Which made all seem as it was not;
Fitting itself to all things well.

VIII

Peter thought he had parents dear;
Brothers, sisters, cousins, cousins;
In the fens of Lincolnshire;
He perhaps had found them there;
Had he gone and boldly shown his

IX

Solemn phia in his own village;
Where he thought oft when a boy
He'd climb the orchard walls to pilage
The produce of his neighbour's tillage,
With marvellous pride and joy.

X

And the Devil thought he had,
Mid the misery and confusion
Of an unjust war, just made
A fortune by the gainful trade
Of giving soldiers rations had—
The world is full of strange delusion—

XI

That he had a mansion planned
In a square like Grosvenor Square,
That he was using fashion, and

PART THE THIRD

HELL

I

Hell is a city much like London—
A populous and a smoky city;
There are all sorts of people undone,
And there is little or no fun done;
Small justice shown, and still less pity.
There is a Castles, and a Canning, 
A Cobbett, and a Castleragh; 
All sorts of caitiff corpses planning 
All sorts of cozening for trepanning. 
Corpses less corrupt than they.

There is a *** who has lost 
His wits, or sold them, none 
knows which; 
He walks about a double ghost, 
And though as thin as Fraud al
most—
Ever grows more grim and rich.

There is a Chancery Court; a 
King; 
A manufacturing mob; a set 
Of thieves who by themselves are 
sent 
Similar thieves to represent; 165 
An army; and a public debt.

Which last is a scheme of paper 
money, 
And means—being interpret
ed—
'Bees, keep your wax—give us the 
honey, 
And we will plant, while skies are 
sunny, 
Flowers, which in winter serve 
instead.'

There is a great talk of revolution 
And a great chance of despot
ism— 
German soldiers—camps—confusion— 
Tumults — lotteries — rage — dissolution— 
Gin—suicide—and methodism; 
Taxes too, on wine and bread, 
And meat, and beer, and tea, and 
cheese, 
From which those patriots pure are 
fed, 
Who gorge before they reel to bed. 
The tenfold essence of all these.

There are mining women, mean
ing, 
Like cats, who amant mier (? ) 
Of their own virtue, and pursuing 
Their gentler sisters to that ruin, 
Without which—what were chastity? 
Lawyers—judges—old hobnobs 
Are there — bailiffs — chancel
lors— 
Bishops—great and little robbers— 
Ryhmesters—pamphleteers— 
stock-jobbers— 
Men of glory in the wars,

One of the attributes in Liaeness's description of the Cat. To a similar cause 
the care-wallowing of more than one species of this genus is to be referred;—except, 
indeed, that the poor quadruped is compelled to quarrel with its own pleasures, 
whilst the biped is supposed only to quarrel with those of others. [Szer's 
Note.]

What would this husk and excuse 
of virtue be without its kernel prostitu
tion, or the kernel prostitution without this husk of a virtue? I wonder the women 
of the town do not form an association, like the Society for the Suppression of 
Vice, for the support of what may be called the 'King, Church, and Constitution'
of their order. But this subject is almost too horrible for a joke. [Sze's 
Note.]

Things whose trade is, over ladies 
To lean, and flirt, and stare, and 
simmer, 
Till all that is divine in woman 
Grows cruel, courteous, smooth, in 
human, 
Crucified 'twixt a smile and 
whisper.

Thrusting, toiling, wailing, moil
ing, 
Frowning, preaching—such a 
riot; 
Each with never-ceasing labour, 
Whilst he thinks he cheats his 
neighbour, 
Cheating his own heart of quiet.

And all these meet at levees;— 
Dinners convivial and politi
cal;— 
Suppers of epic poets;—teas, 
Where small talk dies in agonies; 
Breakfasts professional and criti
cal; 
Lunches and snacks so aldermanic 
That one would furnish forth ten 
dinners, 
Where reigns a Cretan-tongued 
panic, 
Lost news Russ, Dutch, or Ale
manic 
Should make some losers, and some 
winners;— 
At conversazioni—balls— 
Conventicles—and drawing
rooms—

This libel on our national oath, and this accusation of all our countrymen of 
being in the daily practice of solemnly aspersing the most enormous falsehood, 
I fear deserves the notice of a more active Attorney General than that here alluded 
to. [Szer's Note.]
Sometimes the poor are damned indeed
To take,—not means for being blessed—
But Cobbett’s snuff, revenge; that weed
From which the worms that it doth feed
Squeezed less than they before possessed.

And some few, like we know who,
Dammed—but God alone knows why—
To believe their minds are given
To make this ugly Hell a Heaven;
In which faith they live and die.

Thus, as in a town, plague-stricken,
Each man be he sound or no
Must indifferently sicken;
As when day begins to thicken, 260
None knows a pigeon from a crow—

So good and bad, sane and mad,
The oppressor and the oppressed; Those who weep to see what others Smile to inflict upon their brothers; Lovers, haters, worst and best;

All are damned—they breathe an air, 257
Thick, infected, joy-dispelling; Each pursues what seems most fair, Mining like moles, through mind and there Scoop palace-caverns vast, where Care

In throned state is ever dwelling.

Lo, Peter in Hell’s Grosvner Square,
A footman in the Devil’s service! And the misjudging world would swear That every man in service there To virtue would prefer vice.

But Peter, though now damned, was not
What Peter was before damnation.
Men oftentimes prepare a lot
Which ere it finds them, is not what
Suits with their genuine station.

All things that Peter saw and felt
Had a peculiar aspect to him; And when they came within the belt Of his own nature, seemed to melt, Like cloud to cloud, into him.

And so the outward world uniting To that within him, he became
Considerably uninviting
To those who, meditation slighting, Were moulded in a different frame.

And he scorned them, and they scorned him; And he scorned all they did; and they Did all that men of their own trim
Out of the dross and scum of nature;
A toad-like lump of limb and feature,
With mind, and heart, and fancy muddled.

He was that heavy, dull, cold thing,
The spirit of evil well may be:
A drone too base to have a sting;
Who gluts, and grimes his lazy wing,
And calls lust, luxury.

Now he was quite the kind of wight
Round whom collect, at a fixed aera,
Venison, turtle, hock, and claret,—
Good cheer—and those who come to share it—
And best East Indian madeira!

It was his fancy to invite
Men of science, wit, and learning,
Who came to lend each other light;
He proudly thought that his gold's might
Had set those spirits burning.

And all the while, with loose fat smile,
The willing wretch sat winking there,
Believing 'twas his power that made
That jovial scene—and that all paid
Homage to his unnoticed chair.

Though to be sure this place was Hell;
He was the Devil—and all they—
What though the claret circled well,
And wit, like ocean, rose and fell—
Were damned eternally.

PART THE FIFTH

GRACE

Among the guests who often stayed
Till the Devil's petits-soupers,
A man there came, fair as a maid,
And Peter noted what he said,
Standing behind his master's chair.

He was a mighty poet—and
A subtle-souled psychologist;
All things he seemed to understand,
Of old or new—of sea or land—
But his own mind—which was a mist.

This was a man who might have turned
Hell into Heaven—and so in gladness
A Heaven unto himself have earned;
But he in shadows undiscovered
Trusted,—and damned himself to madness.

He spoke of poetry, and how
'Divine it was—a light—a love—
A spirit which like wind doth blow
As it listeth, to and fro;
A dew rained down from God above;

'Tis a power which comes and goes like dream,
And which none can ever trace—
Heaven's light on earth—Truth's brightest beam.
And when he ceased there lay the gleam
Of those words upon his face.

Now Peter, when he heard such talk,
Would, heedless of a broken pate,
Stand like a man asleep, or balk
Some wishing guest of knife or fork,
Or drop and break his master's plate.

At night he o'lt would start and walk
Like a lover, and began
In a wild measure songs to make 405
On moor, and glen, and rocky lake,
And on the heart of man—

And on the universal sky—
And the wide earth's bosom green,—
And the sweet, strange mystery 410
Of what beyond these things may lie,
And yet remain unseen.

For in his thought he visited
The spots in which, ere dead and damned,
He his wayward life had led; 415
Yet knew not whence the thoughts were fed
Which thus his fancy crammed.

And these obscure remembrances
Stirred such harmony in Peter
That, whenever he should please,
He could speak of rocks and trees
In poetic metre.

For though it was without a sense
Of memory, yet he remembered well
Many a ditch and quick-set fence;
Of lakes he had intelligence,
He knew something of heath and fell.

He had also dim recollections
Of pedlars tramping on their rounds;
Of saws, and proverbs; and reflections
Old parsons make in burying-grounds.

But Peter's verse was clear, and came
Announcing from the frozen hearth
Of a cold age, that none might tame
The soul of that diviner flame
It augured to the Earth:

Like gentle rains, on the dry plains,
Making that green which late was gray,
Or like the sudden moon, that stains
Some gloomy chamber's window-panes
With a broad light like day.
For language was in Peter's hand
Like clay while he was yet a potter;
And he made songs for all the land,
Sweet both to feel and understand,
As pibgones late to mountain Cotter.

And Mr. —, the bookseller,
Gave twenty pounds for some;
Then scaring
A footman's yellow coat to wear,
Peter, too proud of heart, I fear,
Instantly gave the Devil warning.

Whereat the Devil took offence,
And swore in his soul a great oath,
'That for his damned impertinence
He'd bring him to a proper sense
Of what was due to gentlemen!

PART THE SIXTH

I
'O that mine enemy had written
A book!'—cried Job:—a fearful curse.
If to the Arab, as the Briton,
Twas galling to be critic-bitten:
The Devil to Peter wished no worse.

II
When Peter's next book found vent,
The Devil to all the first Reviews
A copy of it stily sent,
With five-pound note as compliment:
And this short notice—Pray abuse?

III
Then autumn, month and quarter,
Appeared such mad tracts—
One said—
'Peter seduced Mrs. Foy's daughter,
Then drownd the mother in Ullswater,
The last thing as he went to be.'

IV
Another—'Let him shave his head!
Where's Dr. Willis?—Or is he joking?
What does the rascal mean or hope,
No longer imitating Pope.
In that barbarian Shakespeare poking?

V
One more, 'Is incest not enough?
And must there be adultery too?
Grace after meat? Miscreant and liar!
Thief! Blackguard! Scoundrel!
Pool! Hell-fire
Is twenty times too good for you.

VI
By that last book of yours we think
You've double damned yourself to scorn;
We warned you whilst yet on the brink
You stood. From your black name will shrink
The bate that is unborn.

VII
All these Reviews the Devil made
Up in a parcel, which he had
Safely to Peter's house conveyed.
For carriage, tenpence Peter paid;
Untied them—read them—went half mad.

VIII
What! cried he, 'this is my reward
For nights of thought, and days of toil?
Do poets, but to be abhorred
By men of whom they never heard,
Consume their spirits' oil?

IX
What have I done to them?—and who
Is Mrs. Foy? 'Tis very cruel
To speak of me and Betty too!
Adultery! God defend me! Oh!
I've half a mind to fight a duel.

X
'Or,' cried he, a grave look collecting,
'Is it my genius, like the moon,
Sets those who stand her face inspecting,
That face within their brain reflecting,
Like a crazed bell-chime, out of tune?'

XI
For Peter did not know the town,
But thought, as country readers do,
For half a guinea or a crown,
He bought oblivion or renown
From God's own voice in a review.

XII
All Peter did on this occasion
Was, writing some sad stuff in prose.

The Devil then sent to Leipsic fair
For Born's translation of Kant's book;
A world of words, tall foremost,
Right—wrong—false—true—and foul—and fair
As in a lottery-wheel are shook.

Five thousand crammed octavo pages
Of German psychologies,—he
Who his turor verborum assurges
Thereon, deserves just seven months' wages
More than will e'er be due to me.

I looked on them nine several days,
And then I saw that they were bad;
A friend, too, spoke in their dispraise,
He never read them;—with amaze
I found Sir William Drummond had.

When the book came, the Devil sent
It to P. Verbovale, Esquire,
With a brief note of compliment.
SHELLEY

By that night's Carlisle mail. It went,
And set his soul on fire.

XVII
Fire, which ex luce praebens jamnum,
Made him beyond the bottom see
Of truth's clear well—when I and you, Ma'am,
Go, as we shall do, subter jamnum,
We may know more than he.

XVIII
Now Peter ran to seed in soul
Into a walking paradox;
For he was neither part nor whole,
Nor good, nor bad—nor knave nor fool;
—Among the woods and rocks

XIX
Furious he rode, where late he ran,
Lashing and spurring his tame hobby;
Turned to a formal puritan,
A solemn and unsexual man,—
He half believed White Obi.

XX
This steed in vision he would ride,
High trotting over nine-inch bridges,
With Flibbertigibbet, imp of pride,
Mocking and mowing by his side—
A mad-brained goblin for a guide—
Over corn-fields, gates, and hedges.

XXI
After these ghostly rides, he came
Home to his heart, and found from thence
Much stolen of its accustomed flame;

1A famous river in the new Atlantis of the Dynastophic Pantocrastics.

PETER BELL THE THIRD

XXVII
So in his Country's dying face
He looked—and, lovely as she lay,
Seeking in vain his last embrace,
With hardened steel he turned away:

XXVIII
And coolly to his own soul said,—
'Do you not think that we might make
A poem on her when she's dead:
Or no—a thought is in my head—
Her shroud for a new sheet I'll take:

XXIX
'My wife wants one.—Let who will bury
This mangled corpse! And I and you,
My dearest Soul, will then make merry,
As the Prince Regent did with Sherry,'—
'Ah—and at last desert me too.'

XXX
And so his Soul would not be gay,
But moaned within him; like a lawn
Moaning within a cave, it lay
Wounded and wasting, day by day,
Till all its life of life was gone.

XXXI
As troubled seas its stann waters clear,
The storm in Peter's heart and mind
Now made his verses dark and queer;
They were the ghosts of what they were,
Shaking dim grave-clothes in the wind.

XXXII
For he now raved enormously, folly
Of Baptisms, Sunday-schools, and Graves,
'Would make George Colman melancholy
To have heard him, like a male Molly,
Chanting those stupid staves.'

XXXIII
Yet the Reviews, who heaped abuse
On Peter while he wrote for freedom,
So soon as in his song they spy
The folly which soothes tyranny,
Praise him, for those who feed on em.

XXXIV
'He was a man, too great to scan;—
A planet lost in truth's keen rays;—
His virtue, awful and prodigious;
He was the most sublime, religious,
Pure-minded Poet of these days.'

XXXV
As soon as he read that, cried Peter,
'Eureka! I have found the way
To make a better thing of metre 681
Than 'er was made by living creature
Up to this blessed day.'

XXXVI
Then Peter wrote odes to the Devil;
In one of which he weekly said:
'May Carnage and Slaughter,
Thy niece and thy daughter,
May Rape and Famine,
Thy gorge ever cramming,
Gut thee with living and dead!
PART THE SEVENTH

DOUBLE DAMNATION

I

The Devil now knew his proper cue.—

Soon as he read the ode, he drove to his friend Lord MacMurdoch's, a man of interest in both houses, and said: 'For money or for love,

Pray find some cure or sincurate;

To feed from the superfluous taxes

A friend of ours—a poet—fewer 660

Have fluttered tamer to the lure

Than he.' His lordship stands and racks his

II

Stupid brains, while one might count

As many heads as he had

Boroughs,—

At length replies; from his mean front,

Like one who rubs out an account,

Smoothing away the uneasing furrows:

IV

'It happens fortunately, dear Sir, I can, I hope I need require no pledge from you, that he will stir in our affairs;—like Oliver, that he'll be worthy of his hire.'

V

These words exchanged, the news sent off to Peter, home the Devil bided—

Took to his bed; he had no cough, no doctor,—meat and drink enough;—

Yet that same night he died.

VI

The Devil's corpse was leaded down;

His decent heirs enjoyed his pelf,

Mourning-coaches, many a one, 680

Followed his hearse along the town;

Where was the Devil himself?

VII

When Peter heard of his promotion,

His eyes grew like two stars for bliss:

There was a bow of sleek devotion

Engendering in his back; each motion

Seemed a Lord's shoe to kiss.

VIII

He hired a house, bought plate, and made

A genteel drive up to his door,

With sitted gravel neatly laid;—

As if defying all who said, Peter was ever poor.

IX

But a disease soon struck into

The very life and soul of Peter—

He walked about—slept—had the hue of health upon his cheeks—and few

Dug better—none a heartier eater.

X

And yet a strange and horrid curse

Cling upon Peter, night and day;

Month after month the thing grew worse,

And deadlier than in this my verse I can find strength to say.

XI

Peter was dull—he was at first

Dull—oh, so dull—so very dull!

Whether he talked, wrote, or rehearsed—

Still with this dulness was he cursed—

Dull—beyond all conception—dull.

XII

No one could read his books—no mortal,

But a few natural friends, would hear him;

The parson came not near his portal;

His state was like that of the immortal

Described by Swift—no man could hear him.

XIII

His sister, wife, and children yawned

With a long, slow, and drear ennui,

All human patience far beyond; 715

Their hopes of Heaven each would have pawned, anywhere else to be.

XIV

But in his verse, and in his prose,

The essence of his dulness was concentrated and compressed so close,

'Twould have made Guatimum doze

On his red gridiron of brass. 722

XV

A printer's boy, folding those pages,

Fell slumberously upon one side;

Like those famed Seven who slept three ages, 725

To wakeful frenzy's vigil-rages,

As opliates, were the same applied.

XVI

Even the Reviewers who were hired

To do the work of his reviewing,

With adamantine nerves, grew tired;—

Gaping and torpid they retired,

To dream of what they should be doing.

XVII

And worse and worse, the drowsy curse
Yawned in him, till it grew a pest—
A wide contagious atmosphere, 735
Creeping like cold through all things near;
A power to infect and to infest.

His servant-maids and dogs grew dull;
His kitten, late a sportive elf;
The woods and lakes, so beautiful,
Of dim stupidity were full, 741
All grew dull as Peter’s self.

The earth under his feet—the springs,
Which lived within it a quick life,
The air, the winds of many wings,
That fan it with new murmurings,
Were dead to their harmonious strife.

The birds and beasts within the wood,
The insects, and each creeping thing,
Were now a silent multitude; 750
Love’s work was left unwrought—
No brood
Near Peter’s house took wing.

And every neighbouring cottager
Stupidly yawned upon the other:
No jackass brayed; no little cur,
Cocked up his ears;—no man
would stir
To save a dying mother.

Yet all from that charmed district went
But some half-idiot and half-knave,
Who rather than pay any rent, 760
Would live with marvellous content,
Over his father’s grave.

No bailiff dared within that space,
For fear of the dull charm, to enter;
A man would bear upon his face, 765
For fifteen months in any case,
The yawn of such a venture.

Seven miles above—below—around—
This pest of dulness holds its sway;
A ghastly life without a sound; 770
To Peter’s soul the spell is bound—
How should it ever pass away?

NOTE ON PETER BELL THE THIRD, BY MRS. SHELLEY

In this new edition I have added Peter Bell the Third. A critique on Wordsworth’s Peter Bell reached us at Leighorn, which amused Shelley exceedingly, and suggested this poem.

I need scarcely observe that nothing personal to the author of Peter Bell is intended in this poem. No man ever admired Wordsworth’s poetry more;—he read it perpetually, and taught others to appreciate its beauties. This poem is, like all others written by Shelley, ideal. He conceived the idealism of a poet—a man of lofty and creative genotype—quitting the glorious calling of discovering and announcing the beautiful and good, to support and propagate ignorant prejudices and pernicious errors; imparting to the unenlightened, not that ardour for truth and spirit of toleration which Shelley looked on as the sources of the moral improvement and happiness of mankind, but false and injurious opinions, that evil was good, and that ignorance and force were the best allies of purity and virtue. His idea was that a man gifted, even as transcendentally as the author of Peter Bell, with the highest qualities of genius, must, if he fostered such errors, be infected with dulness. This poem was written as a warning—not as a narration of the reality. He was unacquainted personally with Wordsworth, or with Coleridge (to whom he alludes in the fifth part of the poem), and therefore, I repeat, his poem is purely ideal;—it contains something of criticism on the compositions of those great poets, but nothing injurious to the men themselves.

No poem contains more of Shelley’s peculiar views with regard to the errors into which many of the wisest have fallen, and the pernicious effects of certain opinions on society. Much of it is beautifully written: and, though, like the burlesque drama of Swellfoot, it must be looked on as a plaything, it has so much merit and poetry—so much of himself in it—that it cannot fail to interest greatly, and by right belongs to the world for whose instruction and benefit it was written.

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

OR

SWELLFOOT THE TYRANT

A TRAGEDY IN TWO ACTS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL DORIC

‘Choose Reform or Civil War, When through thy streets, instead of hare with dogs, A Cossar-Queen shall hunt a King with hogs, Riding on the IONIAN MINOTAUR.’

ADVERTISEMENT

This Tragedy is one of a triad, or system of three Plays (an arrangement according to which the Greeks were accustomed to connect their dramatic representations), elucidating the wonderful and appalling fortunes of the Swellfoot dynasty. It was evidently written by some learned Theban, and, from its characteristic dulness, apparently before the duties on the importation of Attic salt had been repealed by the Boeotarchs. The tenderness with which he treats the ions proves him to have been a sus Bocotiae; possibly Epictur de grege porcior; for, as the poet observes,

‘A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.’
No liberty has been taken with the translation of this remarkable piece of antiquity, except the suppressing a seditious and blasphemous Chorus of the Pigs and Bulls at the last Act. The word Hoydipouse (or more properly Oedipus) has been rendered literally SWELLFOOT, without its having been conceived necessary to determine whether a swelling of the hind or the fore feet of the Swinish Monarch is particularly indicated.

Should the remaining portions of this Tragedy be found, entitled, SWELLFOOT in Angoria, and CHORAL, the Translator might be tempted to give them to the reading Public.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

TYRANT SWELLFOOT, King of Thebes: 
Iona Taurina, his Queen. 
MAMMNON, Arch-Priest of Fame. 
PURGANAX, 
DARCE 
Lauctoros

Swellfoot. 

The Goddess. 
The Leech. 
The Rat. 
Moses, the Sow-gilder. 
Solomon, the Porkman. 
ZEPHANIAH, Pig-hunter.

The Minotaur.
CHORUS of the Swinish Multitude.
GUARDS, ATTENDANTS, PRIESTS, etc., etc.

SCENE.—THEBES

ACT I

SCENE I.—A magnificent Temple, built of brick-bones and death's heads, and stilted with snares. Over the Altar the statue of Fame, veiled; a number of Boars, Stags, and Suckling-Pigs, crowned with thistle, shamrock, and oak, sitting on the steps, and clinging round the Altar of the Temple.

Enter SWELLFOOT, in his royal robes, without perceiving the Pigs.

Swellfoot. Thou supreme Goddess! by whose power divine
These graceful limbs are clothed in proud array.
[He contemplates himself with satisfaction.

Of gold and purple, and this kingly paunch
Swells like a sail before a favouring breeze,
And these most sacred nether promontories
Lie satisfied with layers of fat; and these
Boeotian cheeks, like Egypt's pyramid,
(Nor with less toil were their foundations laid),
Sustain the cone of my untroubled brain,
That point, the emblem of a pointless nothing!
Thou to whom Kings and laurelled Emperors,

3 See Universal History for an account of the number of people who died, and the immense consumption of garlic by the wretched Egyptians, who made a sepulchre for the name as well as the bodies of their tyrants.—[Shelley's Note.]
Hog-wash or grains, or ruta-baga, none
Has yet been ours since your reign begun.

First Sow.
My Pigs, 'tis in vain to tug.

Second Sow.
I could almost eat my litter.

First Pig.
I suck, but no milk will come from the dug.

Second Pig.
Our skin and our bones would be bitter.

The Boars.
We fight for this rag of greasy rug,
Though a trough of wash would be fitter.

Semichorus.
Happier Swine were they than we,
Drowned in the Cadarcan sea—
I wish that pity would drive out the devils,
Which in your royal bosom hold their revels,
And sink us in the waves of thy compassion!
Alas! the Pigs are an unhappy nation!
Now if your Majesty would have our bristles
To bind your mortar with, or fill our colons
With rich blood, or make braun out of our gristles,
In policy—ask else your royal Solomons—
You ought to give us hog-wash and clean straw,
And sties well thatched; besides it is the law.

Swellfoot. This is sedition, and rank blasphemy!
Ho! there, my guards!

Enter a Guard.

Guard.
Your sacred Majesty.
Swellfoot. Call in the Jews, Solomon the court porkman,
Moses the sow-gelder, and Zephaniah
The hog-butcher.
Guard.
They are in waiting, Sire.

Enter Solomon, Moses, and Zephaniah,
Swellfoot. Out with your knife, old Moses, and spay those Sows
[The Pigs run about in consternation.
That load the earth with Pigs; cut close and deep.
I cannot well remember; nor, in truth,
The oracle itself!

\textit{Purianax.} The words went thus:—

\textit{Becolm, choose reform or civil war!}
When through the streets, instead of bare with dogs,
A Consort Queen shall hunt a King with Hogs,
Riding on the Ionian Minotaur.

\textit{Mammon.} Now if the oracle had ne'er foretold
This sad alternative, it must arrive,
Or not, and so it must now that it has;
And whether I was urged by grace divine
Or Lesbian liquor to declare these words,
Which must, as all words must, be false or true,
It matters not: for the same Power made all,
Oracle, wine, and me and you—or none—
'Tis the same thing. If you knew as much
Of oracles as I do.

\textit{Purianax.} You arch-priests
Believe in nothing; if you were to dream
Of a particular number in the Lottery,
You would not buy the ticket?

\textit{Mammon.} Yet our tickets
Are seldom blanks. But what steps have you taken?
For prophecies, when once they get abroad,
Like liars who tell the truth to serve their ends,
Or hypocrites who, from assuming virtue,
Do the same actions that the virtuous do,
Contrive their own fulfilment. This Iona—
Well—you know what the chaste Pasiphae did,
Wife to that most religious King of Crete,
And still how popular the tale is here;
And these dull Swine of Thebes boast their descent
From the free Minotaur. You know they still
Call themselves Bulls, though thus degenerate,
And everything relating to a Bull
Is popular and respectable in Thebes.
Their arms are seven Bulls in a field gules;
They think their strength consists in eating beef,—
Now there were danger in the precedent
If Queen Iona—

\textit{Purianax.} I have taken good care
That shall not be. I struck the crust o' the earth
With this enchanted rod, and Hell lay bare!
And from a cavern full of ugly shapes
I chose a \textit{Leech, a Gadfly, and a Ray.}
The Gadfly was the same which Juno sent.

\textit{Oedipus Tyrannus}

To agitate To, and which Ezekiel mentions
That the Lord whistled for out of the mountains
Of utmost Aethiopia, to torment
Mesopotamia Babylon. The beast
Has a loud trumpet like the scarabée,
His crooked tail is barbed with many stings,
Each able to make a thousand wounds, and each
Immedicable; from his convex eyes
He sees fair things in many hideous shapes,
And trumpets all his falsehood to the world.

Like other beetles he is fed on dung—
He has eleven feet with which he crawls,
Trailing a blustering slime, and this foul heart
Has tracked Iona from the Thesian limits,
From Eide to Ile, from city unto city,
Urging her flight from the far Chersonese
To fabulous Solyma, and the Aetnean Isle,
Ortygia, Metelo, and Calyssos's Rock,
And the swart tribes of Garamant and Fez,
Aeolus and Elysium, and thy shores.

Pathenoe, which now, alas! are free!
And through the fortunate Saturnian land,
Into the darkness of the West.

\textit{Mammon.} But if
This Gadfly should drive Iona hence?

\textit{Purianax.} Gods, what an if! but there is my gray Ratz:
So thin with want, he can crawl in and out
Of any narrow chink and filthy hole,
And he shall creep into her dressing-room,
And—

\textit{Mammon.} My dear friend, where are your wits? as if
She does not always taste, a piece of cheese
And bait the trap? and rats, when lean enough
To crawl through such chinks—

\textit{Purianax.} But my Leech—a leech.

Fit to suck blood, with lubricous round rings,
Capaciously expulsive, which make
His little body balloon.
As full of blood as that of hydrogen,
Sucked from men's hearts; insatiably he sucks
And clings and pulls—a horse-leech, whose deep raw
The plethoric King Swellfoot could not fill,
And who, till full, will cling for ever.

\textit{Mammon.} This

\textsuperscript{1} The Promethean Bound of Aeschybus. \textsuperscript{2} And the Lord whistled for the gadfly out of Aethiopia, and for the bee of Egypt, etc.—Ezekiel. \textsuperscript{3} [Shelley's Note]
SHELLEY

For Queen Iona would suffice, and less;
But 'tis the Swinish multitude I fear,
And in that fear I have——

Purganax.

Done what?

Mammon.

My eldest son Chrysaor, because he
Attended public meetings, and would always
Stand prating there of commerce, public faith,
Economy, and unadulterate coin,
And other topics, ultra-radical;
And have entailed my estate, called the Fool's Paradise,
And funds in fairy-money, bonds, and bills,
Upon my accomplished daughter Banknotina,
And married her to the gallows.

Purganax.

A good match!

Mammon. A high connexions, Purganax. The bridegroom
Is of a very ancient family,
Of Hounslo Heath, Tyburn, and the New Drop,
And has great influence in both Houses;—oh!
He makes the fondest husband; nay, too fond,—
New-married people should not kiss in public;
But the poor souls love one another so!
And then my little grandchild, the gibbets,
Promising children as you ever saw,—
The young playing at hanging, the elder learning
How to hold radicals. They are well taught too,
For every gibbet says its catechism
And reads a select chapter in the Bible
Before it goes to play.

Purganax.

'Hi! what do I hear?

Enter the Gadfly.

Mammon. Your Gadfly, as it seems, is tired of gadding.

Gadfly.

Hum! hum! hum!
From the lakes of the Alps, and the cold gray scalps
Of the mountains, I come!
Hum! hum! hum!
From Morocco and Fez, and the high palaces
Of golden Byzantium;
From the temples divine of old Palestine,
From Athens and Rome,
With a hat! and a hum!
I come! I come!

1 "If one should marry a gallows, and beget young gibbets, I never saw one so prone."——Cymbeline.—[Shelley's Note.]

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

All inn-doors and windows
Were open to me:
I saw all that sin does,
Which lampes hardly see
That burn in the night by the curtained bed,—
The impudent lamps! for they blushed not red,
Dinging and singing,
From slumber I rung her,
Loud as the clang of an ironmonger;
Hum! hum! hum!

Far, far, far!
With the trump of my lips, and the sting at my hips,
I drove her—afar!
Far, far, far!
From city to city, abandoned of pity,
A ship without needle or star;—
Homeless she passed, like a cloud on the blast,
Seeking peace, finding war;—
She is here in her car,
From afar, and afar;—
Hum! hum!

I have stung her and wrung her,
The venom is working;—
And if you had hung her
With canting and quirming,
She could not be deader than she will be soon;—
I have driven her close to you, under the moon,
Night and day, hum! hum! ha!
I have hummed her and drummed her
From place to place, till at last I have dumbed her,
Hum! hum! hum!

Enter the Leech and the Rat.

Leech.

I will suck
Blood or muck!
The disease of the state is a plethory,
Who so fit to reduce it as I?

Rat.

I'll slipily seize and
Let blood from her weasand,—
Creeping through crevice, and chink, and cranzy,
With my snaky tail, and my sides so scranzy.
SHELLEY

Purganax.

Aroint ye! thou unprofitable worm!
And thou, dull beetle, get thee back to hell!

To sting the ghosts of Babylonian kings,
And the ox-headed lo——

Swine (within).

Ugh, ugh, ugh!
Ha! I saw the divine,
We will be no longer Swine,
But Bulls with horns and dewlaps.

Rat.

You know, my Lord, the Minotaur——

Purganax (hercely).

Be silent! get to hell! or I will call
The cat out of the kitchen. Well, Lord Mammon,
This is a pretty business.

Mammon.

I will go

And spell some scheme to make it ugly then.—

Enter Swellfoot.

Swellfoot. She is returned! Taurina is in Thebes,
When Swellfoot wishes that she were in hell!
Oh, Hymen, clothed in yellow jealousy,
And waving o'er the couch of wedded kings
The torch of Discord with its fiery hair;
This is thy work, thou patron saint of queens!
Swellfoot is wived! though parted by the sea,
The very name of wife had conjugal rights;
Her cursed image ate, drank, slept with me,
And in the arms of Adiposa oft
Her memory has received a husband's——

A loud tumult, and cries of 'Iona for ever!—No Swellfoot!'

Hark!

How the Swine cry Iona Taurina;
I suffer the real presence; Purganax,
Off with her head! Purganax.

A jury of the Pigs. Swellfoot. Pack them then.

Purganax. Or fattening some few in two separate sties,
The mill-stones rolled, ploughing the pavement up,
And hurling Sucking-Pigs into the air,
With dust and stones.—

Enter Mammon.

Mammon.
I wonder that gray wizards
Like you should be so heardsless in their schemes;
It had been but a point of policy
To keep Iona and the Swine apart.
Divide and rule! but ye have made a junction
Between two parties who will govern you
But for my art.—Behold this BAG! It is
The poison BAG of that Green Spider huge,
On which our spies skulked inovation through
The streets of Thbes, when they were paved with dead:
A bane so much the deadlier fills it now
As calumny is worse than death,—for here
The Gadfly's venom, fifty times distilled,
Is mingled with the vomit of the Leech,
In due proportion, and black rathbane, which
That very Rat, who, like the Pontic tyrant,
Nurtures himself on poison, dare not touch;—
All is sealed up with the broad seal of Fraud,
Who is the Devil's Lord High Chancellor,
And over it the Primate of all Hell
Murmured this pious baptism:—Be thou called
The GREEN BAG; and this power and grace be thine:
That thy contents, on whomsoever poured,
Turn innocence to guilt, and gentilest looks
To savage, foul, and fierce deformity,
Let all baptized by thy infernal dew
Be called adulterer, drunkard, liar, wretch!
No name left out which orthodoxy loves,
Court Journal or legitimate Review!—
Be they called tyrant, beast, fool, goutton, lover
Of other wives and husbands than their own—
The heaviest sin on this side of the Alps!
Wither they to a ghastly caricature
Of what was human!—let not man or beast
Behold their face with unaverted eyes!
Or hear their names with ears that tingle not
With blood of indignation, rage, and shame!—
This is a perilous liquor;—good my Lords.—

[Swellfoot approaches to touch the GREEN BAG.

Beware! for God's sake, beware!—if you should break
The seal, and touch the fatal liquor—

Purganax.

There,

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

Give it to me. I have been used to handle
All sorts of poisons. His dread Majesty
Only desires to see the colour of it.

Mammon. Now, with a little common sense, my Lords,
Only undoing all that has been done
(Yet so as it may seem we but confirm it),
Our victory is assured. We must entice
Her Majesty from the sty, and make the Pigs
Believe that the contents of the GREEN BAG
Are the true test of guilt or innocence.
And that, if she be guilty, 'twill transform her
To manifest deformity like guilt.
If innocent, she will become transfigured
Into an angel, such as they say she is;
And they will see her flying through the air,
So bright that she will dim the noontide sun;
Showering down blessings in the shape of comfits.
This, trust a priest, is just the sort of thing
Swine will believe. I'll wager you will see them
Climbing upon the thatch of their low styes,
With pieces of smoked glass, to watch her sail
Among the clouds, and some will hold the flaps
Of one another's ears between their teeth,
To catch the coming hail of comfits in.
You, Purganax, who have the gift of the gab,
Make them a solemn speech to this effect:
I go to put in readiness the feast
Kept to the honour of our goddess Famine.
Where, for more glory, let the ceremony
Take place of the uglification of the Queen.

Dakro (to Swellfoot). I, as the keeper of your
sacred conscience,
Humbly remind your Majesty that the care
Of your high office, as Man-miller
To red Bellona, should not be deferred.

Purganax, All part, in happier plight to meet again. [Exeunt.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II

SCENE I.—The Public Sty. The Boars in full Assembly.

Enter Purganax.

Purganax. Grant me your patience, Gentlemen and Boars,
Ye, by whose patience under public burthen
The glorious constitution of these sties
Subsist, and shall subsist. The Lean-Pig rates
SHELEY

Grow with the growing populace of Swine,
The taxes, that true source of Piggishness
(How can I find a more appropriate term
To include religion, morals, peace, and plenty,
And all that fit Bozettia as a nation
To teach the other nations how to live?),
Increase with Piggishness itself; and still
Does the revenue, that great spring of all
The patronage, and pensions, and by-payments,
Which free-born Pigs regard with jealous eyes,
Diminish, till at length, by glorious steps,
All the land's produce will be merged in taxes,
And the revenue will amount to—nothing!
The failure of a foreign market for
Sausages, bristles, and blood-puddings,
And such home manufactures, is but partial;
And, that the population of the Pigs,
Instead of hog-wash, has been fed on straw
And water, is a fact which—you know—
That is—it is a state-necessity—
Temporary, of course. Those impious Pigs,
Who, by frequent squeaks, have dared impugn
The settled Swellfoot system, or to make
Irreverent mockery of the genuflexions
Inculcated by the arch-priest, have been whipped
Into a loyal and an orthodox white
Things being in this happy state, the Queen
Iona—

[A loud cry from the Pigs. "She is innocent! most innocent!"

Purganax. That is the very thing that I was saying,

Gentlemen Swine; the Queen Iona being
Most innocent, no doubt, returns to Thebes,
And the lean Sows and Boars collect about her,
Wishing to make her think that we believe
(I mean those more substantial Pigs, who swill
Rich hog-wash, while the others mouth damp straw)
That she is guilty; thus, the Lean-Fig faction
Seeks to obtain that hog-wash, which has been
Your innocence mart, and which I will
Maintain you in to the last drop of—
A Boar (interrupting him).—What
Does any one accuse her of?

Purganax. Why, no one
Makes any positive accusation—but
There were hints dropped, and so the privy wizards
Conceived that it became them to advise
His Majesty to investigate their truth;—

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

Not for his own sake; he could be content
To let his wife play any pranks she pleased,
If, by that suffrance, he could please the Pigs;
But then he fears the morals of the Swine,
The Sows especially, and what effect
It might produce upon the purity and
Religion of the rising generation
Of Sucking-Pigs, if it could be suspected
That Queen Iona—

First Boar. —Well, go on; we long
To hear what she can possibly have done.

Purganax. Why, it is hinted, that a certain Bull—
Thus much is known:—the milk-white Bulla that feed
Beside Clitumnus and the crystal lakes
Of the Cisalpine mountains, in fresh dew
Of lotus-grass and blossoming asphodel
Sleeking their silken hair, and with sweet breath
Loading the morning winds until they faint
With living fragrance, are so beautiful—
Well, I say nothing—but Europa rode
On such a one from Asia into Crete,
And the enamoured sea grew calm beneath
His gliding beauty. And Pasiphae,
Iona's grandmother,—but she is innocent!
And that both you and I, and all assert.

First Boar. Most innocent!

Purganax. Behold this BAG; a bag—

Second Boar. Oh! no GREEN BAGS!! Jealousy's eyes are green,
Scorpions are green, and water-snakes, and efts,
And verdigris, and—

Purganax. Honourable Swine,
In Piglish souls can prepossessions reign?
Allow me to remind you, grass is green—
All flesh is grass;—no bacon but is flesh—
Ye are but bacon. This divine BAG
(Which is not green, but only bacon colour)
Is filled with liquor, which is sprinkled o'er
A woman guilty of—we all know what—
Makes her so hideous, till she finds one blind
She never can commit the like again.
If innocent, she will turn into an angel,
And rain down blessings in the shape of comfits
As she flies up to heaven. Now, my proposal
Is to convert her sacred Majesty
Into an angel (as I am sure we shall do),
By pouring on her head this mystic water.
[Showing the Bag.
I know that she is innocent; I wish
SHELLEY

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Only to prove her so to all the world.
First Boar. Excellent, just, and noble Purganax.
Second Boar. How glorious it will be to see her Majesty
Flying above our heads; her petticoats
Streaming like—like—like—
Third Boar. Anything.
Purganax. Oh no!

But like a standard of an admiral's ship,
Or like the banner of a conquering host,
Or like a cloud dyed in the dying day,
Unravelled on the blast from a white mountain;
Or like a meteor, or a war-steed's mane,
Or waterfall from a dizzy precipice
Scattered upon the wind.
First Boar. Or a cow's tail.
Second Boar. Or anything, as the learned Boar observed.
Purganax. Gentlemen Boars, I move a resolution,
That her most sacred Majesty should be
Invited to attend the feast of Famine,
And to receive upon her chaste white body
Devs of Apotheosis from this Bag.
[A great confusion is heard of the Pigs out of Doors, which communicates itself to those within. During the first Strophe, the doors of the Sty are staved in, and a number of exceedingly lean Pigs and Sows and Boars rush in.

Semichorus I.
No! Yes!

Semichorus II.
Yes! No!

Semichorus I.
A law!

Semichorus II.
A flaw!

Semichorus I.
Porkers, we shall lose our wash,
Or must share it with the Lean-Pigs!

First Boar.
Order! order! be not rash!
Was there ever such a scene, Pigs!

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

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An old Sow (rushing in).
I never saw so fine a dash
Since I first began to wean Pigs.

Second Boar (solemnly).
The Queen will be an angel time enough.
I vote, in form of an amendment, that
Purganax rub a little of that stuff
Upon his face.

Purganax (his heart is seen to beat through his waistcoat).
Gods! What would ye be at?

Semichorus I.
Purganax has plainly shown a
Cloven foot and jackdaw feather.

Semichorus II.
I vote Swellfoot and Iona
Try the magic test together;
Whenever royal spouses bicker,
Both should try the magic liquor.

An old Boar (aside).
A miserable state is that of Pigs,
For if their drivers would tear caps and wigs,
The Swine must bite each other's ear therefore.

An old Sow (aside).
A wretched lot Jove has assigned to Swine,
Squabbling makes Pig-herds hungry, and they dine
On bacon, and whip Sucking-Pigs the more.

Chorus.
Hog-wash has been taken away:
If the Bull-Queen is divested,
We shall be in every way
Hunted, stripped, exposed, molested;
Let us do what' er we may,
That she shall not be arrested.
Queen, we entrench you with walls of brawn,
And palisades of tanks, sharp as a bayonet:
Place your most sacred person here, We pawn
Our lives that none a finger dare to lay on it.
SHELLEY

Those who wrong you, wrong us;
Those who hate you, hate us;
Those who sting you, sting us;
Those who bait you, bait us;
The oracle is now about to be
Fulfilled by circumvolving destiny;
Which says: 'Thebes, choose reform or civil war,
When through your streets, instead of bare with dogs,
A consort queen shall hunt a king with hogs,
Riding upon the IONIAN MINGTAUR.'

Enter Iona Taurina.

Iona Taurina (coming forward). Gentlemen Swine, and gentle
Lady-Pigs,
The tender heart of every Boar acquires
Their Queen, of any act incongruous
With native Piggishness, and she, reposing
With confidence upon the grunting nation,
Has thrown herself, her cause, her life, her all,
Her innocence, into their Hogghish arms;
Nor has the expectation been deceived
Of finding shelter there. Yet know, great Boats,
(For such whoever lives among you finds you, And so do I), the innocent are proud!
I have accepted your protection only
In compliment of your kind love and care,
Not for necessity. The innocent
Are safest there where trials and dangers wait;
Innocent Queens o'er white-hot ploughshares tread
Unsinged, and ladies, Erin's laureate sings it,
Decked with rare gems, and beauty rarer still,
Walked from Killarney to the Giant's Causeway,
Through rebel, smuggler, troops of Yeomanry,
White-boys and Orange-boys, and constables,
Tithe-proctors, and excuse people, uninjured!
Thus I--!

Lord Purganax, I do commit myself
Into your custody, and am prepared
To stand the test, whatever it may be!

Purganax. This magnanimity in your sacred Majesty
Must please the Pigs. You cannot fail of being
A heavenly angel. Smoke your bits of glass,
Ye loyal Swine, or her transfiguration
Will blind your wondering eyes.

An old Boar (aside). Take care, my Lord,

LET'S NOTE: Rich and rare were the gems she wore. See Moore's Irish Melodies.—[Sunn.

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

They do not smoke you first.

Purganax. At the approaching feast
Of Famine, let the expiration be.

Swine, Content! content!

Iona Taurina (aside). I, most content of all,

Know that my foes even thus prepare their fall! [Exeunt omnes.

SCENE II.—The interior of the Temple of Famine. The statue of the
Goddess, a skeleton clothed in part-coloured rags, seated upon a
heap of skulls and loaves intermingled. A number of exceedingly fat
Priests in black garments arrayed on each side, with marrow-bones
and cleavers in their hands. [Solomon, the Court Porter.] A
bouffant of trumpets.

Enter Mammon as arch-priest, Swellfoot, Darke, Purganax, Laoc-
toon, followed by Iona Taurina guarded. On the other side enter
the Swine.

Chorus of Priests, accompanied by the Court Porkman on
marrow-bones and cleavers.

Goddess bare, and gaunt, and pale,
Empress of the world, all hail!
What though Cretans old called thee
Cty-crested Cybele?

We call thee Famine!

Goddess of fasts and feasts, starving and cramming!
Through thee, for emperors, kings, and priests and lords,
Who rule by viziers, sceptres, bank-notes, words,
The earth pours forth its plenteous fruits,
Corn, wool, linen, flesh, and roots—

Those who consume these fruits through thee grow fat,
Those who produce these fruits through thee grow lean,
Whatever change takes place, oh, stick to that!
And let things be as they have ever been,
At least while we remain thy priests,
And proclaim thy fasts and feasts.

Through thee the sacred Swellfoot dynasty
Is based upon a rock amid that sea
Whose waves are Swine—so let it ever be!

[Swellfoot, etc., seat themselves at a table magnificently covered
at the upper end of the Temple. Attendants pass over the stage
with hog-wash in pails; A number of Pigs, exceedingly lean, fol-
low them licking up the wash.

Mammon. I fear your sacred Majesty has lost
The appetite which you were used to have.

Allow me now to recommend this dish—
SHELLEY

A simple kickshaw by your Persian cook,
Such as is served at the great King’s second table.
The price and pains which its ingredients cost
Might have maintained some dozen families
A winter or two—not more—so plain a dish
Could scarcely disagree.—

Swellfoot. After the trial,
And these fastidious Pigs are gone, perhaps
I may recover my lost appetite,—
I feel the gout flying about my stomach—
Give me a glass of Maraschino punch.

Purganax (filling his glass, and standing up). The glorious
Constitution of the Pigs!
All. A toast! a toast! stand up, and three times three!
Dakry. No heel-taps—darken daylight’s—
Laotones. Claret, somehow,
Puts me in mind of blood, and blood of claret!
Swellfoot. Laotones is fishing for a compliment,
But 'tis his due. Yes, you have drunk more wine,
And shed more blood, than any man in Thebes.

For God’s sake stop the grunting of those Pigs!

Purganax. We dare not, Sire, 'tis Famine’s privilege.

Chorus of Swine.

Hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine!
Thy throne is on blood, and thy robe is of rags;
Thou devil which livest on damning;
Saint of new churches, and cant, and GREEN BAGS,
Till in pity and terror thou risest;
Confounding the schemes of the wisest;
When thou liftest thy skeleton form,
When the loaves and the skull roll about,
We will greet thee—the voice of a storm
Would be lost in our terrible shout!

Then hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine!
Hail to thee, Empress of Earth!
When thou risest, dividing possessions;
When thou risest, uprooting oppressions,
In the pride of thy ghastly mirth;
Over palaces, temples, and graves,
We will rush as thy minister-slaves,
Trampling behind in thy train,
Till all be made level again!

Mammon. I hear a crackling of the giant bones
Of the dread image, and in the black pita

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

Which once were eyes, I see two livid flames.
These prodigies are oracular, and show
The presence of the unseen Deity.
Mighty events are hastening to their doom!
Swellfoot. I only hear the lean and mutinous Swine
Grunting about the temple.

Dakry. In a crisis
Of such exceeding delicacy, I think
We ought to put her Majesty, the QUEEN,
Upon her trial without delay.

Mammon. THE BAG
Is here.

Purganax. I have rehearsed the entire scene
With an ox-bladder and some ditchwater,
On Lady P——; it cannot fail. (Taking up the BAG.)
Your Majesty

Swellfoot. In such a filthy business had better
Stand on one side, lest it should sprinkle you.
A spot or two on me would do no harm,
Nay, it might hide the blood, which the sad Genius
Of the Green Isle has fixed, as by a spell,
Upon my brow—which would stain all its seas,
But which those seas could never wash away!

Iona Taurina. My Lord, I am ready——nay, I am impatient
To undergo the test.

[A graceful figure in a semi-transparent veil passes unnoticed
through the Temple; the word LIBERTY is seen through the
veil, as if it were written in fire upon its forehead. Its words
are almost drowned in the furious grunting of the Pigs, and
the business of the trial. She kneels on the steps of the Altar,
and speaks in tones at first faint and low, but which ever be-
come louder and louder.

Mighty Empress! Death’s white wife!
Ghastly mother-in-law of Life!
By the God who made thee such,
By the magic of thy touch,
By the starving and the cramming
Of fasts and feasts! by thy dread self, O Famine!
I charge thee! when thou wake the multitude,
Thou lend them not upon the paths of blood.
The earth did never mean her lotson
For those who crown life's cup with poison
Of fanatic rage and meaningless revenge—
But for those radiant spirits, who are still
The standard-bearers in the van of Change.
Be they the appointed stewards, to fill

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SHELLEY

The lap of Pain, and Toil, and Age—
Renit, O Queen! thy accustomed rage!
Be what thou art not! In voice faint and low
Freedom calls Famine,—her eternal foe,
To brief alliance, hollow truce.—Rise now!

[Whilst the Veiled Figure has been chanting this strophe, Mon-
mon, Dækry, Laocóntos, and Swellfoot have surrounded
Iona Tarina, who, with her hands folded on her breast, and
her eyes lifted to Heaven, stands, as with saint-like resigna-
tion, to avoid the issue of the business, in perfect confidence of
her innocence.

PURGANAX, after unsealing the Green Bag, is gravely about to
pour the liquor upon her head, when suddenly the whole ex-
pression of her figure and countenance changes; she snatches
it from his hand, with a loud laugh of triumph, and empties it
over Swellfoot and his whole Court, who are instantly
changed into a number of filthy and ugly animals, and rush
out of the Temple. The image of Famine then arises, with a
triumphant sound, the Pigs begin scurrying for the loaves,
and are tripped up by the skulls; all those who eat the bones
are turned into Bulls, and arrange themselves quietly behind
the altar. The image of Famine sinks through a chasm in the
earth, and a Minotaur rises.

Minotaur. I am the Ionian Minotaur, the mightiest
Of all Europa's taurine progeny—
I am the old traditional Man-Bull;
And from my ancestors having been Ionian,
I am called Ion, which, by interpretation,
Is John; in plain Thessalian, that is to say,
My name's John Bull; I am a famous hunter,
And can leap any gate in all Boeotia,
Even the palings of the royal park,
Or double ditch about the new enclosures;
And if your Majesty will deign to mount me,
At least till you have hunted down your game,
I will not throw you.

Iona Tarina. (During this speech she has been putting on
boots and spurs, and a hunting-cap, buckishly cocked
on one side, and tucking up her hair, she leaps merrily
on his back.) Hoa! hoa! tallyho! tallyho! ho! ho!
Come, let us hunt these ugly badgers down,
These stinking foxes, these devouring otters,
These hares, these wolves, these anything but men.
Hey, for a whisperin'! my loyal Pigs,
Now let your noses be as keen as beagles',
Your steps as swift as greyhounds', and your cries

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

More dulcet and symphonious than the bells
Of village-towers, on sunshine holiday;
Wake all the dewy woods with jangling music.
Give them no law (are they not beasts of blood?)
But such as they gave you. Tallyho! ho!
Through forest, forge, and bog, and den, and desert,
Pursue the ugly beasts! tallyho! ho!

Full Chorus of Iona and the Swine.

Tallyho! tallyho!
Through rain, hail, and snow,
Through brake, gorse, and briar,
Through fen, flood, and mire,
We go! we go!

Tallyho! tallyho!
Through pond, ditch, and slough,
Wind them, and find them,
Like the Devil behind them,
Tallyho! tallyho!

[Exeunt, in full cry; Iona driving on the Swine, with the empty
Green Bag.

THE END.

NOTE ON OEDIPUS TYRANNUS, BY MRS. SHELLEY

In the brief journal I kept in those days, I find recorded, in August,
1820, Shelley began Swellfoot the Tyrant, suggested by the pigs at the
fair of San Giuliano. This was the period of Queen Caroline's landing
in England, and the struggles made by George IV to get rid of her claims,
which failing, Lord Castlereagh placed the 'Green Bag' on the table of
the House of Commons, demanding in the King's name that an inquiry
should be instituted into his wife's conduct. These circumstances were
the theme of all conversation among the English. We were then at the
Baths of San Giuliano. A friend came to visit us on the day when a fair
was held in the square, beneath our windows; Shelley read to us his Ode
to Liberty; and was riotously accompanied by the grunting of a quantity
of pigs bought for sale to the fair. He compared it to the 'chorus of
frags' in the satiric drama of Aristophanes; and, it being an hour of
renewal, and one leisurly association suggesting another, he imagined
a political-satirical drama on the circumstances of the day, to which the
pigs would serve as chorus—and Swellfoot was begun. When finished,
it was transmitted to England, printed, and published anonymously; but
stigmatized at the very dawn of its existence by the Society for the Suppression
of Vice, who threatened to prosecute it, if not immediately withdrawn.
The friend who had taken the trouble of bringing it out, of course did
not think it worth the annoyance and expense of a contest, and it was
laid aside.

Hesitation of whether it would do honour to Shelley prevented my
publishing it at first. But I cannot bring myself to keep back anything he
ever wrote; for each word is fraught with the peculiar views and sen-
timents which he believed to be beneficial to the human race, and the
bright light of poetry irradiates every thought. The world has a right
to the entire compositions of such a man; for it does not live and thrive
by the outworn lesson of the dullard or the hypocrite, but by the original
free thoughts of men of genius, who aspire to pluck bright truth

'from the pale-faced moon;
   Or dive into the bottom of the deep
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned'

truth. Even those who may dissent from his opinions will consider that
he was a man of genius, and that the world will take more interest in his
slightest word than in the waters of Lethe which are so eagerly prescribed
as medicinal for all its wrongs and woes. This drama, however, must not
be judged for more than was meant. It is a mere plaything of the imagina-
tion; which even may not excite smiles among many, who will not see wit
in those combinations of thought which were full of the ridiculous to
the author. But, like everything he wrote, it breathes that deep sympathy
for the sorrows of humanity, and indignation against its oppressors,
which make it worthy of his name.

CHARLES THE FIRST

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KING CHARLES I.
Queen Henrietta.
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.
WENTWORTH, Earl of Strafford.
LORD COTTINGTON.
LORD WESTON.
LORD COVENTRY.
WILLIAMS, Bishop of Lincoln.
Secretary Lyttelton.
JUDY.

Gentlemen of the Inns of Court, Citizens, Pursuivants, Marshalsmen,
Law Students, Judges, Clerk.

SCENE I.—The Masque of the Inns of Court.

A Pursuivant. Place, for the Marshal of the Masque!
First Citizen. What thinkest thou of this quaint masque which turns,
Like morning from the shadow of the night,

The night to day, and London to a place
Of peace and joy?

Second Citizen. And Hell to Heaven.

Eight years are gone,
And they seem hours, since in this populous street
I trod on grass made green by summer's rain,
For the red plaque kept state within that palace
Where now that vanity reigns. In nine years more
The roots will be refreshed with civil blood;
And thank the mercy of insulted Heaven
That sin and wrongs wound, as an orphan's cry,
The patience of the great Avenger's ear.

A Youth. Yet, father, 'tis a happy sight to see,
Beautiful, innocent, and unforbidden
By God or man:—'tis like the bright procession
Of skiey visions in a solemn dream
From which men wake as from a Paradise,
And draw new strength to tread the thorns of life.
If God be good, wherofere should this be evil?
And if this be not evil, dost thou not draw
Unseasonable poison from the flowers
Which bloom so rarely in this barren world?
Oh, kill these bitter thoughts which make the present
Dark as the future!—

When Avarice and Tyranny, vigilant Fear,
And open-eyed Conspiracy lie sleeping
As on Hell's threshold; and all gentle thoughts
Waken to worship Him who giveth joys
With His own gift.

Second Citizen. How young art thou in this old age of time!
How green in this gray world? Canst thou discern
The signs of seasons, yet perceive no hint
Of change in that stage-scene in which thou art
Not a spectator but an actor? or
Art thou a puppet moved by [enginey]?
The day that dawns in fire will die in storms,
Even though the moon be calm. My travel's done,—
Before the whirlwind wakes I shall have found
My inn of lasting rest; but thou must still
Be journeying on in this inclement air.
Wrap thy old cloak about thy back;
Nor leave the broad and plain and beaten road,
Although no flowers smile on the trodden dust,
For the violent paths of pleasure. This Charles the First
Rose like the equinoctial sun,...
SHELLEY
By vapours, through whose threatening ominous veil
Darting his altered influence he has gained
This height of noon—from which he must decline
Amid the darkness of conflicting storms,
'To dark extinction and to latest night . . .
There goes
The apostate Strafford; he whose titles
Whispered aphorisms
From Machiavel and Bacon: and, if Judas
Had been as brazen and as bold as he—
First Citizen
Is the Archbishop.
Second Citizen. Rather say the Pope:
London will be soon his Rome: he walks
As if he trod upon the heads of men;
He looks elate, drunken with blood and gold;—
Beside him moves the Babylonian woman
Invisibly, and with her as with his shadow,
Miret adulterer! he is joined in sin,
Which turns Heaven’s milk of mercy to revenge.
Third Citizen (lifting up his eyes). Good Lord! rain it down upon
him! . . .
Amid her ladies walks the papist queen,
As if her nice feet scorned our English earth.
The Canaanish Jezebel! I would be
A dog if I might tear her with my teeth!
There’s old Sir Henry Vane, the Earl of Pembroke,
Lord Essex, and Lord Keeper Coventry,
And others who make base their English breed
By vile participation of their honours
With papists, atheists, tyrants, and apostates.
When lawyers masque its time for honest men
To strip the vigor from their purposes.
A seasonable time for masquers this!
When Englishmen and Protestants should sit
Dust on their dishonoured heads,
To avert the wrath of Him whose scourge is felt
For the great sins which have drawn down from Heaven
And foreign overthrow.
The remnant of the martyred saints in Rochefort
Have been abandoned by their faithless allies
To that idolatrous and adulterous torturer
Lewis of France,—the Palatinate is lost—

Enter Leighton (who has been branded in the face) and Bastwick.
Canst thou be—art thou—?
Leighton. I saw Leighton: what

CHARLES THE FIRST
I am thou seest. And yet turn thine eyes,
And with thy memory look on thy friend’s mind,
Which is unchanged, and where is written deep
The sentence of my judge.

Third Citizen. Are these the marks with which
Land thinks to improve the image of his Maker
Stamped on the face of man? Curses upon him,
The impious tyrant!

Second Citizen. It is said besides
That lewd and papist drunkards may profane
The Sabbath with their
And has permitted that most heathenish custom
Of dancing round a pole dressed up with wreaths
On May-day.
A man who thus twice crucifies his God
May well—his brother.—In my mind, friend,
The root of all this ill is prelacy.
I would cut up the root.

Third Citizen. And by what means?
Second Citizen. Smiting each Bishop under the fifth rib.

Third Citizen. You seem to know the vulnerable place
Of these same crocodiles.

Second Citizen. I learnt it in
Egyptian bondage, sir. Your worm of Nile
Betrayed not with its flattering tears like I would;
Yet, when they cannot kill, they whine and weep.
Nor is it half so greedy of men’s bodies
As they of soul and all; nor does it wallow
In slime as they in simony and lies
And close lusts of the flesh.
A Marshalman. Give place, give place!
You torch-bearers, advance to the great gate,
And then attend the Marshal of the Masque
Into the Royal presence.
A Lute Student. What thinkst thou
Of this quaint show of ours, my aged friend?
Even now we see the redness of the torches
Inhal’me the night to the eastward, and the clarions
To us on the wind’s wave. It comes!
And their sounds, floating hither round the pageant,
Rouse up the astonished air.
First Citizen. I will not think but that our country’s wounds
May yet be healed. The king is just and gracious,
Though wicked counsels now pervert his will:
These once cast off—
Second Citizen. As adders cast their skins
And keep their venom, so kings often change;
SHELLEY

Councils and counsellors hang on one another,
Hiding the loathsome
Like the base patchwork of a leper's rags.
The Youth. Oh, still those dissonant thoughts!—List how the music
Grows on the enchanted air! And see, the torches
Restlessly flashing, and the crowd divided
Like waves before an admiral's prow.
A Marshal. Give place
To the Marshal of the Masque!
An Pursuant.
To the King!
The Youth. How glorious! See those throning chariots
Rolling, like painted clouds before the wind,
Behind their solemn steeds: how some are shaped
Like curved sea-shells dyed by the azure depths
Of Indian seas; some like the new-born moon;
And some like cars in which the Romans climbed
(Canopied by Victory's eagle-wings outspread)
The Citizen. See how gloriously
The nettled horses in the torchlight stir
Their gallant riders, while they check their pride,
Like shapes of some diviner element
Than English air, and beings nobler than
The envious and admiring multitude.
Second Citizen. Ay, there they are—
Nobles, and sons of nobles, patenets,
Monopolists, and stewards of this poor farm,
On whose lean sheep sit the prophetic crows,
Here is the pomp that strips the houseless orphan,
Here is the pride that breaks the desolate heart.
These are the lilies glorious as Solomon,
Who tell not, neither do they spin,—unless
It be the webs they catch poor rogues withal,
Here is the surfeit which to them who earn
The niggard wages of the earth, scarce leaves
The tithe that will support them till they crawl
Back to her cold hard bosom. Here is health
Followed by grim disease, glory by shame,
Waste by lamen famine, wealth by qualmish want,
And England's sin by England's punishment.
And, as the effect pursues the cause foregone,
Lo, giving substance to my words, behold
At once the sign and the thing signified—
A troop of cripples, beggars, and lean outcasts,
Horsed upon stumbling jades, carted with dung.
Draged for a day from cellars and low cabins
And rotten hiding-holes, to point the moral
Of this presentment, and bring up the rear

Of painted pomp with misery!
The Youth. 'Tis but
The anti-masque, and serves as discord do
In sweetest music. Who would love May flowers
If they succeeded not to Winter's flaw;
Or day unchanged by night; or joy itself
Without the touch of sorrow?
Second Citizen. I and thou—
A Marshal. Place, give place!

SCENE II.—A Chamber in Whitehall. Enter the King, Queen, Lord, Ward, Lord Stafford, Lord Cobbing, and other Lords; Archy; also St. John, with some Gentlemen at the Inn of Court.

King. Thanks, gentlemen, I heartily accept
This token of your service: your gay masque
Was performed gallantly. And it shows well
When subjects twine such flowers of [observance?]
With the sharp thorns that deck the English crown.
A gentle heart enjoys what it confers,
Even as it suffers that which it inflicts,
Though Justice guides the stroke.
Accept my hearty thanks.
Queen. And gentlemen,
Call your poor Queen your debtor. Your quaint pageant
Rose on me like the figures of past years,
Treading their still path back to infancy,
More beautiful and mild as they draw nearer
The quiet cradle. I could have almost wept
To think I was in Paris, where these shows
Are well devised—such as I was ere yet
My young heart shared a portion of the burthen,
The careful weight of this great monarchy.
There, gentlemen, between the sovereign's pleasure
And that which it regards, no clamour lift
Its proud interposition.
In Paris ribald censurers dare not move
Their poisonous tongues against these sinless sports;
And his smile
Warms those who bask in it, as ours would do.
If... Take my heart's thanks: add them, gentlemen,
To those good words which, were we King of France,
My royal lord would turn to golden deeds.
St. John. Madam, the love of Englishmen can make
The lightest favour of their lawful king
Outweigh a despair.—We humbly take our leaves,
Enriched by smiles which France can never buy.

[Exeunt St. John and the Gentlemen of the Inn of Court.]
King, My Lord Archbishop,
Mark you what spirit sits in St. John's eyes?
Methinks it is too saucy for this presence.
Archie. Yes, pray your Grace look: for, like an unsophisticated [eye]
sees everything upside down, you who are wise will discern the shadow
of an idiot in lawn sleeves and aocket setting springes to catch wood-
cocks in haymaking time. Poor Archie, whose owl-eyes are tempered
to the error of his age, and because he is a fool, and by special ordinance of
God forbidden ever to see himself as he is, sees now in that deep eye a
blindfold devil sitting on the ball, and weighing words out between king
and subjects. One scale is full of promises, and the other full of protesta-
tions: and then another devil creeps behind the first out of the dark wind-
ings [of a] pregnant lawyer’s brain, and takes the bandage from the
other’s eyes, and throws a sword into the left-hand scale, for all the world
like my Lord Essex’s there.
Stradford. A rod in pickle for the Fool’s back!
Archie. Ay, and some are now smiling whose tears will make the brine;
for the Fool sees——
Stradford. Insolent! You shall have your coat turned and be whipped
out of the palace for this.
Archie. When all the fools are whipped, and all the Protestant writers,
while the knives are whipping the fools ever since a thief was set to
catch a thief. If all turncoats were whipped out of palaces, poor Archie
would be disgraced in good company. Let the knives whip the fools, and
all the fools laugh at it. [Let the] wise and godly sift each other’s noses
and ears (having no need of any sense of discernment in their craft);
and the knives, to marshal them, join in a procession to Bedlam, to
entreat the madmen to omit their sublime Platonick contemplations, and
manage the state of England. Let all the honest men who lie [pinched] up
at the prisons or the pillories, in custody of the pursuivants of the
High-Commission Court, marshal them.

Enter Secretary Lyttelton, with papers.

King (looking over the papers). These stiff Scots
His Grace of Canterbury must take order
To force under the Church's yoke.—You, Wentworth,
Shall be myself in Ireland, and shall add
Your wisdom, gentleness, and energy.

Archie. To what in me were wanting.—My Lord Weston,
Look that those merchants draw not without loss
Their bullion from the Tower; and, on the payment
Of shipmoney, take fullest compensation
For violation of our royal forests,
Whose limits, from neglect, have been o'ergrown
With cottages and cornfields. The uttermost
Farthing exact from those who claim exemption
From knighthood: that which once was a reward

Charles the First

Shall thus be made a punishment, that subjects
May know how majesty can wear at will
The rugged mood.—My Lord of Coventry,
Lay my command upon the Courts below
That ball be not accepted for the prisoners
Under the warrant of the Star Chamber.
The people shall not find the stubbornness
Of Parliament a cheap or easy method
Of dealing with their rightful sovereign:
And doubt not this, my Lord of Coventry,
We will find time and place for fit rebuke.—
My Lord of Canterbury.

Archie. The fool is here.

Land. I crave permission of your Majesty
To order that this insolent fellow be
Chastised: he mocks the sacred character,
Scorns at the state, and

King. What, my Archie?

Archie. He mocks and minions all he sees and hearts,
Yet with a quaint and graceful licence—Prithee
For this once do not as Prynne would, were he
Primate of England. With your Grace's leave,
He lives in his own world; and, like a parrot
Hung in his gilded prison from the window
Of a queen's bower over the public way,
Blasphemes with a bird's mind:—his words, like arrows
Which know no aim beyond the archer's wit,
Strike sometimes what eludes philosophy.

(To ARCHIE.) Go, sirrah, and repent of your offence
Ten minutes in the rain; be it your penance
To bring news how the world goes there.

[Exit ARCHIE.

Poor Archie!

He weaves about himself a world of mirth
Out of the wreck of ours.

Land. I take with patience, as my Master did,
All scoffs permitted from above.

King. My lord,
Pray overlook these papers. Archie’s words
Had wings, but these have talons.

Queen. And the lion
That wears them must be tamed. My dearest lord,
I see the new-born courage in your eye
Armed to strike dead the Spirit of the Time,
Which spurs to rage the many-headed beast.
Do thou persist: for, faint but in resolve,
And it were better thou hadst still remained
SHELLEY

The slave of thine own slaves, who tear like curs
The fugitive, and flee from the pursuer;
And Opportunity, that empty wolf,
Flies at his throat who falls. Subdue thy actions
Even to the disposition of thy purpose,
And be that tempered as the Ebro's steel;
And banish weak-eyed Mercy to the weak,
Whence she will greet thee with a gift of peace,
And not betray thee with a traitor's kiss,
As when she keeps the company of rebels,
Who think that she is Fear. This do, lest we
Should fall as from a glorious pinnacle
In a bright dream, and wake as from a dream
Out of our worshipped state.

King. Beloved friend,
God is my witness that this weight of power,
Which He sets me my earthly task to wield
Under His law, is my delight and pride
Only because thou lovest that and me.
For a king bears the office of a God.
To all the under world; and to his God
Alone he must deliver up his trust,
Unborn of its permitted attributes.
[It seems] now as the baser elements
Had mutinied against the golden sun
That kindles them to harmony, and quells
Their self-destroying rapine. The wild million
Strike at the eye that guides them; like as humour
Of the distempered body that conspire
Against the spirit of life throne'd in the heart,—
And thus become the prey of one another,
And last of death.

Stradford. That which would be ambition in a subject
Is duty in a sovereign; for on him,
As on a keystone, hangs the arch of life,
Whose safety is its strength. Degree and form,
And all that makes the age of reasoning man
More memorable than a beast's, depend on this—
That Right should fence itself inviolably
With Power; in which respect the state of England
From usurpation by the insolent commons
Cries for reform.
Get treason, and spare treasure. Fee with coin
The loudest murmurers; feed with jealousies
Opposing factions,—be thyself of none;
And borrow gold of many, for those who lend
Will serve thee till thou payest them; and thus

CHARLES THE FIRST

Keep the fierce spirit of the hour at bay,
Till time, and its coming generations
Of nights and days unborn, bring some one chance,

Or war or pestilence or Nature's self,—
By some distemperate or terrible sign,
Be as an arbiter betwixt themselves.
Nor let your Majesty
Doubt here the peril of the unseen event.
How did your brother Kings, coheritors
In your high interest in the subject earth,
Rise past such troubles to that height of power
Where now they sit, and awfully serene
Smile on the trembling world? Such popular storms
Philip the Second of Spain, this Lewis of France,
And late the German head of many bodies,
And every petty lord of Italy,
Quelled or by arts or arms. Is England poorer
Or feeblest? or art thou who wieldst her power
Tamer than they? or shall this island be—
[Gridled] by its inviolable waters—
To the world present and the world to come
Soe pattern of extinguished monarchy?
Not if thou dost as I would have thee do.

King. Your words shall be my deeds:
You speak the image of my thought. My friend
If Kings can have a friend, I call thee so,
Beyond the large commission which [belongs]
Under the great seal of the realm, take this:
And, for some obvious reasons, let there be
No seal on it, except my kingly word
And honour as I am a gentleman.
Be—as thou art within my heart and mind—
Another self, here and in Ireland:
Do what thou judgest well, take ampest licence,
And stick not even at questionable means.
Hear me, Wentworth. My word is as a wall
Between thee and this world thine enemy—
That hates thee, for thou lovest me.

Stradford. I own
No friend but thee, no enemies but thine:
 Thy lightest thought is my eternal law.
How weak, how short, is life to pay—

King. Thou owest me nothing yet.

(To Laud.)
My lord, what say

Those papers?
Laud. Your Majesty has ever interposed,
In lenity towards thy native soil,
Between the heavy vengeance of the Church
And Scotland. Mark the consequence of warring
This brood of northern vipers in your bosom.
The rabble, instructed noisily
By Lothian, Lindsay, Hume, and false Argyll
(For the waves never menace heaven until
Scourged by the wind's invisible tyranny),
Have in the very temple of the Lord
Done outrage to His chosen ministers,
They scorn the liturgy of the Holy Church,
Refuse to obey her canons, and deny
The apostolic power with which the Spirit
Has filled its elect vessels, even from him
Who held the keys with power to loose and bind,
To him who now pleads in this royal presence.—
Let ample powers and new instructions be
Sent to the High Commissioners in Scotland.
To death, imprisonment, and confiscation,
Add torture, add the ruin of the kindred
Of the offender, add the brand of infamy,
Add mutilation: and if this suffice not,
Unleash the sword and fire, that in their thirst
They may lick up that scum of schismatics.
I laugh at these weak rebels who, desiring
What we possess, still prize of Christian peace,
As if those dreadful arbitrating messengers
Which play the part of God twist right and wrong,
Should be let loose against the innocent sleep
Of templred cities and the smiling fields,
For some poor argument of policy
Which touches our own profit or our pride
(Where it indeed were Christian charity
To turn the cheek even to the smiler's hand); And, when our great Redeemer, when our God,
When He who gave, accepted, and retained
Himself in propitiation of our sins,
Is scorned in His immediate ministry,
With hazard of the inestimable loss
Of all the truth and discipline which is
Salvation to the extremest generation
Of men innumerable, they talk of peace!
Such peace as Cannan found, let Scotland now;
For, by that Christ who came to bring a sword,
Not peace, upon the earth, and gave command
To His disciples at the Passover

CHARLES THE FIRST

That each should sell his robe and buy a sword,—
Once strip that minister of naked wrath,
And it shall never sleep in peace again
Till Scotland bend or break.

King. My Lord Archbishop,
Do what thou wilt and what thou canst in this,
Tay earthly even as thy heavenly King
Gives thee the large power in his munities real.
But we want money, and my mind misgives me
That for so great an enterprise, as yet,
We are unfurnished.

Straford. Yet it may not long
Rest on our wills.

Cottington. The expenses
Of gathering shipmoney, and of disturbing
For every petty rate (for we encounter
A desperate opposition inch by inch
In every warehouse and on every farm),
Have swallowed up the gross sum of the import;
So that, though felt as a most grievous scourge
Upon the land, to the stand us in small stead
As touches the receipt.

Straford. 'Tis a conclusion
Most arithmetical: and thence you infer
Perhaps the assembling of a parliament.
Now, if a man should call his nearest enemies
To sit in licensed judgement on his life,
His Majesty might wisely take that course.

[Aside to Cottington.

It is enough to expect from these lean import
That they perform the office of a scourge,
Without more profit. (Aloud.) Fines and confiscations,
And a forced loan from the refractory city,
Will fill our coffers: and the golden love
Of loyal gentlemen and noble friends
For the worshipped father of our common country,
With contributions from the catholics,
Will make Rebellion pale in our excess.
Be these the expenses of a loyal time and wisdom
Shall frame a settled state of government.

Laud. And weak expediency they! Have we not drained
All, till the which seemed
A mine exhaustless?

Straford. And the love which is,
If loyal hearts could water their blood to gold.

Laud. Such now grow harsen: and I speak it not
As loving parliaments, which, as they have been
In the right hand of bold bad mighty kings
The scourges of the bleeding Church, I hate.
Methinks they scarcely can deserve our fear.

Stratford. Oh! my dear liege, take back the wealth thou gavest:
With that, take all I held, but as in trust
For thee, of mine inheritance: leave me but
This unpromised body for thy service,
And a mind dedicated to no care
Except thy safety:—but assemble not
A parliament. Hundreds will bring, like me,
Their fortunes, as they would their blood, before—

King. No! thou who judgest them art but one. Alas!
We should be too much out of love with Heaven,
Did this vile world show many such as thee,
Thou perfect, just, and honourable man!
Never shall it be said that Charles of England
Stripped those he loved for fear of those he scorns;
Nor will he be so much mithimize his throne
As to impoverish those who most adorn
And best defend it. That you urge, dear Stratford,
Inclines me rather—

Queen. To a parliament?
Is this thy firmness? and thou wilt preside
Over a knot of censurers,
To the unwearing of thy best resolves,
And choose the worst, when the worst comes too soon?

Laud. No, let the worst before the worst must come.
Oh, wilt thou smile whilst our ribald foes,
Dressed in their own usurped authority,
Sharpen their tongues on Henrietta's fame?
It is enough! Thou lovest me no more!

King. Oh, Henrietta! [They talk apart.]

Cottington (to Laud). Money we have none:
And all the expedients of my Lord of Stratford
Will scarcely meet the arrears.

Laud. Without delay
An army must be sent into the north;
Followed by a Commission of the Church,
With amplest power to quench in fire and blood,
And tears and terror, and the pity of hell,
The intense wrath of Heresy. God will give
Victory; and victory over Scotland give
The lion England tamed into our hands.
That will lend power, and power bring gold.

Cottington. Meanwhile
We must begin first where your Grace leaves off.
Gold must give power, or—

CHARLES THE FIRST

Laud. I am not averse
From the assembling of a parliament.

Strong actions and smooth words might teach them soon
The lesson to obey. And are they not.
A bubble fashioned by the monarch's mouth,
The birth of one light breath? If they serve no purpose,
A word dissolves them.

Stratford. The engine of parliaments
Might be deferred until I can bring over
The Irish regiments: they will serve to assure
The issue of the war against the Scots.
And, this game won—which if lost, all is lost—
Gather these chosen leaders of the rebels,
And call them, if you will, a parliament.

King. Oh, be our feet still tardy to shed blood,
Guilty though it may be! I would still spare
The stubborn country of my birth, and ward
From countenances which I loved in youth
The wrathful Church's lacerating hand.

(To Laud.) Have you o'erlooked the other articles?

Laud. Hazlerig, Hampden, Pym, young Harry Vane,
Cromwell, and other rebels of less note,
Intend to sail with the next favouring wind
For the Plantations.

Arcky. Where they think to found
A commonwealth like Gonzalo's in the play,
Gynaecocratic and pantisocratic.

King. What's that, sirrah?

Arcky. New devil's politics,
Hell is the pattern of all commonwealths:
Ladie's was the first republican.

Will you hear Merlin's prophecy, how three [posts?]
'T in one brainless skull, when the whitethorn is full,
Shall sail round the world, and come back again:
Shall sail round the world in a brainless skull,
And come back again when the moon is at full: —

When, in spite of the Church,
They will hear homilies of whatever length
Or form they please.

[ Cottington? ] So please your Majesty to sign this order
For their detention.

Arcky. If your Majesty were tormented night and day by fever, gout,
Theratism, and stone, and asthma, etc., and you found these diseases
had secretly entered into a conspiracy to abandon you, should you think
it necessary to lay an embargo on the port by which they meant to dis-
people your unquiet kingdom of man?
SHELLEY

King. If fear were made for kings, the Fool mocks wisely; But in this case——(cowering). Here, my lord, take the warrant, And see it duly executed forthwith,—That imp of malice and mockery shall be punished. 339

[Exeunt all but King, Queen, and Archy.

Archy. Ay, I am the physician of whom Plato prophesied, who was to be accused by the confectioner for a jury of children, who found him guilty without waiting for the summing-up, and hanged him without benefit of clergy. Thus Baby Charles, and the Twelfth-night Queen of Hearts, and the overgrown schoolboy Cottington, and that little urchin Lang—who would reduce a verdict of 'guilty, death' by famine, if it were impracticable by composition—all imprisoned against poor Archy for presenting them bitter physic the last day of the holidays.

Queen. Is the rain over, sirrah?

King. When it rains And the sun shines, 'twill rain again to-morrow: And therefore never smile till you've done crying.

Archy. But 'tis all over now: like the April anger of woman, the gentle sky has wept itself serene.

Queen. What news abroad? how looks the world this morning?

Archy. Gloriously as a grave covered with virgin flowers. There's a rainbow in the sky. Let your Majesty look at it, for 'A rainbow in the morning Is the shepherd's warning;'

and the flocks of which you are the pastor are scattered among the mountain-tops, where every drop of water is a flake of snow, and the breath of May pierces like a January blast.

King. The sheep have mistaken the wolf for their shepherd, my poor boy; and the shepherd, the wolves for their watchdogs.

Queen. But the rainbow was a good sign, Archy: it says that the waters of the deluge are gone, and can return no more.

Archy. Ay, the salt-water one; but that of tears and blood must yet come down, and that of fire follow, if there be any truth in lies.——The rainbow hang over the city with all its shops, ... and churches, from north to south, like a bridge of congregated lightning pieced by the masonry of heaven——like a balance in which the angel that distributeth the coming hour was weighing that heavy one whose poise is now felt in the lightest hearts, before it bow the proudest heads under the meanest feet.

Queen. Who taught you this trash, sirrah?

Archy. A torn leaf out of an old book trampled in the dirt.——But for the rainbow. It moved as the sun moved, and ... until the top of the Tower ... of a cloud through its left-hand tip, and Lambeth Palace look as dark as a rock before the other. Methought I saw a crown figured upon one tip, and a mitre on the other. So, as I had heard treasures were found where the rainbow quenches its points upon the earth, I set off,
SHELLEY

With her child, born the King of heaven and earth,
Whose reign is men's salvation. And you shall see
A cradled miniature of yourself asleep,
Stamped on the heart by never-erring love;
Liker than any Vandyke ever made,
A pattern to the unborn age of thee,
Over whose sweet beauty I have wept for joy
A thousand times, and now should weep for sorrow
Did I not think that after we were dead
Our fortunes would spring high in him, and that
The cares we waste upon our heavy crown
Would make it light and glorious as a wreath
Of Heaven's beams for his dear innocent brow.
King. Dear Henrietta!

SCENE III.—The Star Chamber, Laud, Juxon, Strafford, and others,
as Judges. Prynne as a Prisoner, and then Bastwick.

Laud. Bring forth the prisoner Bastwick: let the clerk
Recite his sentence.

Clerk. "That he pay five thousand
Pounds to the king, lose both his ears, be branded
With red-hot iron on the cheek and forehead,
And be imprisoned within Lancaster Castle
During the pleasure of the Court."

Laud. Prisoner,
If you have ought to say wherefore this sentence
Should not be put into effect, now speak.

Juxon. If you have ought to plead in mitigation, speak.

Bastwick. Thus, my lords. If, like the prelates, I
Were an invader of the royal power,
A public sinner of the word of God,
Profane, idolatrous, popish, superstitious,
Impious in heart and in tyrannic act,
Void of wit, honesty, and temperance;
If Satan were my lord, as theirs,—our God
Pattern of all I should avoid to do:
Were I an enemy of my God and King
And of good men, as ye are;—I should merit
Your fearful state and gilt prosperity,
Which, when ye wake from the last sleep, shall turn
To cowls and robes of everlasting fire.
But, as I am, I bid ye grudge me not
The only earthly favour ye can yield,
Or I think worth acceptance at your hands,—
Scorn, mutilation, and imprisonment,
even as my Master did,

CHARLES THE FIRST

Until Heaven's kingdom shall descend on earth,
Or earth be like a shadow in the light
Of Heaven absorbed—some few tumultuous years
Will pass, and leave no wreck of what opposes
His will whose will is power.

Laud. Officer, take the prisoner from the bar,
And he his tongue slit for his insolence.

Bastwick. While this hand holds a pen—
Laud. Be his hands—

Juxon. Stop!

Forbear, my lord! The tongue, which now can speak
No terror, would interpret, being dumb,
Heaven's thunder to our harm; . . .
And hands, which now write only their own shame,
With bleeding stumps might sign our blood away.

Laud. Much more such 'mercy' among men would be,
Did all the ministers of Heaven's revenge
Flinch thus from earthly retribution. I
Could suffer what I would inflict.

[Exit Bastwick guarded.

bring up

The Lord Bishop of Lincoln.—
(To Strafford.) Know you not
That, in distraining for ten thousand pounds
Upon his books and furniture at Lincoln,
Were found these scandalous and seditious letters
Sent from one Osbaldstone, who is fled?
I speak it not as touching this poor person;
But of the office which should make it holy,
Were it as vise as it was ever spotless.
Mark, too, my lord, that this expression strikes
His Majesty, if I misinterpret not.

Enter Bishop Williams guarded.

Strafford. 'Twere politic and just that Williams taste
The bitter fruit of his connection with
The schismatics. But you, my Lord Archbishop,
Who owed your first promotion to his favour,
Who grew beneath his smile—

Laud. Would therefore beg

The office of his judge from this High Court,—

That it shall seem, even as it is, that I,
In my assumption of this sacred robe,
Have put aside all worldly preference,
All sense of all distinction of all persons,
All thoughts but of the service of the Church.—

Bishop of Lincoln!
This glorious clime, this armourment, whose lights
Dart mitigated influence through their veil
Of pale blue atmosphere; whose tears keep green
The pavement of this moist all-feeding earth;
This vaporous horizon, whose dim round
Is bastioned by the circumfluous sea,
Repelling invasion from the sacred towers,
Presses upon me like a dungeon's grate,
A low dark root, a damp and narrow wall.
The boundless universe
Becomes a cell too narrow for the soul
That owns no master; while the loathliest ward
Of this wide prison, England, is a nest
Of cradling peace built on the mountain tops,
To which the eagle spirits of the free,
Which range through heaven and earth, and scorn the storm
Of time, and gaze upon the light of truth,
Return to brood on thoughts that cannot die
And cannot be repelled.
Like eagles floating in the heaven of time,
They soar above their quarry, and shall stop
Through palaces and temples thunderproof.

SCENE V

Archy. I'll go live under the ivy that overgrows the terrace, and count
the tears shed on its old [roots? ] as the [wind?] plays the song of

'A widow bird sate mourning
Upon a wintry bough.'

[Sings]

'Heigho! the lark and the owl!
One flies the morning, and one lulls the night:—
Only the nightingale, poor fond soul,
Sings like the fool through darkness and light.

'A widow bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

'There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.'
LETTER TO MARIA GISBONE

lieshorne, July 5, 1820.

The spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet’s tower, cellar, or barn, or tree;
The silk-worm in the dark green mulberry leaves
His winding sheet and cradle ever weaves;
So I, a thing whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought—
No net of words in garish colours wrought;
To catch the idle buzzers of the day—
But a soft cell, where when that fades away,
Memory may clothe in wings my living name
And feed it with the asphodels of fame,
Which in those hearts which must remember me
Grow, making love an immortality.

Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
Would think I were a mighty mechanist,
Bent with sublime Archimedean art
To breathe a soul into the iron heart
Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
Which by the force of figured spells might win
Its way over the sea, and sport therein;
For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan:—or the quick
Wit of that man of God, St. Dominic,
To convince Atheist, Turk, or Heretic,
Or those in philanthropic council met,
Who thought to pay some interest for the debt
They owed to Jesus Christ for their salvation,
By giving a faint foretaste of damnation
To Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, and the rest
Who made our land an island of the blest.
When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire
On Freedom’s heart, grew dim with Empire:
—With thumbscrews, wheels, with tooth and spike and jag
Which fishers found under the utmost cag
Of Cornwall and the storm-encompassed isles,
Where to the sky in steel a wave alone rare.

437

Saturated with destroyed destruction, lay
Sleeping in beauty on their mangled prey,
As panthers sleep:—and other strange and dread
Magical forms the brick floor overspread:
Proteus transformed to metal did not make
More figures, or more strange; nor did he take
Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
Of tin and iron not to be understood;
And forms of unimaginable wood,
To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood:
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and grooved blocks,
The elements of what shall stand the shocks
Of wave and wind and time.—Upon the table
More knucks and gups there be than I am able
To catalogize in this verse of mine:
A pretty bowl of wood—not full of wine,
But quicksilver; that dews which the gnomes drink
When at their subterranean toll they swink,
Pleading the demons of the earthquake, who
Reply to them in lava—cry hallow!
And call out to the cities o’er their head,—
Roofs, towers, and shrines, the dying and the dead,
Crash through the chinks of earth—and then all quad
Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
This quicksilver no gnome has drunk,—within
The walnut bowl it lies, veined and thin,
In colour like the wake of light that stains
The Tuscan deep, when from the moist moon rains
The inmost shower of its white fire—the breeze
Is still—blue Heaven smiles over the pale seas,
And in this bowl of quicksilver—for I
Yield to the impulse of an infancy
Outlasting manhood—I have made to float
A rude idealism of a paper boat:—
A hollow screw with coes—Henry will know
The thing I mean and laugh at me,—if so
He fears not I should do more mischief.—Next
Lie bills and calculations much perplexed,
With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint
Traced over them in blue and yellow paint,
Then comes a range of mathematical
Instruments, for plans nautical and statical;
A heap of rock, a queer broken glass
With ink in it,—a china cup that was
What it will never be again, I think,—
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
SHELLEY

The liquor doctors rail at—and which I
Will quaff in spite of them—and when we die
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,
And cry out,—Heads or tails? where'er we be.
Near that a dusty paint-box, some odd hooks,
A half-burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
Where conic sections, spheres, logarithms,
To great Laplace, from Saunderson and Simla,
Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
Of figures,—disentangle them who may.
Baron de Tott's Memoirs beside them lie,
And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
Near those a most inexplicable thing,
With lead in the middle,—I'm conjecturing
How to make Henry understand; but no—
I'll leave, as Spenser says, with many mo,
This secret in the pregnant womb of time,
Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.

And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
Plotting dark spells, and devilish enginey,
The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind
Which pump up oaths from clergymen, and grind
The gentle spirit of our meek reviews
Into a powdery foam of salt abuse,
Ruffling the ocean of their self-content;—
I sit—and smile or sigh as is my bent,
But not for them.—Libeclo rushes round
With an inconstant and an idle sound,
I heed him more than them—the thunder-smoke
Is gathering on the mountains, like a cloud,
Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare;
The ripe corn under the undulating air
Undulates like an ocean;—and the vines
Are trembling wide in all their trellised lines—
The murmur of the awakening sea doth fill
The empty pauses of the blast,—the hill
Looks hoary through the white electric rain,
And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain,
The interrupted thunder howls; above
One chasm of Heaven smiles, like the eye of Love
On the unquiet world;—while such things are,
How could one worth your friendship heed the war
Of worms? the shriek of the world's carrion jays,
Their censure, or their wonder, or their praise?

You are not here! the quaint witch Memory sees,
In vacant chairs, your absent images,

LETTER TO MARIA GIBBON

And points where once you sat, and now should be
But are not.—I demand if ever we
Shall meet as then we met;—and she replies,
Veiling in awe her second-sighted eyes;
'I know the path alone—but summer home
My sister Hope,—she speaks of all to come.'
But I, an old diviner, who knew well
Every false verse of that sweet oracle,
Turned to the sad enchantress once again,
And sought a respite from my gentle pain,
In citing every passage o'er and o'er
Of our communion—how on the sea-shore
We watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather;
How I ran home through last year's thunder-storm,
And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek,—and how we often made
Feasts for each other, where good will outweiged
The frugal luxury of our country cheer,
As well it might, were it less firm and clear
Than ours must ever be;—and how we spun
A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun
Of this familiar life, which seems to be
But is not;—or is but quaint mockery
Of all we would believe, and sadly blame
The jarring and inexplicable frame
Of this wrong world;—and then anatomize
The purposes and thoughts of men whose eyes
Were closed in distant years;—or widely guess
The issue of the earth's great business,
When we shall be as we no longer are.
Like babbling gossips safe, who hear the war
Of winds, and sigh, but tremble not;—or how
You listened to some interrupted flow
Of visionary rhyme,—in joy and pain
Struck from the innmost fountains of my brain,
With little skill perhaps;—or how we sought
Those deepest wells of passion or of thought
Wrought by wise poets in the waste of years,
Staining their sacred waters with our tears;
Quenching a thirst ever to be renewed.
Or how I, wisest lad! then ended
The language of a land which now is free,
And, winged with thoughts of truth and majesty,
Flits round the tyrant's sceptre like a cloud,
And bursts the peopled prisons, and cries aloud,
SHELLEY

‘My name is Legion!’—that majestic tongue
Which Calderon over the desert flung
Of ages and of nations; and which found
An echo in our hearts, and with the sound
Startled oblivion,—thou wert then to me
As in a nurse,—when inarticulately
A child would talk as its grown parents do.
If living winds the rapid clouds pursue,
If hawks chase doves through the aetherial way,
Huntsmen the innocent deer, and beasts their prey,
Why should not we rouse with the spirit’s blast
Out of the forest of the pathless past
These recollected pleasures?

You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures! You will see
That which was Godwin,—greater none than he
Though fallen—and fallen on evil times—to stand
Among the spirits of our age and land,
Before the dread tribunal of to come
The foremost,—while Rebuffe covers pale and dumb.
You will see Coleridge—he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-enchanted meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.
You will see Hunt—one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is—a tomb;
Who is, what others seem; his room no doubt
Is still adorned with many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about;
And cornals of bay from ribbons hung;
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung;
The gifts of the most learned among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law, and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal paws,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet’s door;
Alas! it is no use to say, ‘I’m poor!’
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever read in book,

LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE

Except in Shakespeare’s wisest tenderness.—
You will see Hogg,—and I cannot express
His virtues,—though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades the gate
Within which they inhabit;—of his wit
And wisdom, you’ll cry out when you are bit.
Is he not within an oyster shell,
One of the richest of the deep;—and there
Is the Peacock, with his mountain Fair,
Turned into a Flamingo,—that shy bird
That gleams in the Indian air—have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him?—but you
Will see him, and will like him too, I hope.
With the milk-white Snowdonian Antelope
Matched with this cameleopard—his fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it;
A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots; let his page,
Which charms the chosen spirits of the time,
Fold itself up for the serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation.—Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge; all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in Horace Smith.—And these,
With some exceptions, which I need not tease
Your patience by descanting on,—are all
You and I know in London.

I recall
My thoughts, and bid you look upon the night.
As water does a sponge, so the moonlight
Fills the void, hollow, universal air—
What see you?—unpavilioned Heaven is fair,
Whether the moon, into her chamber gone,
Leaves midnight to the golden stars, or wan
Clims with diminished beams the azure steep;
Or whether clouds sail o’er the inverse deep,
Piloted by the many-wandering blast,
And the rare stars rush through them dim and fast:
All this is beautiful in every land;—
But what see you beside?—a shabby stand
Of Hackney coaches—a brick house or wall
Fencing some lonely court, white with the scrawl
Of our unhappy politics;—or worse—
A wretched woman reeling by, whose curse
SHELLEY

Mixed with the watchman’s partner of her trade,
You must accept in place of serenade—
Or yellow-haired Polonia murmuring
To Henry, some inaudible thing,
I see a chaos of green leaves and fruit
Built round dark caverns, even to the root
Of the living stems that feed them—in whose bower
There sleep in their dark dew the folded flowers;
Beyond, the surface of the unsickled corn
Trembles not in the slumbering air, and borne
In circles quaint, and ever-changing dance,
Like winged stars the fire-flies flash and glance,
Pale in the open moonshine, but each one
Under the dark trees seems a little sun,
A meteor named; a fixed star gone astray
From the silver regions of the milky way;—
Afar the Contadino’s song is heard,
Rude, but made sweet by distance—and a bird
Which cannot be the Nightingale, and yet
I know none else that sings so sweet as it
At this late hour,—and then all is still—
Now—Italy or London, which you will!

Next winter you must pass with me; I’ll have
My house by that time turned into a grave
Of dead despondence and low-thoughted care,
And all the dreams which our tormentors are;
Oh! that Hunt, Hogg, Peacock, and Smith were there,
With everything belonging to them fair!—
We will have books, Spanish, Italian, Greek;
And ask one week to make another week
As like his father, as I’m unlike mine,
Which is not his fault, as you may divine.
Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
Yet let’s be merry: we’ll have tea and toast;
Custards for supper, and an endless host
Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies;
And other such lady-like luxuries,—
Feasting on which we will philosophize!
And we’ll have fires out of the Grand Duke’s wood,
To thaw the six weeks’ winter in our blood.
And then we’ll talk:—what shall we talk about?
Oh! there are themes enough for many a bout
Of thought-entangled descent;—as to nerves—
With cones and parallelograms and curves
I’ve sworn to strangle them if once they dare
To bother me;—when you are with me there.

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

And they shall never more sip laudanum,
From Helicon or Himero’s,—well, come,
And in despite of God and of the devil,
We’ll make our friendly philosophic revel
Outlast the leafless time; till buds and flowers
Warm the obscure inevitable hours,
Sweet meeting by sad parting to renew;—
‘To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.’

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

TO MARY

(ON HER OBJECTION TO THE FOLLOWING POEM, UPON THE
SCORE OF ITS CONTAINING NO HUMAN INTEREST)

I

How, my dear Mary,—are you critic-bitten
(For vipers kill, though dead) by some review,
That you condemn these verses I have written,
Because they tell no story, false or true?
What, though no mice are caught by a young kitten,
May it not leap and play as grown cats do,
Till its claws come? Prithis, for this one time,
Content thee with a visionary rhyme.

II

What hand would crush the silken-winged fly,
The youngest of inconstant April’s minions,
Because it cannot climb the purest sky?
Where the swan sings, amid the sun’s dominions?
Not thine. Thou knowest ‘tis its doom to die,
When Day shall hide within her twilight pinions
The lucent eyes, and the eternal smile,
Serene as thine, which lent it life awhile.

III

To thy fair feet a winged Vision came,
Whose date should have been longer than a day,
And o’er thy head did beat its wings for fame,
And in thy sight its fading plumes displayed:
The watery bow burned in the evening flame,
But the shower fell, the swift Sun went his way—
And that is dead.—Oh, let me not believe
That anything of mine is fit to live!

385 Stone, from which the river Himero was named, is, with some slight shade
of difference, a synonym of Love.—[Shelley’s Note.]
THE WITCH OF ATLAS

I
Before those cruel Twins, whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the Earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
The pains of putting into learned rhyme,
A lady-witch there lived on Atlas’ mountain
Within a cavern, by a secret fountain.

II
Her mother was one of the Atlantides:
The all-beholding Sun had never beholden
In his wide voyage o’er continents and seas
So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden.

III
’Tis said, she first was changed into a vapour,
And then into a cloud, such clouds as fit,
Like splendid-winged moths about a taper.
Round the red west when the sun dies in it:
And then into a meteor, such as caper.
On hill-tops when the moon is in a fit:
Then, into one of those mysterious stars
Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.

IV
Ten times the Mother of the Months had bent
Her bow beside the folding-star, and hidden
With that bright sign the billows to indent.
The sea-deserted sand—like children chidden,
At her command they ever came and went.
Since in that cave a dewy splendour hidden
Took shape and motion, with the living form
Of this embodied Power, the cave grew warm.

V
A lovely lady garmented in light
From her own beauty—deep her eyes, as are
Two openings of unfathomable night.
Seen through a Temple’s cloven roof—her hair
Dark—the dim brain whirles dizzy with delight,
Ficturing her form; her soft smiles shone afar,
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

VI
And first the spotted camelopard came,
And then the wise and fearless elephant;
Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
Of his own volumes interwoven—all gaunt
And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame.
They drank before her at her sacred font:
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.
The brinded lioness led forth her young,
That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death; the pard unstrung
His shews at her feet, and sought to know
With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue
How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of illy, and the wood-gods in a crew
Came, blithe, as in the olive copes thick
Cicadae are, drunk with the noonday dew:
And Dryope and Faunus followed quick,
Teasing the God to sing them something new;
Till in this cave they found the lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

And universal Pan, 'tis said, was there,
And though none saw him,—through the adamant
Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air,
And through those living spirits, like a want,
He passed out of his everlasting lair
Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant,
And felt that wondrous lady all alone,—
And she felt him, upon her emerald throne.

And every nymph of stream and spreading tree,
And every shepherdess of Ocean's flocks,
Who drives her white waves over the green sea,
And Ocean with the brine on his gray locks,
And quaint Priapus with his company,
All came, much wondering how the enwombèd rocks
Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth;—
Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

The kernesmen and the mountain maidens came,
And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant—
Their spirits shook within them, as a flame
Stirred by the air under a cavern gaunt:
And odours in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept,
Clipped in a floating net, a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the noon yet slept;
As bats at the wired window of a dairy,
They heat their vans; and each was an adept,
When loosed and missioned, making wings of winds,
To stir sweet thoughts or sad, in destined minds.

And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a sight
Of glorious dreams—or if eyes needs must weep,
Could make their tears all wonder and delight,
She in her crystal vials did closely keep:
If men could drink of those clear vials, 'tis said
The living were not envied of the dead.

Her cave was stored with scrolls of strange device,
The works of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations at whose price
Men from the Gods might win that happy age
Too lightly lost, redeeming native vice;
And which might quench the Earth-consuming rage
Of gold and blood—till men should live and move
Harmonious as the sacred stars above;

And how all things that seem untameable,
Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of Wisdom's wizard skill:
Time, earth, and fire—the ocean and the wind,
And all their shapes—and man's imperial will;
And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of Love—let the profane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain.

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
To which the enchantment of her father's power
Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
Were heaped in the recesses of her bower;

Carved lamps and chalices, and vials which shone
In their own golden beams—each like a flower,
Out of whose depth a fire-fly shakes his light
Under a cypress in a starless night.

At first she lived alone in this wild home,
And her own thoughts were each a minister,
Clothing themselves, or with the ocean foam,
Or with the wind, or with the speed of fire,
To work whatever purposes might come
Into her mind; such power her mighty Sire
Had girt them with, whether to fly or run,
Through all the regions which he shines upon.

The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads and Naiads, with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks,
And far beneath the matted roots of trees,
And in the girdled heart of stubborn oaks,
So they might live for ever in the light.
Of her sweet presence—each a satellite.

'This may not be,' the wizard maid replied;
'The fountains where the Naiades below
Their shining hair, at length are drained and dried;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and stew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide;
The boundless ocean like a drop of dew
Will be consumed—the stubborn centre must
Be scattered, like a cloud of summer dust.

'And ye with them will perish, one by one;
If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay—oh, ask not me
To love you till your little race is run;
I cannot die as ye must—over me
Your leaves shall glance—the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth, and so—farewell!'
THE WITCH OF ATLAS

Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawned an inextinguishable well
Of crimson fire—full even to the brim,
And overflowing all the margin trim.

XXX
Within the which she lay when the fierce war
Of wintry winds shook that Innocuous liquor
In many a minute moon and bearded star.
O'er woods and lawsns—the serpent heard it flicker
In sleep, and dreaming still, he crept afar.
And when the windless snow descended thicker
Than autumn leaves, she watched it as it came
Melt on the surface of the level flame.

XXXI
She had a boat, which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star;
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the adornments that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought
And gave it to this daughter: from a cap
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

XXXII
And others say, that, when but three hours old,
The first-born Love out of his cradle leapt,
And clove dun Chaos with his wings of gold,
And like a horticulturist adept
Stole a strange seed, and wrapped it up in mould,
And sowed it in his mother's star, and kept
Watering it all the summer with sweet dew,
And with his wings fanning it as it grew.

XXXIII
The plant grew strong and green, the snowy flower
Fell, and the long and gourd-like fruit began
To turn the light and dew by inward power
To its own substance: woven tracer ran
Of light firm texture, ribbed and branching, o'er
The solid rind, like a leaf's veined fan—
Of which Love scooped this boat—and with soft motion
Piloted it round the circumfulous ocean.
THE WITCH OF ATLAS

In melancholy gloom, the pinnace passed;
By many a stately surmounted pyramid
Of sky-crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

The silver noon into that winding dell,
With slanted gleam athwart the forest tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell;
A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell,
When Earth over her face Night’s mantle wraps;
Between the severed mountains lay on high,
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

And ever as she went, the Image lay
With folded wings and unwakened eyes;
And o’er its gentle countenance did play
The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,
And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which, with busy murmur vain,
They had aroused from that full heart and brain.

And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud
Upon a stream of wind, the pinnace went:
Now lingering on the pools, in which abode
The calm and darkness of the deep content
In which they paused; now o’er the shallow road
Of white and dancing waters, all besprent
With sand and polished pebbles:—mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

And down the earthquaking cataracts which shiver
Their snow-like waters into golden air,
Or under chasms unfathomable ever
Sepulchre them, till in their rage they tear
A subterranean portal for the river,
It fled—the circling sunbows did upbear
Its fall down the hoar precipice of spray,
Lighting it far upon its lampless way.

SHELLEY

XXXIV

This boat she moored upon her fount, and lit
A living spirit within all its frame,
Breathing the soul of swiftness into it.
Couched on the fountain like a panther tame,
One of the twin at Evan’s feet that sit—
Or as on Vesta’s sceptre a swift flame—
Or on blind Homer’s heart a winged thought,—
In joyous expectation lay the boat.

XXXV

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love—all things together grow
Through which the harmony of love can pass;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow—
A living Image, which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

XXXVI

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both,
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked
The bosom swelled lightly with its full youth,
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imagining forth such perfect purity.

XXXVII

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipped with the speed of liquid lightening,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere:
She led her creature to the boiling springs
Where the light boat was moored, and said: ‘Sit here!’
And pointed to the prow, and took her seat
Beside the rudder, with opposing feet.

XXXVIII

And down the streams which clave those mountains vast,
Around their inland islets, and amid
The panther-peopled forests, whose shade cast
Darkness and colours, and a pleasure hid
SHELEY

XLIII

And when the wizard lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many-winding vale,
Which to the innmost mountain upward tend—
She called "Hermaphroditus!"—and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass.

XLIV

And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions,
With stars of fire spotting the stream below;
And from above into the Sun's dominions
Flinging a glory, like the golden glow
In which Spring clothes her emerald-winged minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime,
With which frost paints the pines in winter time.

XLV

And then it winnowed the Elysian air
Which ever hung about that lady bright,
With its aethereal vane—and speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight,
The pinnace, oared by those enchanted wings
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

XLVI

The water flashed, like sunlight by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to Heaven;
The still air seemed as if its waves did flow
In tempest down the mountains; loosely driven
The lady's radiant hair streamed to and fro:
Beneath, the billows having vainly striven
Indignant and impetuous, roared to feel
The swift and steady motion of the keel.

XLVII

Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or in the noon of interlunar night,
The lady-witch in visions could not chain
Her spirit; but sailed forth under the light

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

Of shooting stars, and hade extend again
Its storm-outpeeling wings, the Hermaphrodite;
She to the Austral waters took her way,
Beyond the fabulous Thamondocan,—

XLVIII

Where, like a meadow which no scythe has shaven,
Which rain could never bend, or whirl-blast shake,
With the Antarctic constellations paven,
Canopus and his crew, lay the Austral lake—
There she would build herself a windless haven
Out of the clouds whose moving turrets make
The bastions of the storm, when through the sky
The spirits of the tempest thundered by:

XLIX

A haven beneath whose translucent floor
The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably,
And around which the solid vapours hover,
Based on the level waters, to the sky
Lifted their dreadful crags, and like a shore
Of wintry mountains, inaccessible
Hemmed in with rifts and precipices gray,
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay.

L

And whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the wind's scourge, foam'd like a wounded thing,
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Ploughed up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the house-cormorant in the lightning flash
Looked like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of lanky thunder-smoke—this haven
Was as a gem to copy Heaven engraven,—

LI

On which that lady played her many pranks,
Circling the image of a shooting star,
Even as a tiger on Hydaspes' banks
Outspeeds the antelopes which speediest are,
In her light boat; and many quips and cranks
She played upon the water, till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.
And then she called out of the hollow turrets
Of those high clouds, white, golden and vermilion,
The armies of her ministering spirits—
In mighty legions, million after million,
They came, each troop emblazoning its merits
On meteor flags; and many a proud pavilion
Of the intexture of the atmosphere
They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere.

They framed the imperial tent of their great Queen
Of woven exhalations, underlaid
With lambent lightning-fire, as may be seen
A dome of thin and open ivory inlaid
With crimson silk—cressets from the serene
Hung there, and on the water for her tread
A tapestry of fleece-like mist was strewn,
Dyed in the beams of the ascending moon.

And on a throne o’erlaid with starlight, caught
Upon those wandering isles of aery dew,
Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
She sat, and heard all that had happened new
Between the earth and moon, since they had brought
The last intelligence—and now she grew
Pale as that moon, lost in the watery night—
And now she wept, and now she laughed outright.

These were tame pleasures; she would often climb
The steepest ladder of the craddled rack
Up to some beaked cape of cloud sublime,
And like Arion on the dolphin’s back
Ride singing through the shoreless air—oft-time
Following the serpent lightning’s winding track,
She ran upon the platforms of the wind,
And laughed to hear the fire-balls roar behind.

And sometimes to those streams of upper air
Which whirl the earth in its diurnal round,
She would ascend, and win the spirits there
To let her join their chorus. Mortals found

That on those days the sky was calm and fair,
And mystic snatches of harmonious sound
Wandered upon the earth where'er she passed,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
To glide adown old Nixus, where he threads
Egypt and Aethiopla, from the steep
Of utmost Axumé, until he spreads,
Like a calm flock of silver-fleece sheep,
His waters on the plain; and created heads
Of cities and proud temples gleam amid,
And many a vapour-belted pyramid.

By Moeris and the Mareotic lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms like bridal chamber floors,
Where naked boys bridding tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghostly alligators,
Had left on the sweet waters mighty wakes
Of those huge forms—within the brazen doors
Of the great Labyrinth slept both boy and beast,
Tired with the pomp of their Osrian feast.

And where within the surface of the river
The shadows of the massy temples lie,
And never are erased—but tremble ever
Like things which every cloud can doom to die,
Through lotus-paven canals, and wheresoever
The works of man pierced that serenest sky
With tombs, and towers, and fanes, 'twasn her delight
To wander in the shadow of the night.

With motion like the spirit of that wind
Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
Passed through the peopled haunts of humankind,
Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet,
Through Jane, and palace-court; and labyrinth mined
With many a dark and subterranean street
Under the Nile, through chambers high and deep
She passed, observing mortals in their sleep.
A pleasure sweet doubtless it was to see
Mortals subdued in all the shapes of sleep.
Here lay two sister twins in infancy;
There, a lone youth who in his dreams did weep;
Within, two lovers linkedd innocently
In their loose locks which over both did creep
Like ivy from one stem—and there lay calm
Old age with snow-bright hair and folded palm.

But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
Not to be mirrored in a holy song—
Distortions foul of supernatural awe,
And pale imaginings of visioned wrong;
And all the code of Custom's lawfull law
Written upon the brows of old and young:
'This,' said the wizard maiden, 'is the strife
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life.'

And little did the sight disturb her soul.—
We, the weak mariners of that wide lake
Where'er its shores extend or billows roll,
Our course unpiolotted and starless make
O'er its wild surface to an unknown goal:—
But she in the calm depths her way could take,
Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide
Beneath the wettering of the restless tide.

And she saw princes couch'd under the glow
Of sunlike gems; and round each temple-court
In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep—all of one sort—
For all were educated to be so—
The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves.

And all the forms in which those spirits lay
Were to her sight like the diaphanous
Veils, in which those sweet ladies oft array
Their delicate limbs, who would conceal from us

Only their scorn of all concealment: they
Move in the light of their own beauty thus.
But these and all now lay with sleep upon them,
And little thought a Witch was looking on them.

She, all those human figures breathing there,
Beheld as living spirits—to her eyes
The naked beauty of the soul lay bare,
And often through a rude and worn disguise
She saw the inner form most bright and fair—
And then she had a charm of strange device,
Which, murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

Alas! Aurora, what wouldest thou have given
For such a charm when Tithon became gray?
Or how much, Venus, of thy silver heaven
Wouldest thou have yielded, ere Proserpina
Had half (oh! why not all?) the debt forgiven
Which dear Adonis had been doomed to pay,
To any witch who would have taught you it?
The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

'Tis said in after times her spirit free
Knew what love was, and felt itself alone—
But holy Dion could not chaste be
Before she stooped to kiss Endymion,
Than now this lady—like a sexless bee
Tasting all blossoms, and confined to none,
Among those mortal forms, the wizard-maiden
Passed with an eye serene and heart unladen.

To those she saw most beautiful, she gave
Strange panacea in a crystal bowl:—
They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
And lived thenceforward as if some control,
Mightier than life, were in them; and the grave
Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
Was as a green and overarching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.
SHELLEY

LXX
For on the night when they were buried, she
Restored the embalmers' ruin, and shook
The light out of the funeral lamps, to be
A mimic day within that deathly nook;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling bands, and took
The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch.

LXXI
And there the body lay, age after age,
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying,
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,
With gentle smiles about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
Of death or life; while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new, the rapid, blind
And fleeting generations of mankind.

LXXII
And she would write strange dreams upon the brain
Of those who were less beautiful, and made
All harsh and crooked purposes more vain
Than in the desert is the serpent's wake
Which the sand covers—all his evil gain
The miser in such dreams would rise and shake
Into a beggar's lap;—the lying scribe
Would his own lies betray without a bribe.

LXXIII
The priests would write an explanation full,
Translating hieroglyphics into Greek,
How the God Apis really was a bull,
And nothing more; and bid the herald stick
The same against the temple doors, and pull
The old cant down; they licensed all to speak
Whate'er they thought of hawks, and cats, and geese,
By pastoral letters to each diocese.

LXXIV
The king would dress an ape up in his crown
And robes, and seat him on his glorious seat,
And on the right hand of the sunlike throne
Would place a gaudy mock-bird to repeat

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

The chatterings of the monkey.—Every one
Of the prone courtiers crawled to kiss the feet
Of their great Emperor, when the morning came,
And kissed—alas, how many kiss the same!

LXXV
The soldiers dreamed that they were blacksmiths, and
Walked out of quarters in somnambulism;
Round the red anvils you might see them stand
Like Cyclopes in Vulcan's sooty abyss,
Beating their swords to ploughshares;—in a band
The grinders sent those of the liberal schism
Free through the streets of Memphis, much, I wis,
To the annoyance of King Amasis.

LXXVI
And timid lovers who had been so coy,
They hardly knew whether they loved or not,
Would rise out of their rest, and take sweet joy,
To the fulfilment of their inmost thought;
And when next day the maiden and the boy
Met one another, both, like sinners caught,
Blushed at the thing which each believed was done
Only in fancy—till the tenth moon shine;

LXXVII
And then the Witch would let them take no ill:
Of many thousand schemes which lovers find
The Witch found one,—and so they took their fill
Of happiness in marriage warm and kind.
Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,
Were torn apart—a wide wound, mind from mind!—
She did unite again with visions clear
Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

LXXVIII
These were the pranks she played among the cities
Of mortal men, and what she did to Sprites
And Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties
To do her will, and show their subtle sleights,
I will declare another time; for it is
A tale more fit for the weird winter nights
Than for these garish summer days, when we
S scarcely believe much more than we can see.
NOTE ON THE WITCH OF ATLAS, BY MRS. SHELLEY

We spent the summer of 1820 at the Baths of San Giuliano, four miles from Pisa. These baths were of great use to Shelley in soothing his nervous irritability. We made several excursions in the neighbourhood. The country around is fertile, and diversified and rendered picturesque by ranges of near hills and more distant mountains. The peasantry are a handsome intelligent race; and there was a gladsome sunny heaven spread over us, that rendered home and every scene we visited cheerful and bright. During some of the hottest days of August, Shelley made a solitary journey on foot to the summit of Monte San Pellegrino— a mountain of some height, on the top of which there is a chapel, the object, during certain days of the year, of many pilgrimages. The excursion delighted him while it lasted; though he exerted himself too much, and the effect was considerable fatigue and weakness on his return. During the expedition he conceived the idea, and wrote, in the three days immediately succeeding to his return, the Witch of Atlas. This poem is peculiarly characteristic of his tastes—widely fanciful, full of brilliant imagery, and discarding human interest and passion, to revel in 'e fantastic ideas that his imagination suggested.

The surpassing excellence of The Cenci had made me greatly desire that Shelley should increase his popularity by adopting subjects that would more suit the popular taste than a poem conceived in the abstract and dreamy spirit of the Witch of Atlas. It was not only that I wished him to acquire popularity as redounding to his fame; but I believed that he would obtain a greater mastery over his own powers, and greater happiness in his mind, if public applause crowned his endeavours. The few stanzas that precede the poem were addressed to me on my representing these ideas to him. Even now I believe that I was in the right. Shelley did not expect sympathy and approbation from the public; but he knew that he could not have sustained himself while writing. He was thrown on his own resources, and on the inspirations of his own soul; and wrote because this mind overflowed, without the hope of being appreciated. I had not the most distant wish that he should trudge in opinion, or submit his lofty aspirations for the human race to the low ambition and pride of the many; but I felt sure that, if his poems were more addressed to the common feelings of men, his proper rank among the writers of the day would be acknowledged, and that popularity as a poet would enable his countrymen to do justice to his character and virtues, which in those days it was the mode to attack with the most flagitious calumnies and insulting abuse. That he felt these things deeply cannot be doubted, though he armed himself with the consciousness of acting from a lofty and heroic sense of right. The truth burst from his heart sometimes in solitude, and he would write a few unfinished verses that showed that he felt the sting; among such I find the following:

I believed that all this morbid feeling would vanish if the chord of sympathy between him and his countrymen was touched. But my persuasions were vain, the mind could not be bent from its natural inclination. Shelley shrunk instinctively from portraying human passion, with its mixture of good and evil, of disappointment and disquiet. Such opened again the wounds of his own heart; and he loved to shelter himself rather in the airiest flights of fancy, forgetting love and hate, and regret and lost hope, in such imaginations as borrow their hues from sunrise or sunset, from the yellow moonshine or pearly twilight, or the heat of the air or the coolness of the sky, which celebrated the singing of the winds among the pines, the flow of a murmuring stream, and the thousand harmonious sounds which Nature creates in her solitudes. These are the materials which form the Witch of Atlas; it is a brilliant congregation of ideas such as his senses gathered, and his fancy coloured, during his rambles in the sunny land he so much loved.

EPIPSYCHIDION

VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE NOBLE AND UNFORTUNATE LADY, EMILIA V——-

NOW IMPRISONED IN THE CONVENT OF

E' anima amante si stanca fuori del creto, e si creese nell' infinito un Mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso baratro. Hai own words.

ADVERTISEMENT

The Writer of the following lines died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades, which he had bought, and where he had fitted up the ruins of an old building, and where it was his hope to have realised a scheme of life, suited perhaps to that happier and better world of which he is now an inhabitant, but hardly practicable in this. His life was singular; less on account of the romantic vicissitudes which diversified it, than the ideal tinge which it received from his own character and feelings. The present Poem, like the Vita Nuova of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a matter-of-fact history of the circumstances to which it relates; and to a certain other class it must ever remain incompre-
SHELLEY

happens, from a defect of a common organ of perception for the ideas of which it treats. Not but that gran vergogna sarebbe a colui, che rimasse cosa sotto veste di figura, o di colore rettorico; e domandato non suppersi denudare le sue parole da cosi veste, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento.

The present poem appears to have been intended by the Writer as the dedication to some longer one. The stanza on the opposite page is almost a literal translation from Dante's famous Canzone

Voi, ch' intendo, il lasso ch' el movete, etc.

The presumptuous application of the concluding lines to his own composition will raise a smile at the expense of my unfortunate friend: be it a smile not of contempt, but pity.

My Song, I fear that thou wilt find but few Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning, Of such hard matter dost thou entertain; Whence, if by misadventure, chance should bring Thee to base company (as chance may do), Quite unaware of what thou dost contain, I prithee, comfort thy sweet self again, My last delight! tell them that they are dull, And bid them own that thou art beautiful.

EPISYCHIDION

Sweet Spirit! Sister of that orphan one, Whose empire is the name thou weepest on, In my heart's temple I suspend to thee These votive wreaths of withered memory.

Poor captive bird! who, from thy narrow cage, Fourseat such music, that it might assuage The rugged hearts of those who prisoned thee, Were they not deaf to all sweet melody; This song shall be thy rose: its petals pale Are dead, indeed, my adored Nightingale; But soft and fragrant is the faded blossom, And it has no thorn left to wound thy bosom.

High, spirit-winged Heart! who dost for ever Beat thine unfeeling bars with vain endeavour, Till those bright plumes of thought, in which arrayed It over-soared this low and worldly shade, Lie shattered; and thy panting, wounded breast Stains with dear blood its unmaternal nest! I weep vain tears: blood would less bitter be, Yet poured forth gladlier, could it profit thee.

EPIPSYCHIDION

Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human, Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman All that is insupportable in thee Of light, and love, and immortality! Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse! Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe! Thou Moon beyond the clouds! Thou living Form Among the Dead! Thou Star above the Storm! Thou Wonder, and thou Beauty, and thou Terror! Thou Harmony of Nature's art! Thou Mirror In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun, All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on! Ay, even the dim words which obscure thee now Flash, lightning-like, with unaccustomed glow; I pray thee that thou blot from this sad song All of its much mortality and wrong, With those clear drops, which start like sacred dew From the twin lights thy sweet soul darkens through, Weeping, till sorrow becomes ecstasy:

Then smile on it, so that it may not die.

I never thought before my death to see Youth's vision thus made perfect. Emily, I love thee; though the world by no thin name Will hide that love from its unvalued shame. Would we two had been twins of the same mother! Or, that the name my heart lent to another Could be a sister's bond for her and thee, Blending two beams of one eternity! Yet were one lawful and the other true, These names, though dear, could paint not, as is due, How beyond refuge I am thine. Ah me! I am not thine: I am a part of thee.

Sweet Lamp! my moth-like Muse has burned its wings Or, like a dying swan who soars and sings, Young Love should teach Time, in his own gray style, All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile, A lovely soul formed to be blessed and bless? A well of sealed and secret happiness, Whose waters like bethie light and music are, Vanquishing dissonance and gloom? A Star Which moves not in the moving heavens, alone? A Smile amid dark frowns? a gentle tone Amid rude voices? a beloved light? A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight? A Lute, which those whom Love has taught to play Make music on, to soothe the roughest day
SHELLEY

And lull fond Grief asleep? a buried treasure?
A cradle of young thoughts of wingless pleasure?
A violet-shrouded grave of Woe?—I measure
The world of fancies, seeking one like thee,
And find—alas! mine own infirmity.

She met me, Stranger, upon life's rough way,
And lured me towards sweet Death; as Night by Day,
Winter by Spring, or Sorrow by swift Hope,
Led into light, life, peace. An antelope,
In the suspended impulse of its lightness,
Were less aethereally light: the brightness
Of her divinest presence trembles through
Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
Embodied in the windless heaven of June
Amid the splendour-winged stars, the Moon
Burns, inextinguishably beautiful:
And from her lips, as from a hyacinth full
Of honey-dew, a liquid murmur drops,
Killing the sense with passion; sweet as steps
Of planetary music heard in trance.
In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
The sunbeams of those wells which ever leap
Under the lightnings of the soul—too deep
For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense.
The glory of her being, issuing thence,
Stains the dead, blank, cold air with a warm shade
Of unentangled intermixture, made
By Love, of light and motion: one intense
Diffusion, one serene Omniscience,
Whose flowing outlines mingle in their flowing,
Around her cheeks and utmost fingers glowing
With the unintermitted blood, which there
Quivers, (as in a fleece of snow-like air
The crimson pulse of living morning quiver,) Continuously prolonged, and ending never,
Till they are lost, and in that Beauty fused
Which penetrates and claps and fills the world;
Scarce visible from extreme loveliness.
Warm fragrance seems to fall from her light dress
And her loose hair; and where some heavy tress
The air of her own speed has dissentwined,
The sweetness seems to satiate the faint wind;
And in the soul a wild odour is felt,
Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt
Into the bosom of a frozen bud.—
See where she stands! a mortal shape indeed.

EPIPSYCHIDION

With love and life and light and deity,
And motion which may change but cannot die;
An image of some bright Eternity;
A shadow of some golden dream; a Splendour
Leaving the third sphere pilotless; a tender
Reflection of the eternal Moon of Love
Under whose motions life's dull billows move;
A Metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning;
A Vision like Incarnate April, warning
With smiles and tears, Frost the Anatomy
Into his summer grave.

Ah, woe is me!

What have I dared? where am I lifted? how
Shall I descend, and perish not? I know
That Love makes all things equal: I have heard
By mine own heart this joyous truth averted:
The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
In love and worship, blends itself with God.

Spouse! Sister! Angel! Pilot of the Fates
Whose course has been so starless! O too late
Beloved! O too soon adored, by me!
For in the fields of Immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,
A divine presence in a place divine;
Or should have moved beside it on this earth,
A shadow of that substance, from its birth;
But not as now:—I love thee; yes, I feel
That on the fountain of my heart a seal
Is set, to keep its waters pure and bright
For thee, since in those tears thou hast delight.
We—are we not forlorn, as notes of music are,
For one another, though dissimilar;
Such difference without discord, as can make
Those sweetest sounds, in which all spirits shake
As trembling leaves in a continuous air.

Thy wisdom speaks in me, and bids me dare
Beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wrecked.
I never was attached to that great sect,
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion, though it is in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread,
Who travel to their home among the dead.
SHELLEY

By the broad highway of the world, and so
With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

True Love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths; 'tis like thy light,
Imagination! which from earth and sky,
And from the depths of human fantasy,
As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills
The Universe with glorious beams, and kills
Error, the worm, with many a sun-like arrow
Of its reverberated lightning. Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
The life that wears, the spirit that creates
One object, and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity.

Mind from its object differs most in this:
Evil from good; misery from happiness;
The borer from the noble; the impure
And frail, from what is clear and must endure.
If you divide suffering and dress, you may
Diminish till it is consumed away;
If you divide pleasure and love and thought,
Each part exceeds the whole; and we know not
How much, while any yet remains unshared,
Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared:
This truth is that deep well, whence sages draw
The unenlightened light of hope; the eternal law
By which those live, to whom this world of life
Is as a garden ravaged, and whose stride
Tills for the promise of a later birth.
The wilderness of this Elysian earth.

There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous door
Paved her light steps,—on an imagined shore,
Under the gray bank of some promontory
She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
That I beheld her not. In solitudes
Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,

EPIPSYCHIDION

And from the fountains, and the odours deep
Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
Breathed but of her to the enamoured air;
And from the breezes whether low or loud,
And from the rain of every passing cloud,
And from the singing of the summer-birds,
And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
Of antique verse and high romance,—in form,
Sound, colour,—in whatever checks that Storm
Which with the shattered present chokes the past;
And in that best philosophy, whose taste
Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
As glorious as a fiery martyrdom;
Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.—

Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth
I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
And towards the lodestar of my one desire,
I fluttered, like a dizzied moth, whose flight
Is as a dead leaf's in the owllet light,
When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
As if it were a lamp of earthy flame.—
But She, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
Passed, like a God throne'd on a winged planet,
Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
Into the dreamy cone of our life's shade;
And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
I would have followed, though the grave between
Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen:
When a voice said:—'O thou of hearts the weakest,
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seest.'
Then I—Where?—the world's echo answered 'where?'
And in that silence, and in my despair,
I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul;
And murmured names and spells which have control
Over the sightless tyrants of our fate;
But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
The night which closed on her; nor uncreate
That world within this Chaos, mine and me,
Of which she was the veiled Divinity,
The world I say of thoughts that worshipped her:
And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
SHELLEY

And every gentle passion sick to death,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
Into the wintry forest of our life;
And struggling through its error with vain strife,
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms, I passed,
Seeking among those untaught foresters
If I could find one form resembling hers,
In which she might have masked herself from me.
There,—One, whose voice was venomed melody
Sate by a well, under blue nightshade bower;
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
Her touch was as electric poison,—flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came,
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves; until, as hair grown gray
Over a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
With rains of unseasonable time.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.
And some were fair—but beauty dies away;
Others were wise—but honeyed words betray;
And One was true,—oh! why not true to me?
Then, as hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
Wounded and weak and panting; the cold day
Trembled, for pity of my strife and pain.
When, like a noonday dawn, there shone again
Deliverance, One stood on my path who seemed
As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed
As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun;
The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright isles,
Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles,
That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
And warms not but illumines. Young and fair
As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
From its own darkness, until all was bright
Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
And, as a cloud charioted by the wind,
She led me to a cave in that wild place,
And sate beside me, with her downward face

EIPSSYCHIDION

Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.
And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb,
And all my being became bright or dim
As the Moon's image in a summer sea,
According as she smiled or frowned on me;
And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed:
Alas, I then was not a woeful one:
For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
Unmindful each of their accustomed strife,
Masked like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
The wandering hopes of one abandoned mother,
And through the cavern without wings they flew,
And cried 'Away, he is not of our crew.'
I wept, and though it be a dream, I weep.

What storms then shook the ocean of my sleep,
Blotting that Moon, whose pale and waning lips
Then shrank as in the sickness of eclipse,—
And how my soul was as a lampless sea,
And who was then its Tempest; and when She,
The Planet of that hour, was quenched, what frost
Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast
The moving billows of my being fell
Into a death of ice, immovable;—
And then—what earthquakes made it gape and split,
The white Moon smiling all the while on it,
These words conceal!—If not, each word would be
The key of stewards' tears. Weep not for me!

At length, into the obscure Forest came
The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.
Atheart that wintry wilderness of thorns
Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn's,
And from her presence Life was radiated
Through the gray earth and branches bare and dead;
So that her way was paved, and roofed above
With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love;
And music from her simulation spread
Like light,—all other sounds were penetrated
By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
So that the savage winds hung mute around;
And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair
Dissolving the dull cold in the frore air:
Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun,
When light is changed to love, this glorious One
Floated into the cavern where I lay,
And called my Spirit, and the dreaming clay
SHELEY
Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
As smoke by fire, and in her beauty's glow
I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
Was penetrating me with living light:
I knew it was the Vision veiled from me
So many years—that it was Emily.

Twin Spheres of light who rule this passive Earth,
This world of love, this art, and into birth
Awaken all its fruits and flowers, and dart
Magnetic might into its central heart;
And lift its billows and its mists, and guide
By everlasting laws, each wind and tide
To its fit cloud, and its appointed cave;
And hurl its storms, each in the craggy grave
Which was its cradle, luring to faint bowers
The armies of the rainbow-winged showers;
And, as those married lights, which from the towers
Of Heaven look forth and fold the wandering globe
In liquid sleep and splendour, as a robe;
And all their many-mingled influence blend,
If equal, yet unlike, to one sweet end;—
So ye, bright regents, with alternate sway
Govern my sphere of being, night and day!
Thou, not disdaining even a borrowed might;
Thou, not eclipsing a remotest light;
And, through the shadow of the seasons three,
From Spring to Autumn's sere maturity,
Light it into the Winter of the tomb,
Where it may ripen to a brighter bloom.
Thou too, O Comet beautiful and fierce,
Who drew the heart of this fairl Universe
Towards thine own; till, wrecked in that convulsion,
Alternating attraction and repulsion,
Thine went astray and that was rent in twain;
Oh, float into our azure heaven again!
Be there Love's folding-star at thy return;
The living Sun will feed thee from its urn
Of golden fire; the Moon will veil her horn
In thy last smiles; adoring Even and Morn
Will worship thee with incense of calm breath
And lights and shadows; as the star of Death
And Birth is worshipped by those sisters wild
Called Hope and Despair upon the heart are piled
Their offerings,—of this sacrifice divine
A World shall be the altar.

LADY mine,
SHELLEY

Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited; innocent and bold.
The blue Aegean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,
Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide;
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air; and far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noontide nightingales;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs;
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison:
Which is a soul within the soul—they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.—
It is an isle twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea,
Cradled, and hung in our tranquillity;
Bright as that wandering Eden Lucifer,
Washed by the soft blue Oceans of young air.
It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,
Pestilence, War and Earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way;
The wingèd storms, chanting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,
Which Sun or Moon or zephyr draw aside,
Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride

EPISYCHIDION

Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess;
Yet, like a buried lamp, a Soul no less
BURNS in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of th' Eternal, whose own smile
Unfolds itself, and may be felt, not seen.
O'er the gray rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.—
But the chief marvel of the wilderness
Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how
None of the rustic island-people know:
'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height
It overtops the woods; but, for delight,
Some wise and tender Ocean-King, erc crime
Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
Reared it, a wonder of that simple time,
An envy of the isles, a pleasure-house
Made sacred to his sister and his spouse.
It scarce seems now a wreck of human art,
But, as it were Titanic; in the heart
Of Earth having assumed its form, then grown
Out of the mountains, from the living stone,
Lifting itself in caverns light and high:
For all the antique and learned imagery
Has been eroded, and in the place of it
The ivy and the wild-vine interknit
The volumes of their many-twining stems;
Parasite flowers illume with dewy gems
The lampless halls, and when they fade, the sky
Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
With moonlight patches, blear in clear keen,
Or fragments of the day's intense seren—
Working mosaic on their Parian floors.
And, day and night, aloof, from the high towers
And terraces, the Earth and Ocean seem
To sleep in another's arms, and dream
Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
Rend in their smiles, and call reality.

This isle and house are nine, and I have vowed
Thee to be lady of the solitude.—
And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden Eastern air,
And level with the living winds, which flow
Like waves above the living waves below.—
I have sent books and music there, and all
Those instruments with which high Spirits call
The soul that burns between them, and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
Confused in Passion's golden purity,
As mountain-springs under the morning sun.
We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?
One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigured; ever still
Burning, yet ever incomsumable:
In one another's substance finding food,
Like flames too pure and light and unimbued
To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
Which point to Heaven and cannot pass away:
One hope within two wiles, will one beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation. Woe is me!
The winged words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of Love's rare Universe,
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

Weak Verses, go, kneel at your Sovereign's feet,
And say:—We are the masters of thy slave;
What wouldest thou with us and ours and thine?
Then call your sisters from Oblivion's cave,
All singing loud: 'Love's very pain is sweet,
But its reward is in the world divine
Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave.'
So shall ye live when I am there. Then haste
Over the hearts of men, until ye meet
Marina, Vanna, Primus, and the rest,
And bid them love each other and be blessed:
And leave the troop which errs, and which reproves,
And come and be my guest,—for I am Love's.

FRAGMENTS CONNECTED WITH EPIPSYCHIDION
THREE EARLY DRAFTS OF THE PREFACE
(ADVERTISEMENT)

The following Poem was found amongst other papers in the Portfolio
of a young Englishman with whom the Editor had contracted an intimacy
at Florence, brief indeed, but sufficiently long to render the Catastrophe
**SHELLEY**

by which it terminated one of the most painful events of his life.

The literary merit of the Poem in question may not be considerable; but worse verses are printed every day, &

He was an accomplished & amiable person but his error was, & θρησκεία

dió πόντον θρησκεία πόντον.—His fate is an additional proof that 'The tree of

Knowledge is not that of Life'?—He had framed to himself certain

opinions, founded no doubt upon the truth of things, but built up to a

Babel height; they fell by their own weight, & the thoughts that were

his architects, became unintelligible one to the other, as men upon whom

confusion of tongues has fallen.

[These] verses seem to have been written as a sort of dedication of

some work to have been presented to the person whom they address;

but his papers afford no trace of such a work.—The circumstances to

which [they] the poem allude, may easily be understood by those to

whom [the] spirit of the poem itself is [un]intelligible; a detail of facts,

sufficiently harmonious in [themselves but] their combinations

of melancholy [task] charge of consigning the body of my poor

friend to the grave, was committed to me by his desolated family. I

caused him to be buried in a spot selected by himself.

**PREFAE II**

[Epips]

T. E. V. Epipsych

Lines addressed to

the Noble Lady

[Emilia] [E. V.]

Emilia

[The following Poem was found in the PF. of a young Englishman,

who died on his passage from Lephorn to the Levant. He had bought one

of the Sporades] He was accompanied by a lady [who might have been]

supposed to be his wife, & an effeminate looking youth, to whom he

shewed an [attachment] so [singular] excessive an attachment as to

give rise to the suspicion, that she was a woman—at his death this sus-
picion was confirmed; object speedily found a refuge both from the

tants of the brute multitude, and from the [of her grief in the same

grave that contained her lover.—He had bought one of the Sporades, &

fitted up a Saracenic castle which accident had preserved in some repair

with simple elegance, & it was his intention to dedicate the remainder

of his life to undisturbed intercourse with his companions.

These verses apparently were intended as a dedication of a longer

poem or series of poems

**PREFAE III**

The writer of these lines died at Florence in [January 1820] while he

was preparing ** for one wildest of the of the Sporades, where he

bought & fitted up the ruins of some old building.—His life was singular,

less on account of the romantic vicissitudes which diversified it, than the

ideal tinge which they received from his own character & feelings—

**FRAGMENTS CONNECTED WITH EPIPSYCHIDION**

The verses were apparently intended by the writer to accompany some

longer poem or collection of poems, of which there* [are no remnants

in his] *** remains [in his] portfolio.—

The editor is induced to

The present poem, like the vita Nova of Dante, is sufficiently in-
telligible to a certain class of readers without a matter of fact history of

the circumstances to which it relate, & to a certain other class, it must

& ought ever to remain incomprehensible.—It was evidently intended to

be prefixed to a longer poem or series of poems—but among his papers

there are no traces of such a collection.

**PASSAGES OF THE POEM, OR CONNECTED THEREWITH**

**Here, my dear friend, is a new book for you;**

I have already dedicated two

To other friends, one female and one male,—

What you are, is a thing that I must veil;

What can this be to those who praise or rail? I

never was attached to that great sect

Whose doctrine is that each one should select

Out of the world a mistress or a friend,

And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend

To cold oblivion—though 'tis in the code

Of modern morals, and the beaten road

Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread

Who travel to their home among the dead

By the broad highway of the world—and so

With one sad friend, and many a jealous foe,

The dreariest and the longest journey go.

Free love has this, different from gold and clay,

That to divide is not to take away.

Like ocean, which the general north wind breaks

Into ten thousand waves, and each one makes

A mirror of the moon—like some great glass,

Which did distort whatever form might pass,

Dashed into fragments by a playful child,

Which then reflects its eyes and forehead mild;

Giving for one, which it could never express,

A thousand images of loveliness.

If I were one whom the loud world held wise,

I should disdain to quote authorities

In commendation of this kind of love:—

Why there is first the God in heaven above,

Who wrote a book called Nature, 'tis to be

Reviewed, I hear, in the next Quarterly;
SHELLEY

And Socrates, the Jesus Christ of Greece,
And Jesus Christ Himself, did never cease
To urge all living things to love each other,
And to forgive their mutual faults, and another
The Devil of disunion in their souls.

I love you!—Listen, O embodied Ray
Of the great Brightness; I must pass away
While you remain, and these light words must be
Tokens by which you may remember me.
Start not—the thing you are is unbetrayed,
If you are human, and if but the shade
Of some sublimer spirit . . .

And as to friend or mistress, 'tis a form;
Perhaps I wish you were one. Some declare
You a familiar spirit, as you are;
Others with a
more inhuman
Hint that, though not my wife, you are a woman;
What is the colour of your eyes and hair?
Why, if you were a lady, it were fair
The world should know—but, as I am afraid,
The Quarterly would bait you if betrayed;
And if, as it will be sport to see them stumble
Over all sorts of scandals, hear them mumble
Their litany of curses—some guess right,
And others swear you're a Hermaphrodite;
Like that sweet marble monster of both sexes,
Which looks so sweet and gentle that it vexes
The very soul that the soul is gone
Which lifted from her limbs the veil of stone.

It is a sweet thing, friendship, a dear balm,
A happy and auspicious bird of calm,
Which rides o'er life's ever tumultuous Ocean;
A God that broods o'er chaos in commotion;
A flower which fresh as Lapland roses are,
Lifts its bold head into the world's forel air,
And blooms most radiantly when others die,
Health, hope, and youth, and brief prosperity;
And with the light and odour of its bloom,
Shining within the dungeon and the tomb;

FRAGMENTS CONNECTED WITH EPIPSYCHIDION

Whose coming is as light and music are
Mid dissonance and gloom—a star
Which moves not 'mid the moving heavens alone—
A smile among dark frowns—a gentle tone
Among rude voices, a beloved light,
A solitude, a refuge, a delight.
If I had but a friend! Why, I have three
Even by my own confession; there may be
Some more, for what I know, for 'tis my mind
To call my friends all who are wise and kind,—
And these, Heaven knows, at best are very few;
But none can ever be more dear than you.
Why should they be? My muse has lost her wings,
Or like a dying swan who soars and sings,
I should describe you in heroic style,
But as it is, are you not void of guile?
A lovely soul, formed to be blessed and bless:
A well of sealed and secret happiness;
A lute which those whom Love has taught to play
Make music on to cheer the roughest day,
And enchant sadness till it sleeps . . .

To the oblivion whither I and thou,
All loving and all lovely, hasten now
With steps, ah, too unequal! may we meet
In one Elysium or one winding-sheet!

If any should be curious to discover
Whether to you I am a friend or lover,
Let them read Shakespeare's sonnets, taking thence
A whetstone for their dull intelligence
That tears and will not cut, or let them guess
How Diotima, the wise prophetess,
Instructed the instructor, and why he
Rebuked the infant spirit of melody
On Agathon's sweet lips, which as he spoke
Was as the lovely star when morn has broke
The roof of darkness, in the golden dawn,
Half-hidden, and yet beautiful.

I'll pawn
My hopes of Heaven—you know what they are worth—
That the presumptuous pedagogues of Earth,
If they could tell the riddle offered here
Would scorn to be, or being to appear
What now they seem and are—but let them chide,
They have few pleasures in the world beside;
SHELLEY

Perhaps we should be dull were we not chidden,
Paradise fruits are sweetest when forbidden.
Folly can season Wisdom, Hatred Love.

Farewell, if it can be to say farewell
To those who

I will not, as most dedicatores do,
Assure myself and all the world and you,
That you are faultless—would to God they were
Who taunt me with your love! I then should wear
These heavy chains of life with a light spirit,
And would to God I were, or even as near it
As you, dear heart. Alas! what are we? Clouds
Driven by the wind in warring multitudes,
Which rain into the bosom of the earth,
And rise again, and in our death and birth,
And through our restless life, take as from heaven
Hues which are not our own, but which are given,
And then withdrawn, and with inconstant glance
Flash from the spirit to the countenance.
There is a Power, a Love, a Joy, a God
Which makes in mortal hearts its brief abode,
A Pythian exhalation, which inspires
Love, only love—a wind which o'er the wires
Of the soul's giant harp
There is a mood which language faints beneath;
You feel it striding, as Almighty Death
Hs bloodless steed

And what is that most brief and bright delight
Which rushes through the touch and through the sight,
And stands before the spirit's immost throne,
A naked Seraph? None hath ever known.
Its birth is darkness, and its growth desire;
Untameable and fleet and fierce as fire,
Not to be touched but to be felt alone,
It fills the world with glory—and is gone.

It floats with rainbow pinions o'er the stream
Of life, which flows, like a dream
Into the light of morning, to the grave
As to an ocean.

FRAGMENTS CONNECTED WITH EPISYPHIDION

What is that joy which serene infancy
Perceives not, as the hours content them by,
Each in a chain of blossoms, yet enjoys
The shapes of this new world, in giant toys
Wrought by the busy ever new?
Remembrance borrows Fancy's glass, to show
These forms more sincere
Than now they are, than then, perhaps, they were.
When everything familiar seemed to be
Wonderful, and the immortality
Of this great world, which all things must inherit,
Was felt as one with the awakening spirit,
Unconscious of itself, and of the strange
Distinctions which in its proceeding change
It feels and knows, and mourns as if each were
A desolation

Were it not a sweet refuge, Emily,
For all these exiles from the dull insane
Who vex this pleasant world with pride and pain,
For all that band of sister-spirits known
To one another by a voiceless tone?

If day should part us night will mend division
And if sleep parts us—we will meet in vision
And if life parts us—we will mix in death
Yielding our mite [?] of reluctant breath
Death cannot part us—we must meet again
In all in nothing in delight in pain:
How, why or when or where—it matters not
So that we share an undivided lot

And we will move possessing and possessed
Wherever beauty on the earth's bare [?] breast
Lies like the shadow of thy soul—till we
Become one being with the world we see.
ADONAIΣ

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS, AUTHOR OF
ENDYMION, HYPERION, ETC.

'Αστήρ παν μέν έλαμπε συζούσαν έφοδος
νόην δέ βασιλιφ λάμπεις — Έπεφεσιν εν φιλίμης.—ΠΛΑΤΩ.

PREFACE

Φάρασκον ἥλιον, Πλων, ποιεί σάμχα, φάρασκον εἴδης.
Πῶς τοις χέλεοι ποτάμης, κώδει θυλάδης;
της βρότοις θυσίαν άνάλαβες, και πέραν τον,
καὶ ἄκαιρη λαῶπον της φαράσκος Εκδοτική Εἴδης.

—ΜΟΣΧΟΣ, ΕΠΙΤΑΦΙΟΝ.

It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste which several of his earlier compositions were modelled prove at least that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of Hyperion as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the — of 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and where cankerworms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his Endymion, which appeared in the Quarterly Review, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows or one like Keats's composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to

I

I weep for Adonais—he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, cause thy obscure companions,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: 'With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!'

II

Where went thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was born Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corpse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

III

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feels on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

IV

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania!—He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country’s pride,
The priest, the slave, and the libertine,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood; he went, untried,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o’er earth; the third among the sons of light.

V

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
Have sunk, extinct in their refugent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame’s serene abode.

VI

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished—
The nursing of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!

ADONAI S

Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals ripped before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting channel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII

He will awake no more, oh, never more!—
Within the twilight chamber spreads space
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
Of change, shall o’er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

IX

Oh, weep for Adonais!—The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But drop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne’er will gather strength, or find a home again.

X

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries;
‘Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain,’
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain,

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anemom
Which frozen tears instead of pearls began;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

Another Splendour on his mouth all,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting-heart beneath
With lightning and with music; the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse.

And others came... Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sigis,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp;—the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonis. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at evening day:
Since she can mumble not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds:—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have walked the sullen year?
To Phoebus was not: Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonis: wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with mourning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion waits for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and bower;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.
Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos; in its stream immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight,
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning?—the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
'Wake thou,' cried Misery. 'childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his, with tears and sighs.'
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried: 'Arise!
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.
"O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hasted thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
Who feed where Desolation has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion;—how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It slopes, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night.

Thus ceased she; and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And Love taught Grief to fall like music from his tongue.

"Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled a stray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked;—a Power
Girt round with weakness;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking bellow;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart.
Shook the weak hand that grasped it: of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

All stood afool, and at his partial noon
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: 'Who art thou?'
He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—oh! that it should be so!
SHELLEY

XXXV

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athur what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honored the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could not escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

XXXVII

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be
And ever at thy season be thou free.
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow,
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

XXXVIII

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now—
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

ADONAI S

XXXIX

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Inulnerable nothing.—W'e decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Consume us and consume day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

XL

He has outlived the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an un lamented urn.

XLI

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hast thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

XLII

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearyed love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.
He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dress that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may well. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

The inheritors of unfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale,—his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted influence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark;
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
'Thou art become as one of us,' they cry,
'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song;
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!'
Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fed!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
Thy have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and spheroid skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the immest veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

And ever as he went he swept a lyre
Of unaccustomed shape, and strings
Now like the of impetuous fire,
Which breaks the forest with its murmuring
Now like the rush of the aereal wings
Of the enamoured wind among the treetop,
Whispering unimaginable things,
And dying on the streams of dew serene,
Which feed the unknown meads with ever-during green.

And the green Paradise which western waves
Embosom in their ever-wailing sweep,
Talking of freedom to their tongueless caves,
Or to the spirits which within them keep
A record of the wrongs which, though they sleep,
Die not, but dream of retribution, heard
His hymns, and echoing them from steep to steep,
Kept—

And then came one of sweet and earnest looks,
Whose soft smiles to his dark and night-like eyes
Were as the clear and ever-living brooks
Are to the obscure fountains whence they rise,
Showing how pure they are: a Paradise
Of happy truth upon his forehead low
Lay, making wisdom lovely, in the guise
Of earth-awakening morn upon the brow
Of star-deserted heaven, while ocean gleams below.
His song, though very sweet, was low and faint,
A simple strain——

A mighty Phantasm, half concealed
In darkness of his own exceeding light,
Which cloathed his awful presence unrevealed,
Chariot on the night
Of thunder-smoke, whose skirts were chrysolite.

And like a sudden meteor, which outstrips
The splendour-winged chariot of the sun,
Eclipse
The armies of the golden stars, each one
Pavilioned in its tent of light—all strewed
Over the chasms of blue night——

HELLAS
A LYRICAL DRAMA
ΜΑΝΤΙΣ 'ΕΙΜ 'ΕΣΘΑΛΩΝ 'ΑΓΩΝΩΝ.—OEDIP. COLON.
TO HIS EXCELLENCY
PRINCE ALEXANDER MAVROCORDATO
LATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE KOSOPOG OF WALLACHIA

THE DRAMA OF HELLAS IS INSCRIBED AS AN
IMPERFECT TOKEN OF THE ADMIRATION,
SYMPATHY, AND FRIENDSHIP OF
THE AUTHOR

PEIS, November 1, 1821.

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

The only goat-song which I have yet attempted has, I confess, in spite
of the unfavourable nature of the subject, received a greater and a more
valuable portion of applause than I expected or than it deserved.

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

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

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

The modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom
the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind,
and he inherits much of their sensibility, their rapidity of conception,
their enthusiasm, and their courage. If in many instances he is degraded
by moral and political slavery to the practice of the basest vices it engenders—and that below the level of ordinary degradation—let us reflect that the corruption of the best produces the worst, and that habits which subsist only in relation to a peculiar state of social institution may be expected to cease as soon as that relation is dissolved. In fact, the Greeks, since the admirable novel of Anastasius could have been a faithful picture of their manners, have undergone most important changes; the flower of their youth, returning to their country from the universities of Italy, Germany, and France, have communicated to their fellow-citizens the latest results of that social perfection of which their ancestors were the original source. The University of Chios contained before the breaking out of the revolution eight hundred students, and among them several Germans and Americans. The munificence and energy of many of the Greek princes and merchants, directed to the renovation of their country with a spirit and a wisdom which has few examples, is above all praise.

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

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

Should the English people ever become free, they will reflect upon the part which those who presume to represent their will have played in the great drama of the revival of liberty, with feelings which it would become them to anticipate. This is the age of the war of the oppressed against the oppressors, and every one of those ringleaders of the privileged gangs of murderers and swindlers, called Sovereigns, look to each other for aid against the common enemy, and suspend their mutual jealousies in the presence of a mightier fear. Of this holy alliance all the despots of the earth are virtual members. But a new race has arisen throughout Europe, nursed in the abhorrence of the opinions which are its chains, and which will continue to produce fresh generations to accomplish that destiny which tyrants foresee and dread.

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

PROLOGUE TO HELLAS

Herald of Eternity. It is the day when all the sons of God
Wait in the rootless senate-house, whose floor
Is Chaos, and the immovable abyss
Frozen by His steadfast word to hyaline

The shadow of God, and delegate
Of that before whose breath the universe
Is as a print of dew.

Hierarchs and kings
Who from your thrones pinnacled on the past
Sway the reluctant present, ye who sit
Pavilioned on the radiance or the gloom
Of mortal thought, which like an exhalation
Steaming from earth, conceals the 

of heaven
Which gave it birth, assemble here
Before your Father's throne; the swift decree
Yet hovers, and the fiery incarnation
Is yet withheld, clothed in which it shall
annul

The fairest of those wandering isles that gem
The sapphire space of interstellar air,
That green and azure sphere, that earth enwrapped
Less in the beauty of its tender light
Than in an atmosphere of living spirit
Which interpenetrating all the

it rolls from realm to realm
And age to age, and in its ebb and flow
Impels the generations
To their appointed place,
Whilst the high Arbiter
Beholds the strife, and at the appointed time
Sends His decrees veiled in eternal

Within the circuit of this pendent orb
There lies an antique region, on which fell
The dew of thought in the world's golden dawn
Earliest and most benign, and from it sprung
Temples and cities and immortal forms
And harmonies of wisdom and of song;
And thoughts, and deeds worthy of thoughts so fair.
And when the sun of its dominion failed,
And when the winter of its glory came,
The winds that stripped it bare blew on and swept
That dew into the utmost wildernesses
In wandering clouds of sunny rain that thawed
The unmaternal bosom of the North.
Haste, sons of God,
For ye beheld,
Reluctant, or consenting, or astonished,
The stern decrees go forth, which heaped on Greece
Ruin and degradation and despair.
A fourth now waits: assemble, sons of God,
To speed or to prevent or to suspend,
If, as ye dream, such power be not withheld,
The unaccomplished destiny.

Chorus.
The curtain of the Universe
Is rent and shattered,
The splendour-winged worlds disperse
Like wild doves scattered.
Space is roofless and bare,
And in the midst a cloudy shrine,
Dark amid thrones of light,
In the blue glow of hyaline
Golden worlds revolve and shine.
In flight
From every point of the Infinite,
Like a thousand dawns on a single night
The splendours rise and spread;
And through thunder and darkness dread
Light and music are radiated,
And in their pavilioned chariots led
By living wings high overhead
The giant Powers move.
Gloomy or bright as the thrones they fill.

A chaos of light and motion
Upon that glassy ocean.

The senate of the Gods is met,
Each in his rank and station set;
There is silence, in the spaces—
Lo! Satan, Christ, and Mahomet
Start from their places!

Christ.
Almighty Father!
Low-kneeling at the feet of Destiny

Hellas
There are two fountains in which spirits weep
When mortals err, Discord and Slavery named,
And with their bitter dew two Destinies
Filled each their irrevocable urns; the third,
Fiercest and mightiest, mingled both, and added
Chaos and Death, and slow Oblivion's lymph,
And hate and terror, and the poisoned rain.

The Aurora of the nations. By this brow
Whose pores wept tears of blood, by these wide wounds,
By this imperial crown of agony,
By infamy and solitude and death,
For this I underwent, and by the pain
Of pity for those who would for me
The unremembered joy of a revenge,
For this I felt—by Plato's sacred light,
Of which my spirit was a burning morrow—
By Greece and all she cannot cease to be.
Her quenchless words, sparks of immortal truth,
Stars of all night—her harmonies and forms,
Echoes and shadows of what Love adores.
In thee, I do compel thee, send forth Kate,
Thy irrevocable child: let her descend,
A seraph-winged Victory [arrayed]
In tempest of the omnipotence of God
Which sweeps through all things.

From hollow leagues, from Tyranny which arms
Adverse miscreeds and emulous anarchies
To stamp, as on a winged serpent's seed,
Upon the name of Freedom: from the storm
Of faction, which like earthquake shakes and sickens
The solid heart of enterprise; from all
By which the holiest dreams of highest spirits
Are stars beneath the dawn...

Victorious as the world arose from Chaos!
And as the Heavens and the Earth arrayed
Their presence in the beauty and the light
Of Thy first smile, O Father,—as they gather
The spirit of Thy love which paves for them
Their path o'er the abyss, till every sphere
Shall be one living Spirit,—so shall Greece—
Satan. Be as all things beneath the empyrean,
Mine! Art thou eyeless like old Destiny,
Thou mockery-king, crowned with a wreath of thorns?
Whose sceptre is a reed, the broken reed
Which pierces thee, whose throne a chair of scorn;
For seest thou not beneath this crystal floor
The innumerable worlds of golden light
Which are my empire, and the least of them
which thou wouldst redeem from me?
Know'st thou not them my portion?
Or wouldest rekindle the strife
Which our great Father then did arbitrate
Which he assigned to his competing sons
Each his apportioned realm?

Thou who art mailed in the omnipotence
Of Him who sends thee forth, whatever thy task,
Speed, spare not to accomplish, and be mine
Thy trophies, whether Greece again become
The fountain in the desert whence the earth
Shall drink of freedom, which shall give it strength
To suffer, or a Gulf of hollow death
To swallow all delight, all life, all hope.
Go, thou Victor, of my will, no less
Than of the Father's; but lest thou shouldst faint,
The winged hounds, Famine and Pestilence,
Shall wait on thee, the hundred-forked snake
Instructed Superstition still shall
The earth behind thy steps, and War shall hover
Above, and Fraud shall gape below, and Change
Shall fit before thee on her dragon wings,
Convulsing and consuming, and I add
Three vials of the tears which daemons weep
When virtuous spirits through the gate of Death
Pass triumphing over the thorns of life,
Sceptres and crowns, mitres and swords and snares,
Trampling in scorn, like Him and Socrates.
The first is Anarchy; when Power and Pleasure,
Glory and science and security,
On Freedom hang like fruit on the green tree,
Then pour it forth, and men shall gather ashes.
The second Tyranny—
Christ. Obdurate spirit!
Thou seest but the Past in the To-come.
Pride is thy error and thy punishment.
Boast not thine empire, dream not that thy worlds
Are more than furnace-sparks or rainbow-drops
Before the Power that wields and kindles them.
True greatness asks not space, true excellence

HELLAS

Lives in the Spirit of all things that live,
Which lends it to the worlds thou callest thine.

Mahomet. . . Hasten thou and fill the waning crescent
With beams as keen as those which pierced the shadow
Of Christian night rolled back upon the West,
When the orient moon of Islam rode in triumph
From Thous to the Hercynian snow.

Wake, thou Word
Of God, and from the throne of Destiny
Even to the utmost limit of thy way
May Triumph

. . .

Be thou a curse on them whose creed
Divides and multiplies the most high God.

HELLAS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MAHMUD. DAAOOD.

HASSAN. AHAESUEUS, a Jew.

CHORUS OF GREEK CAPTIVE WOMEN. [The Phantom of Mahomet II.]

MESSENGERS, SLAVES, AND ATTENDANTS.

SCENE, CONSTANTINOPLE. TIME, SUNSET.

SCENE.—A Terrace on the Seraglio. MAHMUD sleeping, an Indian Slave sitting beside his Couch.

CHORUS OF GREEK CAPTIVE WOMEN.

We strew these opiate flowers
On thy restless pillow,—
They were stripped from orient bowers,
By the Indian bellow.

Be thy sleep
Calm and deep,

Like theirs who fell—not ours who weep!

INDIAN.

Away, unlovely dreams!
Away, false shapes of sleep!
Be his, as Heaven seems,
Clear, and bright, and deep!

Soft as love, and calm as death,
Sweet as a summer night without a breath.
Chorus.

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

Indian.

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

Chorus.

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

Semiclours I.

Life may change, but it may fly not;
Hope may vanish, but can die not;
Truth be veiled, but still it burneth;
Love repulsed,—but it returneth!

Semiclours II.

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

Semiclours I.

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

Hellas.

In the great morning of the world,
The Spirit of God with might unfurled
The flag of Freedom over Chaos,
And all its banded anarchs fled,
Like vultures frightened from Imaus,
Before an earthquake's tread—
So from Time's tempestuous dawn
Freedom's splendour burst and shone:—
Thermopylae and Marathon
Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted,
The springing Fire.—The winged glory
On Philippi half-alighted,
Like an eagle on a promontory.
Its unwearied wings could fan
The quenchless ashes of Milan.
From age to age, from man to man,
It lived; and lit from land to land
Florence, Albion, Switzerland.
Then night fell; and, as from night,
Reassuming fiery flight,
From the West swift Freedom came,
Against the course of Heaven and doom,
A second sun arrayed in flame,
To burn, to kindle, to illumine.
From far Atlantis its young beams
Chased the shadows and the dreams.
France, with all her sanguine steams,
Hid, but quenched it not: again
Through clouds its shafts of glory rain
From utmost Germany to Spain.
As an eagle fed with morning
Scorns the embattled tempest's warning,
When she seeks her aerie hanging
In the mountain-cedar's hair,
And her brood expect the clanging
Of her wings through the wild air,
Sick with famine:—Freedom, so
To what of Greece remaineth now
Returns; her hoary ruins glow
Like Orient mountains lost in day;
Beneath the safety of her wings
Her renovated nurslings prey.
And in the naked lightenings
Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
SHELLEY
Let Freedom leave—where'er she flies,
A Desert, or a Paradise:
Let the beautiful and the brave
Share her glory, or a grave.

Semichorus I.
With the gifts of gladness
Greece did thy cradle strew;

Semichorus II.
With the tears of sadness
Greece did thy shroud bedew!

Semichorus I.
With an orphan's affection
She followed thy bier through Time;

Semichorus II.
And at thy resurrection
Reappear, as thou, sublime!

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

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

Semichorus I.
If Annihilation—

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

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

Mahmud (starting from his sleep). Man the Seraglio-guard!
make fast the gate!
What from a cannonade of three short hours?
'Tis false! that breach towards the Bosphorus

HELLAS
Cannot be practicable yet—who sits?
Stand to the match; that when the foe prevails
One spark may mix in reconciling ruin
The conqueror and the conquered! Heave the tower
Into the gap—wrench off the roof!
(Erect HASAN.)
Hai! what!
The truth of day lightens upon my dream
And I am Mahmud still.

Hasan. Your Sublime Highness
Is strangely moved.

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

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

Mahmud,

I would talk

With this old Jew.

Hassan.

Thy will is even now

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

Mid the Demons, less accessible

Than thou or God! He who would question him

Must sail alone at sunset, where the stream

Of Ocean sleeps around those foamless isles,

When the young moon is westering as now,

And evening airs wander upon the wave;

And when the pines of that bee-posturing isle,

Green Erebinthus, quench the fiery shadow

Of his girt prow within the sapphire water,

Then must the lonely helmsman cry aloud

‘Abasaurus!’ and the caverns round

Will answer ‘Abasaurus!’ If his prayer

Be granted, a faint meteor will arise

Lighting him over Marmora, and a wind

Will rush out of the sighing pine-forest,

And with the wind a storm of harmony

Unutterably sweet, and pilot him

Through the soft twilight to the Bosphorus:

Thence at the hour and place and circumstance

Fit for the matter of their conference

The Jew appears. Few dare, and few who dare

Win the desired communion—but that shout

Bodes—[A shout within.]

Mahmud. Evil, doubtless; like all human sounds.

Let me converse with spirits.

Hassan.

That shout again.

Mahmud. This Jew whom thou hast summoned—

Hassan.

Mahmud. When the omnipotent hour to which are yoked

He, I, and all things shall compel—enough!

Silence those mutineers—that drunken crew,

That crowd about the pilot in the storm.

Ay! strike the foremost shorter by a head!

They weary me, and I have need of rest.

Kings are like stars—they rise and set, they have

The worship of the world, but no repose.

[Exeunt severally.]

Chorus.

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever

From creation to decay,

Like the bubbles on a river

Sparkling, bursting, borne away.

But they are still immortal

Who, through birth’s orient portal

And death’s dark chasm hurried to and fro,

Clothe their unceasing flight

In the brief dust and light

Gathered around their chariots as they go;

New shapes they still may weave,

New gods, new laws receive

Bright or dim are they as the robins they last

On Death’s bare ribs had cast.

A power from the unknown God,

A Promethean conqueror, came;

Like a triumphal path he trod

The thorns of death and shame.

A mortal shape to him

Was like the vapour dim

Which the orient planet animates with light;

Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,

Like bloodhounds mild and tame,

Nor prayed, until their Lord had taken flight;

The moon of Mahomet

Arose, and it shall set:

While blazoned as on Heaven’s immortal noon

The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep

From one whose dreams are Paradise

Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,

And Day peers forth with her blank eyes;

So fleet, so faint, so fair,

The Powers of earth and air

Fled from the folding-star of Bethlehem:

Apollo, Pan, and Love,

And even Olympian Jove

Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them;

Our hills and seas and streams,

Disceped of their dreams,

Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,

Waited for the golden years.

Enter MAHMUD, HASSAN, DASOON, and others.

Mahmud. More gold? our ancestors bought gold with victory,

And shall I sell it for defeat?

Dassoon. The Janizars

Clamour for pay.

Mahmud. Go! bid them pay themselves
SHELLEY

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

Dadoo.
It has been sown,
And yet the harvest to the sicklemen
Is as a grain to each.

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

O miserable worm, after a night
More glorious than the day which it usurped!
O faith in God! O power on earth! O word
Of the great prophet, whose o'ershadowing wings
Darkened the thrones and idols of the West,
Now bright—For thy sake cursed be the hour,
Even as a father by an evil child,
When the orient moon of Islam rolled in triumph
From Caucasus to White Cretan!

Rain above, and anarchy below;
Terror without, and treachery within;
The Chalice of destruction full, and all
Thirsting to drink; and who among us dares
To dash it from his lips? and where is Hope?

Hassan. The lamp of our dominion still rides high;
One God is God—Mahomet is His prophet.

Four hundred thousand Moslems, from the limits
Of utmost Asia, irresistible
Throng, like full clouds at the Sirocco's cry;
But not like them to weep their strength in tears:
They bear destroying lightnings, and their step
Wakes earthquake to consume and overwhelm,
And reign in ruin. Phrygian Olympus,
Timohus, and Latmos, and Mycale, roughen
With horrend arms; and lofty ships even now,
Like vapours anchored to a mountain's edge,
Freighted with fire and whirlwind, wait at Scala
The convoy of the ever-veering wind.

HELлас

Samos is drunk with blood;—the Greek has paid
Brief victory with swift loss and long despair.
The false Moldavian serfs fled fast and far,
When the fierce shout of Allah-illa-Allah!
Rose like the war-cry of the northern wind
Which kills the sluggish clouds, and leaves a flock
Of wild swans struggling with the naked storm.
So were the lost Greeks on the Danube's day!
If night is mute, yet the returning sun
Kindles the voices of the morning birds;
Nor at thy bidding less exultingly
Than birds rejoicing in the golden day,
The Anarchies of Africa unleash
Their tempest-winged cities of the sea,
To speak in thunder to the rebel world.
Like sulphurous clouds, half-shattered by the storm,
They sweep the pale Aegean, while the Queen
Of Ocean, bound upon her island- throne,
Far in the West, sits mourning that her sons
Who frown on Freedom spare a smile for thee:
Russia still hovers, as an eagle might
Within a cloud, near which a kite and crane
Hang tangled in inextricable fight,
To swoop upon the victor;—for she fears
The name of Freedom, even as she hates thine.
But recreant Austria loves thee as the Grave
Loves Pestilence, and her slow dogs of war
Fleshed with the chase, come up from Italy,
And howl upon their limits; for they see
The panther, Freedom, fled to her old cover,
Amid seas and mountains, and a mightier brood
Crouch round. What Anarch wears a crown or mitre,
Or bears the sword, or grasps the key of gold,
Whose friends are not thy friends, whose foes thy foes?
Our arsenals and our armories are full;
Our forts defy assault; ten thousand cannon
Lie ranged upon the beach, and hour by hour
Their earth-convulsing wheels affright the city;
The galloping of fiery steeds makes pale
The Christian merchant; and the yellow Jew
Hides his hoard deeper in the faithless earth.
Like clouds, and like the shadows of the clouds,
Over the hills of Anatolia,
Swift in wide troops the Tartar chivalry
Sweep;—the far flashing of their starry lances
Reverberates the dying light of day.
We have one God, one King, one Hope, one Law;
SHELLEY

But many-headed Insurrection stands
Divided in itself, and soon must fall.

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

Hassan. Even as that moon
Renews itself——

Mahmud. Shall we be not renewed!
Far other bane than ours were needed now
To stem the torrent of descending time:
The Spirit that lifts the slave before his lord
Stalks through the capitals of armed kings,
And spreads his ensign in the wilderness:
Exults in chains; and, when the rebel falls,
Cries like the blood of Abel from the dust;
And the inheritors of the earth, like beasts
When earthquake is unleashed, with idiot fear
Cower in their kingly dens—as I do now.
What were Defeat when Victory must appeal?
Or Danger, when Security looks pale?——
How said the messenger—who, from the fort
Islanded in the Danube, saw the battle
Of Bucharest?—that——

Hassan. Ibrahim’s scimitar
Drew with its gleam swift victory from Heaven,
To burn before him in the night of battle—
A light and a destruction.

Mahmud. Ay! the day
Was ours:—but how?——

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

Mahmud. Speak—tremble not——

Hassan. Islanded

HELLAS

By victor myriads, formed in hollow square
With rough and steadfast front, and thrice flung back
The deluge of our foaming cavalry;
Thrice their keen wedge of battle pierced our lines,
Our baffled army trembled like one man
Before a host, and gave them space; but soon,
From the surrounding hills, the batteries blazed,
Kneading them down with fire and iron rain:
Yet none approached; till, like a field of corn
Under the hook of the swift sickleman,
The band, intrenched in mounds of Turkish dead,
Grew weak and few.—Then said the Pacha, ‘Slaves,
Render yourselves—they have abandoned you——
What hope of refuge, or retreat, or aid?
We grant your lives.’ ‘Grant that which is thine own!’
Cried one, and fell upon his sword and died!
Another—‘God, and man, and hope abandon me;
But I to them, and to myself, remain
Constant.’—he bowed his head, and his heart burst.
A third exclaimed, ‘There is a refuge, tyrant,
Where thou dar’st not pursue, and canst not harm
Shouldst thou pursue; there we shall meet again.’
Then held his breath, and, after a brief spasm,
The indignant spirit cast its mortal garment
Among the slain—dead earth upon the earth!
So these survivors, each by different ways,
Some strange, all sudden, none dishonourable,
Met in triumphant death; and when our army
Closed in, while yet wonder, and awe, and shame
Held back the base hyaenas of the battle
That feed upon the dead and fly the living,
One rose out of the chaos of the slain:
And if it were a corpse which some dread spirit
Of the old saviours of the land we rule
Had lifted in its anger, wandering by;——
Or if there burned within the dying man
Unquenchable disdain of death, and faith
Creating what it feigned:—I cannot tell——
But he cried, ‘Phantoms of the free, we come!
Armies of the Eternal, ye who strike
To dust the citadels of sanguine kings,
And shake the souls throne’d on their stoney hearts,
And thaw their frostwork disdains like dew;——
Ye who float around this clime, and weave
The garment of the glory which it wears,
Whose fame, though earth betray the dust it clapsed,
Lies sequestr’d in monumental thought;——

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PROGENITORS of all that yet is great,
Ascribe to your bright senate, O accept
In your high ministerations, us, your sons—
Us first, and the more glorious yet to come!
And ye, weak conquerors! giants who look pale
When the crushed worm rebels beneath your tread.
The vultures and the dogs, your pensioners tame,
Are overgorged; but, like oppressors, still
They crave the relic of Destruction’s feast.
The exhalations and the thirsty winds
Are sick with blood; the dew is foul with death;
Heaven’s light is quenched in slaughter: thus, where’er
Upon your camps, cities, or towers, or fleets,
The obscene birds the reeking remnants cast
Of these dead limbs,—upon your streams and mountains,
Upon your fields, your gardens, and your housetops,
Where’er the winds shall creep, or the clouds fly,
Or the dews fall, or the angry sun look down
With poisoned light—Famine, and Pestilence,
And Pain, shall wage war upon our side!
Nature from all her boundaries is moved
Against ye: Time has found ye light as foam,
The Earth rebels; and Good and Evil stake
Their empire o’er the unborn world of men
On this one cast:—but ere the die be thrown,
The renovated genius of our race,
Proud umbrile of the impious game, descends,
A seraph-winged Victory, bestriding
The tempest of the Omnipotence of God,
Which sweeps all things to their appointed doom,
And you to oblivion!—More he would have said,
But—

Mahmud. Died—as thou shouldst ere thy lips had painted
Their ruin in the hues of our success.
A rebel’s crime, gilt with a rebel’s tongue!
Your heart is Greek, Hassan.

Hassan. It may be so:
A spirit not my own wrenched me within,
And I have spoken words I fear and hate;
Yet would I die for—

Mahmud. Live! oh live! outlive
Me and this sinking empire. But the fleet—

Hassan. Alas!—

Mahmud. The fleet which, like a flock of clouds
Chased by the wind, flies the insurgent banner!
Our winged castles from their merchant ships!
Our myriads before their weak pirate bands!
And every countenance blank. Some ships lay feeding 
The ravening fire, even to the water's level; 
Some were blown up; some, settling heavily, 
Sunk; and the shrieks of our companions died 
Upon the wind, that bore us fast and far, 
Even after they were dead. Nine thousand perished! 
We met the vultures legioned in the air 
Stemming the torrent of the tainted wind; 
They, screaming from their cloudy mountain-peaks, 
Stoop'd through the sulphurous battle-smoke and perched 
Each on the withering carcass that we loved, 
Like its ill angel or its damned soul, 
Riding upon the bosom of the sea. 
We saw the dog-fish hastening to their feast. 
Joy waked the voiceless people of the sea, 
And ravencrime Famine left his ocean cave 
To dwell with War, with us, and with Despair. 
We met night three hours to the west of Patmos, 
And with night, tempest—
Mahmud. 

Enter a Messenger.

Mesenger. 
Your Sublime Higness,
That Christian hound, the Muscovite Ambassador,
Has left the city.—If the rebel fleet 
Had anchored in the port, had victory 
Crowned the Greek legions in the Hippodrome,
Panic were tamer.—Obedience and Mutiny, 
Like giants in contention planet-struck, 
Stand gazing on each other.—There is peace 
In Stamboul.—
Mahmud. Is the grave not calmer still? 
Its ruins shall be mine. 
Hassan. 
Fear not the Russian: 
The tiger leagued not with the stag at bay 
Against the hunter.—Cunning, base, and cruel, 
He crouches, watching till the spoil be won, 
And must be paid for his reserve in blood. 
After the war is fought, yield the sleek Russian 
That which thou canst not keep, his deserved portion 
Of blood, which shall not flow through streets and fields, 
Rivers and seas, like that which we may win, 
But stagnate in the veins of Christian slaves!

Enter second Messenger.

Second Messenger. Nauplia, Tripolizza, Mothon, Athens, 
Navarin, Artas, Monembasia,

Corinth, and Thebes are carried by assault, 
And every Islamite who made his dogs 
Fat with the flesh of Galillean slaves 
Passed at the edge of the sword: the lust of blood, 
Which made our warriors drunk, is quenched in death; 
But like a fiery plague breaks out anew 
In deeds which make the Christian cause look pale 
In its own light. The garrison of Patras 
Has store but for ten days, nor is there hope 
But from the Briton: at once slave and tyrant, 
His wished still are weaker than his fears, 
Or he would sell what faith may yet remain 
From the oaths broke in Geron and in Norway; 
And if you buy him not, your treasury 
Is empty even of promises—his own coin. 
The freedman of a western poet-chief 
Holds Attica with seven thousand rebels, 
And has heat back the Pacha of Negropont: 
The aged Ali sits in Yanina 
A crownless metaphor of empire:
His name, that shadow of his withered might, 
Holds our besieging army like a spell 
In pray to famine, pest, and mutiny;
He, bastioned in his citadel, looks forth 
Joyless upon the sapphire lake that mirrors 
The ruins of the city where he reigned 
Childless and sceptereless. The Greek has reaped 
The costly harvest his own blood matured, 
Not the sower, Ali—who has bought a truce 
From Ypsilanti with ten camel-loads 
Of Indian gold.

Enter a third Messenger.

Mahmud. What more?
Third Messenger. The Christian tribes 
Of Lebanon and the Syrian wilderness 
Are in revolt,—Damascus, Homs, Aleppo 
Tremble,—the Arab menaces Medina, 
The Aethiop has intrenched himself in Sennaar, 
And keeps the Egyptian rebel well employed, 
Who denies homage, claims investiture 
As price of tardy aid. Persia demands 
The cities on the Tigris, and the Georgians 
Refuse their living tribute. Crete and Cyprus, 
Like mountain-twins that from each other's veins 
Catch the volcano-fire and earthquake-spasm, 
Shake in the general fever. Through the city,
Like birds before a storm, the Santons shriek,
And prophesysings horrible and new
Are heard among the crowd: that sea of men
Sleeps on the wrecks it made, breathless and still.
A Dervise, learned in the Koran, preaches
That it is written how the sins of Islam
Must raise up a destroyer even now.
The Greeks expect a Saviour from the West,
Who shall not come, men say, in clouds and glory,
But in the omnipresence of that Spirit
In which all live and are. Ominous signs
Are blazoned broadly on the noonday sky:
One saw a red cross stamped upon the sun;
It has rained blood; and monstrous births declare
The secret wrath of Nature and her Lord.
The army encamped upon the Cydaris
Was roused last night by the alarm of battle,
And saw two hosts conflicting in the air,
The shadows doubtless of the un-born time
Cast on the mirror of the night. While yet
The fight hung balanced, there arose a storm
Which swept the phantoms from among the stars.
At the third watch the Spirit of the Plague
Was heard abroad flapping among the tents;
Those who relieved watch found the sentinel dead.
The last news from the camp is, that a thousand
Have sickened, and—

Enter a Fourth Messenger.

Mahmud. And thou, pale ghost, dim shadow
Of some untimely rumour, speak!
Fourth Messenger. One comes
Fainting with toil, covered with foam and blood:
He stood, he says, on Chelonites' Promontory, which o'erlooks the isles that groan
Under the Briton's frown, and all their waters
Then trembling in the splendour of the moon,
When as the wandering clouds unveiled or hid
Her boundless light, he saw two adverse fleets
Stalk through the night in the horizon's glimmer,
Mingling fierce thunders and sulphurous gleams,
And smoke which strangled every infant wind
That soothed the silver clouds through the deep air.
At length the battle slept, but the Sirocco
Awoke, and drove his Bock of thunder-clouds
Over the sea-horizon, blotting out
All objects—save that in the faint moon-glimpse

HELLAS

He saw; or dreamed he saw, the Turkish admiral
And two the lieutenant of our ships of war,
With the bright image of that Queen of Heaven,
Who hid, perhaps, her face for grief, reversed;
And the abhorred cross—

Enter an Attendant.

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

[Semichorus I.

Would I were the winged cloud
Of a tempest swift and loud!
I would scorn
The smile of morn
And the wave where the moonrise is born!
I would leave
The spirits of eve
A shroud for the corpse of the day to weave
From other threads than mine!
Bask in the deep blue moon divine.
Who would? Not I.

Semichorus II.

Whither to fly?

Semichorus I.

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

Semichorus II.

Ah king! wilt thou chain
The rock and the rain?
Will thou fetter the lightning and hurricanes?
The storms are free,
But we—

Chorus.

O Slavery! thou frost of the world's prime,
Killing its flowers and leaving its thorns bare!
This touch has stamped these limbs with crime,
These brows thy branding brandish bear,
But the free heart, the impassive soul
Scorn thy control!

Semichorus I.

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

Semichorus II.

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

Semichorus I.

Temples and towers,
Citadels and marts, and they
Who live and die there, have been ours,
And may be thine, and must decay;
But Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war,
Based on the crystalline sea
Of thought and its eternity;
Her citizens, imperial spirits,
Rule the present from the past,
On all this world of men inherits
Their seal is set.

Semichorus II.

Hear ye the blast,
Whose Orphic thunder thrilling calls

HELAS

From ruin her Titanian walls?
Whose spirit shakes the sapless bones
Of Slavery? Argos, Corinth, Crete
Hear, and from their mountain thrones
The daemons and the nymphs repeat
The harmony.

Semichorus I.

I hear! I hear!

Semichorus II.

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

Semichorus I.

I hear! I hear!

The hiss as of a rushing wind,
The roar as of an ocean foaming,
The thunder as of earthquake coming
I hear! I hear!
The crash as of an empire falling,
The shrieks as of a people calling
'Mercy! mercy!'—How they thrill!
Then a shout of 'kill! kill! kill!'
And then a small still voice, thus—

Semichorus II.

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

Semichorus I.

In sacred Athens, near the fane
Of Wisdom, Pity's altar stood:
Serve not the unknown God in vain,
But pay that broken shrine again,
Love for hate and tears for blood.
SHELLEY

Enter Mahmud and Ahasuerus.

Mahmud. Thou art a man, thou sayest, even as we.
Ahasuerus. No more!

Mahmud. But raised above thy fellow-men
By thought, as I by power.
Ahasuerus. Thou sayest so.

Mahmud. Thou art an adept in the difficult lore
Of Greek and Frank philosophy; thou numberest
The flowers, and thou measurest the stars;
Thou seest the element from element;
Thy spirit is present in the Past, and sees
The birth of this old world through all its cycles
Of desolation and of loneliness,
And when man was not, and how man became
The monarch and the slave of this low sphere,
All its narrow circles—it is much—
I honour thee, and would be what thou art
Were I not what I am; but the unborn hour,
Craddled in fear and hope, conflicting storms,
Who shall unveil? Nor thou, nor I, nor any
Mighty or wise. I apprehended not
What thou hast taught me, but I now perceive
That thou art no interpreter of dreams;
Thou dost not own that art, device, or God,
Can make the Future present—let it come!
Moreover thou disdainest us and ours;
Thou art as God, whom thou contemplatest.
Ahasuerus. Disdain thee—not the worm beneath thy feet!
The Fathomless has care for meaner things
Than thou canst dream, and has made pride for those
Who would be what they may not, or would seem
That which they are not. Sultan! talk no more
Of thee and me, the Future and the Past;
But look on that which cannot change—the One,
The unborn and the undying. Earth and ocean,
Space, and the isles of life or light that gem
The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
This firmament pavilioned upon chaos,
With all its crescents of immortal fire,
Whose outwall, bastioned impregnable
Against the escape of boldest thoughts, repels them
As Calpe the Atlantic clouds—this Whole
Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts, and flowers,
With all the silent or tempestuous workings
By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
Is but a vision—all that it inheres
Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles and dreams;

HELLAS

Hellas

Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
The Future and the Past are idle shadows
Of thought's eternal flight—they have no being:
Nought is but that which feels itself to be.
Mahmud. What meanest thou? Thy words stream like a tempest
Of dazzling mist within my brain—they shake
The earth on which I stand, and hang like night
On Heaven above me. What can they avail?
They cast on all things surest, brightest, best,
Doubt, insecurity, astonishment.
Ahasuerus. Mistake me not! All is contained in each.
Dodona's forest to an acorn's cup
Is that which has been, or will be, to that
Which is—the absent to the present. Thought
Alone, and its quick elements, Will, Passion,
Reason, Imagination, cannot die:
They are, what that which they regard appears,
The stuff whence mutability can weave
All that it hath dominion over, worlds, worms,
Empires, and superstitions. What has thought
To do with time, or place, or circumstance?
Wouldst thou behold the Future?—ask and have!
Knock and it shall be opened—look, and lo!
The coming age is shadowed on the Past
As on a glass.

Mahmud. Wild, wilder thoughts convulse
My spirit—Did not Mahomet the Second
Win Stumboul?
Ahasuerus. Thou wouldst ask that giant spirit
The written fortunes of thy house and faith.
Thou wouldst cite one out of the grave to tell
How what was born in blood must die.

Mahmud. Thy words
Have power on me! I see—
Ahasuerus. What hearest thou?
Mahmud. A far whisper—
Terrible silence.
Ahasuerus. What succeeds?
Mahmud. As of the assault of an imperial city,
The hiss of inextinguishable fire,
The roar of giant cannon; the earthquaking
Fall of vast bastions and precipitous towers,
The shock of crags shot from strange enginery,
The clash of wheels, and clang of armèd hoofs,
And crash of brazen mail as of the wreck
Of adamantine mountains—the mad blast.
Of trumpets, and the neigh of raging steeds,
The shrieks of women whose thrill jars the blood,
And one sweet laugh, most horrible to bear,
As of a joyous infant waked and playing
With its dead mother's breast, and now more loud
The mingled battle-cry,—ha! hear I not
"Ey totovi vijul!" 'Allah-Illa-Allah!''

Ashtauers. The sulphurous mist is raised—thou seest—
Mahmud. A chasm,
As of two mountains, in the wall of Stamboul;
And in that ghastly breach the Islamites,
Like giants on the ruins of a world,
Stand in the light of sunrise. In the dust
Glimmers a kingless diadem, and one
Of regal port has cast himself beneath
The stream of war. Another proudly clad
In golden arms spurs a Tartarian barb
Into the gap, and with his iron mace
Directs the torrent of that tide of men,
And seems—he is—Mahomet!

Ashtauers. What thou seest
Is but the ghost of thy forgotten dream.
A dream itself, yet less, perhaps, than that
Thou call'st reality. Thou mayest behold
How cities, on which Empire sleeps entombed,
Bow their towered crests to mutability.
Poised by the flood, c'en on the height thou holdest,
Thou mayest now learn how the full tide of power
Ebbs to its depths.—Inheritor of glory,
Conceived in darkness, born in blood, and nourished
With tears and toil, thou seest the mortal throne
Of that whose birth was but the same. The Past
Now stands before thee like an Incarnation
Of the To-come; yet would'st thou commune with
That portion of thyself which was ere thou
Didst start for this brief race whose crown is death,
Dissolve with that strong faith and fervent passion
Which called it from the uncreated deep,
Yon cloud of war, with its tempestuous phantoms
Of raging death; and draw with mighty will
The imperial shade hither.

[Exit Ashtauers. The Phantom of Mahomet the Second appears.

Mahmud. Approach!

Phantom. I come
Thence whither thou must go! The grave is fitter
To take the living than give up the dead;
Yet has thy faith prevailed, and I am here.

The heavy fragments of the power which fell
When I arose, like shapeless crags and clouds,
Hang round my throne on the abyss, and voices
Of strange lament soothe my supreme repose,
Waiting for glory never to return.—
A later Empire nods in its decay;
The autumn of a greater faith is come,
And wolfish change, like winter, howls to strip
The foliage in which Fame, the eagle, built
Her aerie, while Dominion whelped below.
The storm is in its branches, and the frost
Is on its leaves, and the blank deep expects
Oblivion on oblivion, spoil on spoil,
Ruin on ruin:—Thou art slow, my son;
The Anarchs of the world of darkness keep
A throne for thee, round which thine empire lies
Boundless and mute; and for thy subjects thou,
Like us, shalt rule the ghosts of murdered life,
The phantoms of the powers who rule thee now—
Mutinous passions, and conflicting fears,
And hopes that sate themselves on dust, and die!—
Stripped of their mortal strength, as thou of thine.
Islam must fall, but we will reign together
Over its ruins in the world of death:—
And if the trunk be dry, yet shall the seed
Unfold itself even in the shape of that
Which gathers birth in its decay. Woe! woe!
To the weak people tangled in the grasp
Of its last spasms.

Mahmud. Spirit, woe to all!
Woe to the wronged and the avenger! Woe
To the destroyer, woe to the destroyed!
Woe to the dupe, and woe to the deceiver!
Woe to the oppressed, and woe to the oppressor!
Woe both to those that suffer and inflict;
Those who are born and those who die! but say,
Imperial shadow of the thing I am,
When, how, by whom, Destruction must accomplish
Her consummation!

Phantom. Ask the cold pale Hour,
Rich in eversion of impending death,
When he shall fall upon whose rife gray hairs
Sit Care, and Sorrow, and Infirmity—
The weight which Crime, whose wings are plum'd with years,
Leaves in his flight from ravaged heart to heart
Over the heads of men, under which burthen
They bow themselves unto the grave: lond wretch!
HELLAS

Impale the remnant of the Greeks! despoil!
Violate! make their flesh cheaper than dust!

Seminchorus II.

Thou voice which art
The herald of the ill in splendour hid!
Thou echo of the hollow heart.
Of monarchy, bear me to thine abode
When desolation flashes o'er a world destroyed:
Oh, bear me to those isles of jagged cloud
Which float like mountains on the earthquake, mid
The momentary oceans of the lightning,
Or to some toppling promontory proud
Of solid tempest whose black pyramid,
Riven, overhangs the founts intensely bright'ning
Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire
Before their waves expire,
When heaven and earth are light, and only light
In the thunder-night!

Voice without. Victory! Victory! Austria, Russia, England,
And that same serpent, that poor shadow, France.
Cry peace, and that means death when monarchs speak.
Ho, there! bring torches, sharpen those red stakes.
These chains are light, fitter for slaves and poisoners
Than Greeks. Kill! plunder! burn! let none remain.

Seminchorus I.

Alas! for Liberty!
If numbers, wealth, or unfuilling years,
Or fate, can quell the free!
Alas! for Virtue, when
Torments, or contumely, or the sneers
Of erring judging men
Can break the heart where it abides.
Alas! if Love, whose smile makes this obscure world splendid,
Can change with its false times and tides,
Like hope and terror,—
Alas for Love!
And Truth, who wanderest lone and unbefriended,
If thou cannot veil thy fire-consuming mirror
Before the dazzled eyes of Error,
Alas for thee! Image of the Above.

Seminchorus II.

Repulse, with plumes from conquest torn,
Led the ten thousand from the limits of the morn
Through many an hostile Anarchy!
At length they wept aloud, and cried, 'The Sea! the Sea!'
Through exile, persecution, and despair,
Rome was, and young Atlantis shall become
The wonder, or the terror, or the tomb
Of all whose step wakes Power pulsed in her savage hair:
But Greece was as a hermit-child,
Whose fairest thoughts and limbs were built
To woman's growth, by dreams so mild,
She knew not pain or guilt;
And now, O Victory, blash! and Empire, tremble
When ye desert the free—
If Greece must be
A wreck, yet shall its fragments reassemble,
And build themselves again impregnably
In a diviner clime,
To Amphion's music on some Cape sublime,
Which frowns above the idle foam of Time.

**Semichorus I.**

Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made;
Let the free possess the Paradise they claim;
Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weighed
With our ruin, our resistance, and our name!

**Semichorus II.**

Our dead shall be the seed of their decay,
Our survivors be the shadow of their pride,
Our adversity a dream to pass away—
Their dishonour a remembrance to abide!

*Voice without.* Victory! Victory! The bought Briton sends
The keys of ocean to the Islamites—
Now shall the blazon of the cross be veiled,
And British skill directing Othman might.
Thunder-strike rebel victory. Oh, keep holy
This jubilee of unreveiled blood!
Kill! crush! despoil! Let not a Greek escape!

**Semichorus I.**

Darkness has dawned in the East
On the noon of time:
The death-birds descend to their feast
From the hungry clime.
Let Freedom and Peace flee far
To a sunny strand,
And follow Love's folding-star
To the Evening land!

**Semichorus II.**

The young moon has fed
The her exhausted horn
With the sunset's fire:
The weak day is dead,
But the night is not born;
And, like loveliness panting with wild desire
While it trembles with fear and delight,
Hesperus flies from awakening night,
And pants in its beauty and speed with light
Fast-flashing, soft, and bright.
Thou beacon of love! thou lamp of the free!
Guide us far, far away,
To climes where now veiled by the ardour of day
Thou art hidden
From waves which weary Noon
Faints in her summer swoon.
Between kingless continents sinnerless as Eden,
Around mountains and islands inviolably
Pranked on the sapphire sea.

**Semichorus I.**

Through the sunset of hope,
Like the shapes of a dream,
What Paradise islands of glory gleam!
Beneath Heaven's cope,
Their shadows more clear float by—
The sound of their oceans, the light of their sky,
The music and fragrance their solitudes breathe
Burst, like morning on dream, or like Heaven on death,
Through the walls of our prison;
And Greece, which was dead, is arisen!

**Chorus.**

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faith and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.
A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempe blooms, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.
SHELLEY

A lofter Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth's last scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free:
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remote time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued:
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh, cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy:
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

 NOTES

(1) The scourgeless ashes of Milan [1. 60, p. 509].
Milan was the centre of the resistance of the Lombard league against the Austrian tyrant. Franchi Barbarossa burnt the city to the ground, but liberty lived in its ashes, and it rose like an exhalation from its ruins. See Simondi's Histoire des Républiques Italiennes, a book which has done much towards awakening the Italians to an imitation of their great ancestors.

(2) The Chorus [p. 512].
The popular notions of Christianity are represented in this chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal. The first stanza contrasts the immortality of the living and thinking beings which inhabit the planets, and to use a common and inadequate phrase, clothe themselves in matter, with the transience of the noblest manifestations of the external world.

The concluding verses indicate a progressive state of more or less exalted existence, according to the degree of perfection which every distinct intelligence may have attained. Let it not be supposed that I mean to dogmatised upon a subject, concerning which all men are equally ignorant, or that I think the Gordian knot of the origin of evil can be disentangled by that or any similar assertions. The received hypothesis of a Being resembling men in the moral attributes of His nature, having called us out of non-existence, and after inflicting on us the misery of the commission of error, should superadd that of the punishment and the privations consequent upon it, still would remain inexplicable and incredible.

That there is a true solution of the riddle, and that in our present state that solution is unattainable by us, are propositions which may be regarded as equally certain: meanwhile, as it is the province of the poet to attach himself to those ideas which exalt and ennoble humanity, let him be permitted to have conjectured the condition of that futurity towards which we are all impelled by an inextinguishable thirst for immortality.

Until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, this desire itself must remain the strongest and the only presumption that eternity is the inheritance of every thinking being.

(3) No hoary priests after that Patriarch [1. 245, p. 514].
The Greek Patriarch, after having been compelled to fulminate an anathema against the insurgents, was put to death by the Turks. Fortunately the Greeks have been taught that they cannot buy security by degradation, and the Turks, though equally cruel, are less cunning than the smooth-faced tyrants of Europe. As to the anathema, his Holiness might as well have thrown his mitre at Mount Athos for any effect that it produced. The chiefs of the Greeks are almost all men of comprehension and enlightened views on religion and politics.

(4) The freedman of a western poet-chief [1. 563, p. 521].
A Greek who had been Lord Byron's servant commands the insurgents in Attica. This Greek, Lord Byron informs me, though a poet and an enthusiastic patriot, gave him rather the idea of a timid and woe-pitiful person. It appears that circumstances make men what they are, and that we all contain the germ of a degree of degradation or of greatness whose connection with our character is determined by events.

(5) The Greeks expect a Saviour from the West [1. 598, p. 522].
It is reported that this Messiah had arrived at a seaport near Lacedaemon in an American brig. The association of names and ideas is irre-
sistiibly ludicrous, but the prevalence of such a rumour strongly marks the state of popular enthusiasm in Greece.

(6) The sound as of the assault of an imperial city [ll. 814-15, p. 327].

For the vision of Mahmund of the taking of Constantinople in 1453, see Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. xii, p. 223.

The manner of the invocation of the spirit of Mahomet the Second will be censured as over subtle. I could easily have made the Jew a regular conjurer, and the Phantom an ordinary ghost. I have preferred to represent the Jew as disclaiming all pretension, or even belief, in supernatural agency, and as tempting Mahmud to that state of mind in which ideas may be supposed to assume the force of sensations through the confusion of thought with the objects of thought, and the excess of passion animating the creations of imagination.

It is a sort of natural magic, susceptible of being exercised in a degree by any one who should have made himself master of the secret associations of another's thoughts.

(7) The Chorus [p. 533].

The final chorus is indistinct and obscure, as the event of the living drama whose arrival it foretells. Prophecies of wars, and rumours of wars, etc., may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age, but to anticipate however darkly a period of regeneration and happiness is a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which hinders possess or feign. It will remind the reader 'magnus nec proximus intervallo' of Isiah and Virgil, whose ardent spirits overleaping the actual reign of evil which we endure and bewail, already saw the possible and perhaps approaching state of society in which the 'lens shall lie down with the lamb,' and 'ominis feret omnia tellus.' Let these great names be my authority and my excuse.

(8) Saturn and Love their long repose shall burst [l. 1090, p. 534].

Saturn and Love were among the deities of a real or imaginary state of innocence and happiness. All those who fell, or the Gods of Greece, Asia, and Egypt; the One who rose, or Jesus Christ, at whose appearance the idols of the Pagan World were anemned of their worship; and the many unsubdued, or the monstrous objects of the idolatry of China, India, the Antarctic islands, and the native tribes of America, certainly have reigned over the understandings of men in conjunction or in succession during periods in which all we know of evil has been in a state of portentous, and, until the revival of learning and the arts, perpetually increasing, activity. The Grecian gods seem indeed to have been personally more innocent, although it cannot be said, that as far as temperance and chastity are concerned, they gave so edifying an example as their successors. The sublime human character of Jesus Christ was deformed by an imputed identification with a Power, who tempted, betrayed, and punished the innocent beings who were called into existence by His sole will; and for the period of a thousand years, the spirit of this most just, wise, and benevolent of men has been propitiated with myriads of hecatombs of those who approached the nearest to His innocence and wisdom, sacrificed under every aggravation of atrocity and variety of torture. The horrors of the Mexican, the Peruvian, and the Indian superstitions are well known.

NOTE ON HELLAS, BY MRS. SHELLEY

The South of Europe was in a state of great political excitement at the beginning of the year 1821. The Spanish Revolution had been a signal to Italy; secret societies were formed; and, when Naples rose to declare the Constitution, the call was responded to from Brundisi to the foot of the Alps. To crush these attempts to obtain liberty, early in 1821 the Austrians poured their armies into the Peninsula: at first their coming rather seemed to add energy and resolution to a people long enslaved. The Piedmontese asserted their freedom; Genoa threw off the yoke of the King of Sardinia; and, as if in playful imitation, the people of the little state of Massa and Carrara gave the cong in to their sovereign, and set up a republic.

Tuscany alone was perfectly tranquil. It was said that the Austrian minister presented a list of sixty Carbonari to the Grand Duke, urging their imprisonment; and the Grand Duke replied, 'I do not know whether these are the Carbonari, but I know, if I imprison them, I shall directly have sixty thousand start up.' But, though the Tuscans had no desire to disturb the paternal government beneath whose shelter they shuddered, they regarded the progress of the various Italian revolutions with intense interest, and hatred for the Austrians was warm in every bosom. But they had slender hopes; they knew that the Neapolitans would offer no fit resistance to the regular German troops, and that the overthrow of the constitution in Naples would act as a decisive blow against all struggles for liberty in Italy.

We have seen the rise and progress of reform. But the Holy Alliance was alive and active in those days, and few could dream of the peaceful triumph of liberty. It seemed then that the armed assertion of freedom in the South of Europe was the only hope of the liberals, as, if it prevailed, the nations of the north would imitate the example. Happily the reverse has proved the fact. The countries accustomed to the exercise of the privileges of freemen, to a limited extent, have extended, and are extending, these limits. Freedom and knowledge have now a chance of proceeding hand in hand; and, if it continue thus, we may hope for the durability of both. Then, as I have said— in 1821—Shelley, as well as every other lover of liberty, looked upon the struggles in Spain and Italy as decisive of the destinies of the world, probably for centuries to come. The interest he took in the progress of affairs was intense. When Genoa declared itself free, his hopes were at their highest. Day after day he read the bulletins of the Austrian army, and sought eagerly to gather tokens.
of its defeat. He heard of the revolt of Genoa with emotions of transport. His whole heart and soul were in the triumph of the cause. We were living at Pisa at that time; and several well-informed Italians, at the sound of whom we may place the celebrated Vecce, were accustomed to seek for sympathy in their hopes from Shelley: they did not find such for the despair they too generally experienced, founded on contempt for their southern countrymen.

While the fate of the progress of the Austrian armies then invading Naples was yet in suspense, the news of another revolution filled him with exultation. We had formed the acquaintance at Pisa of several Constantinopolitan Greeks, of the family of Prince Caradja, formerly Hospodar of Wallachia; who, hearing that the bowstring, the accursed finale of his viceroyalty, was on the road to him, escaped with his treasures, and took up his abode in Tuscany. Among these was the gentleman to whom the drama of Hellas is dedicated. Prince Mavrocordato was warmed by those aspirations for the independence of his country, which filled the hearts of many of his countrymen. He often intimated the possibility of an insurrection in Greece; but we had no idea of its being so near at hand, when, on the 1st of April 1821, he called on Shelley, bringing the news. His cousin, Prince YpsiIanti, and, radiant with exultation proclamation of his cousin, Prince Ypsilanti, and, radiant with exultation, declared that henceforth Greece would be free.

Shelley had hymned the dawn of liberty in Spain and Naples, in two odes dictated by the warmest enthusiasm; he felt himself naturally impelled to decorate with poetry the uprise of the descendants of those people whose works he regarded with deep admiration, and to adopt the valiantly character in prophesying their success. Hellas was written in a moment of enthusiasm. It is curious to remark how well he overcomes the difficulty of forming a drama out of such scant materials. His prophecies, indeed, came true in their general, not their particular, purport. He did not foresee the death of Lord Lonsdale, which was to be the epoch of a change in English politics, particularly as regarded foreign affairs; nor that the navy of his country would fight for instead of against the Greeks, and by the battle of Navarino secure their enfranchisement from the Turks. Almost against reason, as it appeared to him, he resolved to believe that Greece would prove triumphant; and in this spirit, auguring ultimate good, yet grieving over the vicissitudes to be endured in the interval, he composed his drama. Hellas was among the last of his compositions, and is among the most beautiful. The choruses are singularly imaginative, and melodious in their versification. There are some stanzas that beautifully exemplify Shelley's peculiar style; as, for instance, the assertion of the intellectual empire which must be for ever the inheritance of the country of Homer, Sophocles, and Plato:—

*"Blest Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war,
Based on the crystalline sea
Of thought and its eternity."*

FRAGMENTS OF UNFINISHED DRAMA

And again, that philosophical truth felicitously imaged forth—

*"Revenge and Wroth bring forth their kind,
The foul cuba like their parents are,
Their den is in the guilty mind,
And Conscience feeds them with despair.'*

The conclusion of the last chorus is among the most beautiful of his lyrics. The imagery is distinct and majestic; the prophecy, such as poets love to dwell upon, the Regeneration of Mankind—and that regeneration reflecting back splendour on the foregone time, from which it inherits so much of intellectual wealth, and memory of past virtuous deeds, as must render the possession of happiness and peace of tenfold value.

FRAGMENTS OF AN UNFINISHED DRAMA

The following fragments are part of a Drama undertaken for the amusement of the individuals who composed our intimate society, but left unfinished. I have preserved a sketch of the story as far as it had been shadowed in the poet's mind.

An Enchantress, living in one of the islands of the Indian Archipelago, saves the life of a Pirate, a man of savage but noble nature. She becomes enamoured of him; and he, inconstant to his mortal love, for a while returns her passion; but at length, recalling the memory of her whom he left, and who laments his loss, he escapes from the Enchanted Island, and returns to his lady. His mode of life makes him again go to sea, and the Enchantress seizes the opportunity to bring him, by a spirit-brewed tempest, back to her island.—[Mrs. Shelley's Note. 1839.]

SCENE.—Before the Cavern of the Indian Enchantress.

The Enchantress comes forth.

Enchantress.

He came like a dream in the dawn of life,
He fled like a shadow before its noon;
He is gone, and my peace is turned to strife,
And I wander and wane like the weary moon.
O, sweet Echo, wake,
And for my sake
Make answer the while my heart shall break!

But my heart has a music which Echo's lips,
Though tender and true, yet can answer not,
And the shadow that moves in the soul's eclipse
Can return not the kiss by his now forgot;
Sweet lips! he who hath
On my desolate path
Cast the darkness of absence, worse than death!
SHELLEY

The Enchantress makes her spell: she is answered by a Spirit.

Spirit. Within the silent centre of the earth
My mansion is; where I have lived insphered
From the beginning, and around my sleep
Have woven all the wondrous imagery
Of this dim spot, which mortals call the world;
Infinite depths of unknown elements
Massed into one impenetrable mask;
Sheets of immeasurable fire, and veins
Of gold and stone, and adamantine iron.
And as a veil in which I walk through Heaven
I have wrought mountains, seas, and waves, and clouds,
And lastly light, whose intercumulation dawns
In the dark space of interstellar air.

A good Spirit, who watches over the Pirate's fate, leads, in a mysterious manner, the lady of his love to the Enchanted Isle. She is accompanied by a Youth, who loves the lady, but whose passion she returns only with a sisterly affection. The ensuing scene takes place between them on their arrival at the Isle. [Mrs. Shelley's Note, 1839.]

ANOTHER SCENE
INDIAN YOUTH AND LADY.

Indian. And, if my grief should still be dearer to me
Than all the pleasures in the world beside,
Why would you lighten it?

Lady. I offer only
That which I seek, some human sympathy
In this mysterious island.

Indian. Oh! my friend,
My sister, my beloved!—What do I say?
My brain is daisy, and I scarce know whether
I speak to thee or her.

Lady. Peace, perturbed heart!
I am to thee only as thou to mine,
The passing wind which heals the brow at noon,
And may strike cold into the breast at night,
Yet cannot long where it soothes the most,
Or soon soothe could it linger.

Indian. But you said
You also loved?

Lady. Loved! Oh, I love. Methinks
This word of love is fit for all the world,
And that for gentle hearts a higher name
Would speak of gentler thoughts than the world owns.
I have loved.

FRAGMENTS OF UNFINISHED DRAMA

Indian. And thou lovest not? if so,
Young as thou art thou canst afford to weep.

Lady. Oh! would that I could claim exemption
From all the bitterness of that sweet name.
I loved, I love, and when I love no more
Let joys and grief perish, and leave despair
To ring the knell of youth. He stood beside me,
The embodied vision of the brightest dream,
Which like a dawn heralds the day of life;
The shadow of his presence made my world
A Paradise. All familiar things he touched,
All common words he spoke, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.
He was as is the sun in his fierce youth,
As terrible and lovely as a tempest;
He came, and went, and left me what I am.
Alas! Why must I think how oft we two
Have sat together near the river springs,
Under the green pavilion which the willow
Spreads on the floor of the unfrozen fountain,
Strewed, by the nurslings that linger there,
Over that islet paved with flowers and moss,
While the musk-rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Showered on us, and the dove mourned in the pine,
Said prophetic of sorrows not her own?
The crane returned to her unfrozen haunt,
And the false cuckoo bade the spring good morn;
And on a wintry bough the widowed bird,
Hid in the deepest night of ivy-leaves,
Renewed the vigils of a sleepless sorrow.

I, left like her, and leaving one like her,
Alone and abandoned and abandoned
(Oh! unlike her in this!) the gentlest youth,
Whose love had made my sorrows dear to him,
Even as my sorrow made his love to me!

Indian. One curse of Nature stamps in the same mould
The features of the wretched; and they are
As like as violet to violet,
When memory, the ghost, their odours keeps
Mid the cold relics of abandoned joy.—
Proceed.

Lady. He was a simple innocent boy.
I loved him well, but not as he desired;
Yet even thus he was content to be:—
A short content, for I was—

Indian [aside]. God of Heaven!
From such an islet, such a river-spring—!
I dare not ask her if there stood upon it
A pleasure-dome surmounted by a crescent,
With steps to the blue water. [Aloud.] It may be
That Nature masks in life several copies
Of the same lot, so that the sufferers
May feel another's sorrow as their own,
And find in friendship what they lost in love.
That cannot be; yet it is strange that we,
From the same scene, by the same path to this
Realm of abandonment. — But speak! your breath—
Your breath is like soft music, your words are
The echoes of a voice which on my heart
Sleeps like a melody of early days.

Lady. — He was so awful, yet
So beautiful in mystery and terror,
Calming me as the loveliness of heaven
Soothes the unquiet sea: — and yet not so,
For he seemed stormy, and would often seem
A quenchless sun masked in portentous clouds;
For such his thoughts, and even his actions were;
But he was not of them, nor they of him,
But as they hid his splendour from the earth.
Some said he was a man of blood and peril,
And steeped in bitter infancy to the lips.
More need was there I should be innocent,
More need that I should be most true and kind,
And much more need that there should be found one
To share remorse and scorn and solitude,
And all the ills that wait on those who do
The tasks of ruin in the world of life.
He fled, and I have followed him.

Indian. — Such a one
Is he who was the winter of my peace.
But, fairest stranger, when didst thou depart
From the far hills where rise the springs of India?
How didst thou pass the intervening sea?
Lady. — If I be sure I am not dreaming now,
I should not doubt to say it was a dream.
Methought a star came down from heaven,
And rested mid the plants of India,
Which I had given a shelter from the frost
Within my chamber. There the meteor lay,
Panting forth light among the leaves and flowers,
As if it lived, and was outworn with speed;
Or that it loved, and passion made the pulse
Of its bright life throbb like an anxious heart,
SHELLEY

Played to it on the sunny winter days
Soft melodies, as sweet as April rain
On silent leaves, and sang those words in which
Passion makes Echo taunt the sleeping strings;
And I would send tales of forgotten love
Late into the lone night, and sing wild songs
Of maidens deserted in the olden time,
And weep like a soft cloud in April's bosom
Upon the sleeping eyelids of the plant,
So that perhaps it dreamed that Spring was come,
And crept abroad into the moonlight air,
And loosened all its limbs, as, noon by noon,
The sun averted less his oblique beam.

Indian. And the plant died not in the frost?

Lady. It grew;
And went out of the lattice which I left
Half open for it, trailing its quaint spires
Along the garden and across the lawn,
And down the slope of moss and through the tufts
Of wild-flower roots, and stumps of trees o'ergrown
With simple lichens, and old hoary stones,
On to the margin of the glassy pool,
Even to a nook of unblown violets
And lilies-of-the-valley yet unborn,
Under a pine with ivy overgrown,
And there its fruit lay like a sleeping lizard
Under the shadows; but when Spring indeed
Came to unwrap her infants, and the lilies
Peeped from their bright green masks to wonder at
This shape of autumn couched in their recess,
Then it dilated, and it grew until
One half lay floating on the fountain wave,
Whose pulse, elapsed in unlike sympathies,
Kept time
Among the snowy water-lily buds,
Its shape was such as summer melody
Of the south wind in spicy vales might give
To some light cloud bound from the golden dawn
To fairy isles of evening, and it seemed
In hue and form that it had been a mirror
Of all the hues and forms around it and
Upon it pictured by the sunny beams
Which, from the bright vibrations of the pool,
Were thrown upon the rafters and the roof
Of boughs and leaves, and on the pillared stems
Of the dark sylvan temple, and reflections
Of every infant flower and star of moss

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

And veined leaf in the azure odorous air.
And thus it lay in the Elysian calm
Of its own beauty, floating on the line
Which, like a film in purest space, divided
The heaven beneath the water from the heaven
Above the clouds; and every day I went
Watching its growth and wondering;
And as the day grew hot, methought I saw
A glassy vapour dancing on the pool,
And on it little quaint and filmy shapes,
With dizzy motion, wheel and rise and fall,
Like clouds of gnats with perfect lineaments.

O friend, sleep was a veil uplifted from Heaven—
As if Heaven dawned upon the world of dream—
When darkness rose on the extinguished day
Out of the eastern wilderness.

Indian. I too
Have found a moment's paradise in sleep
Half compensate a hell of waking sorrow.

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask
Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth—
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth

Of light, the Ocean's orison arose,
To which the birds tempered their matin lay.
All flowers in field or forest which unclose
Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray

Burned slow and inconstantly, and sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air;
And, in succession due, did continent,
Isle, ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould,
Rise as the Sun their father rose, to bear
Their portion of the toil, which he of old
Took as his own, and then imposed on them:
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold
Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the heavy stem
Which an old chestnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine: before me fled
The night; behind me rose the day; the deep
Was at my feet, and Heaven above my head,—
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread
Was so transparent, that the scene came through
As clear as when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills they glimmer; and I knew
That I had felt the freshness of that dawn
Bathe in the same cold dew my brow and hair,
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn
Under the self-same bough, and heard as there
The birds, the fountains and the ocean hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air,
And then a vision on my brain was rolled.

As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay,
This was the tenour of my waking dream:—
Methought I sate beside a public way
Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream
Of people there was hurryng to and fro,
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,
All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, and so
Was borne amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier;
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy,
Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear,
Some flying from the thing they feared, and some
Seeking the object of another's fear;

And others, as with steps towards the tomb,
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
And others mournfully within the gloom
Of their own shadow walked, and called it death;
And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
Half fainting in the affinity of vain breath:
But more, with motions which each other crossed,
Pursued or shunned the shadows the clouds threw,
Or birds within the noontide aether lost,
Upon that path where flowers never grew,—
And, weary with vain toil and faint for thirst,
Heard not the fountains, whose melodious dew
Out of their mossy cells forever burst;
Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
Of grassy paths and wood-lawns interspersed
With overarchings elms and caverns cold;
And violet banks where sweet dreams brood, but they
Pursued their serious folly as of old.

And as I gazed, methought that in the way
The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the south wind shakes the extinguished day,
And a cold glare, intenser than the noon,
But icy cold, obscured with blinding light
The sun, as he the stars. Like the young moon—
When on the sunlit limits of the night
Her white shell trembles amid crimson air,
And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might—
Doth, as the herald of its coming, bear
The ghost of its dead mother, whose dim form
Bends in dark aether from her infant's chair,—
So came a chariot on the silent storm
Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
So sate within, as one whom years deform,
Beneath a dusky hood and double cape,
Crouching within the shadow of a tomb;
And o'er whate seeming the head a cloud-like crape
SHELEY

Was bent, a dun and faint aetherial gloom
Tempering the light. Upon the chariot-beam
A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume

The guidance of that wonder-winged team;
The shapes which drew it in thick lightennings
Were lost:—I heard alone on the air's soft stream

The music of their ever-moving wings.
All the four faces of that Charioteer
Had their eyes banded; little profit brings

Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun,—
Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere

Of all that is, has been or will be done;
So ill was the car guided—but it passed
With solemn speed majestically on.

The crowd gave way, and I arose aghast,
Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
And saw, like clouds upon the thunder-blast,

The million with fierce song and frantic dance
Raging around—such seemed the jubilee
As when to greet some conqueror's advance

Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
From senate-house, and forum, and theatre,
When

Had bound a yoke, which soon they stooped to bear.
Nor wanted here the just similitude
Of a triumphal pageant, for where'er

The chariot rolled, a captive multitude
Was driven;—all those who had grown old in power
Or misery,—all who had their age subdued

By action or by suffering, and whose hour
Was drained to its last sand in weal or woe,
So that the trunk survived both fruit and flower;—

All those whose fame or infamy must grow
Till the great winter lay the form and name
Of this green earth with them for ever low;—

All but the sacred few who could not tame
Their spirits to the conquerors—but as soon
As they had touched the world with living flame,
SHELEY

But not the less with impotence of will
They wheel, though ghastly shadows interpose
Round them and round each other, and fulfill
Their work, and in the dust from whence they rose
Sink, and corruption veils them as they lie,
And past in these performs what in those
Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
Half to myself I said—'And what is this?
Whose shape is that within the car? And why—'
I would have added—'is all here amiss?—'
But a voice answered—'Life!'—I turned, and knew
(O Heaven, have mercy on such wretchedness!)
That what I thought was an old root which grew
To strange distortion out of the hill side,
Was indeed one of those deluded crew,
And that the grass, which methought hung so wide
And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
And that the holes he vainly sought to hide,
Were or had been eyes:—'If thou canst, forbear
To join the dance, which I had well forborne!'
Said the grim Feature (of my thought aware).

'I will unfold that which to this deep scorn
Led me and my companions, and relate
The progress of the pageant since the morn;
'If thirst of knowledge shall not then abate,
Follow it thou even to the night, but I
Am weary.'—Then like one who with the weight
Of his own words is staggered, wearily
He paused; and ere he could resume, I cried:
'First, who art thou?'—Before thy memory,
I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did and died,
And if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
Had been with purer nutriment supplied,
'Corruption would not now thus much inherit
Of what was once Rousseau,—nor this disguise
Stain that which ought to have disdain'd to wear it;
'If I have been extinguished, yet there rise
A thousand beacons from the spark I bore'—
'And who are those chained to the car?'—"The wise,
THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

'The great, the unforgotten,—they who wore
Mitre and helms and crowns, or wreaths of light,
Signs of thought's empire over thought—their lore
'Taught them not this, to know themselves; their might
Could not repress the mystery within,
And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night
'Taught them ere evening.'—'Who is he with chin
Upon his breast, and hands crossed on his chain?'—
'The child of a fierce hour; he sought to win
'The world, and lost all that it did contain
Of greatness, in its hope destroyed; and more
Of fame and peace than virtue's self can gain
'Without the opportunity which bore
Him on its eagle pinions to the peak
From which a thousand climbers have before
Fallen, as Napoleon fell.'—'I felt my cheek
Alter, to see the shadow pass away,
Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak
That every pigmy kicked it as it lay;
And much I grieved to think how power and will
In opposition rule our mortal day,
And why God made irreconcilable
Good and the means of good; and for despair
I half disdained mine eyes' desire to fill
With the spent vision of the times that were
And scarce have ceased to be.—'Dost thou behold,'
Said my guide, 'those spoilers spoiled, Voltaire,
'Frederick, and Paul, Catherine, and Leopold,
And hoary anarchists, demagogues, and sage—
names which the world thinks always old,
'For in the battle Life and they did wage,
She remained conqueror. I was overcome
By my own heart alone, which neither age,
'Nor tears, nor infamy, nor now the tomb
Could temper to its object.'—'Let them pass,'
I cried, 'the world and its mysterious doom
'Is not so much more glorious than it was,
That I desire to worship those who drew
New figures on its false and fragile glass
SHELLEY

'As the old faded,—Figures ever new
Rise on the bubble, paint them as you may;
We have but thrown, as those before us threw,
Our shadows on it as it passed away,
But mark how chained to the triumphal chair
The mighty phantoms of an elder day;

'All that is mortal of great Plato there
Expiates the joy and woe his master knew not;
The star that ruled his doom was far too fair.

'And life, where long that flower of Heaven grew not,
Conquered that heart by love, which gold, or pain,
Or age, or sloth, or slavery could subdue not.

'And near him walk the twain,
The tutor and his pupil, whom Dominion
Followed as tame as vulture in a chain.

'The world was darkened beneath either pinion
Of him whom from the flock of conquerors
Fame singled out for her thunder-bearing minion;

'The other long outlived both woes and wars,
Throned in the thoughts of men, and still had kept
The jealous key of Truth's eternal doors.

'If Bacon's eagle spirit had not left
Like lightning out of darkness—be compelled
The Proteus shape of Nature, as it slept

'To wake, and lead him to the caves that held
The treasure of the secrets of its reign.
See the great bards of elder time, who quelled

'The passions which they sung, as by their strain
May well be known: their living melody
Temper its own contagion to the vein

'Of those who are infected with it—I
Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!
And so my words have seeds of misery—

'Even as the deeds of others, not as theirs,
And then he pointed to a company,
'Midst whom I quickly recognized the heirs
Of Caesar's crime, from him to Constantine;
The anarch chiefs, whose force and murderous snares

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

Had founded many a sceptre-bearing line,
And spread the plague of gold and blood abroad:
And Gregory and John, and men divine,

Who rose like shadows between man and God;
Till that eclipse, still hanging over heaven,
Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode,

For the true sun it quenched—'Their power was given
But to destroy,' replied the leader:—'I
Am one of those who have created, even

'Tf it be but a world of agony:—
'Whence campest thou? and whither goest thou?
How did thy course begin?' I said, 'and why?

'Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
Of people, and my heart sick of one sad thought—
Speak!'—'Whence I am, I partly seem to know,

'And how and by what paths I have been brought
To this dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess;—
Why this should be, my mind can compass not;

'Whither the conqueror hurry me, still less;
But follow thou, and from spectator turn
Actor or victim in this wretchedness,

'And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
From thee. Now listen.—In the April prime,
When all the forest-tips began to burn

'With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
Of the young season, I was laid asleep
Under a mountain, which from unknown time

'Had yawned into a cavern, high and deep;
And from it came a gentle rivulet,
Whose water, like clear air, in its calm sweep

'Bent the soft grass, and kept for ever wet
The stems of the sweet flowers, and filled the grove
With sounds, which whose hears must needs forget

'All pleasure and all pain, all hate and love,
Which they had known before that hour of rest;
A sleeping mother then would dream not of

'Her only child who died upon the breast
At eventide—a king would mourn no more
The crown of which his brows were dispossessed
SHErrER

When the sun lingered o'er his ocean floor
To gild his rival's new prosperity,
Thou would'st forget thus vainly to deplore
Ills, which if ills can find no cure from thee,
The thought of which no other sleep will quell,
Nor other music blot from memory,
'So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell;
And whether life had been before that sleep
The Heaven which I imagine, or a Hell

Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep,
I know not; I arose, and for a space
The scene of woods and waters seemed to keep,

Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace
Of light diviner than the common sun
Sheds on the common earth, and all the place

Was filled with magic sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves and shadows dumb;

And, as I looked, the bright omnipresence
Of morning through the orient cavern flowed,
And the sun's image radiantly intense

Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
Like gold, and threaded all the forest's maze
With winding paths of emerald fire; there stood

Amid the sun, as he amid the blaze
Of his own glory, on the vibrating
Floor of the fountain, paved with flashing rays,

A Shape all light, which with one hand did fling
Dew on the earth, as if she were the dawn,
And the invisible rain did ever sing

A silver music on the mossy lawn;
And still before me on the dusky grass,
Iris her many-coloured scarf had drawn

In her right hand she bore a crystal glass,
Mantling with bright Nepenthe; the fierce splendour
Fell from her as she moved under the mass

Of the deep cavern, and with palms so tender,
Their tread broke not the mirror of its billow,
Gilded along the river, and did bend her

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

Head under the dark boughs, till like a willow
Her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream
That whispered with delight to be its pillow

As one enamoured is upborne in dream
O'er lily-paven lakes, mid silver mist,
To wondrous music, so this shape might seem

Partly to tread the waves with feet which kissed
The dancing foam; partly to glide along
The air which roughened the moist amphethyst,

Or the faint morning beams that fell among
The trees or the soft shadows of the trees;
And her feet, ever to the ceaseless song

Of leaves, and winds, and waves, and birds, and bees,
And falling drops, moved in a measure new
Yet sweet, as on the summer evening breeze,

Up from the lake a shape of golden dew
Between two rocks, athwart the rising moon,
Dances i' the wind, where never eagle flew;

And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
To which they moved, seemed as they moved to blot
The thoughts of him who gazed on them; and soon

All that was, seemed as if it had been not;
And all the gazer's mind was strown beneath
Her feet like embers; and she, thought by thought,

Trampled its sparks into the dust of death;
As day upon the threshold of the east
Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath

Of darkness re-immune even the least
Of heaven's living eyes—like day she came,
Making the night a dream; and ere she ceased

To move, as one between desire and shame
Suspected, I said—If, as it doth seem,
Thou comest from the realm without a name

Into this valley of perpetual dream,
Show whence I came, and where I am, and why—
Pass not away upon the passing stream.

Arise and quench thy thirst, was her reply,
And as a shut lily stricken by the wand
Of dewy morning's vital alchemy,
SHErrLEY

'I rose; and, bending at her sweet command,
Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
And suddenly my brain became as sand

'Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador;
Whilst the wolf, from which they fled amazed,

Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore,
Until the second bursts:—so on my sight
Burst a new vision, never seen before,

'And the fair shape waned in the coming light,
As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
From Lucifer, amid the chrysoille

'Of sunrise, ere it tinge the mountain-tops;
And as the presence of that fairest planet,
Although unseen, is felt by one who hopes

'That his day's path may end as he began it,
In that star's smile, whose light is like the scent
Of a jonquil when evening breezes fan it,

'Or the soft note in which his dear lament
The Brescian shepherd breathes, or the caress
That turned his weary slumber to content;

'So knew I in that light's severe excess
The presence of that Shape which on the stream
Moved, as I moved along the wilderness,

'More dimly than a day-appearing dream,
The ghost of a forgotten form of sleep;
A light of heaven, whose half-extinguished beam

'Through the sick day in which we wake to weep
Glimmers, for ever sought, for ever lost;
So did that shape its obscure tenure keep

'Beside my path, as silent as a ghost;
But the new Vision, and the cold bright car,
With solemn speed and stunning music, crossed

'The forest, and as if from some dread war
Triumphantly returning, the loud million
Fiercely extolled the fortune of her star.

'A moving arch of victory, the vermilion
And green and azure plumes of Iris had
Built high over her wind-winged pavilion,

1 The favourite song, Stacco di pascolar le pecorette, is a Brescian national air.

—[Mrs. Shelley's Note.]
SHELLEY

Grew dense with shadows to its inmost covers,
The earth was gray with phantoms, and the air
Was peopled with dim forms, as when there hovers
A flock of vampire-bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, bringing, ere evening,
Strange night upon some Indian isle;—thus were
Phantoms diffused around; and some did fling
Shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves,
Behind them; some like eaglets on the wing
Were lost in the white day; others like elves
Danced in a thousand unimagin'd shapes
Upon the sunny streams and grassy shelves;
And others sate chattering like restless apes
On vulgar hands, ...

Some made a cradle of the ermin'd capes
Of knaly mantles; some across the tier
Of pontiffs sate like vultures; others played
Under the crown which girl with empire
A baby's or an idiot's brow, and made
Their nests in it. The old anatomies
Sate hatching their bare broods under the shade
Of dacon wings, and laughed from their dead eyes
To reassume the delegated power,
Arrayed in which those worms did monarchize,
Who made this earth their charnel. Others more
Humble, like falcons, sate upon the fist
Of common men, and round their heads did soar;
Or like small gnats and flies, as thick as mist
On evening marshes, throned about the brow
Of lawyers, statesmen, priest and poet—
And others, like discoloured flakes of snow
On fairest bosoms and the sunniest hair,
Fell, and were melted by the youthful glow
Which they extinguished; and, like tears, they were
A veil to those from whose faint lids they rained
In drops of sorrow. I became aware
Of whence those forms proceeded which thus stained
The track in which we moved. After brief space,
From every form the beauty slowly waned;

EARLY POEMS

From every firmest limb and fairest face
The strength and freshness fell like dust, and left
The action and the shape without the grace
Of life. The marble bow of youth was cleft
With care; and in those eyes where once hope shone,
Desire, like a lioness bereft
Of her last cub, glared ere it died; each one
Of that great crowd sent forth incessantly
These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown
In autumn evening from a poplar tree.
Each like himself and like each other were
At first; but some distorted seemed to be
Obscure clouds, moulded by the casual air;
And of this stuff the car's creative ray
Wrought all the busy phantoms that were there,
As the sun shapes the clouds; thus on the way
Mask after mask fell from the countenance
And form of all, and long before the day
Was old, the joy which walked like heaven's glance
The sleepers in the oblivious valley, died;
And some grew weary of the ghastly dance,
And fell, as I have fallen, by the wayside—
Those soonest from whose forms most shadows passed,
And least of strength and beauty did abide.

'Then, what is life? I cried.—'

EARLY POEMS [1814, 1815]

STANZAS

Tis dewy looks sink in my breast;
Thy gentle words strew poison there;
Thou hast disturbed the only rest
That was the portion of despair!
Subdued to Duty's hard control,
I could have borne my wayward lot;
The chains that bind this ruined soul
Had canker'd then—but crushed it not.

STANZAS.—APRIL, 1814

Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon.
Rapid clouds have drank the last pale beam of even:
Away the gathering winds will call the darkness soon.
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of heaven.
TO HARRIET

Thy look of love has power to calm
The stormiest passion of my soul;
Thy gentle words are drops of balm
In life’s too bitter bowl;
No grief is mine, but that alone 5
These choicest blessings I have known.

Harriet! if all who long to live
In the warm sunshine of thine eye,
That price beyond all pain must give—
Beneath thy scorn to die; 10

Then hear thy chosen own too late
His heart most worthy of thy hate.
Be thou, then, one among many kind
Whose heart is harder not for state,
Thou only virtuous, gentle, kind, 15
Amid a world of hate;
And by a slight endurance seal
A fellow-being’s lasting weal.

For pale with anguish is his cheek,
His breath comes fast, his eyes are dim,
Thy name is struggling ere he speak,
Weak is each trembling limb;

TO MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN

I

Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed;
Yes, I was firm—thus wert not thou—
My halied looks did fear yet dread
To meet thy looks—I could not know
How anxiously they sought to shine
With soothing pity upon mine.

II

To sit, and curb the soul’s mute rage
Which preyed upon itself alone;
To curse the life which is the cage
Of fettered grief that dares not groan,
Hiding from many a careless eye
The scorned load of agony.

III

Whilst thou alone, then not regarded,
The thou alone should be,
To spend years thus, and be rewar’d,
As thou, sweet love, requited me
When none were near—Oh! I did wake

TO ———

Yer look on me—take not thine eyes away,
Which feed upon the love within mine own,
Which is indeed but the reflected ray
Of thine own beauty from my spirit thrown.
SHELLEY

Yet speak to me—thy voice is as the tone
Of my heart's echo, and I think I hear
That thou yet loveth me; yet thou alone
Like one before a mirror, without care
Of aught but thine own features, imaged there;
And yet I wear out life in watching thee;
A toll so sweet at times, and thou indeed
Art kind when I am sick, and pity me.

MUTABILITY

We are as clouds that veil the midnight moon;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiant!—yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever:
Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.—A dream has power to poison sleep;
We rise.—One wandering thoughtpollutes the day;
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep;
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away:
It is the same!—For, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free:
Man's yesterday may never be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but Mutability.

ON DEATH

There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave.

WHITHER ART THOU GONE?—Ecclesiastes

The pale, the cold, and the moon's smile
Which the meteor beam of a starless night
Sheds on a lovely and sea-swept isle,
Ere the dawning of morn's undoubted light,
Is the flame of life so fickle and wan
That life's round our steps till their strength is gone.

O man! hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way,
And the billows of cloud that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day,

EARLY POEMS

Where Hell and Heaven shall leave thee free
To the universe of destiny.

This world is the nurse of all we know,
This world is the mother of all we feel,
And the coming of death is a fearful blow
To a brain uncompassed with nerves of steel;
When all that we know, or feel, or see,
Shall pass like an unreal mystery.

The secret things of the grave are there,
Where all but this frame must surely be,
Though the fine-wrought eye and the wondrous ear
No longer will live to hear or to see
All that is great and all that is strange
In the boundless realm of unending change.

Who calleth a tale of unspeaking death?
Who lifeth the veil of what is to come?
Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb?
Or uniteth the hopes of what shall be
With the tears and the love for that which we see?

A SUMMER EVENING CHURCHYARD

LEICESTER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray;
And pallid Evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of Day:
Silence and Twilight, unbelieved of men,
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea;
Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,
Responding to the charm with its own mystery.
The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, aerial Pile! whose pinnacles
Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
Obeyest in silence their sweet solemn spells,
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
Around whose lesening and invisible height
Gather among the stars the clouds of night.
The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres:
And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound,
Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,
Breathed from their wormy beds all living things around,
And mingling with the still night and mute sky
Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
And terrorless as this serenest night;
Here could I hope, like some inquiring child
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

Ost! there are spirits of the air,
And genii of the evening breeze,
And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
As star-beams among twilight trees:—
Such lovely ministers to meet
Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
And moonlight seas, that are the voice
Of these inexplicable things,
Thou didst hold commune, and rejoice
When they did answer thee; but they
Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes
Beams that were never meant for thine,
Another's wealth:—tame sacrifice
To a fond faith! still dost thou pine?
Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands?

Ah! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
On the false earth's inconstancy?
Did thine own mind afford no scope
Of love, or moving thoughts to thee?
That natural scenes or human smiles
Could steal the power to wound thee in their wiles?

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled
Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted;
The glory of the moon is dead;
Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed;

Thine own soul still is true to thee,
But changed to a foul fiend through misery.

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,
Dream not to chase:—the mad endeavour
Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thouwert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice didst weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty:—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

I hate thee, fallen tyrant! I did groan
To think that a most unambitious slave,
Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the grave
Of Liberty. Thou mightst have built thy throne
Where it had stood even now: thou didst prefer
A frail and bloody pomp which Time has swept
In fragments towards Oblivion. Massacre,
For this I prayed, would on thy sleep have crept,
Treason and Slavery, Rapine, Fear, and Lust,
And stifled thee, their minister. I know
Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
That Virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than Force or Fraud: old Custom, legal Crime,
And bloody Faith the foulest birth of Time.
SHELLEY

LINES

I

The cold earth slept below,
Above the cold sky shone;
And all around, with a chilling sound,
From caves of ice and fields of snow,
The breath of night like death did flow
Beneath the sinking moon.

II

The wintry hedge was black,
The green grass was not seen,
The birds did rest on the bare thorn's breast,
Whose roots, beside the pathway track,
Had bound their folds o'er many a crack
Which the frost had made between.

III

Thine eyes glowed in the glare
Of the moon's dying light;
As a ten-are's beam on a sluggish stream
Gleams dimly, so the moon shone there,
And it yellowed the strings of thy raven hair,
That shook in the wind of night.

IV

The moon made thy lips pale, beloved—
The wind made thy bosom chill—
The night did shed on thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.

EARLY POEMS

NOTE ON THE EARLY POEMS, BY MRS. SHELLEY

The remainder of Shelley's Poems will be arranged in the order in which they were written. Of course, mistakes will occur in placing some of the shorter ones; for, as I have said, many of these were thrown aside, and I never saw them till I had the misery of looking over his writings after the hand that traced them was dust; and some were in the hands of others, and I never saw them till now. The subjects of the poems are often to me an unerring guide; but on other occasions I can only guess, by finding them in the pages of the same manuscript book that contains poems with the date of whose composition I am fully conversant. In the present arrangement all his poetical translations will be placed together at the end.

The loss of his early papers prevents my being able to give any of the poetry of his boyhood. Of the few I give as Early Poems, the greater part were published with Alastor; some of them were written previously, some at the same period. The poem beginning 'Oh, there are spirits in the air' was addressed in idea to Coleridge, whom he never knew; and at whose character he could only guess imperfectly, through his writings, and accounts he heard of him from some who knew him well. He regarded his change of opinions as rather an act of will than conviction, and believed that in his inner heart he would be haunted by what Shelley considered the better and holier aspirations of his youth. The summer evening that suggested to him the poem written in the churchyard of Lechlade occurred during his voyage up the Thames in 1815. He had been advised by a physician to live as much as possible in the open air; and a fortnight of a bright warm July was spent in tracing the Thames to its source. He never spent a season more tranquilly than the summer of 1815. He had just recovered from a severe pulmonary attack; the weather was warm and pleasant. He lived near Windsor Forest; and his life was spent under its shade or on the water, meditating subjects for verse. Hitherto, he had chiefly aimed at extending his political doctrines, and attempted so to do by appeals in prose essays to the people, exhorting them to claim their rights; but he had now begun to feel that the time for action was not ripe in England, and that the pen was the only instrument wherewith to prepare the way for better things.

In the scanty journals kept during those years I find a record of the books that Shelley read during several years. During the years of 1814 and 1815 the list is extensive. It includes, in Greek, Homer, Hesiod, Theocritus, the histories of Thucydides and Herodotus, and Diogenes Laertius. In Latin, Petronius, Suetonius, some of the works of Cicero, a large proportion of those of Seneca and Livy. In English, Milton's poems, Wordsworth's Excursion, Southey's Madoc and The Sheela, Locke On the Human Understanding, Bacon's Novum Organum. In Italian, Ariosto, Tasso, and Alberi. In French, the Réveries d'un Solitaire of Rousseau. To these may be added several modern books of travel. He read few novels.
POEMS WRITTEN IN 1816

THE SUNSET

There late was One whose subtle being,
As light and wind within some delicate cloud
That fades amid the blue noon's burning sky,
Genius and death contended. None may know
The sweetness of the joy which made his breath
Fall, like the trances of the summer air,
When, with the Lady of his love, who then
First knew the unreserve of mingled being,
He walked along the pathway of a field,
Which to the east a hoar wood shadowed o'er,
But to the west was open to the sky.
There now the sun had sunk, but lines of gold
Hung on the ashen clouds, and on the points
Of the far level grass and nodding flowers
And the old dandelion's hoary beard,
And, mingled with the shades of twilight, lay
On the brown massy woods—and in the east
The broad and burning moon lingeringly rose
Between the black trunks of the crowded trees,
While the faint stars were gathering overhead.—

That night the youth and lady mingled lay
In love and sleep—but when the morning came
The lady found her lover dead and cold.
Let none believe that God in mercy gave
That stroke. The lady died not, nor grew wild,
But year by year lived on—in truth I think
Her gentleness and patience and sad smiles,
And that she did not die, but lived to tend
Her aged father, were a kind of madness,
If madness 'tis to be unlike the world,
For but to see her were to read the tale
Woven by some subtlest bard, to make hard hearts
Dissolve away in wisdom-working grief;—
Her eyes were black and lustreless and wan:
Her eyelashes were worn away with tears,
Her lips and cheeks were like things dead—so pale;
Her hands were thin, and through their wandering veins
And weak articulations might be seen

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

I

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen among us,—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
Like memory of music fled,
Like aught that for its grace may be
dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

II

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river,
Why ought such should fall and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom,—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

III

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
to sage or poet these responses given—
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1816

Day's ruddy light. The tomb of thy dead self
Which one vexed ghost inhabits, night and day,
Is all, lost child, that now remains of thee!

Inheritor of more than earth can give,
Passionless calm and silence unproven,
Whether the dead find, oh, not sleep! but rest,
And are the uncomplaining things they seem,
Or live, or drop in the deep sea of Love;
Oh, that like thine, mine epitaph were—Peace!
This was the only moan she ever made.
SHELLEY

Frail spells,—whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.

Thy light alone,—like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream.

Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

IV

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came,
Depart not,—lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

V

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names which our youth is fed;
I was not heard,—I saw them not—
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooring
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming,—
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

VI

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine,—have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight.
Outwatched with me the envious night—
They know that never joy illumined my brow

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1816

Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou,—O awful Loveliness,
Wouldst give what'er these words cannot express.

vii

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm—to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, Sorrirr fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

MONT BLANC

LINES WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI

I

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

II

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine—
Thou many-coloured, many-voiced vale,
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice-gulfs that guard his secret throne
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning through the tempest;—thou dost lie,
Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
to drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
To hear—an old and solemn harmony;
Thine earthly rainbow stretched across the sweep
Of the ethereal waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptured image; the strange sleep
Which when the voices of the desert fail
Wraps all in its own deep eternity;—
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve’s commotion,
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound—
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencing,
Holding an unceasing interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Foeay,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live.—I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
Spread far and wide, and invisibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless gates!
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—
Its subject mountains in their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overarching heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps;
A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter’s bone,
And the wolf tracks her there—how hideously
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.—Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-daemon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire envelop once this silent snow?
None can reply—all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which教你s with doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
But for such faith, with nature reconciled;
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
Within the daedal earth; lightning and rain,
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
Holds every future leaf and flower;—the bound
With which from that detested trance they leap;
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
And that of him and all that his may be:
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
Are born and die; revolve, subsist, and swell.
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity,
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
And this, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primaeval mountains
Teach the advertent mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes thread far around an inaccessible
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
Shelley

Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks, drawn down
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
So much of life and joy is lost. The race
Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean-waves,
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:—the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights,
And many sounds, and much of life and death.
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
Or the star-beams dart through them:—Winds contend
Silent there, and heap the snow with breath
Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
Over the snow. The secret Strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of Heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

July 23, 1816.

Fragments of a Ghost Story

A shiver of his ashes took
From the hearth's obscurest nook,
Muttering mysteries as she went.
Helen and Henry knew that Granny
Was as much afraid of Ghosts as any,
And so they followed hard—
But Helen clung to her brother's arm,
And her own spasm made her shake.

Note on Poems of 1816, by Mrs. Shelley

Shelley wrote little during this year. The poem entitled The Sunset
was written in the spring of the year, while still residing at Bishopsgate.
He spent the summer on the shores of the Lake of Geneva. The Hymn to
Intellectual Beauty was conceived during his voyage round the lake with
Lord Byron. He occupied himself during this voyage by reading the
Nouvelle Héloïse for the first time. The reading it on the very spot where
the scenes are laid added to the interest; and he was at once surprised
and charmed by the passionate eloquence and earnest enthralling interest
that pervade this work. There was something in the character of Saint-
Preux, in his abnegation of self, and in the worship he paid to Love, that
coincided with Shelley's own disposition; and, though differing in many
of the views and shocked by others, yet the effect of the whole was fas-
cinating and delightful.

Mont Blanc was inspired by a view of that mountain and its surrounding
peaks and valleys, as he lingered on the Bridge of Arve on his way
through the Valley of Chamouni. Shelley makes the following mention of
this poem in his publication of the History of a Six Weeks' Tour, and
Letters from Switzerland: 'The poem entitled Mont Blanc is written by
the author of the two letters from Chamouni and Vevey. It was composed
under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited
by the objects which it attempts to describe; and, as an un-disciplined
overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to
imitate the untamable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which
those feelings sprang.'

This was an eventful year, and less time was given to study than
usual. In the list of his reading I find, in Greek, Theocritus, the Prometheus
of Aeschylus, several of Plutarch's Lives, and the works of Lucian.
In Latin, Lucretius, Pliny's Letters, the Annals and Germany of Tacitus.
In French, the History of the French Revolution by La Cremel. He read
for the first time, this year, Montaigne's Essays, and regarded them ever
after as one of the most delightful and instructive books in the world.
The list is scanty in English works: Locke's Essay, Political Justice, and
Coleridge's Lay Sermon, form nearly the whole. It was his frequent habit
to read aloud to me in the evening; in this way we read, this year, the
New Testament, Paradise Lost, Spenser's Faery Queen, and Don Quixote.
POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817

MARIANNE'S DREAM

I

A pale Dream came to a Lady fair,
And said, A boon, a boon, I pray!
I know the secrets of the air,
And things are lost in the glare of day,
Which I can make the sleeping see,
If they will put their trust in me.

II

And thou shalt know of things unknown,
If thou wilt let me rest between
The veiny lids, whose fringe is thrown
Over thine eyes so dark and sheen:
And half in hope, and half in fright,
The Lady closed her eyes so bright.

III

At first all deadly shapes were driven
Tumultuously across her sleep,
And over the vast cope of bending heaven
All ghastly-visaged clouds did sweep;
And the Lady ever looked to spy
If the golden sun shone forth on high.

IV

And as towards the east she turned,
She saw aloft in the morning air,
Which now with hues of sunrise burned,
A great black Anchor rising there;
And wherever the Lady turned her eyes,
It hung before her in the skies.

V

The sky was blue as the summer sea,
The depths were cloudless overhead,
The air was calm as it could be,
There was no sight or sound of dread,
But that black Anchor floating still
Over the piny eastern hill.

VI

The Lady grew sick with a weight of fear
To see that Anchor ever hanging,
And veiled her eyes; she then did hear
The sound as of a dim low clang,
And looked abroad if she might know
Was it aught else, or but the flow
Of the blood in her own veins, to and fro.

VII

There was a mist in the sunless air,
Which shook as it were with an earthquake's shock,
But thievish weeds that blossomed there
Were moveless, and each mighty rock
Stood on its basis steadfastly;
The Anchor was seen no more on high.

VIII

But piled around, with summits hid
In lines of cloud at intervals,
Stood many a mountain pyramid
Among whose everlasting walls
Two mighty cities shone, and ever
Through the red mist their domes did quiver.

IX

On two dread mountains, from whose crest,
Might seem, the eagle, for her brood,
Would never have hung her dizzy nest,
Those tower-encircled cities stood.
A vision strange such towers to see,
Sculptured and wrought so gorgeously
Where human art could never be.

X

And columns framed of marble white,
And giant fanes, dome over dome
Fled, and triumphant gates, all bright
With workmanship, which could not come
From touch of mortal instrument,
Shot over the vales, or lustre lent
From its own shapes magnificent.

XI

But still the Lady heard that clang
Filling the wide air far away;
And still the mist whose light did hang
Among the mountains shook alway,
So that the Lady's heart beat fast,
As half in joy, and half aghast,
On those high domes her look she cast.

XII

Sudden, from out that city sprung
A light that made the earth grow red;
Two flames that each with quivering tongue
Licked its high domes, and overhead
Among those mighty towers and fanes
Dropped fire, as a volcano rains
Its sulphurous ruin on the plains.

XIII

And hark! a rush as if the deep
Had burst its bonds; she looked behind
And saw over the western steep
A raging flood descend, and wind
Through that wide vale; she felt no fear,
But said within herself, 'Tis clear
These towers are Nature's own, and she
To save them has sent forth the sea.

XIV

And now those raging billows came
Where that fair Lady sat, and she
Was borne towards the showering flame
By the wild waves heaped tumultuously
And, on a little plank, the flow
Of the whirlpool bore her to and fro.

XV

The flames were fiercely vomited
From every tower and every dome,
And dreary light did widely shed
'Oer that vast flood's suspended foam,
Beneath the smoke which hung its night
On the stained cope of heaven's light.

XVI
The plank whereon that Lady sate
Was driven through the chasms, about and about,
Between the peaks so desolate
Of the drowning mountains, in and out,
As the thistle-heard on a whirlwind sail—
While the flood was filling those hollow vales.

XVII
At last her plank an eddy crossed,
And bore her to the city's wall,
Which now the flood had reached almost;
It might the stoutest heart appal
To hear the fire roar and hiss
Through the domes of those mighty palaces.

XVIII
The eddy whirled her round and round
Before a gorgeous gate, which stood
Piercing the clouds of smoke which bound
Its airy arch with light like blood;
She looked on that gate of marble clear,
With wonder that extinguished fear.

XIX
For it was filled with sculptures rarest,
Of forms most beautiful and strange,
Like nothing human, but the fairest
Of winged shapes, whose legions range
Throughout the sleep of those that are,
Like this same Lady, good and fair.

XX
And as she looked, still lovelier grew
Those marble forms,—the sculptor sure
Was a strong spirit, and the hue
Of his own mind did there endure
After the touch, whose power had braided
Such grace, was in some sad change faded.

XXI
She looked, the flames were dim, the flood
Grew tranquil as a woodland river
Winding through hills in solitude;
Those marble shapes then seemed to quiver,
And their fair limbs to float in motion,
Like weeds unfolding in the ocean.

XXII
And their lips moved; one seemed to speak,
When suddenly the mountains cracked,
And through the chasm the flood did break
With an earth-uplifting cataclys.
The statues gave a joyous scream,
And on its wings the pale thin Dream
Lifted the Lady from the stream.

XXIII
The dizzy flight of that phantom pale
Waked the fair Lady from her sleep,
And she arose, while from the veil
Of her dark eyes the Dream did creep,
And she walked about as one who knew
That sleep has sights as clear and true
As any waking eyes can view.

TO CONSTANTIA, SINGING

I
Thus to be lost and thus to sink and die,
Perchance were death indeed!—Constantia, turn!
In thy dark eyes a power like light doth lie,
Even though the sounds which were thy voice, which burn
Between thy lips, are laid to sleep;
Within thy breath, and on thy hair, like odour, it is yet,
And from thy touch like fire doth leap.
Even while I write, my burning cheeks are wet,
Alas, that the torn heart can bleed, but not forget!

II
A breathless awe, like the swift change
Unseen, but felt in youthful slumber,
Wild, sweet, but uncommunicably strange,
Thou breathest now in fast ascending numbers.
The cope of heaven seems rent and cloven
By the enchantment of thy strain,
And on my shoulders wings are woven,
To follow its sublime career
Beyond the mighty moons that wane
Upon the verge of Nature's utmost sphere,
Tell the world's shadowy walls are past and disappear.

III
Her voice is hovering o'er my soul—it lingers
Overshadowing it with soft and lulling wings,
The blood and life within those snowy fingers
Teach witchcraft to the instrumental strings.
My brain is wild, my breath comes quick—
The blood is listening in my frame,
And thronging shadows, fast and thick,
Fall on my overlonging eyes;
My heart is quivering like a flame;
As morning dew, that in the sunbeam dies,
I am dissolved in these consuming ecstasies.
SHELLEY

IV

I have no life, Constantia, now, but thee,
Whilst, like the world-surrounding air, thy song
Flows on, and fills all things with melody.
Now is thy voice a tempest swift and strong,
On which, like one in trance upborne,
Secure o'er rocks and waves I sweep,
Rejoicing like a cloud of morn.
Now 'tis the breath of summer night,
Which when the starry waters sleep,
Round western isles, with incense-blossoms bright,
Lingerings, suspends my soul in its voluptuous flight.

TO CONSTANTIA

I

The rose that drinks the fountain dew
In the pleasant air of noon,
Grows pale and blue with altered hue—
In the gaze of the nightly moon;
For the planet of frost, so cold and bright,
Makes it wan with her borrowed light.

II

Such is my heart—roses are fair,
And that at best a withered blossom;
But thy false care did idly wear
Its withered leaves in a faithless bosom;
And fed with love, like air and dew,
Its growth—

FRAGMENT: TO ONE SINGING

My spirit like a charmed bark doth swim
Upon the liquid waves of thy sweet singing,
Far far away into the regions dim
Of rapture—as a boat, with swift sails winging
Its way adown some many-winding river,
Speeds through dark forests o'er the waters winging...

A FRAGMENT: TO MUSIC

Silver key of the fountain of tears,
Where the spirit drinks till the brain is wild;
Softest grave of a thousand fears,
Where their mother, Care, like a drowsy child,
Is laid asleep in flowers.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817

ANOTHER FRAGMENT TO MUSIC

No, Music, thou art not the 'food of Love,'
Unless Love feeds upon its own sweet self,
Till it becomes all Music murmurs of.

'MIGHTY EAGLE'

SUPPOSED TO BE ADDRESSED TO WILLIAM GODWIN

Mighty eagle! thou that sovereign
O'er the misty mountain forest,
And amid the light of morning
Like a cloud of glory liest,
And when night descends destitute
The embattled tempests' warning!

TO THE LORD CHANCELLOR

I

Thy country's curse is on thee, darkest crest
Of that foul, knotted, many-headed worm
Which rends our Mother's bosom—Priestly Pest!
Masked Resurrection of a buried Form!

II

Thy country's curse is on thee! Justice sold,
Truth trampled, Nature's landmarks overthrown,
And heaps of fraud-accumulated gold,
Plead, loud as thunder, at Destruction's throne.

III

And, whilst that sure slow Angel which aye stands
Watching the beck of Mutability
Delays to execute her high commands,
And, though a nation weeps, spares thine and thee.

IV

Oh, let a father's curse be on thy soul,
And let a daughter's hope be on thy tomb;
Be both, on thy gray head, a leader-cowl
To weigh thee down to thine approaching doom!

V

I curse thee by a parent's outraged love,
By hopes long cherished and too lately lost,
By gentle feelings thou couldst never prove,
By griefs which thy stern nature never crossed;
SHELLEY

VI
By those infantile smiles of happy light,
Which were a fire within a stranger's hearth,
Quenched even when kindled, in untimely night
Hiding the promise of a lovely birth:

VII
By those unpractised accents of young speech,
Which he who is a father thought to frame
To gentlest lore, such as the wisest teach—
Thou strike the lyre of mind!—oh, grief and shame!

VIII
By all the happy see in children's growth—
That undeveloped flower of budding years—
Sweetness and sadness interwoven both.
Source of the sweetest hopes and saddest fears—

IX
By all the days, under an hireling's care,
Of dull constraint and bitter heaviness,—
O wretched ye if ever any were,—
Sadder than orphans, yet not fatherless!

X
By the false cant which on their innocent lips
Must hang like poison on an opening bloom,
By the dark creeds which cover with eclipse
Their pathway from the cradle to the tomb—

XI
By thy most impious Hell, and all its terror;
By all the grief, the madness, and the guilt
Of thine impostures, which must be their error—
That sand on which thy crumbling power is built—

XII
By thy complicity with lust and hate—
Thy thirst for tears—thy hunger after gold—
The ready frauds which ever on thee wait—
The servile arts in which thou hast grown old—

XIII
By thy most killing sneer, and by thy smile—
By all the arts and snares of thy black den,
And—for thou canst ouwestave the crocodile—
By thy false tears—those millstones braining men—

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817

XIV
By all the hate which checks a father's love—
By all the scorn which kills a father's care—
By those most impious hands which dared remove
Nature's high bounds—by thee—and by despair—

XV
Yes, the despair which bids a father groan,
And cry, 'My children are no longer mine—
The blood within those veins may be mine own,
But—Tyrant—thetir polluted souls are thine;—'

XVI
I curse thee—though I hate thee not.—O slave!
If thou couldst quench the earth-consuming Hell
Of which thou art a daemon, on thy grave
This curse should be a blessing. Fare thee well!

TO WILLIAM SHELLEY

I
The billows on the beach are leaping around it,
The bark is weak and frail,
The sea looks black, and the clouds that bound it
Darkly strew the gale.

II
They have taken thy brother and sister dear,
They have made them unfit for thee;
They have withered the smile and dried the tear
Which should have been sacred to me.

III
Come thou, beloved as thou art;
Another sleepeth still
Near thy sweet mother's anxious heart,
Which thou with joy shalt fill.
SHELLEY

With fairest smiles of wonder thrown
On that which is indeed our own,
And which in distant lands will be
The dearest playmate unto thee.

Fear not the tyrants will rule for ever,
Or the priests of the evil faith;
They stand on the brink of that raging river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death.
It is fed from the depth of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams and rages and swells;
And, their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks on the surge of eternity.

Rest, rest, and shriek not, thou gentle child!
The rocking of the boat thou fearest,
And the cold spray and the clamour wild,—
There, sit between us two, thou dearest—
Me and thy mother—well we know
The storm at which thou tremblest so,
With all its dark and hungry graves,
Less cruel than the savage slaves
Who hunt us o'er these sheltering waves.

This hour will in thy memory
Be a dream of days forgotten long.
We soon shall dwell by the azure sea
Of serene and golden Italy;
Of Greece, the Mother of the free;
And I will teach thine infant tongue
To call upon those heroes old
In their own language, and will mould
Thy growing spirit in the flame
Of Grecian lore, that by such name
A patriot's birthright thou mayst claim!

FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAFT OF THE POEM
TO WILLIAM SHELLEY

This world is now our dwelling-place;
Where'er the earth one fading trace
Of what was great and free does keep,
That is our home!...

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817

Mild thoughts of man's ungentle race
Shall our contented exile reap;
For who that in some happy place
His own free thoughts can freely chase
By woods and waves can clothe his face
In cynic smiles? Child! we shall weep.

This lament,
The memory of thy grievous wrong
Will fade...
But genius is omnipotent
To hallow...

ON FANNY GODWIN

Her voice did quiver as we parted,
Yet knew I not that heart was broken
From which it came, and I departed
Heeding not the words then spoken.
Misery—O Misery,
This world is all too wide for thee.

LINES

That time is dead for ever,
Child!
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever!
We look on the past
And stare aghast
At the spectres wailing, pale and ghast,
Of hopes which thou and I beguiled
To death on life's dark river.

The stream we gazed on then rolled by;
Its waves are unreturning;
But we yet stand
In a lone land,
Like tombs to mark the memory
Of hopes and fears, which fade and flee
In the light of life's dim morning.

DEATH

They die—the dead return not—Misery
Sits near an open grave and calls them over,
A Youth with hoary hair and haggard eye—
They are the names of kindred, friend and lover,
Which he so feebly calls—they all are gone—
Food wretch, all dead! those vacant names alone,
This most familiar scene, my pain—
These tombs—alone remain.
SHELLEY

II

Misery, my sweetest friend—oh, weep no more!
Thou wilt not be consoled—I wonder not!
For I have seen thee from thy dwelling's door
Watch the calm sunset with them, and this spot
Was even as bright and calm, but transitory,
And now thy hopes are gone, thy hair is hoary;
This most familiar scene, my pain—
These tombs—alone remain.

OTHO

I

THOU wert not, Cassius, and thou couldst not be,
Last of the Romans, though thy memory claim
From Brutus his own glory—and on thee
Rests the full splendour of his sacred fame:
Nor he who dared make the foul tyrant quail
Amid his cowering senate with thy name,
Though thou and he were great—it will avail
To thine own fame that Otho's should not fail.

II

'Twill wrong thee not—thou wouldst, if thou couldst feel,
Abjure such envious fame—great Otho died
Like thee—he sanctified his country's steel,
At once the tyrant and tyrannicide,
In his own blood—a deed it was to bring
Tears from all men—though full of gentle pride,
Such pride as from impetuous love may spring,
That will not be refused its offering.

FRAGMENTS SUPPOSED TO BE PARTS OF OTHO

I

Those whom nor power, nor lying faith, nor toil,
Nor custom, queen of many slaves, makes blind,
Have ever grieved that man should be the spoil
Of his own weakness, and with earnest mind
Fed hopes of its redemption; these recur
Chastened by deathful victory now, and find
Foundations in this foulest age, and stir
Me whom they cheer to be their minister.

II

Dark is the realm of grief: but human things
Those may not know who cannot weep for them.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817

III

Once more descend
The shadows of my soul upon mankind,
For to those hearts with which they never blend,
Thoughts are but shadows which the flashing mind
From the swift clouds which track its flight of fire,
Cast on the gloomy world it leaves behind.

'O THAT A CHARIOT OF CLOUD WERE MINE'

O that a chariot of cloud were mine!
Of cloud which the wild tempest weaves in air,
When the moon over the ocean's line
Is spreading the locks of her bright gray hair.
O that a chariot of cloud were mine!
I would sail on the waves of the bellowy wind
To the mountain peak and the rocky lake,
And the...

FRAGMENT: TO A FRIEND RELEASED FROM PRISON

For me, my friend, if not that tears did tremble
In my faint eyes, and that my heart beat fast
With feelings which make rapture pain resemble,
Yet, from thy voice that falsehood starts aghast,
I thank thee—let the tyrant keep
His chains and tears, yea, let him weep
With rage to see thee freshly risen,
Like strength from slumber, from the prison,
In which he vainly hoped the soul to bind
Which on the chains must prey that fetter humankind.

FRAGMENT: SATAN BROKEN LOOSE

A golden-winged Angel stood
Before the Eternal Judgement-seat:
His looks were wild, and Devil's blood
Stained his dainty hands and feet.
The Father and the Son
Knew that strife was now begun.
They knew that Satan had broken his chain,
And with millions of daemons in his train,
Was ranging over the world again.
Before the Angel had told his tale,
A sweet and a creeping sound
Like the rushing of wings was heard around;
SHELLEY

And suddenly the lamps grew pale—
The lamps, before the Archangels seven,
That burn continually in Heaven.

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FRAGMENT: IGNICULUS DESIDERII
To thirst and find no fill—to wait and wander
With short unsteady steps—to pause and ponder—
To feel the blood run through the veins and tingle
Where busy thought and blind sensation mingle;
To nurse the image of unfelt caresses
Till dim imagination just possesses
The half-created shadow, then all the night
Sick . . .

FRAGMENT: AMOR AETERNUS
Wealth and dominion fade into the mass
Of the great sea of human right and wrong,
When once from our possession they must pass;
But love, though misdirected, is among
The things which are immortal, and surpass
All that frail stuff which will be—or which was.

---

FRAGMENT: THOUGHTS COME AND GO IN SOLITUDE
My thoughts arise and fade in solitude,
The verse that would invest them melts away
Like moonlight in the heaven of spreading day:
How beautiful they were, how firm they stood,
Fleeting the stary sky like woven pearl!

A HATE-SONG
A Hater he came and sat by a ditch,
And he took an old cracked lute;
And he sang a song that was more of a screech
'Gainst a woman that was a brute.

---

LINES TO A CRITIC
I
Honey from silkworms who can
gather,
Or silk from the yellow bee?
The grass may grow in winter
weather
As soon as hate in me.

II
Hate men who cant, and men who
pray,
And men who rail like thee;
An equal passion to repay
They are not coy like me.

---

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817

III
Or seek some slave of power and
gold
To be thy dear heart's mate; 19
Thy love will move that bigot
cold
Sooner than me, thy hate.

IV
A passion like the one I prove
Cannot divided be;
I hate thy want of truth and
love,
How should I then hate thee? 16

OZYMANDIAS
I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

NOTE ON POEMS OF 1817, BY MRS. SHELLEY

This very illness that oppressed, and the aspect of death which had
approached so near Shelley, appear to have kindled to yet keener life
the Spirit of Poetry in his heart. The restless thoughts kept awake by
pain clothed themselves in verse. Much was composed during this year.
The Reval of Ithaca, written and printed, was a great effort—Rosalind
and Helen was begun—and the fragments and poems I can trace to the
same period show how full of passion and reflection were his solitary
hours.

In addition to such poems as have an intelligible aim and shape, many
a stray idea and transitory emotion found imperfect and abrupt ex-
pression, and then again lost themselves in silence. As he never wan-
dered without a book and without implements of writing, I find many
such, in his manuscript books, that scarcely bear record; while some of
them, broken and vague as they are, will appear valuable to those who
love Shelley's mind, and desire to trace its workings.

He projected also translating the Hymns of Homer; his version of
several of the shorter ones remains, as well as that to Mercury already
published in the Posthumous Poems. His readings this year were chiefly
Greek. Besides the Hymns of Homer and the Iliad, he read the dramas
of Aeschylus and Sophocles, the Symposium of Plato, and Ariadne's Historia Indica. In Latin, Apuleius alone is named. In English, the Bible was his constant study; he read a great portion of it aloud in the evening. Among these evening readings I find also mentioned the Faerie Queen; and other modern works, the production of his contemporaries, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Moore, and Byron.

His life was now spent more in thought than action—he had lost the eager spirit which believed it could achieve what it projected for the benefit of mankind. And yet in the converse of daily life Shelley was far from being a melancholy man. He was eloquent when philosophy or politics or taste were the subjects of conversation. He was playful; and indulged in the wild spirit that mocked itself and others—not in bitterness, but in sport. The author of Nightmare Abbey seized on some points of his character and some habits of his life when he painted Scythian. He was not addicted to 'port or madeira,' but in youth he had read of Illuminati and Eleutherarchs, and believed that he possessed the power of operating an immediate change in the minds of men and the state in society. These wild dreams had faded; sorrow and adversity had struck home; but he struggled with despondency as he did with physical pain.

There are few who remember him sailing paper boats, and watching the navigation of his tiny craft with eagerness—or repeating with wild energy The Ancient Mariner, and Southey's Old Woman of Berkeley; but those who do will recollect that it was in such, and in the creations of his own fancy when that was most daring and ideal, that he sheltered himself from the storms and disappointments, the pain and sorrow, that beset his life.

No words can express the anguish he felt when his elder children were torn from him. In his first resentment against the Chancellor, on the passing of the decree, he had written a curse, in which there breathes, besides haughty indignation, all the tenderness of a father's love, which could imagine and fondly dwell upon its loss and the consequences.

At one time, while the question was still pending, the Chancellor had said some words that seemed to intimate that Shelley should not be permitted the care of any of his children, and for a moment he feared that our infant son would be torn from us. He did not hesitate to resolve, if such were menaced, to abandon country, fortune, everything, and to escape with his child; and I find some unfinished stanzas addressed to this son, whom afterwards we lost at Rome, written under the idea that we might suddenly be forced to cross the sea, so to preserve him. This poem, as well as the one previously quoted, were not written to exhibit the pangs of distress to the public; they were the spontaneous outbursts of a man who brooded over his wrongs and woes, and was impelled to shed the grace of his genius over the uncontrollable emotions of his heart. I ought to observe that the fourth verse of this effusion is introduced in Rosalind and Helen. When afterwards this child died at Rome, he wrote, à propos of the English burying-ground in that city: 'This spot is the repository of a sacred loss, of which the yearnings of a parent's heart

P O E M S  W R I T T E N  I N  1 8 1 8

are now prophetic; he is rendered immortal by love, as his memory is by death. My beloved child lies buried here. I envy death the body far less than the oppressors the minds of those whom they have torn from me. The one can only kill the body, the other crushes the affections.'

P O E M S  W R I T T E N  I N  1 8 1 8

TO THE NIL

Month after month the gathered rains descend
Drenching your secret Ethiopian dwellings
And from the desert's ice-girt pinnacles
Where Frost and Heat in strange embraces blend
On Atlas, fields of moist snow half depend.

Girt there with blasts and meteor's tempest dwells
By Nile's aereal urn, with rapid spells
Urging those waters to their mighty end.

And those Egypt's land of Memory floods are level
And they are thine, O Nile—and well thou knowest
That soul-sustaining airs and blasts of evil
And fruits and poisons spring where'er thou flowest.

Beware, O Man—for knowledge must to thee,
Like the great flood to Egypt, ever be.

P A S S A G E  O F  T H E  A P E N N I N E S

LISTEN, listen, Mary mine,
To the whisper of the Apennine,
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's roar,
Or like the sea on a northern shore,

Heard in its raging ebull and flow
By the captives pent in the cave below.

The Apennine in the light of day
Is a mighty mountain dim and gray,
Which between the earth and sky doth lay;
But when night comes, a chaos dread
On the dim starlight then is spread.

And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm,
Shrouding...

T H E  P A S T

Wilt thou forget the happy hours
Which we buried in Love's sweet bowers,

Heaping over their corpses cold
Blossoms and leaves, instead of mould?

Blossoms which were the joys that fell,
And leaves, the hopes that yet remain.
SHELLEY

II

Forget the dead, the past? Oh, yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it,
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets which glide through the spirit's gloom,
And with ghastly whispers tell
That joy, once lost, is pain.

TO MARY

O Mary dear, that you were here
With your brown eyes bright and clear,
And your sweet voice, like a bird
Singing love to its lone mate
In the ivy hollow resonant;
Voice the sweetest ever heard!
And your brow more... than the sky

Of this azure Italy,
Mary dear, come to me soon,
I am not well whilst thou art far;
As sunset to the spherical moon,
Still recedes, as ever still
The sun from the sun's delight,
If there is no friends who shall meet
What, if there no heart will meet

What, if there no heart will meet
His with love's impatient beat;
With cold and silent rest.
In friendship's smile, in love's caress?

Lines Written Among the Eupanean Hills

October, 1818.

Many a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of Misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on—

Day and night, and night and day;
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track;

A shrunken, lifeless, vacant form,
It lies on my abandoned breast,
And mocks the heart which yet is warm,
With cold and silent rest.

I weep,—my tears revive it not!
I sigh,—it breathes no more on me;
Its mute and uncomplaining lot
Is such as mine should be.

One white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few gray rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land:
Nor is heard one voice of wall
But the sea-sea, as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale;
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling, like a slaughtered town,
When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp of fratricides:

Ay, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony:
To such a one this moon was led,
My bark by soft winds piloted:
'Mid the mountains Euganean
I stood listening to the paean
With which the legions rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestic:
Gathering round with wings all bright
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gleam
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming

WHILST ABOVE THE SUNLESS SKY

Big with clouds, hangs heavily,
And behind the tempest fleet
Hurries on with lightning feet,
Rising sail, and cord, and plank,
That the ship has almost drank
Death from the o'er-brimming deep;
And sinks down, down, like that sleep
When the dreamer seems to be
Weathering through eternity;
And the dim low line before
Of a dark and distant shore
Still recedes, as ever still
Losing with divided will.
But no power to seek or shun,
He is ever drifted on
Over the unrepenting wave
To the haven of the grave.

A white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few gray rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land:

A shrunken, lifeless, vacant form,
It lies on my abandoned breast,
And mocks the heart which yet is warm,
With cold and silent rest.

Who once clothed with life and thought
What now moves nor murmurs not.

A white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few gray rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land:
Nor is heard one voice of wall
But the sea-sea, as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale;
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling, like a slaughtered town,
When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp of fratricides:

Those unburied bones around
There is many a mournful sound;
There is no lament for him,
Like a sunless vapour, dim,
Who once clothed with life and thought

What now moves nor murmurs not.
SHELLEY

Follow down the dark steep
streaming,
Till all is bright, and clear, and
still,
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green
sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair;
Underneath Day’s azure eyes
Ocean’s nursing, Venice lies;
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite’s destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lot the sun upspring behind, 100
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline;
And before that beam of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and
spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies; 110
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City, thou hast been 115
Ocean’s child, and then his queen;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou must soon be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier. 120
A less drear ruin than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne, among the waves
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew 125
Flies, as once before it flew,
O’er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,
Save where many a palace gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of Ocean’s own,
Topples o’er the abandoned sea
As the tides change suddenly.
The fisher on his watery way,
Wandering at the close of day, 135
Will spread his sail and seize his
oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their
sleep
Bursting o’er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid masque of death
O’er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through aerial gold,
As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Spharches, where human forms,
Like pollution-nourished worms,
To the corpse of greatness cling,
Murdered, and now mouldering;
But if Freedom should awake
In her omnipotence, and shake
From the Celtic Anarch’s hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime;
If not, perish thou and they! — 140
Clouds which stain truth’s rising
day
By her sun consumed away—
Earth can spare ye: while like
flowers,
In the waste of years and hours,
From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.
Perish—let there only be
Floating o’er thy heartless sea
As the garment of thy sky
Clothes the world immortally, 170
One remembrance, more sublime
Than the tattered pall of time,
Which scarce hides thy visage
wain;
That a tempest-cleaving Swan
Of the waters of Albion
Driven from his ancestral streams
By the night of evil dreams,
Found a nest in thee; and Ocean
Welcomed him with such emotion
That its joy grew, and, sprung
From his lips like music flung
Over a mighty thunder-fit,
Chastening terror:—what though
yet
Poesy’s unfailing River,
Which through Albion winds forev
er
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred Poet’s grave,
Mourns its latest nursing fled?
What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce can for this fame repay
Aught thine own? oh, rather say
Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul
As the ghost of Albion’s slings
Round Scamander’s wasting
springs;
As divinest Shakespeare’s might
Fills Avon and the world with light
Like omniscient power which he
Imag’d mid mortality;
As the love from Petrarch’s urn
Yet amid storm doth burn,
A quenchless lamp by which the
heart
Sees things unearthly;—so thou
art,
Mighty spirit—so shall be
The City that did refuse thee. 205
Lo, the sun floats up the sky
Like thought-winged Liberty,
Till the universal light
Seems to level plain and height;
From the sea a mist has spread
And the beams of morn lie dead
On the towers of Venice now,
Like its glory long ago.
By the skirts of that gray cloud
Many-domed Padua proud
Stands, a peopled solitude,
’Mid the harvest-shining plain,
Where the peasant heaps his grain
In the garner of his foe,
And the milk-white oxen slow
With the purple vintage strain
Heaped upon the creaking wain,
That the brutal Celt may swill
Drunken sleep with savage will;
And the sickle to the sword
Lies unchanged, though many a
lord.
Like a weed whose shade is poison,
Overgrows this region’s fosen,
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
To destruction’s harvest-home;
Men must reap the things they
now,
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse; but ’tis a bettcr woe
That love or reason cannot change
The despot’s rage, the slave’s re
eveng.

Padea, thou within whose walls
Those mute guests at festivals,
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
Played at dice for Ezazelin,
Till Death cried, “I win, I win!”
And Sin cursed to lose the wager,
But Death promised, to assuage
her,
That he would petition for
Her to be made Vice-Empress,
When the destined years were o’er,
Over all between the Po
And the eastern Alpine snow,
Under the mighty Austrian,
Sin smiled so as Sin only can,
And since that time, ay, long before,
Both have ruled from shore to shore,—
That incestuous pair, who follow
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
As Repentance follows Crime,
And as changes follow Time. 255
In thine halls the lamp of learning,
Padua, now no more is burning;
Like a meteor, whose wild way
Is lost over the grave of day,
It gleams betrayed and to betray:
Once remotest nations came 261
To adore that sacred flame,
When it lit not many a hearth
On this cold and gloomy earth:
Now new fires from antique light
Spring beneath the wide world's might;
But their spark lies dead in thee,
Trampled out by Tyranny.
As the Norway woodman quells,
In the depth of piny dells, 270
One light flame among the brakes,
While the boundless forest shakes,
And its mighty trunks are torn
By the fire thus lowly born:
The spark beneath his feet is dead,
He starts to see the flames it fed 280
Howling through the darkened sky
With a myriad tongues victoriously,
And sinks down in fear: so thou,
O Tyranny, beholdest now
Light around thee, and thou hearest
The loud flames ascend, and fear
Grovel on the earth; ay, hide
In the dust thy purple pride!
Noon descends around me now; 285
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
When a soft and purple mist
Like a vaporous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolved star
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound
To the point of Heaven's profound,
Fills the overflowing sky:
And the plains that silent lie
Underneath, the leaves unlosed;
Where the infant Frost has trodden
With his morning-winged feet,
Whose bright print is gleaming yet;
And the red and golden vines,
Piercing with their trellised lines 300
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness;
The dun and bladed grass no less,
Pointing from this hoary tower
In the windless air; the flower
Glimmering at my feet; the line
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
In the south dimly islanded;
And the Alps, whose snows are spread
High between the clouds and sun;
And of living things each one;
And my spirit which so long
Darkened this swift stream of song,
Interpenetrated lie
By the glory of the sky:
Be it love, light, harmony,
Odour, or the soul of all
Which from Heaven like dew doth fall,
Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.
Noon descends, and after noon 320
Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantile moon,
And that one star, to which her
Almost seems to minister
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs—
And the soft dreams of the morn
(Which like winged winds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies
Mid remembered agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being) Pass,
To other sufferers fleeting,

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1813

And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of Life and Agony:
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf; even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,
May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt;
In a dell mid lawny hills,
Which the wild-sea murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and small divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine:
We may live so happy there,
That the Spirits of the Air,
Envying us, may even entice
To our healing Paradise
The polluting multitude;
But their rage would be subdued
By that calm divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves;
While each breathless interval
In their whispersings musical
The inspired soul supplies
With its own deep melodies
And the love which heals all strife
Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood:
They, not it, would change; and
Soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.

SCENE FROM 'TASSO'

MADDALO, a Courtier.
PIGNA, a Minister.
MALPIGIO, a Poet.
ALBANO, an Usher.

Maddalo, No access to the Duke! You have not said
That the Count Maddalo would speak with him?
Pigna, Did you inform his Grace that Signor Pigna
Waits with his steed and his signature?
Malpigio, The Lady Leonora cannot know
That I have written a sonnet to her fame,
In which I Venus and Adonis.
You should not take my gold and serve me not.
Albano. In truth I told her, and she smiled and said,
'If I am Venus, thou, cloy Poesy,
Art the Adonis whom I love, and he
The Erythraean boar that wounded him.'
O trust to me, Signor Malpigio,
Those nodes and smiles were favours worth the zecchino.
Malpigio. The words are twisted in some double sense
That I reach not: the smiles fell not on me.
Pigna, How are the Duke and Duchess occupied?
Albano. Buried in some strange talk. The Duke was leaning,
His finger on his brow, his lips unclosed.
The Princess sate within the window-seat,
And so her face was hid; but on her knee
Her hands were clasped, veined, and pale as snow,
And quivering—young Tasso, too, was there.

*Maddalo.* Thou seest on whom from thine own worshipped heaven
Thou drawest down smiles—they did not rain on thee.
*Maddalo.* Would they were parching lightnings for his sake
On whom they fell!

**SONG FOR ‘TASSO’**

I

I loved—alas! our life is love;
But when we cease to breathe and move
I do suppose love ceases too.
I thought, but not as now I do,
Keen thoughts and bright of link’d lore,
Of all that men had thought before,
And all that Nature shows, and more.

II

And still I love and still I think,
But strangely, for my heart can drink
The dregs of such despair, and live,
And love:
And if I think, my thoughts come fast,
I mix the present with the past,
And each seems uglier than the last.

III

Sometimes I see before me flee
A silver spirit’s form, like thee,
O Leonora, and I sit
... still watching it,
Till by the grated casement’s ledge
It fades, with such a sigh, as sedge
Breathes o’er the breezy streamlet’s edge.

**INVOCATION TO MISERY**

I

Come, be happy!—sit near me,
Shadow-vested Misery;
Coy, unwilling, silent bride,
Mourning in thy robe of pride,
Desolation—defied!

II

Come, be happy!—sit near me:
Sad as I may seem to thee,
I am happier far than thou,
Lady, whose imperial brow
Is endiadem’d with woe.
STANZAS

WRITTEN IN DEJECTION, NEAR NAPLES

I

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,
The breath of the moist earth is light,
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The City's voice itself, is soft like Solitude's.

II

I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:
I sit upon the sands alone,—
The lightning of the noontide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Ariseth from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

III

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure,
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure;
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

IV

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1818

V

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely mourn;
They might lament—for I am one
Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

THE WOODMAN AND THE NIGHTINGALE

A woodman whose rough heart was out of tune
(I think such hearts yet never came to good)
Hated to hear, under the stars or moon,
One nightingale in an interlusive wood
Satiate the hungry dark with melody;—
And as a vale is watered by a flood,
Or as the moonlight fills the open sky
Struggling with darkness—as a tuberose
Peoples some Indian dell with scents which lie
Like clouds above the flower from which they rose,
The singing of that happy nightingale
In this sweet forest, from the golden close

Of evening till the star of dawn may fail,
Was interfused upon the silentness,
The folded roses and the violets pale
Heard her within their slumber, the abyss
Of heaven with all its planets; the dull ear
Of the night-cradled earth; the loneliness
Of the circumfluous waters,—every sphere
And every flower and beam and cloud and wave,
And every wind of the mute atmosphere,

And every beast stretched in its rugged cave,
And every bird lull'd on its mossy bough,
And every silver moth fresh from the grave,
Which is its cradle—ever from below
Aspiring like one who loves too fair, too far,
To be consumed within the purest glow.
SHELLEY

Of one serene and unapproached star,
As if it were a lamp of earthly light,
Unconscious, as some human lovers are,
Itself how low, how high beyond all height
The heaven where it would perish!—and every form
That worshipped in the temple of the night
Was awed into delight, and by the charm
Girt as with an interminable zone,
Whilst that sweet bird, whose music was a storm
Of sound, shook forth the dull oblivion
Out of their dreams; harmony became love
In every soul but one.

And so this man returned with axe and saw
At evening close from killing the tall treetop
The soul of whom by Nature’s gentle law
Was each a wood-nymph, and kept ever green
The pavement and the roof of the wild copse,
Chequering the sunlight of the blue serene

With jagged leaves,—and from the forest tops
Singing the winds to sleep—or weeping oft
Fast showers of aerial water-drops
Into their mother’s bosom, sweet and soft,
Nature’s pure tears which have no bitterness;—
Around the cradles of the birds aloft

They spread themselves into the loveliness
Of fan-like leaves, and over pallid flowers
Hang like moist clouds;—or, where high branches kiss,
Make a green space among the silent bowers,
Like a vast lane in a metropolis,
Surrounded by the columns and the towers

All overwrought with branch-like traceries
In which there is religion—and the mute
Persuasion of unkindled melodies,

Odours and gleams and murmurs, which the lute
Of the blind pilot-spirit of the blast
Stirs as it sails, now grave and now acute,

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1818

Wakening the leaves and waves, ere it has passed
To such brief union as on the brain
One tone, which never can recur; has cast,
One accent never to return again.

The world is full of Woodmen who expel
Love’s gentle Dryads from the haunts of life,
And vex the nightingales in every dell.

MARENGHI

I

LET those who pine in pride or in revenge,
Or think that ill for ill should be repaid,
Who barter wrong for wrong, until the exchange
Ruins the merchants of such thriftless trade,
Visit the tower of Vado, and unlearn
Such bitter faith beside Marenghi’s urn.

II

A massy tower yet overhangs the town,
A scattered group of ruined dwellings now . . .

III

Another scene ere wise Etruria knew
Its second ruin through internal strife,
And tyrants through the breach of discord threw
The chain which binds and kills. As death to life,
As winter to fair flowers (though some be poison)
So Monarchy succeeds to Freedom’s poison.

IV

In Pisa’s church a cup of sculptured gold
Was brimming with the blood of feuds forsworn
A Sacrament more holy ne’er of old
Etrurians mingled mid the shades forlorn
Of moon-illumined forests, when . . .

V

And reconciling factions wet their lips
With that dread wine, and swear to keep each spirit
Undarkened by their country’s last eclipse . . .

1 This fragment refers to an event told in Simondi’s "Histoire des Républiques Italiennes," which occurred during the war when Florence finally subdued Pisa, and reduced it to a province. [Mrs. Shelley’s Note, 1844.]
Was Florence the libertine? that band
Of free and glorious brothers who had planted,
Like a green isle mid Aethopian sand,
A nation amid slaveries, disenchanted
Of many impious faiths—wise, just—do they,
Does Florence, gorge the sated tyrants' prey?

O foster-nurse of man's abandoned glory,
Since Athens, its great mother, sunk in splendour;
Thou shadowest forth that mighty shape in story,
As ocean its wrecked fanes, severe yet tender:
The light-invented angel Poesy
Was drawn from the dim world to welcome thee.

And thou in painting didst transcribe all taught
By loftiest meditations; marble knew
The sculptor's fearless soul—and as he wrought,
The grace of his own power and freedom grew,
And more than all, heroic, just, sublime,
Thou wert among the false . . . . was this thy crime?

Yes; and on Pisa's marble walls the twine
Of direst weeds hangs garlanded—the snake
Inhabits its wrecked palaces;—in thine
A beast of subtler venom now doth make
Its lair, and sits amid their glories overthrown,
And thus thy victim's fate is as thine own.

The sweetest flowers are ever frail and rare,
And love and freedom blossom but to wither;
And good and ill like vines entangled are,
So that their grapes may oft be plucked together;
Divide the vintage ere thou drink, then make
Thy heart rejoice for dead Marenghi's sake.

[Albert] Marenghi was a Florentine;
If he had wealth, or children, or a wife
Or friends, (or farm) or cherished thoughts which twine
The sights and sounds of home with life's own life
Of these he was despoiled and Florence sent . . . .
xxvii
And at the utmost point ... stood there
The relics of a reed-inwoven cot,
Thatched with broad flags. An outlawed murderer
Had lived seven days there: the pursuit was hot
When he was cold. The birds that were his grave
Fell dead after their feast in Vado’s wave.

There must have burned within Marenghi’s breast
That fire, more warm and bright than life and hope,
(Which to the martyr makes his dungeon ...)
More joyous than free heaven’s most majestic cope
To his oppressor), warring with decay,—
Or he could ne’er have lived years, day by day.

Nor was his state so lone as you might think.
He had tamed every newt and snake and toad,
And every seagull which sailed down to drink
These freshes are the death-mist went abroad.
And each one, with peculiar talk and play,
Wiled, not untaught, his silent time away.

And the marsh-meteors, like tame beasts, at night
Came licking with blue tongues his veined feet;
And he would watch them, as, like spirits bright,
In many entangled figures quaint and sweet.
To some enchanted music they would dance—
Until they vanished at the first moon-glance.

He mocked the stars by grouping on each weed
The summer dew-globes in the golden dawn;
And, ere the hoar-frost languished, he could read
Its pictured path, as on bare spots of lawn
Its delicate brief touch in silver weaves
The likeness of the wood’s remembered leaves.

And many a fresh Spring morn would he awaken—
While yet the unrisen sun made glow, like iron
Quivering in crimson fire, the peaks unshaken
Of mountains and blue isles which did environ
With air-clad crags that plain of land and sea,—
And feel

P O E M S  W R I T T E N  I N  1 8 1 8

And in the moonless nights, when the dun ocean
Heaved undernearth wide heaven, star-impearled,
Starting from dreams . . .
Communed with the immeasurable world;
And felt his life beyond his limbs dilated,
Till his mind grew like that it contemplated.

His food was the wild fig and strawberry;
The milky pine-nuts which the autumn-blast
Shakes into the tall grass; or such small fry
As from the sea by winter-storms are cast;
And the coarse bulbs of iris-flowers he found
Knotted in clumps under the spongy ground.

And so were kindled powers and thoughts which made
His solitude less dark. When memory came
(For years gone by leave each a deepening shade),
His spirit basked in its internal flame,
As, when the black storm hurries round at night,
The fisher basked beside his red lightfire.

Yet human hopes and cares and faiths and errors,
Like billows unawakened by the wind,
Slept in Marenghi still; but that all terror,
Weakness, and doubt, had withered in his mind.
His couch . . .

And, when he saw beneath the sunset’s planet
A black ship walk over the crimson ocean,—
Its pennon streaming on the blasts that fan it,
Its sails and ropes all tense and without motion,
Like the dark ghost of the unburied even
Striding athwart the orange-coloured heaven,—

The thought of his own kind who made the soul
Which sped that winged shape through night and day,—
The thought of his own country . . .
SONNET

Li'st not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread,—behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin Destinies; who ever weave
Their shadows, o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.
I knew one who had lifted it—he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love,
But found them not, alas! nor was there sought
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth; and like the Preacher found it not.

FRAGMENT: TO BYRON

O mighty mind, in whose deep stream this age
Shakes like a reed in the unheeding storm,
Why dost thou curb not thine own sacred rage?

FRAGMENT: APOSTROPHE TO SILENCE

Silence! Oh, well are Death and Sleep and Thou
Three brethren named, the guardians gloomy-winged
Of one abyss, where life, and truth, and joy
Are swallowed up—yet spare me, Spirit, pity me,
Until the sounds I hear become my soul,
And it has left these faint and weary limbs,
To track along the lapses of the air
This wandering melody until it rests
Among lone mountains in some . .

FRAGMENT: THE LAKE'S MARGIN

The fierce beasts of the woods and wildernesses
Track not the steps of him who drinks of it;
For the light breezes, which for ever fleet
Around its margin, heap the sand thereon.

FRAGMENT: 'MY HEAD IS WILD WITH WEEPING'

My head is wild with weeping for a grief
Which is the shadow of a gentle mind.
I walk into the air (but no relief
To seek,—or haply, if sought, to find;
It came unsought)—to wonder that a chief
Among men's spirits should be cold and blind.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1818

FRAGMENT: THE VINE-SHROUD

Flourishing vine, whose kindling clusters glow
Beneath the autumnal sun, none taste of thee;
For thou dost shroud a ruin, and below
The rotting bones of dead antiquity.

NOTE ON POEMS OF 1818, BY MRS. SHELLEY

We often hear of persons disappointed by a first visit to Italy. This
was not Shelley's case. The aspect of its nature, its sunny sky, its majestic
storms, of the luxuriant vegetation of the country, and the noble
marble-built cities, enchanted him. The sight of the works of art was full
enjoyment and wonder. He had not studied pictures or statues before; he
now did so with the eye of taste, that referred not to the rules of schools,
but to those of Nature and truth. The first entrance to Rome opened to
him a scene of remain's of antique grandeur that far surpassed his expec-
tations; and the unspeakable beauty of Naples and its environs added to
the impression he received of the transcendent and glorious beauty of
Italy.

Our winter was spent at Naples. Here he wrote the fragments of
Marenghi and The Woodman and the Nightingale, which he afterwards
took abroad. At this time, Shelley suffered greatly in health. He put him-
self under the care of a medical man, who promised great things, and
made him endure severe bodily pain, without any good results. Constant
and poignant physical suffering exhausted him; and though he preserved
the appearance of cheerfulness, and often greatly enjoyed our wanderings
in the environs of Naples, and our excursions on its sunny sea, yet many
hours were passed when his thoughts, shadowed by illness, became
gloomy—and then he escaped to solitude, and in verses, which he hid
from fear of wounding me, poured forth morbidity but too natural bursts of
discontent and sadness. One looks back with unspeakable regret and
graving remorse to such periods; fancying that, had one been more alive
to the nature of his feelings, and more attentive to soothe them, such
would not have existed. And yet, enjoying as he appeared to do every
sight or influence of earth or sky, it was difficult to imagine that any
melancholy he showed was aught but the effect of the constant pain to
which he was a martyr.

We lived in utter solitude. And such is often not the nurse of cheer-
fulness; for them, at least with those who have been exposed to adversity,
the mind broods over its sorrows too intently; while the society of the
enlightened, the witty, and the wise, enables us to forget ourselves by
making us the sharers of the thoughts of others, which is a portion of the
philosophy of happiness. Shelley never liked society in numbers,—it
harassed and wearied him; but neither did he like loneliness, and usually
went alone, sheltered himself against memory and reflection in a book.
But, with one or two whom he loved, he gave way to wild and joyous
spirits, or in more serious conversation expounded his opinions with
vivacity and eloquence. If an argument arose, no man ever argued better. He was clear, logical, and earnest, in supporting his own views; attentive, patient, and impartial, while listening to those on the adverse side. Had not a wall of prejudice been raised at this time between him and his countrymen, how many would have sought the acquaintance of one whom to know was to love and to revere! How many of the more enlightened of his contemporaries have since regretted that they did not seek him! how very few knew his worth while he lived! and, of those few, several were withheld by timidity or envy from declaring their sense of it. But no man was ever more enthusiastically loved—more looked up to, as one superior to his fellows in intellectual endowments and moral worth, by the few who knew him well, and had sufficient nobleness of soul to appreciate his superiority. His excellence is now acknowledged; but, even while admitted, not duly appreciated. For who, except those who were acquainted with him, can imagine his unwaried benevolence, his generosity, his systematic forbearance? And still less is it his vast superiority in intellectual attainments sufficiently understood—his sagacity, his clear understanding, his learning, his prodigious memory. All these, as displayed in conversation, were known to few while he lived, and are now silent in the tomb:

"Ah! orbo mondo ingrato! 
Gran capton hai di deuer pianger meco; 
Che quel ben ch'era in te, perdut' hai seco."

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1819

LINES WRITTEN DURING THE CASTLEREAGH ADMINISTRATION

I

Corpses are cold in the tomb; Stones on the pavement are dumb; Abortions are dead in the womb, And their mothers look pale—like the death-white abore Of Albion, free no more.

II

Her sons are as stones in the way— They are masses of senseless clay— They are trodden, and move not away,— The abortion with which she travailleth Is Liberty, smitten to death.

III

Then trample and dance, thou Oppressor! For thy victim is no redresser; Thou art sole lord and possessor Of her corpses, and cloths, and abortions—they pave Thy path to the grave.

IV

Hearest thou the festival din Of Death, and Destruction, and Sin, And Wealth crying Haroo! within? To the bacchanal triumph that makes Truth dumb, Thine Epithalamium.

V

Ay, marry thy ghastly wife! Let Fear and Disquiet and Strife Spread thy couch in the chamber of Life! Marry Ruin, thou Tyrant! and Hell be thy guide To the bed of the bride!

SONG TO THE MEN OF ENGLAND

I

Men of England, wherefore plough For the lords who lay ye low? Wherefore weave with toil and care The rich robes your tyrants wear?

II

Wherefore feed, and cloth, and save, From the cradle to the grave, Those ungrateful drones who would Drain your sweat—nay, drink your blood?

III

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge Many a weapon, chain, and scouage, That these stingless drones may spoil The forced produce of your toil?

IV

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm, Shelter, food, love's gentle balm? Or what is it ye buy so dear With your pain and with your fear?

V

The seed ye sow, another reaps; The wealth ye find, another keeps; The robes ye weave, another wears; The arms ye forge, another bears.

VI

Sow seed,—but let no tyrant reap; Find wealth,—let no impostor reap; Weave robes,—let not the idle wear; Forge arms,—in your defence to bear.

VII

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells; In hails ye deck another dwells. Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

VIII

With plough and spade, and hoe and loom, Trace your grave, and build your tomb, And weave your winding-sheet, till fair England be your sepulchre.
SIMILES FOR TWO POLITICAL CHARACTERS OF 1819

I
As from an ancestral oak
Two empty ravens sound their clarion,
Yell by yell, and croak by croak,
When they scent the noonday smoke
Of fresh human carrion:— 5

II
As two gibbering night-birds fit
From their bowers of deadly yew
Through the night to frighten it,
When the moon is in a fit,
And the stars are none, or few:—

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1819

A NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM

I
God prosper, speed, and save,
God raise from England's grave
Her murdered Queen!

IV
'Wild her enemies
In their own dark disguise,—
God save our Queen!

II
Pave with swift victory
The steps of Liberty,
Whom Britons own to be
Immortal Queen.

V
All earthly things that dare
Her sacred name to bear,
Strip them, as kings are, bare;
God save the Queen!

III
See, she comes throned on high,
On swift Eternity!
God save the Queen!

VI
Be her eternal throne
Built in our hearts alone—
God save the Queen!

She is Thine own pure soul
Moulding the mighty whole,—
God save the Queen!

She is Thine own deep love
Rained down from Heaven above,—
Wherever she rest or move,
God save our Queen!

SONNET: ENGLAND IN 1819

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,—
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring,—
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know.

But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,—
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field,
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield.

Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed;
A Senate,—Time's worst statute unrevoked,—
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

FRAAGMENT: TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND

People of England, ye who toil and groan,
Who reap the harvest which are not your own,
Who weave the clothes which your oppressors wear,
And for your own take the inclement air;
Who build warm houses . . .
And are like gods who give them all they have,
And nurse them from the cradle to the grave . . .

FRAAGMENT: 'WHAT MEN GAIN FAIRLY'

What men gain fairly—that they should possess,
And children may inherit idleness,
From him who earns it—This is understood;
Private injustice may be general good.
But he who gains by base and armed wrong,
Or guilty fraud, or base compliances,
May be despoiled; even as a stolen dress
Is stripped from a convicted thief, and he
Left in the nakedness of infamy.
ODE TO HEAVEN

CHORUS OF SPIRITS

First Spirit.

PEACE-ROOF of cloudless nights!
Paradise of golden lights!
Deep, Immeasurable, vast,
Which art now, and which wert then
Of the Present and the Past,
Of the eternal Where and When,
Presence-chamber, temple, home,
Ever-canopying dome,
Of acts and ages yet to come!

Glorious shapes have life in thee,
Earth, and all earth's company;
Living globes which ever throng
Thy deep chasms and wildernesses;
And green worlds that glide along;
And swift stars with flashing tresses;
And icy moons most cold and bright,
And mighty suns beyond the night,
Atoms of intensest light.

Even thy name is as a god,
Heaven! for thou art the abode
Of that Power which is the glass
Wherein man his nature sees.
Generations as they pass
Worship thee with bended knees.
Their unremarking gods and they
Like a river roll away:
Thou remainest such—alway!

Second Spirit.

Thou art but the mind's first chamber,
Round which its young fancies clamber,
Like weak insects in a cave,
Lighted up by stalactites;
But the portal of the grave,
Where a world of new delights
Will make thy best glories seem
But a dim and midnight gleam
From the shadow of a dream!

Third Spirit.

Peace! the abyss is wreathed with scorn
At your presumption, atom-born!
What is Heaven? and what are ye
Who its brief expanse inherit?
What are suns and spheres which fly
With the instinct of that Spirit
Of which ye are but a part?
Drops which Nature's mighty heart
Drives through thinnest veins!
Depart!

What is Heaven? a globe of dew,
Filling in the morning new
Some eyed flower whose young leaves waken
On an unimagin'd world:
Constellated suns unshaken,
Orbits measureless, are furled
In that frail and fading sphere,
With ten millions gathered there,
To tremble, gleam, and dis appear.
CANCELLED FRAGMENTS OF THE ODE TO HEAVEN

When a...

When the night...

Watch the look askance...  
See neglect, and falsehood fold...

ODE TO THE WEST WIND

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter's heaving,  
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,  
Who charlottest to their dark wintry bed  
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow  
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
With living hues and odours plain and hill:  
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,  
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

1 This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when a tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cilantpine regions. The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.—[SHELLEY'S NOTE.]

III

Come from the high air, sweep, and sweep!  
As thou, O uncontrollable! If ever  
I were in my boyhood, and could be  
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,  
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed  
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven  
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;  
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;  
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share  
The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even  
I were as in my boyhood, and could be  
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,  
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed  
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven  
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.

Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
SHELLEY

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: timeless, and swift, and proud.

\[5\]

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quickly a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

70

AN EXHORTATION

Chameleons feed on light and air:
Poets' food is love and fame:
If in this wide world of care
Poets could but find the same
With as little toil as they,
Would they ever change their hue
As the light chameleons do,
Suiting it to every ray
Twenty times a day?

Poets are on this cold earth,
As chameleons might be,
Hidden from their early birth
In a cave beneath the sea;
Where light is, chameleons change:
Where love is not, poets do:
Fame is love disguised: if few
Find either, never think it strange
That poets range.

Yet dare not stain with wealth of power
A poet's free and heavenly mind:
If bright chameleons should devour
Any food but beams and wind,
They would grow as earthly soon
As their brother lizards are.
Children of a sunnier star,
Souls from beyond the moon,
Oh, refuse the boon!

10

THE INDIAN SERENADE

I

I arise from dreams of thee,
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright:
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how?
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

5

II

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—

10

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1819

The Champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart;—
As I must on thine,
Oh, beloved as thou art!

35

Oh lift me from the grass!
I die! I faint! I fail!

To Sophia [Miss Stacey]

I

Thou art fair, and few are fairer
Of the Nymphs of earth or ocean;
They are robes that fit the wearer—
Those soft limbs of thine, whose motion
Ever falls and shifts and glances
As the life within them dances.

5

II

Thy deep eyes, a double Planet,
Caze the wisest into madness
With soft clear fire,—the winds that fan it
Are those thoughts of tender gladness
Which, like zephyrs on the bellow,
Make thy gentle soul their pillow.

10

III

If, whatever face thou paintest
In those eyes, grows pale with pleasure,
If the fainting soul is faintest,
When it hears thy harp's wild measure,
Wonder not that when thou speakest
Of the weak my heart is weakest.

15

IV

As dew beneath the wind of morning,
As the sea which whirlwinds waken,
As the birds at thunder's warning,
As one who feels an unseen spirit
Is my heart when thine is near it.
TO WILLIAM SHELLEY

(Tarry little footsteps on the sands
Of a remote and lonely shore;
The twinkling of thine infant hands,
Where now the worm will feed no more;
Thy mingled look of love and glee
When we returned to gaze on thee—

TO MARY SHELLEY

My dearest Mary, wherefore hast thou gone,
And left me in this dreary world alone?
Thy form is here indeed,—a lovely one—
But thou art fled, gone down the dreary road,
That leads to Sorrow's most obscure abode;
Thou sittest on the hearth of pale despair,

For thine own sake I cannot follow thee.

TO WILLIAM SHELLEY

(Rome! Rome! Rome!
Non è più come era prima!) 5

My lost William, thou in whom
Some bright spirit lived, and did
That decaying robe consume
Which its lustre faintly hid,—
Here its ashes find a tomb,
But beneath this pyramid
Thou art not—if a thing divine
Like thee can die, thy funeral shrine
Is thy mother's grief and mine.

TO WILLIAM SHELLEY

Where art thou, my gentle child? 10
Let me think thy spirit feeds,
With its life intense and mild,
The love of living leaves and weeds
Among these tombs and ruins wild;
—Let me think that through low seeds
Of sweet flowers and sunny grass
Into their hues and scents may pass
A portion—

TO MARY SHELLEY

The world is dreary,
And I'm weary
Of wandering on without thee, Mary;
A joy was erewhile
In thy voice and thy smile,
And 'tis gone, when I should be gone too, Mary.

TO MARY SHELLEY

It lieth, gazing on the midnight sky,
Upon the cloudy mountain-peak supine;
Below, far lands are seen tremblingly;
Its horror and its beauty are divine.
Upon its lips and eyelids seems to lie
Loveliness like a shadow, from which shine,
Fiery and lurid, struggling underneath,
The agonies of anguish and of death.

Yet it is less the horror than the grace
Which turns the gazer's spirit into stone,
Whereon the lineaments of that dead face
Are graven, till the characters be grown
Into itself, and thought no more can trace;
'Tis the melodious hue of beauty thrown
Athumb the darkness and the glare of pain,
Which humanize and harmonize the strain.

And from its head as from one body grow,
As grass out of a watery rock,
Hairs which are vipers, and they curl and flow
And their long tangles in each other lock,
And with unending involutions show
Their mailed radiance, as it were to mock
The torture and the death within, and saw
The solid air with many a ragged jaw.

And, from a stone beside, a poisonous eft
Peeps idly into those Gorgonian eyes;
Whilst in the air a ghastly bat, bereft
Of sense, has flitted with a mad surprise
Out of the cave this hideous light had left;
And he comes hastening like a moth that hies
After a taper; and the midnight sky
Flares, a light more dread than obscurity.
LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY

I

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the Ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine?

II

See the mountains kiss high Heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea.
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?

FRAGMENT: "FOLLOW TO THE DEEP WOOD'S WEEDS"

Follow to the deep wood's weeds,
Follow to the wild-briar dingle,
Where we seek to intermingle,
And the violet tells her tale.

To the odour-scented gale,
For they two have enough to do
Of such work as I and you.

THE BIRTH OF PLEASURE

At the creation of the Earth
Pleasure, that divinest birth,
From the soil of Heaven did rise,
Wrapped in sweet wild melodies—
Like an exhalation wreathing
To the sound of air low-breathing
Through Aeolian pines, which make
A shade and shelter to the lake.

Whence it rises soft and slow;
Her life-breathing limbs did flow
In the harmony divine
Of an ever-lengthening line
Which enwrapped her perfect form
With a beauty clear and warm.

FRAGMENT: LOVE THE UNIVERSE TO-DAY

And who feels discord now or sorrow?
Love is the universe to-day—
These are the slaves of dim to-morrow,
Darkening Life's labyrinthine way.

FRAGMENT: 'A GENTLE STORY OF TWO LOVERS YOUNG'

A gentle story of two lovers young,
Who met in innocence and died in sorrow,
And of one selfish heart, whose rancour clung
Like curses on them; are ye slow to borrow
The lore of truth from such a tale?
Or in this world's deserted vale,
Do ye not see a star of gladness
Pierce the shadows of its sadness,—
When ye are cold, that love is a light sent
From Heaven, which none shall quench, to cheer the innocent?

FRAGMENT: LOVE'S TENDER ATMOSPHERE

There is a warm and gentle atmosphere
About the form of one we love, and thus
As in a tender mist our spirits are
Wrapped in the of that which is to us
The health of life's own life—

FRAGMENT: WEDDED SOULS

I am as a spirit who has dwelt
Within his heart of hearts, and I have felt
His feelings, and have thought his thoughts, and known
The inmost converse of his soul, the tone
Unheard but in the silence of his blood,
When all the pulses in their multitude
Image the trembling calm of summer seas.
I have unlocked the golden melodies
Of his deep soul, as with a master-key,
And loosened them and bathed myself therein—
Even as an eagle in a thunder-mist
Clothing his wings with lightning.

FRAGMENT: 'IS IT THAT IN SOME BRIGHTER SPHERE'

Is it that in some brighter sphere
We part from friends we meet with here?
Or do we see the Future pass
Over the Present's dusky glass?

FRAGMENT: SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY

Is not to-day enough? Why do I peer
Into the darkness of the day to come?
Is not to-morrow even as yesterday?
And will the day that follows change thy doom?
SHELLEY

Few flowers grow upon thy wintry way;
And who waits for thee in that cheerless home
Whence thou hast fled, whither thou must return
Charged with the load that makes thee faint and mourn?

FRAGMENT: YE GENTLE VISITATIONS OF CALM THOUGHT

Ye gentle visitations of calm thought—
Moods like the memories of happier earth,
Which come arrayed in thoughts of little worth,
Like stars in clouds by the weak winds enwrought,—
But that the clouds depart and stars remain,
While they remain, and ye, alas, depart!

FRAGMENT: MUSIC AND SWEET POETRY

How sweet it is to sit and read the tales
Of mighty poets and to hear the while
Sweet music, which when the attention fails
Fills the dim pause—

FRAGMENT: THE SEPULCHRE OF MEMORY

And where is truth? On tombs? for such to thee
Has been my heart—and thy dead memory
Has lain from childhood, many a changeful year,
Unchangeingly preserved and buried there.

FRAGMENT: WHEN A LOVER CLASPS HIS FAIREST

I

When a lover clasps his fairest,
Then be our dread sport the rarest,
Their caresses were like the chaff
In the tempest, and be our laugh
His despair—her epitaph!

II

When a mother clasps her child,
Watch till dusty Death has piled
His cold ashes on the clay;
She has loved it many a day—
She remains,—it fades away.

FRAGMENT: WAKE THE SERPENT NOT

Wake the serpent not—lest he
Should not know the way to go—
Let him crawl which yet lies sleeping
Through the deep grass of the meadow!
Not a bee shall hear him creeping,
Not a may-fly shall awaken
From its cradling blue-bell shaken,
Not the starlight as he's sliding
Through the grass with silent gliding.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1819

FRAGMENT: RAIN

The fitful alternations of the rain,
When the chill wind, languid as with pain
Of its own heavy moisture, here and there
Drives through the gray and beamless atmosphere.

FRAGMENT: A TALE UNTOLD

One sung of thee who left the tale untold,
Like the false dawns which perish in the bursting;
Like empty cups of wrought and faded gold,
Which mock the lips with air, when they are thirsting.

FRAGMENT: TO ITALY

As the sunrise to the night,
As the north wind to the clouds,
As the earthquake's fiery flight,
Ruin mountain solitudes,
Everlasting Italy,
Be those hopes and fears on thee.

FRAGMENT: WINE OF THE FAIRIES

I am drunk with the honey wine
Of the moon-unfolded egantine.
Which fairies catch in hyacinth bowls,
The hats, the dominces, and the noles
Sleep in the walls or under the award
Of the desolate castle yard;
And when 'tis split on the summer earth
Or its fumes arise among the dew,
Their jocund dreams are full of mirth,
They gibber their joy in sleep; for few
Of the fairies bear those bowels so new!

FRAGMENT: A ROMAN'S CHAMBER

I

In the cave which wild weeds cover
Wait for thine aethereal lover;
For the pallid moon is waning,
O'er the spiral cypress hanging
And the moon no cloud is staining.

II

It was once a Roman's chamber,
Where he kept his darkest revels,
And the wild weeds twin and clamber;
It was then a chasm for devils.
FRAGMENT: ROME AND NATURE

Rome has fallen, ye see it lying
Heaped in undistinguished ruin:
Nature is alone unifying.

VARIATION OF THE SONG OF THE MOON

(Prometheus Unbound, Act IV.)

As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it
beholds;

As a gray and empty mist
Lies like solid amethyst
Over the western mountain it enfolds,

When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow;
As a strain of sweetest sound
Wraps itself the wind around

Until the voiceless wind be music too;
As light dark, fian, and dull,
Basking in what is beautiful,
Is full of light and love—

CANCELLED STANZA OF THE MASK OF ANARCHY

(for which stanzas LXXVIII, LXXIX have been substituted.)

From the cities where from caves,
Like the dead from putrid graves,
Troops of starvelings gilding come,
Living Tenants of a tomb.

NOTE BY MRS. SHELLEY

Shelley loved the People; and respected them as often more virtuous,
as always more suffering, and therefore more deserving of sympathy,
than the great. He believed that a clash between the two classes of society
was inevitable, and he eagerly ranged himself on the people's side. He
had an idea of publishing a series of poems adapted expressly to commemo-
rate their circumstances and wrongs. He wrote a few; but, in those
days of prosecution for libel, they could not be printed. They are not
among the best of his productions, a writer being always shackled when
he endeavours to write down to the comprehension of those who could
not understand or feel a highly imaginative style; but they show his
earnestness, and with what heartfelt compassion he went home to the
direct point of injury—that oppression is detestable as being the parent
of starvation, nakedness, and ignorance. Besides these outpourings of
compassion and indignation, he had meant to adorn the cause he loved
with loftier poetry of glory and triumph: such is the scope of the Ode to
the Assertors of Liberty. He sketched also a new version of our national
anthem, as addressed to Liberty.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

THE SENSITIVE PLANT

PART FIRST

A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of Night.

And the spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rains wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loneliness;

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed,
Which unfolded the depth of her glowing breast
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare;
And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Maenad its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked, under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water-lilies lay tremulous,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden long and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bower of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flow'rets which, drooping as day drooped too,
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,

To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it),

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Smote smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun;

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant which could give small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
Received more than all, it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver,

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower;
Radiance and odour are not its dower;
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
It desires what it has not, the Beautiful!

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmuring:
The beams which dart from many a star
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar;

The plumèd insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears;

The quivering vapours of dim moonlight,
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
Move, as reeds in a single stream;

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from Heaven above,
And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, though less bright, was far more deep,
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,

And the beast, and the birds, and the insects were drowned
In an ocean of dreams without a sound;
Whose waves never mark, though they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness;

(Only overhead the sweet winging gale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fall,
And snatches of Elysian chant
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant); —

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest
Upgathered into the bosom of rest;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of Night.
SHELLEY

PART SECOND

There was a Power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling Grace
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind
Which, dilating, had moulded her rвен and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even:
And the meteors of that sublunar Heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when Night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth!

She had no companion of mortal race,
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes,
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise:

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted Heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Though the veil of daylight concealed him from her.

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed;
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,
That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her airy footstep trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm over the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder-showers.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and osier-bands;
If the flowers had been her own infants, she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore, in a basket of Indian wool,
Into the rough woods far aloof,—

In a basket, of grasses and wild-flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeres
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest Spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
All the sweet season of Summer tide,
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she died!

PART THIRD

Three days the flowers of the garden fair,
Like stars when the moon is awakened, were,
Or the waves of Baiæ, ere luminous
She floated up through the smoke of Vesúvius.

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chant,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the soles of the mourners, deep and low;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin-plank;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep.
Swift Summer into the Autumn flowed,
And frost in the mist of the morning rode,
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose-leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Paved the turf and the moss below.
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
Leaf by leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and gray, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind passed;
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the wingèd seeds,
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks
Were bent and tangled across the walks;
And the leafless network of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agars, and fungi, with mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated!

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water-snakes.

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill,
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crepied and flitted in broad noonday
Unseen; every branch on which they alit
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant, like one forbid,
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves, which together grew,
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn;
The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came; the wind was his whip:
One choppy finger was on his lip:
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles;

His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth, and the air, and the water bound;
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne
By the tenfold blasts of the Arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
Their decay and sudden flight from frost
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost!

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want:
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.
SHELLEY

First there came down a thawing rain
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again;
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew;
And a northern whirlwind, wandering about
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
Shook the boughs this laden, and heavy, and stiff,
And snapped them off with his rigid grip.
When Winter had gone and Spring came back
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck;
But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and darnels,
Rose like the dead from their ruined chambers.

CONCLUSION

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a Spirit sat,
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.
Whether that Lady's gentle mind,
No longer with the form combined
Which scattered love, as stars do light,
Fount sadness, where it left delight,
I dare not guess; but in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,
It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasing if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.
That garden sweet, that lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and colours there,
In truth have never passed away;
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.
For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change; their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being obscure.

A VISION OF THE SEA

'Tis the terror of tempest. The rags of the sail
Are flickering in ribbons within the fierce gale:
From the stark night of vapours the dim rain is driven,
And when lightning is loosed, like a deluge from Heaven,

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

She sees the black trunks of the waterpouts spin
And bend, as if Heaven was roaring in,
Which they seemed to sustain with their terrible mass
As if ocean had sunk from beneath them: they pass
To their graves in the deep with an earthquake of sound,
And the waves and the thunders, made silent around,
Leave the wind to its echo. The vessel, now tossed
Through the low-trailing rack of the tempest, is lost
In the skirts of the thunder-cloud; now down the sweep
Of the wind-cloven wave to the chasm of the deep.
It sinks, and the walls of the waters vale
Whose depths of dread calm are unimoved by the gale,
Dim mirrors of ruin, hang gleaming about.
While the surf, like a chaos of stars, like a rout
Of death-flames, like whirlpools of fire-flowing iron,
With splendour and terror the black ship environ,
Or like sulphur-flakes hurled from a mine of pale fire
In fountains spout o'er it. In many a spire
The pyramid-billows with white points of brine
In the cope of the lightning inconstantly shine.
As piercing the sky from the floor of the sea.
The great ship seems splitting! it cracks as a tree,
While an earthquake is splintering its root, ere the blast
Of the whirlwind that stripped it of branches has passed.
The immense thunder-balls which are raining from Heaven
Have shattered its mast, and it stands black and riven
The chinks such destruction. The heavy dead hulk
On the living sea rolls an insatiate bulk,
Like a corpse on the clay which is hungering to fold
Its corruption around it. Meanwhile, from the hold,
One deck is burst up by the waters below,
And it splits like the ice when the thaw-breezes blow
Or the lakes of the desert! Who sits on the other?
Is that all the crew that lie burying each other,
Like the dead in a breach, round the foremost? Are those
Twin tigers, who burst, when the waters arose,
In the agony of terror, their chains in the hold;
(What now makes them tame, is what then made them bold;)
Who crouch, side by side, and have driven, like a crank,
The deep grip of their claws through the vibrating plank:—
Are these all? Nine weeks the tall vessel had lain
On the windless expanse of the watery plain,
Where the death-darting sun cast no shadow at noon,
And there seemed to be fire in the beams of the moon,
Till a lead-coloured fog gathered up from the deep,
Whose breath was quick pestilence; then, the cold sleep
SHELLEY

Crept, like blight through the ears of a thick field of corn,
Over the populous vessel. And even and morn,
With their hammocks for coffins the seamen aghast
Like dead men the dead limbs of their comrades cast
Down the deep, which closed on them above and around,
And the sharks and the dogfish their grave-clothes unbound,
And were glutted like Jews with this mammon rained down
From God on their wilderness. One after one
The mariners died; on the eve of this day,
When the tempest was gathering in cloudy array,
But seven remained. Six the thunder has smitten,
And they lie black as mummies on which Time has written
His scorn of the embalmer; the seventh, from the deck
An oak-splinter pierced through his breast and his back,
And hung out to the tempest, a wreck on the wreck,
No more? At the helm sits a woman more fair
Than Heaven, when, unbinding its star-braided hair,
It sinks with the sun on the earth and the sea.
She clasps a bright child on her upgathered knee;
It laughs at the lightning, it mocks the mixed thunder
Of the air and the sea, with desire and with wonder
It is becconing the tigers to rise and come near,
It would play with those eyes where the radiance of fear
Is outshining the meteors; its bosom beats high,
The heart-lore of pleasure has kindled its eye,
While its mother's is lustreless. 'Smile not, my child,
But sleep deeply and sweetly, and so be beguiled
Of the pang that awaits us, whatever that be,
So dreadful since thou must divide it with me!
Dream, sleep! This pale bosom, thy cradle and bed,
Will it rock thee not, infant? 'Tis beating with dread!
Alas! what is life, what is death, what are we,
That when the ship sinks we no longer may be?
What! to see thee no more, and to feel thee no more?
To be after life what we have been before?
Not to touch those sweet hands? Not to look on those eyes,
Those lips, and that hair,—all the smiling disguise
Thou yet wear'st, sweet Spirit, which I, day by day,
Have so long called my child, but which now fades away
Like a rainbow, and I the fallen shower?—Lo! the ship
Is settling, it topples, the leeeward ports dip;
The tigers leap up when they feel the slow brine
Crawling inch by inch on them; hair, ears, limbs, and eyes,
Stand rigid with horror; a loud, long, hoarse cry
Bursts at once from their vitals tremendously,
And 'tis borne down the mountainous vale of the wave,
Rebounding, like thunder, from crag to cave,

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

Mixed with the clash of the lashing rain,
Hurried on by the might of the hurricane:
The hurricane came from the west, and passed on
By the path of the gate of the eastern sun,
Transversely dividing the stream of the storm;
As an arrowy serpent, pursuing the form
Of an elephant, bursts through the brares of the waste.
Black as a cornonitor the screaming blast,
Between Ocean and Heaven, like an ocean, passed,
Till it came to the clouds on the verge of the world
Which, based on the sea and to Heaven upcurled,
Like columns and walls did surround and sustain
The dome of the tempest; it rent them in twain,
As a flood rends its barriers of mountainous crag:
The dense clouds in many a ruin and rag,
Like the stones of a temple ere earthquake has passed,
Like the dust of its fall, on the whirlwind are cast;
They are scattered like foam on the torrent; and where
The wind has burst out through the chasm, from the air
Of clear morning the beams of the sunrise flow in,
Unimpeded, keen, golden, and crystalline,
Banded armies of light and of air, at one gate
They encounter, but interpenetrate.
And that break in the tempest is widening away,
And the caverns of cloud are torn up by the day,
And the fierce winds are sinking with weary wings,
Lulled by the motion and murmuring
And the long glassy heave of the rocking sea,
And overhead glorious, but dreadful to see,
The wrecks of the tempest, like vapours of gold,
Are consuming in sunrise. The bearded waves behold
The deep calm of blue Heaven dilating above,
And, like passions made still by the presence of Love,
Beneath the clear surface reflecting it slide
Tremulous with soft influence; extending its tide
From the Andes to Atlas, round mountain and isle;
Round sea-birds and wrecks, paved with Heaven's azure smile,
The wide world of waters is vibrating. Where
Is the ship? On the verge of the wave where it lay
One tiger is mingled in ghastly affray
With a sea-snake. The foam and the smoke of the battle
Stain the clear air with sunbowes: the jar, and the rattle
Of solid bones crushed by the infinite stress
Of the snake's adamantine voluminoseness;
And the hum of the hot blood that spouts and rains
Where the gape of the tiger has wounded the veins
Swollen with rage, strength, and effort; the whirl and the splash
SHELLEY

As of some hideous engine whose brazen teeth smash
The thin winds and soft waves into thunder; the screams
And hissings crawl fast o'er the smooth ocean-streams,
Each sound like a centipede. Near this commotion,
A blue shark is hanging within the blue ocean
The fin-winged tomb of the victor. The other
Is winning his way from the fate of his brother
To his own with the speed of despair. Lo! a boat
Advances: twelve rowers with the impulse of thought
Urge on the keen keel,—the brine foams. At the stern
Three marksmen stand levelling. Hot bullets burn
In the breast of the tiger, which yet bears him on
To his refuge and ruin. One fragment alone,—
'Tis dwindling and sinking, 'tis now almost gone,—
Of the wreck of the vessel peers out of the sea.
With her left hand she grasps it impetuously,
With her right she sustains her fair infant. Death, Fear,
Love, Beauty, are mixed in the atmosphere,
Which trembles and burns with the fervour of dread
Around her wild eyes, her bright hand, and her head,
Like a meteor of light o'er the waters! her child
Is yet smiling, and playing, and murmuring; so smiled
The false deep ere the storm. Like a sister and brother
The child and the ocean still smile on each other,
Whilst——

THE CLOUD

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams,
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.
I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan against;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my säkley bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits;

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
While he is dissolving in rains.
The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead;
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orb'd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glistening o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes stirred;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the roof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.
I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,—
The mountains its columns be.
SHELLEY

The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-coloured bow;
The sphere—fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursing of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die,
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpredicated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou wingest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unembodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unheeded
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view!

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet
Those heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinking grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass:

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest—but ne'er knows love's sad safety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou corner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.
ODE TO LIBERTY

Yet, Freedom, yet, thy banner, torn but flying,
Streams like a thunder-storm against the wind.—Byron.

I
A GLORIOUS people vibrated again
The lightning of the nations: Liberty.
From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain,
Scattering contagious fire into the sky,
Gleamed. My soul spurned the chains of its dismay,
And in the rapid plumes of song
Clothed itself, sublime and strong,
(As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among.)
Flowering in verse o'er its accustomed prey;
Till from its station in the Heaven of fame
The Spirit's whirlwind rapped it, and the ray
Of the remotest sphere of living flame
Which paves the void was from behind it flung,
As foam from a ship's swiftwings, when there came
A voice out of the deep: I will record the same.

II
The Sun and the serenest Moon sprang forth:
The burning stars of the abyss were hurled
Into the depths of Heaven. The flaccid earth,
That island in the ocean of the world,
Hung in its cloud of all-sustaining air:
But this divinest universe
Was yet a chaos and a curse,
For thou wert not: but, power from worst producing worse,
The spirit of the beasts was kindled there,
And of the birds, and of the watery forms,
And there was war among them, and despair
Within them, raging without truce or terms:
The bosom of their violated nurse.
Groaned, for beasts warred on beasts, and worms on worms,
And men on men; each heart was as a hell of storms.

III
Man, the imperial shape, then multiplied
His generations under the pavilion
Of the Sun's throne: palace and pyramid,
Temple and prison, to many a swarming million
Were, as to mountain-wolves their ragged caves.
This human living multitude
Was savage, cunning, blind, and rude,
For thou wert not; but o'er the populous solitude,

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1810

Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves,
Hung Tyranny; beneath, safe dwelt
The sister-pest, congregator of slaves;
Into the shadow of her pinions wide
Anarchs and priests, who feed on gold and blood
Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,
Drove the astonished herds of men from every side.

IV
The nodding promontories, and blue isles,
And cloud-like mountains, and dividuous waves
Of Greece, basked glorious in the open smiles
Of favouring Heaven: from their enchanted caves
Prophetic echoes flung dim melody,
On the uncomprehending wild
The vine, the corn, the olive mild,
Grew savage yet, to human use unreconciled;
And, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea,
Like aught that is which wraps what is to be,
Art's deathless dreams lay veiled by many a vein
Of Parian stone; and, yet a speechless child,
Verse murmured, and Philosophy did strain
Her lidless eyes for thee; when o'er the Aegean main

V
Athens arose: a city such as vision
Builds from the purple crags and silver towers
Of battlemented cloud, as in derision
Of kingliest masonry: the ocean-floors
Pave it; the evening sky pavilions it;
Its portals are inhabited
By thunder-zoned winds, each head
Within its cloudy wings with sun-fire garlanded,—
A divine work! Athens, diviner yet,
Gleamed with its crest of columns, on the will
Of man, as on a mount of diamond, set;
For thou wert, and thine all-creative skill
Peopled, with forms that mock the eternal dead
In marble immortality, that hill
Which was thine earliest throne and latest oracle.

VI
Within the surface of Time's fleeting river
Its wrinkled image lies, as then it lay
Immovably unquiet, and for ever
It trembles, but it cannot pass away!
SHELLEY

The voices of thy bards and sages thunder
With an earth-awakening blast
Through the caverns of the past:
(Religion veils her eyes; Oppression shrinks aghast:)
A wingèd sound of joy, and love, and wonder,
Which soars where Expectation never flew,
Rending the veil of space and time asunder;
One ocean feeds the clouds, and streams, and dew;
One Sun illumines Heaven; one Spirit vast
With life and love makes chaos ever new,
As Athens doth the world with thy delight renew.

VII

Then Rome was, and from thy deep bosom fairest,
Like a wolf-cub from a Cadmean Maenad;
She drew the milk of greatness, though thy dearest
From that Elysian food was yet unweaned;
And many a deed of terrible uprightness
By thy sweet love was sanctified;
And in thy smile, and by thy side,
Saintly Camillus lived, and firm Aulus died.
But when tears stained thy robe of vestal whiteness,
And gold profaned thy Capitolian throne,
Thou didst desert, with spirit-wingèd lightness,
The senate of the tyrants: they sunk prone
Slaves of one tyrant: Falatinius sighed
Faint echoes of Ionian song: that tone
Thou didst delay to hear, lamenting to disown.

VIII

From what Hyrcanian glen or frozen hill,
Or piny promontory of the Arctic main,
Or utmost islet inaccessible,
Didst thou lament the ruin of thy reign,
Teaching the woods and waves, and desert rocks,
And every Nainad's ice-cold urn,
To talk in echoes sad and stern
Of that sublimest lore which man had dared unlearn?
For neither didst thou watch the wizard flocks
Of the Scauld's dreams, nor haunt the Druid's sleep.
What if the tears riined through thy shattered locks
Were quickly dried? for thou didst groan, not weep,
When from its sea of death, to kill and burn,
The Galilean serpent forth did creep,
And made thy world an indistinguishable heap.

1 See the Bacchan of Enniusides.—[Shelley's Note.]

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

X

A thousand years the Earth cried, 'Where art thou?'
And then the shadow of thy coming fell
On Saxon Alfred's olive-cinctured brow:
And many a warrior-peopled citadel,
Like rocks which fire lifts out of the flat deep,
Arose in sacred Italy,
Frowning o'er the tempestuous sea
Of kings, and priests, and slaves, and slaves, in tower-crowned majesty;
That multitudinous anarchy did sweep
And burst around their walls, like idle foam,
Whilst from the human spirit's deepest deep
Strange melody with love and awe struck dumb
Dissonant arms; and Art, which cannot die.
With divine wand traced on our earthly home
Fit imagery to pave Heaven's everlasting dome.

X

Thou huntress swifter than the Moon! thou terror
Of the world's wolves! thou bearer of the quiver,
Whose sunlike shafts pierce tempest-wingèd Error,
As light may pierce the clouds when they disperse
In the calm regions of the orient day!
Luther caught thy wakening glance;
Like lightning, from his leader lance
Reflected, it dissolved the visions of the trance
In which, as in a tomb, the nations lay;
And England's prophets hailed thee as their queen,
In songs whose music cannot pass away,
Though it must flow forever: not unseen
Before the spirit-sighted countenance
Of Milton didst thou pass, from the sad scene
Beyond whose night he saw, with a dejected men.

XI

The eager hours and reluctant years
As on a dawn-illumined mountain stood,
Trampling to silence their loud hopes and fears,
Darkening each other with their multitude,
And cried aloud, 'Liberty!' Indignation
Answered Pity from her cave;
Death grew pale within the grave,
And Desolation howled to the destroyer, Save!
When like Heaven's Sun girl by the exhalation
Of its own glorious light, thou didst arise,
Chasing thy foes from nation unto nation.
Like shadows: as if day had cloven the skies
At dreaming midnight o'er the western wave,
Men started, staggering with a glad surprise,
Under the lightnings of thine unfamiliar eyes.

XII
Thou Heaven of earth! what spells could pall thee then
In ominous eclipse? a thousand years
Bred from the slime of deep Oppression's den,
Dyed all thy liquid light with blood and tears,
Till thy sweet stars could weep the stain away;
How like Bacchanals of blood
Round France, the ghastly vintage, staid
Destruction's sceptred slaves, and Folly's mitred brood!
When one, like them, but mightier far than they,
The Anarch of thine own bewildered powers,
Rose: armies mingled in obscure array,
Like clouds with clouds, darkening the sacred bowers
Of serene Heaven. He, by the past pursued,
Rests with those dead, but unforgotten hours,
Whose ghosts scare victor kings in their ancestral towers.

XIII
England yet sleeps: was she not called of old?
Spain calls her now, as with its thrilling thunder
Venius wakest Aetna, and the cold
Snow-crags by its reply are cloven in sunder:
O'er the lift waves every Aeolian isle
From Pithecusa to Pelorus
Howls, and leaps, and glares in chorus:
They cry, 'Be dim: ye lamps of Heaven suspended o'er us!'
Her chains are threads of gold, she need but smile
And they dissolve: but Spain's were links of steel,
Till bit to dust by virtue's keenest lie.
Twins of a single destiny! appeal
To the eternal years enthroned before us
In the dim West; impress us from a seal,
All ye have thought and done! Time cannot dare conceal.

XIV
Tomb of Arminius! rend up thy dead
Till, like a standard from a watch-tower's staff,
His soul may stream over the tyrant's head;
Thy victory shall be his epitaph,
Wild Bacchanal of truth's mysterious wine,
King-deluded Germany,
His dead spirit lives in thee.
SHELLEY

He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor.
What if earth can clothe and feed
Amplest millions at their need,
And power in thought be as the tree within the seed?
Or what if Art, an ardent intercessor,
Driving on fiery wings to Nature's throne,
Checks the great mother stooping to caress her,
And cries: 'Give me, thy child, dominion
Over all height and depth? if Life can breed
New wants, and wealth from those who toil and groan,
Rend of thy gifts and hers a thousandfold for one!

XVIII

Come thou, but lead out of the inmost cave
Of man's deep spirit, as the morning-star
Beckons the Sun from the Eoan wave,
Wisdom. I hear the penons of her car
Self-moving, like cloud charioted by flame;
Comes she not, and come ye not,
Rulers of eternal thought,
To judge, with solemn truth, life's ill-portioned lot?
Blind Love, and equal Justice, and the Name
Of what has been, the Hope of what will be?
O Liberty! if such could be thy name
Wert thou disjoined from these, or they from thee:
If thine or theirs were treasures to be bought
By blood or tears, have not the wise and free
Wept tears, and blood like tears?—The solemn harmony

XIX

Paused, and the Spirit of that mighty singing
To its abyss was suddenly withdrawn;
Then, as a wild swan, when sublimely winging
Its path athwart the thunder-smoke of dawn,
Sinks headlong through the aereal golden light
On the heavy-sounding plain,
When the bolt has pierced its brain;
As summer clouds dissolve, unburnished of their rain;
As a far taper fades with fading night,
As a brief insect dies with dying day,—
My song, its pinions disarrayed of might,
Dropped; or 'tis closed the echoes far away
Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,
As waves which lately paved his watery way
Hiss round a drowning's head in their tempestuous play.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

I

I fear thy kisses, gentle maiden,
Thou needest not fear mine;
My spirit is too deeply laden
Ever to burden thee.

II

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,
Thou needest not fear mine;
Innocent is the heart's devotion
With which I worship thee.

ARETHUSA

I

Arethusa arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acrocorian mountains,—
From cloud and from crag, with many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks,
With her rainbow locks streaming among the streams;—
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams;
And gilding and springing
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep;
The Earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.

II

Then Alpheus bold
On his glacier cold,
With his trident the mountains strook;
And opened a chasm
In the rocks—-with the spasm
All Erymanthus shook.
And the black south wind
It unsheled behind
The urns of the silent snow,
And earthquake and thunder
Did rend in sunder
The bars of the springs below.
And the beard and the hair
Of the River-god were
Seen through the torrent's sweep,
As he followed the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

III

"Oh, save me! Oh, guide me!
And bid the deep hide me,
For he grasps me now by the hair!"
The loud Ocean heard,
To its blue depth stirred,
And divided at her prayer;
And under the water
The earth's white daughter
Fled like a sunny beam;
Behind her descended
Her billows, unblended
With the brackish Dorian stream:—
Like a gloomy stain
On the emerald main
Alpheus rushed behind,—
As an eagle pursuing
A dove to its ruin
Down the streams of the cloudy wind.
IV
Under the bower
Where the Ocean Powers
Sit on their pearl-fried thrones;
Through the coral woods,
Of the wailing floods.
Over heaps of unvalued stones:
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a network of coloured light;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night:
Outspeeding the shark,
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the Ocean's foam,
And up through the rifts
Of the mountain cliffs
They passed to their Dorian home.

V
And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning skies,
Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted,
They ply their watery tasks.
At sunrise they leap
From their cradles steep;
In the cave of the shelving hill;
At noonside they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of asphodel;
And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore;
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
When they love but live no more.

SONG OF PROSERPINE
WHILE GATHERING FLOWERS ON THE PLAIN OF ENNA

I
Sacred Goddess, Mother Earth,
Thou from whose immortal bosom
Gods, and men, and beasts have birth,
Leaf and blade, and bud and blossom,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

II
With mists of evening dew
Thou dost nourish these young flowers
Till they grow, in scent and hue,
Fairest children of the Hours,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

HYMN OF APOLLO

I
The sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie,
Curtained with star-inwoven tapestries
From the broad moonlight of the sky,
Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

Waken me when my Mother, the gray Dawn,
Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.

II
Then I arise, and climbing Heaven's blue dome,
I walk over the mountains and the waves,
Leaving my robe upon the ocean foam;
My footsteps pave the clouds with fire; the caves
Are filled with my bright presence, and the air
Leaves the green Earth to my embraces bare.

III
The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill
Deceit, that loves the night and fears the day;
All men who do or even imagine ill
Fly me, and from the glory of my ray
Good minds and open actions take new might,
Until diminished by the reign of Night.

IV
I feed the clouds, the rainbows and the flowers
With their aethereal colours; the moon's globe
And the pure stars in their eternal bowers
Are circled with my power as with a robe;
Whatever lamps on Earth or Heaven may shine
Are portions of one power, which is mine.

V
I stand at noon upon the peak of Heaven,
Then with unwilling steps I wander down
Into the clouds of the Atlantic even;
For grief that I depart they weep and frown:
What look is more delightful than the smile
With which I soothe them from the western isle?

VI
I am the eye with which the Universe
Beholds itself and knows itself divine;
All harmony of instrument or verse;
All prophecy, all medicine is mine,
All light of art or nature;—to my song
Victory and praise in its own right belong.
HYMN OF PAN

I
From the forests and highlands
We come, we come;
From the river-girt islands,
Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings.

The wind in the reeds and the
rushes,
6
The bees on the bells of thyme,
The birds on the myrtle bushes,
The cicale above in the lime,
And the lizards below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Timolus
was;
11
Listening to my sweet pipings.

II
Liquid Peneus was flowing,
And all dark Tempe lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
15
The light of the dying day,
Speeded by my sweet pipings.
The Sileni, and Sylvans, and
Fauns,
And the Nymphs of the woods
and the waves,
To the edge of the moist river-
lawns,
20
And the brink of the dewy caves;

And all that did then attend and
follow,
Wore silent with love, as you now,
25
Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.

III
I sang of the dancing stars,
I sang of the daedal Earth,
And of Heaven—and the giant
wars,
And Love, and Death, and
Birth,—
And then I changed my pipings,—
Singing how down the vale of Maen-
enus
I pursued a maiden and clasped
20
a reed.
Gods and men, we are all deluded
thus!
It breaks in our bosom and then
we bleed:
All wept, as I think both ye now
would,
If envy or age had not frozen your
blood,
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

THE QUESTION

I
I dreamed that, as I wandered by the way,
Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

II
There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearl of Arcturus of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets;
Faint oxalis; tender bluebells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets —
Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth—
Its mother's face with Heaven's collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

III
And in the warm hedge grew lush eglandine,
Green cowbrow and the moonlight-coloured may,
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray;
And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

IV
And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with white,
And starry river buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

V
Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come.
That I might there present it!—Oh! to whom?

THE TWO SPIRITS: AN ALLEGORY

First Spirit.
0 thou, who plumed with strong desire
Wouldst float above the earth, beware!
A Shadow tracks thy flight of fire—
Night is coming!
Bright are the regions of the air,
And among the winds and beams,
It were delight to wander there—
Night is coming!

Second Spirit.
The deathless stars are bright above;
If I would cross the shade of night,
Within my heart is the lamp of love,
And that is day!
And the moon will smile with gentle light
On my golden plumes where'er they move;
The meteors will linger round my flight,
And make night day.

First Spirit.
But if the whirlwinds of darkness waken
Hail, and lightning, and stormy rain;
See, the bounds of the air are shaken—
Night is coming!
The red swift clouds of the hurricane
Yon declining sun have overtaken,
The crash of the hall sweeps over the plain—
Night is coming!

Second Spirit.
I see the light, and I hear the sound;
I'll sail on the flood of the tempest dark,
With the calm within and the light around
Which makes night day:
And thou, when the gloom is deep and stark,
Look from thy dull earth, slumber-bound,
My moon-like flight thou then mayst mark
On high, far away.

Some say there is a precipice
Where one vast pine is frozen to ruin
O'er piles of snow and casms of ice
Mid Alpine mountains;
And that the languid shape in pursuing
That winged shape, for ever flies
Round those hour branches, aye renewing
Its airy fountains.

Some say when nights are dry and clear,
And the death-dews sleep on the morass,
Sweet whispers are heard by the traveller,
Which make night day:
And a silver shape like his early love doth pass
Uphorne by her wild and glittering hair,
And when he awakes on the fragrant grass,
He finds night day.

ODE TO NAPLES

I stood within the City disinterred;
And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls
Of spirits passing through the streets; and heard
The Mountain's slumberous voice at intervals
Thrill through those roofless halls;
The oracular thunder penetrating shook
The listening soul in my suspended blood;
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke—
I felt, but heard not:—through white columns glazed
The isle-sustaining ocean-flood,
A plane of light between two heavens of azure!
Around me gleamed many a bright sepulchre
Of whose pure beauty, Time, as if his pleasure
Were to spare Death, had never made erasure;
But every living lineament was clear
As in the sculptor's thought; and there
The wreaths of stony myrtle, ivy, and pine,
Like winter leaves overgrown by moulded snow,
Seemed only not to move and grow
Because the crystal silence of the air
Weighed on their life; even as the Power divine
Which then lulled all things, brooded upon mine.

Then gentle winds arose
With many a mingled close
Of wild Aeolian sound, and mountain-odours keen;
And where the Bafian ocean
Welters with strive like motion,
Within, above, around its bowers of stary green,
Moving the sea-flowers in those purple caves,
Even as the ever stormless atmosphere

2 The Author has connected many recollections of his visit to Pompeii and Baiae
With the enthusiasm excited by the intelligence of the proclamation of a Con-
stitutional Government at Naples. This has given a tinge of picturesque and
descriptive imagery to the introductory Epodes which depict these scenes, and
some of the majestic feelings permanently connected with the scene of this animat-
ing event.—[SHELLEY's Note.]

2 Pompeii.—[SHELLEY'S NOTE.]
SHELLEY

Floats o'er the Elysian realm.
It bore me, like an Angel, o'er the waves
Of sunlight, whose swift pinnacle of dewy air
No storm can overwhelm.
I sailed, where ever flows
Under the calm Serene
A spirit of deep emotion
From the unknown graves
Of the dead Kings of Melody.¹

Shadowy Aornos darkened o'er the helm
The horizontal aether; Heaven stripped bare
Its depth over Elysium, where the prow
Made the invisible water white as snow;
From that Týrphaean mount, Inaríme,
There streamed a sunbright vapour, like the standard
Of some aethereal host;
Whilst from all the coast,
Louder and louder, gathering round, there wandered
Over the oracular woods and divine sea
Prophesying which grew articulate—
They seize me—I must speak them!—be they fate!

STROPHIE I

Naples! thou Heart of men which ever pantest
Naked, beneath the lidless eye of Heaven!
Elysian City, which to calm enchantest
The mutinous air and sea! they round thee, even
As sleep round Love, are driven!
Metropolis of a ruined Paradise
Long lost, late won, and yet but half regained!
Bright Altar of the bloodless sacrifice,
Which armed Victory offers up unstained
To Love, the flower-enchanted!
Thou which wert once, and then didst cease to be,
Now art, and henceforth ever shalt be, free,
If Hope, and Truth, and Justice can avail,
Hail, hail, all hail!

STROPHIE II

Thou youngest giant birth
Which from the groaning earth
Leap'st, clothed in armour of impenetrable scale!
Last of the Intercessors!
Who against the Crowned Transgressors
Pleadest before God's love! Arrayed in Wisdom's mail,
Wave thy lightning lance in mirth

ANTISTROPHIE I α

What though Cimmerian Anarchys dare blaspheme
Freedom and thee? thy shield is as a mirror
To make their blind slaves see, and with fierce gleam
To turn his hungry sword upon the wearer;
A new Actaeon's error
Shall theirs have been—devoured by their own hounds!
Be thou like the imperial Basilisk
Killing thy foe with unapparent wounds!
Gaze on Oppression, till at that dread risk
Aghast she pass from the Earth's disk:
Fear not, but gaze—for freemen mightier grow,
And slaves more feeble, gazing on their foe:—
If Hope, and Truth, and Justice may avail,
Thou shalt be great.—All hail!

ANTISTROPHIE II α

From Freedom's form divine,
From Nature's inmost shrine,
Strip every impious gawd, rend Error veil by veil;
O'er Ruin desolate,
O'er Fals'hood's fallen state,
Sit thou sublime, be the Destroyer pale!
And equal laws be thine,
And winged words let sail,
Freighted with truth even from the throne of God:
That wealth, surviving fate,
Be thine.—All hail!

ANTISTROPHIE I β

Didst thou not start to hear Spain's thrilling paean
From land to land re-echoed solemnly,
Till silence became music? From the Aecean
² To the cold Alps, eternal Italy
Starts to hear thine! The Sea
Which paves the desert streets of Venice laughs
In light and music; widowed Genoa wan
By moonlight spells ancestral epitaphs,
Murmuring, 'Where is Doria?' fair Milan,
Within whose veins long ran

² Aéea, the island of Circe.—[SHELLEY'S NOTE.]
SHELLEY

The viper's palsy'ng venom, lifts her heel
To bruise his head. The signal and the seal
(If Hope and Truth and Justice can avail)
Art thou of all these hopes. O hail!

ANTISTROPHES II β

Florence! beneath the sun,
Of cities fairest one,
Blushes within her bower for Freedom's expectation:
From eyes of quenchless hope
Rome tears the priestly cope,

As ruling once by power, so now by admiration,—
An athlete stripped to run
From a remoter station
For the high prize lost on Philipp's shore;—
As then Hope, Truth, and Justice did avail,
So now may Fraud and Wrong! O hail!

EPISODE I β

Hear ye the march as of the Earth-born Forms
Arrayed against the ever-living Gods?
The crash and darkness of a thousand storms
Bursting their inaccessible abodes
Of crags and thunder-clouds?
See ye the banners blaze on to the day,
Inwrought with emblems of barbaric pride?
Dissentant threats kill Silence far away,
The serene Heaven which wraps our Eden wide
With iron light is dyed;
The Anarchs of the North lead forth their legions
Like Chaos o'er creation, uncreating;
An hundred tribes nourished on strange religions
And lawless slaveries,—down the aereal regions
Of the white Alps, descanting,
Famished wolves that bide no waiting,
Blotting the glowing footsteps of old glory,
Trampling our columned cities into dust,
Their dull and savage lust
On Beauty's corpse to sickness satiating—
They come! The fields they tread look black and hoary
With fire—from their red feet the streams run gory!

EPISODE II β

Great Spirit, deepest Love!
Which rulest and dost move

1 The viper was the armorial device of the Visconti, tyrants of Milan.—[Steele-
LEY'S NOTE.]
SHELLEY
To his dwelling;
Come, Months, come away;
Put on white, black, and gray;
Let your light sisters play—
Ye, follow the bier
Of the dead cold Year;
And make her grave green with tear on tear.

THE WANING MOON
And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapped in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky East,
A white and shapeless mass—

TO THE MOON

I
Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,—
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

II
Thou chosen sister of the Spirit,
That gazes on thee till in thee it pities . . .

DEATH

I
Death is here and death is there,
Death is busy everywhere,
All around, within, beneath,
Above is death—and we are death.

II
Death has set his mark and seal
On all we are and all we feel,
On all we know and all we fear,

III
First our pleasures die—and then
Our hopes, and then our fears—and when
These are dead, the debt is due,
Dust claims dust—and we die too.

IV
All things that we love and cherish,
Like ourselves must fade and perish;
Such is our rude mortal lot—
Love itself would, did they not.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

LIBERTY

I
The fiery mountains answer each other;
Their thunderings are echoed from one to one;
The tempestuous oceans awake one another,
And the ice-rocks are shaken round Winter's throne,
When the clarion of the Typhon is blown.

II
From a single cloud the lightening flashes,
Whilst a thousand isles are illumined around,
Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes,
An hundred are shuddering and tottering; the sound
Is bellowing underground.

III
But keener thy gaze than the lightening's glare,
And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp;
Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy stare
Makes blind the volcanoes; the sun's bright lamp
To thine is a fen-fire damp.

IV
From billow and mountain and exhalation
The sunlight is darted through vapour and blast;
From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,
From city to hamlet thy dawning is cast,—
And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night
In the van of the morning light.

SUMMER AND WINTER

It was a bright and cheerful afternoon,
Towards the end of the sunny month of June,
When the north wind congregates in crowds
The floating mountains of the silver clouds
From the horizon—and the stainless sky
Opens beyond them like eternity.
All things rejoiced beneath the sun; the weeds,
The river, and the corn-fields, and the reeds;
The willow leaves that glanced in the light breeze,
And the firm foliage of the larger trees.

It was a winter such as when birds die
In the deep forests; and the fishes lie
SHELLEY

Stiffened in the translucent ice, which makes
Even the mud and slime of the warm lakes
A wrinkled clad as hard as brick; and when,
Among their children, comfortable men
Gather about great fires, and yet feel cold:
Alas, then, for the homeless beggar old!

THE TOWER OF FAMINE

Amid the desolation of a city,
Which was the cradle, and is now the grave
Of an extinguished people,—so that Pity
Weeps o'er the shipwrecks of Oblivion's wave,
There stands the Tower of Famine. It is built
Upon some prison-homes, whose dwellers rave
For bread, and gold, and blood: Pain, linked to Guilt,
Agitates the light flame of their hours,
Until its vital oil is spent or split.
There stands the pile, a tower amid the towers
And sacred domes; each marble-ribbed roof,
The brazen-gated temples, and the bowers
Of solitary wealth,—the tempest-proof
Pavilions of the dark Italian air,—
Are by its presence dimmed—they stand aloof,
And are withdrawn—so that the world is bare;
As if a spectre wrapped in shapeless terror
Amid a company of ladies fair
Should glide and glow, till it became a mirror
Of all their beauty, and their hair and hue,
The life of their sweet eyes, with all its error,
Should be absorbed, till they to marble grew.

AN ALLEGORY

A PORTRAIT as of shadowy adamant
Stands yawning on the highway of the life
Which we all tread, a cavern huge and gaunt;
Around it rages an unceasing strife
Of shadows, like the restless clouds that haunt
The gap of some cleft mountain, lifted high
Into the whirlwinds of the upper sky.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

II

And many pass it by with careless tread,
Not knowing that a shadowy . . .
Tracks every traveller even to where the dead
Wait peacefully for their companion new;
But others, by more curious humour led,
Pause to examine,—these are very few,
And they learn little there, except to know
That shadows follow them wherever they go.

THE WORLD'S WANDERERS

I

Tell me, thou Star, whose wings of light
Speed thee in thy fiery flight,
In what cavern of the night
Will thy pinions close now?

II

Tell me, Moon, thou pale and gray
Pilgrim of Heaven's homeless way,
In what depth of night or day
Seest thou repose now?

III

Weary Wind, who wanderest
Like the world's rejected guest,
Hast thou still some secret nest
On the tree or hillow?

SONNET

Ye hasten to the grave! What seek ye there,
Ye restless thoughts and busy purposes
Of the idle brain, which the world's livery wear?
O thou quick heart, which pantest to possess
All that pale Expectation longed hath fair!
Thou vainly curious mind which wouldst guess
Whence thou didst come, and whither thou must go,
And all that never yet was known would know—
Oh, whither hasten ye, that thus ye press,
With such swift feet life's green and pleasant path,
Seeking, alike from happiness and woe,
A refuge in the cavern of gray death?
O heart, and mind, and thoughts! what thing do you
Hope to inherit in the grave below?
LINES TO A REVIEWER

Alas, good friend, what profit can you see
In hating such a harmless thing as me?
There is no sport in hate where all the rage
Is on one side: in vain would you assuage
Your frowns upon an unresisting smile,
In which not even contempt lurks to beguile
Your heart, by some faint sympathy of hate,
Oh, conquer what you cannot satiate!
For to your passion I am far more coy
Than ever yet was coldest maid or boy.
In winter noon. Of your antipathy
If I am the Narcissus, you are free
To pine into a sound with hating me.

FRAGMENT OF A SATIRE ON SATIRE

In gibbets, axes, confiscations, chains,
And racks of subtle torture, if the pains
Of shame, of fiery Hell's tempestuous wave,
Seen through the caverns of the shadowy grave,
Hurling the damned into the murky air
While the meek blest sit smiling: if Despair
And Hate, the rapid bloodhounds with which Terror
Hunts through the world the homeless steps of Error,
Are the secrets of the commonwealth
To make men wise and just; . . .
And not the sophisms of revenge and fear,
Bloodier than is revenge . . .
Then send the priests to every hearth and home
To preach the burning wrath which is to come,
In words like flakes of sulphur, such as thaw
The frozen tears . . .
If Satire's scourge could wake the slumbering hounds
Of Conscience, or erase the deeper wounds,
The leprous scars of callous Infamy;
If it could make the present not to be,
Or charm the dark past never to have been,
Or turn regret to hope: who that has seen
What Southey is and was, would not exclaim,
Lash on! be the keen verse dipped in flame;
Follow his flight with winged words, and urge
The strokes of the inexorable scourge
Until the heart be naked, till his soul
See the contagion's spots foul;
And from the mirror of Truth's sunlike shield,
SHELLEY

II

Solina, scura, cupa, senza speme,
La notte quando Lilla mi abbandona;
Fei cuori chi si batton insieme
Ogni notte, senza dirla, sarà buona.

iii

Come male buona notte si suona
Con sospiri e parole interrotte!—
Il modo di aver la notte buona
E mai non di dir la buona notte.

ORPHEUS

A. Not far from hence. From yonder pointed hill,
Crowned with a ring of oaks, you may behold
A dark and barren field, through which there flows,
Sluggish and black, a deep but narrow stream,
Which the wind ripples not, and the fair moon
Gazes in vain, and finds no mirror there.
Follow the herbless banks of that strange brook
Until you pause beside a darksome pond,
The fountain of this rivulet, whose gush
Cannot be seen, hid by a rayless night.
That lives beneath the overarching rock
That shades the pool—an endless spring of gloom,
Upon whose edge hovers the tender light,
Trembling to mingle with its paramour.—
But, as Syrinx fled Pan, so night flies day,
Or, with most sullen and regardless hate,
Refuses stern her heaven-born embrace.
On one side of this jagged and shapeless hill
There is a cave, from which there eddies up
A pale mist, like aereal gossamer,
Whose breath destroys all life—while it vails
The rock—then, scattered by the wind, it flies
Along the stream, or lingers on the clefts,
Killing the sleepy worms, if aught bide there.
Upon the beetle edge of that dark rock
There stands a group of cypresses; not such
As, with a graceful spine and stirring life,
Fierce the pure heaven of your native vale,
Whose branches the air plays among, but not
Disturbs, fearing to spoil their solemn grace;
But blasted and all wearily they stand,
One to another clinging; their weak boughs
Sigh as the wind buffets them, and they shake

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

Beneath its blast—a weatherbeaten crew!

Chorus. What wondrous sound is that, mournful and faint,
But more melodious than the murmuring wind
Which through the columns of a temple glides?
A. It is the wandering voice of Orpheus' lyre,
Borne by the winds, who sigh that their rude king
Hurries them fast from these air-feeding notes;
But in their speed they bear along with them
The waning sound, scattering it like dew
Upon the startled sense.

Chorus. Does he still sing?
Methought he rashly cast away his harp
When he had lost Eurydice.

A. Ah, no!

Awhile he paused. As a poor hunted stag
A moment shudders on the fearful brink
Of a swift stream—the cruel hounds press on.
With deepening yells, the arrows glance and wound,—
He plunges in: so Orpheus, seized and torn
By the sharp fangs of an insatiate grief,
Maenad-like waved his lyre in the bright air,
And wildly shrieked 'Where she is, it is dark!'
And then he struck from forth the strings a sound
Of deep and fearful melody. Alas!
In times long past, when fair Eurydice
With her bright eyes sat listening by his side,
He gently sang of high and heavenly themes.
As in a brook, fretted with little waves
By the light airs of spring—each riplet makes
A many-sided mirror for the sun,
While it flows musically through green banks,
Ceaseless and pauses, ever clear and fresh,
So flowed his song, reflecting the deep joy
And tender love that fed those sweetest notes,
The heavenly offspring of ambrosial food.
But that is past. Returning from dear Hell,
He chose a lonely seat of unhewn stone,
Blackened with lichens, a herbless plain.
Then from the deep and overflowing spring
Of his eternal ever-moving grief
There rose to Heaven a sound of angry song.
'Tis a mighty cataract that parts
Two sister rocks with waters swift and strong,
And casts itself with horrid roar and din
Adown a steep: from a perennial source
It ever flows and falls, and breaks the air
With loud and fierce, but most harmonious roar,
SHELLEY

And as it falls casts up a vaporous spray
Which the sun clothes in hues of Iris light.
Thus the tempestuous torrent of his grief
Is clothed in sweetest sounds and varying words
Of poesy. Unlike all human works,
It never slackens, and through every change
Wisdom and beauty and the power divine
Of mighty poesy together dwell,
Mingling in sweet accord. As I have seen
A fierce south blast tear through the darkened sky,
Driving along a rack of winged clouds,
Which may not pause, but ever hurry on,
As their wild shepherd wills them, while the stars,
Twinkling and dim, peep from between the plumes.
Anon the sky is cleared, and the high dome
Of serene Heaven, starred with fiery flowers,
Shuts in the shaken earth; or the still moon
Swiftly, yet gracefully, begins her walk,
Rising all bright behind the eastern hills.

I talk of moon, and wind, and stars, and not
Of song; but, would I echo his high song,
Nature must lend me words ne'er used before,
Of which I must borrow from her perfect works,
To picture each of his perfect attributes.
He does no longer sit upon his throne
Of rock upon a desert herbless plain,
For the evergreen and knotted flexes,
And cypresses that seldom wave their boughs,
And sea-green olives with their grateful fruit,
And vines dragging along the twisted vines,
Which drop their berries as they follow fast,
And blackthorn bushes with their Infant race
Of blushing rose-blooms; bees, to lovers dear,
And weeping willow trees; all swift or slow,
As their huge boughs or lighter dress permit,
Have circled in his throne, and Earth herself
Has sent from her maternal breast a growth
Of stelllike flowers and herbs of odour sweet,
To pave the temple that his poesy
Has framed, while near his feet grim lions couch,
And kids, fearless from love, creep near his lair.
Even the blind worms seem to feel the sound.
The birds are silent, hanging down their heads,
Perched on the lowest branches of the trees;
Not even the nightingale intrudes a note
In rivalry, but all entranced she listens.

FIORDISPINA

The season was the childhood of sweet June,
Whose sunny hours from morning until noon
Went creeping through the day with silent feet,
Each with its load of pleasure; slow yet sweet;
Like the long years of bliss Eternity
Never to be developed. Joy to thee,
Fiordispina and thy Cosimo.
For thou the wonders of the depth canst know
Of this unfathomable flood of hours,
Sparkling beneath the heaven which embowers—

They were two cousins, almost like to twins,
Except that from the catalogue of sins
Nature had raised their love—which could not be
But by discovering their nativity,
And so they grew together like two flowers
Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers
Lull or awaken in their purple prime,
Which the same hand will gather—the same clime
Shake with decay. This fair day smiles to see
All those who were—and who e'er loved like thee,
Fiordispina? Scarcely Cosimo,
Within whose bosom and whose brain now glow
The ardours of a vision which obscure
The very ideal of its portraiture.
He faints, dissolved into a sea of love;
But thou art as a planet spangled above;
But thou art Love itself—ruling the motion
Of his subjected spirit: such emotion
Must end in sin and sorrow, if sweet May
Had not brought forth this morn—your wedding-day.

Lie there; sleep awhile in your own dew,
Ye faint-eyed children of the Hours,
Fiordispina said, and threw the flowers
Which she had from the breathing—

A table near of polished porphyry.
They seemed to wear a beauty from the eye
That looked on them—a fragrance from the touch
Whose warmth checked their life: a light such
As sleepers wear, lulled by the voice they love,
which did reprove


SHELLEY

The childish pity that she felt for them,
And a remorse that from their stem
She had divided such fair shapes made
A feeling in the which was a shade
Of gentle beauty on the flowers; there lay.
All gems that make the earth’s dark bosom gay:
Rods of myrtle-lords and lemon-bloomers,
And that leaf tinted lightly which assumes
The livery of unremembered snow—
Violets whose eyes have drunk—

Fiordispina and her nurse are now
Upon the steps of the high portico;
Under the withered arm of Media.
She flings her glowing arm

step by step and stair by stair,
That withered woman, gray and white and brown—

More like a trunk by lichens overgrown
Than anything which once could have been human.
And ever as she goes the palsied woman

‘How slow and painfully you seem to walk,
Poor Media! you tire yourself with talk.’
‘And well it may,
Fiordispina, dearest—well-a-day!
You are hastening to a marriage-bed;
I to the grave!’—And if my love were dead,
Unless my heart deceives me, I would lie
Beside him in my shroud as willingly
As now in the gay night-dress Lilla wrought.’
‘Fie, child! Let that unseasonable thought
Not be remembered till it snows in June;
Such fancies are a music out of tune
With the sweet dance your heart must keep to-night.
What! would you take all beauty and delight
Back to the Paradise from which you sprung,
And leave to grosser mortals?
And say, sweet lamb, would you not learn the sweet
And subtle mystery by which spirits meet?
Who knows whether the loving game is played,
When, once of mortal [vesture] disarrayed,
The naked soul goes wandering here and there.
Through the wide deserts of Elysian air?
The violet dies not till it—

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

TIME LONG PAST

I

Like the ghost of a dear friend dead
Is Time long past.
A tone which is now forever died,
A hope which is now forever past,
A love so sweet it could not last,
Was time long past.

II

There were sweet dreams in the night
Of Time long past:

FRAGMENT: THE DESERTS OF DIM SLEEP

I went into the deserts of dim sleep—
That world which, like an unknown wilderness,
Bounds this with its recesses wide and deep—

FRAGMENT: ‘THE VIEWLESS AND INVISIBLE CONSEQUENCE’

The viewless and invisible Consequence
Watches thy goings-out, and comings-in,
And the hours over thy guilty sleep.
Unveiling every new-born deed, and thoughts
More ghastly than those deeds—

FRAGMENT: A SERPENT-FACE

His face was like a snake’s—wrinkled and loose
And withered—

FRAGMENT: DEATH IN LIFE

My head is heavy, my limbs are weary,
And it is not life that makes me move.

FRAGMENT: ‘SUCH HOPE, AS IS THE SICK DESPAIR OF GOOD’

Such hope, as is the sick despair of good,
Such fear, as is the certainty of ill,
Such doubt, as is pale Expectation’s food
Turned while she tastes to poison, when the will
Is powerless, and the spirit . . . .

And, was it sadness or delight,
Each day a shadow onward cast
Which made us wish it yet might last—
That Time long past.

III

There is regret, almost remorse,
For Time long past.
’Tis like a child’s belov’d corse
A father watches, till at last
Beauty is like remembrance, cast
From Time long past.
SHELLEY

FRAGMENT: 'ALAS! THIS IS NOT WHAT I THOUGHT LIFE WAS'

Alas! this is not what I thought life was,
I knew that there were crimes and evil men,
Misery and hate; nor did I hope to pass
Untouched by suffering, through the rugged glen.
In mine own heart I saw as in a glass
The hearts of others. And when
I went among my kind, with triple brass
Of calm endurance my weak breast I armed,
To bear scorn, fear, and hate, a woful mass!

FRAGMENT: MILTON'S SPIRIT

I dreamed that Milton's spirit rose, and took
From life's green tree his Uranian lute;
And from his touch sweet thunder flowed, and shook
All human things built in contempt of man,—
And sanguine thrones and impious altars quaked,
Prisons and citadels...

FRAGMENT: 'UNRISEN SPLENDOUR OF THE BRIGHTEST SUN'

Unrisen splendour of the brightest sun,
To rise upon our darkness, if the star
Now beckoning thee out of thy misty throne
Could thaw the clouds which wage an obscure war
With thy young brightness!

FRAGMENT: PATER OMNIPOTENS

Serene! in his unconquerable might
Endued[,] the Almighty King, his steadfast throne
Encompassed unapproachably with power
And darkness and deep solitude and awe
Stood like a black cloud on some airy cliff
Embosoming its lightning—in his sight
Unnumbered glorious spirits trembling stood
Like slaves before their Lord—prostrate around
Heaven's multitudes hymned everlasting praise.

FRAGMENT: TO THE MIND OF MAN

Thou living light that in thy rainbow hues
Clothest this naked world; and over Sea
And Earth and air, and all the shapes that be
In peopled darkness of this wondrous world

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

The Spirit of thy glory dost diffuse
truth thou Vital Flame
Mysterious thought that in this mortal frame
Of things, with unextinguished lustre burnest
Now pale and faint now high to Heaven upcurled
That eer as thou dost languish still returnest
And ever
Before the before the Pyramids

NOTE ON POEMS OF 1820, BY MRS. SHELLEY

We spent the latter part of the year 1819 in Florence, where Shelley
passed several hours daily in the Gallery, and made various notes on his
ancient works of art. His thoughts were a good deal taken up also by the
project of a steamboat, undertaken by a friend, an engineer, to ply be-
tween Leghorn and Marseilles, for which he supplied a sum of money.
This was a sort of plan to delight Shelley, and he was greatly disap-
pointed when it was thrown aside.

There was something in Florence that disagreed excessively with his
health, and he suffered far more pain than usual; so much so that we left
it sooner than we intended, and removed to Pisa, where we had some
friends, and, above all, where we could consult the celebrated Vaccaré
as to the cause of Shelley's sufferings. He, like every other medical man,
could only guess at that, and gave little hope of immediate relief; he
enjoined him to abstain from all physicians and medicine, and to leave
his complaint to Nature. As he had vainly consulted medical men of the
highest repute in England, he was easily persuaded to adopt this advice.
Pain and ill-health followed him to the end; but the residence at Pisa
agreed with him better than any other, and there in consequence we
remained.

In the Spring we spent a week or two near Leghorn, borrowing the
house of some friends who were absent on a journey to England. It was
on a beautiful summer evening, while wandering among the lanes whose
myrtle-hedges were the bowers of the fire-flies, that we heard the carolling
of the skylark which inspired one of the most beautiful of his poems. He
addressed the letter to Mrs. Gisborne from this house, which was hers:
he had made his study of the workshop of her son, who was an engineer.
Mrs. Gisborne had been a friend of my father in her younger days. She
was a lady of great accomplishments, and charming from her frank and
affectionate nature. She had the most intense love of knowledge, a delicate
and trembling sensibility, and preserved freshness of mind after a life
of considerable adversity. As a favourite friend of my father, we had sought her with eagerness; and the most open and cordial friendship was established between us.

Our stay at the Baths of San Giuliano was shortened by an accident. At the foot of our garden ran the canal that communicated between the Serchio and the Arno. The Serchio overflowed its banks, and, breaking its bounds, this canal also overflowed; all this part of the country is below the level of its rivers, and the consequence was that it was speedily flooded. The rising waters filled the Square of the Baths, in the lower part of which our house was situated. The canal overflowed in the garden behind; the rising waters on either side at last burst open the doors, and, meeting in the house, rose to the height of six feet. It was a picturesque sight at night to see the peasants driving the cattle from the plains below to the hills above the Baths. A fire was kept up to guide them across the ford; and the forms of the men and the animals showed in dark relief against the red glare of the flame, which was reflected again in the waters that filled the Square.

We then removed to Pisa, and took up our abode there for the winter. The extreme mildness of the climate suited Shelley, and his solitude was enlivened by an intercourse with several intimate friends. Chance cast us strangely enough on this quiet half-unpeopled town; but its very peace suited Shelley. Its river, the near mountains, and not distant sea, added to its attractions, and were the objects of many delightful excursions. We feared the south of Italy, and a hotter climate, on account of our child; our former bereavement inspiring us with terror. We seemed to take root here, and moved little afterwards; often, indeed, entertaining projects for visiting other parts of Italy, but still delaying. But for our fears on account of our child, I believe we should have wandered over the world, both being passionately fond of travelling. But human life, besides its great unstable necessities, is ruled by a thousand ill-purposed ties that shackle at the time, although it is difficult to account afterwards for their influence over our destiny.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821

DIRGE FOR THE YEAR

I
Orphan Hours, the Year is dead,
Come and sigh, come and weep!
Merry Hours, smile instead,
For the Year is but asleep.
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.

II
As an earthquake rocks a corpse
In its coffin in the clay,
So white Winter, that rough nurse,
Rocks the death-cold Year.
Solemn Hours! wall aloud
For your mother in her shroud.

III
When I arose and saw the dawn,
15 I sighed for thee;

IV
January gray is here,
Like a sexton by her grave; 20
February bears the bier,
March with grief doth howl and rave,
And April weeps—but, O ye Hours!
Follow with May's fairest flowers.

TO NIGHT

I
Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone day-light,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear—
Which make thee terrible and dear—
Swift be thy flight!

II
Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-imwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
10 Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

III
When I arose and saw the dawn,
15 I sighed for thee;

TIME

Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!
Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
SHELLEY

Claspest the limits of mortality,
And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
Vomittest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore;
Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?

LINES

Far, far away, O ye
Halcyons of Memory,
Seek some far calmer nest
Than this abandoned breast!
No news of your false spring
To my heart's winter bring,
Once having gone, in vain
Ye come again.

FROM THE ARABIC: AN IMITATION

I
My faint spirit was sitting in the light
Of thy looks, my love;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon
For the brooks, my love.
Thy barb whose hoofs outspeed the tempest's flight
Bore thee far from me;
My heart, for my weak feet were weary soon,
Did companion thee.

II
Ah! fleeter far than fleeter storm or steed,
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care;
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.

TO EMILIA VIVIANI

I
Madonna, wherefore hast thou sent to me
Sweet-basil and mignonette?
Emblem love and health, which never yet
In the same wreath might be.

II
The waters are flashing,
The white hail is dashing,
The lightnings are glancing,
The hoar-spray is dancing—
Away!

The whirlwind is rolling,
The thunder is tolling,
The forest is swaying,
The minster bells ringing—
Come away!

The Earth is like Ocean,
Wreck-strewn and in motion:
Bird, beast, man and worm
Have crept out of the storm—
Come away!

IV
Our boat has one sail,
And the helmsman is pale;—
A bold pilot I tow,
Who should follow us now,—
Shouted he—

And she cried: 'Fly the sea!
Put off guilty from shore!'—
As she spoke, bolts of death
Mixed with hail, specked their path
O'er the sea.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821

Alas, and they are wet!
Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?
For never rain or dew
Such fragrance drew
From plant or flower—the very doubt endears
My sadness ever new,
The sighs I breathe, the tears I shed for thee.

Send the stars light, but send not love to me,
In whom love ever made
Health like a heap of embers soon to fade—

The Fugitives

I
And from isle, tower and rock,
The blue beacon-cloud broke,
And though dumb in the blast,
The red cannon flashed fast
From the lee.

III
And 'Fear'st thou?' and 'Fear'st thou?'
And 'Seest thou?' and 'Hear'st thou?'

And 'Drive we not free
O'er the terrible sea,
I and thou?'

One boat-cloak did cover
The loved and the lover—
Their blood beats one measure,
They murmur proud pleasure
Soft and low;—

While around the lashed Ocean,
Like mountains in motion,
Is withdrawn and uplifted,
Sunk, shattered and shifted
To and fro.

IV
In the court of the fortress
Beside the pale portress,
Like a bloodhound well beaten
The bridgework stands, eaten
By shame;
PITY then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight!
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,
And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

I love snow, and all the forms
Of the radiant frost;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
Everything almost
Which is Nature's, and may be Untainted by man's misery.

I love tranquil solitude, And such society As is quiet, wise, and good; Between thee and me What difference? but thou dost possess The things I seek, not love them less.

TO
Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.
Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

RARELY, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight! Wherefore hast thou left me now Many a day and night? Many a weary night and day 'Tis since thou art fled away.

How shall ever one like me Win thee back again? With the joyous and the free Thou wilt scoff at pain. Spirit false! thou hast forgot All but those who need thee not.

As a lizard with the shade Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed; Even the sighs of grief Reproach thee, that thou art not near, And reproach thou wilt not hear.

Let me set my mournful ditty To a merry measure; Thou wilt never come for pity, Thou wilt come for pleasure; And with curses as wild As e'er clung to child, He devotes to the blast, The best, loveliest and last Of his name!
POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821

II

Sad Aziola! many an eventide
Thy music I had heard
By wood and stream, meadow and mountain-side,
And fields and marshes wide,—
Such as not voice, nor lute, nor wind, nor bird,
The soul ever stirred;
Unlike and far sweeter than them all.
Sad Aziola! from that moment I
Loved thee and thy sad cry.

A LAMENT

I

O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!

II

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more!

REMEMBRANCE

I

Swifter far than summer's flight—
Swifter far than youth's delight—
Swifter far than happy night,
Art thou come and gone—
As the earth when leaves are dead,
As the night when sleep is sped,
As the heart when joy is fled,
I am left lone, alone.

II

To fly with thee, false as thou—
My heart each day desires the morrow;
Sleep itself is turned to sorrow;
Vainly would my winter borrow
Sunny leaves from any bough.

Lilies for a bridal bed—
Roses for a matron's head—
Violets for a maiden's dead—
Pansies let my flowers be:
On the living grave I bear
Scatter them without a tear—
Let no friend, however dear,
Waste one hope, one fear for me.
SHELLEY

TO EDWARD WILLIAMS

I

The serpent is shut out from Paradise,
The wounded deer must seek the herb no more
In which its heart-cure lies:
The widowed dove must cease to haunt a bower
Like that from which its mate with feigned sighs
Fled in the April hour.
I too must seldom seek again
Near happy friends a mitigated pain.

II

Of hatred I am proud,—with scorn content;
Indifference, that once hurt me, now is grown
Itself indifferent;
But, not to speak of love, pity alone
Can break a spirit already more than bent.
The miserable one
Turns the mind’s poison into food,—
Its medicine is tears,——its evil good.

III

Therefore, if now I see you seldom,
Dear friends, dear [friend], know that I only fly
Your looks, because they stir
Griefs that should sleep, and hopes that cannot die:
The very comfort that they minister
I scarce can bear, yet I
So deeply is the arrow gone,
Should quickly perish if it were withdrawn.

IV

When I return to my cold home, you ask
Why I am not as I have ever been,
You spoil me for the task
Of acting a forced part in life’s dull scene,—
Of wearing on my brow the idle mask
Of author, great or mean,
In the world’s carnival. I sought
Peace thus, and but in you I found it not.

V

Full half an hour, to-day, I tried my lot
With various flowers, and every one still said,
‘She loves me—loves me not.’
And if this meant a vision long since fled—
If it meant fortune, fame, or peace of thought—
If it meant,—but I dread

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821

VI

The crane o’er seas and forests seeks her home;
No bird so wild but has its quiet nest,
When it no more would roam:
The sleepless billows on the ocean’s breast
Break like a bursting heart, and die in foam,
And thus at length find rest:
Doubtless there is a place of peace
Where my weak heart and all its throbs will cease.

VII

I asked her, yesterday, if she believed
That I had resolution. One who had
Would ne’er have thus relieved
His heart with words,—but what his judgement bade
Would do, and leave the scorrer unrelieved.
These verses are too sad
To send to you, but that I know,
Happy yourself, you feel another’s woe.

TO

I

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smoother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

II

When passion’s trance is overpast,
If tenderness and truth could last,
Or live, whilst all wild feelings keep
Some mortal slumber, dark and deep,
I should not weep, I should not weep!

III

It were enough to feel, to see,
Thy soft eyes gazing tenderly,
A BRIDAL SONG

Let eyes not see their own delight;—
Haste, swift hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.

Fairies, sprites, and angels, keep her!
Holy stars, permit no wrong!
And return to wake the sleeper,
Dawn,—ere it be long!
O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun!
Come along!

EPITHALAMIUM

ANOTHER VERSION OF THE PRECEDING

Hence, swift hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew.

Girls.

O joy! O fear! what may be done
In the absence of the sun?
Come along!

Boys and Girls.

O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun!
Come along!

ANOTHER VERSION OF THE SAME

Boys Sing:

Nigh! with all thine eyes look down!
Darkness! weep thy holiest dew!
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Haste, coy hour! and quench all light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!
Haste, swift hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew!

Girls Sing.

Nay, return, Vesper! urge thy lazy car!
Swift unbar
The gates of Sleep!

Chorus.

The golden gates of Sleep unbar,
When Strength and Beauty, met together,
Kindle their image, like a star
In a sea of glassy weather.
May the purple mist of love
Round them rise, and with them move,
Nourishing each tender gem
Which, like flowers, will burst from them.
As the fruit is to the tree
May their children ever be!

LOVE, HOPE, DESIRE, AND FEAR

Also many there were hurt by that strong boy,
His name, they said, was Pleasure,
And near him stood, glorious beyond measure,
Four Ladies who possess all empery
In earth and air and sea,
Nothing that lives from their award is free.
Their names will I declare to thee,
Love, Hope, Desire, and Fear,
And they the regents are

Of the four elements that frame the heart,
And each diversely exercised art
By force or circumstance or slight
To prove her dreadful might
Upon that poor domain.
Desire presented her [false] glass,
and then
The spirit dwelling there
Was spellbound to embrace what seemed so fair:
Within that magic mirror,
And dazed by that bright error,
It would have scorned the [ shafts]
of the avenger,  
And death, and penitence, and danger,
Had not then silent Fear
Touched with her palkying spear,
So that as if a frozen torrent
The blood was curdled in its current;
It dared not speak, even in look or motion,
But chained within itself its proud devotion.
Between Desire and Fear thou wert
A wretched thing, poor heart!
Sad was his life who bore thee in his breast,
Wild bird for that weak nest.
Till Love even from fierce Desire it bought,
And from the very wound of tender thought
Drew solace, and the pity of sweet eyes
Came strength to bear those gentle agonies,

Surmount the loss, the terror, and the sorrow.
Then Hope approached, she who can borrow
For poor to-day, from rich to morrow.
And Fear withdrew, as night when day
Descends upon the orient ray.
And after long and vain endurance
The poor heart woke to her assurance.
—At one birth these four were born
With the world's forgotten men,
And from Pleasure still they hold,
All it circles, as of old.
When, as summer lures the swallow,
Pleasure lures the heart to follow.
O weak heart of little wit!
The fair hand that wounded it.
Seeking, like a panting hare,
Refuge in the lynx's lair.
Love, Desire, Hope, and Fear,
Ever will be near.

FRAGMENTS WRITTEN FOR HELLAS

I
FAIREST of the Destinies,
Disarray thy dazzling eyes:
Keener far thy lightnings are
Than the winged [ bolts] thou bearest,
And the smile thou wearest
Wraps thee as a star
Is wrapped in light.

II
Could Arethusa to her forsaken urn
From Alpheus and the bitter Doris run,
Or could the morning shafts of purest light

Again into the quivers of the Sun
Be gathered—could one thought
From its wild flight
Return into the temple of the brain.
Without a change, without a stain,—
Could aught that is, ever again
Be what it once has ceased to be.
Greece might again be free!

III
A star has fallen upon the earth
Mid the benighted nations,
And as she passed, the diamonds in her hair
Were mirrored in the polished marble stair
Which led from the cathedral to the street;
And ever as she went her light fair feet
Erased these images.

The bride-maidens who round her thronging came,
Some with a sense of self-rebuke and shame,
Envy the unenviable; and others
Making the joy which should have been another's
Their own by gentle sympathy; and some
Sighing to think of an unhappy home:
Some few admiring what can ever lure
Maidens to leave the heaven serene and pure
Of parents' smiles for life's great cheat; a thing
Bitter to taste, sweet in imagining.

But they are all dispersed—and, lo! she stands
Looking in idle grief on her white hands,
Alone within the garden now her own;
And through the sunny air, with jangling tone,
The music of the merry marriage-bells,
Killing the azure silence, sinks and swells;—
Absorbed like one within a dream who dreams
That he is dreaming, until slumber seems
A mockery of itself—when suddenly
Antonio stood before her, pale as she.
With agony, with sorrow, and with pride,
He lifted his wan eyes upon the bride,
And said—'Is this thy faith?' and then as one
Whose sleeping face is stricken by the sun
With light like a harsh voice, which bids him rise
And look upon his day of life with eyes
Which weep in vain that they can dream no more,
Ginevra saw her lover, and forbore
To shriek or faint, and checked the stifling blood
Rushing upon her heart, and unsubdued
Said—'Friend, if earthly violence or ill,
Suspicion, doubt, or the tyrannic will
Of parents, chance or custom, time or change,
Or circumstance, or terror, or revenge,
Or wildered looks, or words, or evil speech,
With all their stings and venom can impeach
Our love,—we love not—if the grave which hides
The victim from the tyrant, and divides
The cheek that whitens from the eyes that dart
Imperious inquisition to the heart

That is another's, could dissever ours,
We love not.——What! do not the silent hours
Beckon thee to Gherardi's bridal bed?
Is not that ring—a pledge, he would have said,
Of broken vows, but she with patient look
The golden circle from her finger took,
And said—'Accept this token of my faith,
The pledge of vows to be absolved by death;
And I am dead or shall be soon—my knell
Will mix its music with that merry bell,
Does it not sound as if they sweetly said
"We toll a corpse out of the marriage-bed'?!
The flowers upon my bridal chamber strewn
Will serve unfaded for my bier—so soon
That even the dying violet will not die
Before Ginevra.' The strong fantasy
Had made her accents weaker and more weak,
And quenched the crimson life upon her cheek,
And glazed her eyes, and spread an atmosphere
Round her, which chilled the burning noon with fear,
Making her but an image of the thought
Which, like a prophet or a shadow, brought
News of the terrors of the coming time.
Like an accusing branded with the crime
He would have cast on a beloved friend,
Whose dying eyes reproach not to the end
The pale betrayer—he then with vain repentance
Would share, he cannot now avert, the sentence—
Antonio stood and would have spoken, when
The compound voice of women and of men
Was heard approaching; he retired, while she
Was led amid the admiring company.
Back to the palace,—and her maidens soon
Changed her attire for the afternoon,
And left her at her own request to keep
An hour of quiet and rest,—like one asleep
With open eyes and folded hands she lay;
Pale in the light of the declining day.

Meanwhile the day sinks fast, the sun is set,
And in the lighted hall the guests are met;
The beautiful looked lovelier in the light
Of love, and admiration, and delight.
Reflected from a thousand hearts and eyes,
Kindling a momentary Paradise.
This crowd is safer than the silent wood,
Where love's own doubts disturb the solitude;
SHELLEY

On frozen hearts the fiery rain of wine
Falls, and the dew of music more divine
Temper the deep emotions of the time
To spirits cradled in a sunny clime:—
How many meet, who never yet have met,
To part too soon, but never to forget.
How many saw the beauty, power and wit
Of looks and words which ne'er enchanted yet;
But life's familiar veil was now withdrawn,
As the world leaps before an earthquake's dawn,
And unprophetic of the coming hours,
The main winds from the expanded flowers
Scatter their hoarded incense, and awaken
The earth, until the dewy sleep is shaken
From every living heart which it possesses,
Through seas and winds, cities and wildernesses,
As if the future and the past were all
Treasured 't the instant;—so Gherardil's hall
Laughed in the mirth of its lord's festival,
Till some one asked—'Where is the Bride?' And then
A bridesmaid went,—and ere she came again
A silence fell upon the guests—a pause
Of expectation, as when beauty awes
All hearts with its approach, though unheheld,
Then wonder, and then fear that wonder quelled;—
For whispers passed from mouth to ear which drew
The colour from the hearer's cheeks, and flew
Louder and swifter round the company;
And then Gherardil entered with an eye
Of ostentatious trouble, and a crowd
Surrounded him, and some were weeping loud.

They found Gineva dead! if it be death
To lie without motion, or pulse, or breath,
With waxen cheeks, and limbs cold, stiff, and white,
And open eyes, whose fixed and glassy light
Mocked at the speculation they had owned.
If it be death, when there is felt around
A smell of clay, a pale and icy glare,
And silence, and a sense that lifts the hair
From the scalp to the ankles, as it were
Corruption from the spirit passing forth,
And giving all it shrouded to the earth,
And leaving as swift lightning in its flight
Ashes, and smoke, and darkness: in our night
Of thought we know thus much of death,—no more
Than the unborn dream of our life before

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821

Their barks are wrecked on its inhospitable shore.
The marriage feast and its solemnity
Was turned to funeral pomp—the company,
With heavy hearts and looks, broke up; nor they
Who loved the dead went weeping on their way
Alone, but sorrow mixed with sad surprise
Loosened the springs of pity in all eyes,
On which that form, whose fate they weep in vain,
Will never, thought they, kindle smiles again.
The lamps which, half extinguished in their haste,
Gleamed few and faint o'er the abandoned feast,
Showed as it were within the vaulted room
A cloud of sorrow hanging, as if gloom
Had passed out of men's minds into the air.
Some few yet stood around Gherardil there,
Friends and relations of the dead,—and he,
A loveless man, accepted cordially
The consolation that he wanted not;
Awe in the place of grief within him wrought.
Their whispers made the solemn silence seem
More still—some wept,
Some melted into tears without a sob,
And some with hearts that might be heard to throb
Leaned on the table, and at intervals
Shuddered to hear through the deserted halls
And corridors the thrilling shrieks which came
Upon the breeze of night, that shook the flame
Of every torch and taper as it swept
From out the chamber where the women kept;—
Their tears fell on the dear companion cold
Of pleasures now departed; then was knelled
The bell of death; and soon the priests arrived,
And finding Death their penitent had shivered,
Returned like ravens from a corpse wherein
A vulture has just feasted to the bone.
And then the mourning women came—

THE DINGE

Old winter was gone
In his weakness back to the mountains hoar,
And the spring came down
From the planet that hovers upon the shore
Where the sea of sunlight encroaches
On the limits of wintry night;—
If the land, and the air, and the sea,
SHELLEY

Rejoice not when spring approaches,
We did not rejoice in thee,
Ginevra!

She is still, she is cold
On the bridal couch,
One step to the white deathbed,
And one to the bier,
And one to the charnel—and one, oh where?
The dark arrow fled
In the noon.

Ere the sun through heaven once more has rolled,
The rats in her heart
Will have made their nest,
And the worms be alive in her golden hair,
While the Spirit that guides the sun,
Sits throned in his flaming chair,
She shall sleep.

EVENING: PONTE AL MARE, PISA

I
The sun is set; the swallows are asleep;
The bats are fluttering fast in the gray air;
The slow soft toads out of damp corners creep,
And evening's breath, wandering here and there
Over the quivering surface of the stream,
Wakes not one ripple from its summer dream.

II
There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,
Nor damp within the shadow of the trees;
The wind is intermitting, dry, and light;
And in the inconstant motion of the breeze
The dust and straws are driven up and down,
And whirl'd about the pavement of the town.

III
Within the surface of the fleeting river
The wrinkled image of the city lay,
Inmouvably unquiet, and forever
It trembles, but it never fades away;
Go to the . . .
You, being changed, will find it then as now.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821

IV
The chasm in which the sun has sunk is shut
By darkest barriers of cinerous cloud,
Like mountain over mountain huddled—but
Growing and moving upwards in a crowd,
And over it a space of watery blue,
Which the keen evening star is shining through.

THE BOAT ON THE SERCHIO

Our boat is asleep on Serchio's stream,
Its sails are folded like thoughts in a dream,
The helm sways tily, hither and thither;
Dominic, the boatman, has brought the mast,
And the oars, and the sails; but 'tis sleeping fast,
Like a beast, unconscious of its tether.

The stars burnt out in the pale blue air,
And the thin white moon lay withering there;
To tower, and cavern, and rift, and tree,
The owl and the bat fled drowsily,
Day had kindled the dewy woods,
And the rocks above and the stream below,
And the vapours in their multitudes,
And the Apennine's shroud of summer snow,
And clothed with light of airy gold
The mists in their eastern caves unrolled.

Day had awakened all things that he,
The lark and the thrush and the swallow free,
And the milkmaid's song and the mower's scythe,
And the matin-bell and the mountain bee;
Fireflies were quenched on the dewy corn,
Glow-worms went out on the river's brink,
Like lamps which a student forgets to trim:
The beetle forgot to wind his horn,
The crickets were still in the meadow and hill;
Like a flock of rooks at a farmer's gun
Night's dreams and terrores, every one,
Fled from the brains which are their prey
From the lamp's death to the morning ray.

All rose to do the task He set to each,
Who shaped us to His ends and not our own;
The million rose to learn, and one to teach
What none yet ever knew or can be known,
And many rose.
SHELLEY

Whose woe was such that fear became desire;—
Melchior and Lionel were not among those;
They from the throng of men had stepped aside,
And made their home under the green hill-side.
It was that hill, whose intervening brow
Screens Lucca from the Pisani's envious eye,
Which the circumfluous plain waving below,
Like a wide lake of green fertility,
With streams and fields and marshes bare,
Divides from the far Apennines—which its
Islanded in the immeasurable air.

'What think you, as she lies in her green cove,
Our little sleeping boat is dreaming of?
'If morning dreams are true, why I should guess
That she was dreaming of our idleness,
And of the miles of watery way
We should have led her by this time of day.'—

'Never mind,' said Lionel,
'Give care to the winds, they can bear it well
About yon poplar-tops; and see
The white clouds are driving merrily,
And the stars we miss this morn will light
More willingly our return to-night.—
How it whistles, Dominic's long black hair!
List, my dear fellow; the breeze blows fair;
Hear how it sings into the air.—

'Of us and of our lazy motions,'
Impatiently said Melchior,
'If I can guess a boat's emotions;
And how we ought, two hours before,
To have been the devil knows where.
And then, in such transalpine Tuscan
As would have killed a Della-Cruscan,

So, Lionel according to his art
Weaving his idle words, Melchior said:
'She dreams that we are not yet out of bed;
We'll put a soul into her, and a heart
Which like a dove chased by a dove shall beat.'

'Ay, heave the ballast overboard,
And stow the eatacles in the aft locker,'
'Would not this keg be best a little lowered?
'No, now all's right.' 'Those bottles of warm tea—

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821

(Give me some straw)—must be stowed tenderly;
Such as we used, in summer after six,
To cram in great-coat pockets, and to mix
Hard eggs and radishes and rolls at Eton,
And, couched on stolen hay in those green harbours
Farmers called gaps, and we schoolboys called harbours,
Would feast till eight.'

With a bottle in one hand,
As if his very soul were at a stand,
Lionel stood—when Melchior brought him steady—
'Sit at the helm—fasten this sheet—all ready!
The chain is loosed, the sails are spread,
The living breath is fresh behind,
As, with dews and sunrise fed,
Comes the laughing morning wind;—
The sails are full, the boat makes head
Against the Serchio's torrent fierce,
Then flags with an intermittent course,
And hangs upon the wave, and stems
The tempest of the .
Which fervid from its mountain source
Shallow, smooth and strong doth come,—
Swift as fire, tempestuously
It sweeps into the afrighted sea
In morning's smile its eddies coil,
Its billows sparkle, toss and boil,
Torturing all its quiet light
Into columns fierce and bright.

The Serchio, twisting forth
Between the marble barriers which it clove
At Ripafraatta, leads through the dread chasm
The wave that died the death which lovers love,
Living in what it sought; as if this spasm
Had not yet passed, the toppling mountains cling,
But the clear stream in full enthusiasm
Fours itself on the plain, then wandering
Down one clear path of effluence crystalline
Sends its superficial waves, that they may fling
At Arno's feet tribute of corn and wine;
Then, through the pestilential deserts wild
Of tangled marsh and woods of stunted pine,
It rushes to the Ocean.
SHELLEY

MUSIC

I
I pant for the music which is divine,
My heart in its thirst is a dying flower;
Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine,
Loosen the notes in a silver shower;
Like a herbless plain, for the gentle rain,
I gasp, I faint, till they wake again.

II
Let me drink of the spirit of that sweet sound,
More, oh more,—I am thirsting yet;
It lessens the serpent which care has bound
Upon my heart to stifle it;
The dissolving strain, through every vein,
Passes into my heart and brain.

III
As the scent of a violet withered up,
Which grew by the brink of a silver lake,
When the hot noon has drained its dewy cup,
And mist there was none its thirst to slake—
And the violet lay dead while the odour flew
On the wings of the wind over the waters blue—

IV
As one who drinks from a charmed cup
Of foaming, and sparkling, and murmuring wine,
Whom, a mighty Enchantress filling up,
Invites to love with her kiss divine...

SONNET TO BYRON

[I am afraid these verses will not please you, but]
If I esteemed you less, Envy would kill
Pleasure, and leave to Wonder and Despair
The ministration of the thoughts that fill
The mind which, like a worm whose life may share
A portion of the unapproachable,
Marks your creations rise as fast and fair
As perfect worlds at the Creator's will,
But such is my regard that nor your power
To soar above the heights where others [climb],
Nor fame, that shadow of the unborn hour
Cast from the envious future on the time,
Move one regret for his unhonoured name
Who dares these words:—the worm beneath the God
May lift itself in homage of the God.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821

FRAGMENT ON KEATS

WHO DESIRED THAT ON HIS TOMB SHOULD BE INSCRIBED—

'HERE lieth One whose name was writ on water.'
But, ere the breath that could erase it blew,
Death, in remorse for that fell slaughter,
Death, the immortalizing winter, flew
Awhart the stream,—and time's printless torrent grew
Of Adonais!

FRAGMENT: 'METHOUGHT I WAS A BILLOW IN THE CROWD'

METHOUGHT I was a billow in the crowd
Of common men, that stream without a shore,
That ocean which at once is deaf and loud;
That I, a man, stood amid many more
By a wayside . . ., which the aspect bore
Of some imperial metropolis,
Where mighty shapes—pyramid, dome, and tower—
Gleamed like a pile of crags—

TO-MORROW

WHERE art thou, beloved To-morrow?
When young and old, and strong and weak,
Rich and poor, through joy and sorrow,
Thy sweet smiles we ever seek,—
In thy place—ah! well-a-day!
We find the thing we seek—To-day.

STANZA

If I walk in Autumn's even
While the dead leaves pass,
If I look on Spring's soft heaven,—
Something is not there which was.
Winter's wondrous front and snow,
Summer's clouds, where are they now?

FRAGMENT: A WANDERER

He wanders, like a day-appearing dream,
Through the dim wildernesses of the mind;
Through desert woods and tracts, which seem
Like ocean, homeless, boundless, unconfined.
FRAGMENT: LIFE ROUNDED WITH SLEEP
The babe is at peace within the womb;
The corpse is at rest within the tomb:
We begin in what we end.

FRAGMENT: 'I FAINT, I PERISH WITH MY LOVE!'
I faint, I perish with my love! I grow
Frail as a cloud whose [splendours] pale
Under the evening's ever-changing glow:
I die like mist upon the gale,
And like a wave under the calm I fail.

FRAGMENT: THE LADY OF THE SOUTH
FAINT with love, the Lady of the South
Lay in the paradise of Lebanon
Under a heaven of cedars boughs; the drought
Of love was on her lips; the light was gone
Out of her eyes—

FRAGMENT: ZEPHYRUS THE AWAKENER
Come, thou awakener of the spirit's ocean,
Zephyr, whom to thy cloud or cave
No thought can trace! speed with thy gentle motion!

FRAGMENT: RAIN
The gentleness of rain was in the wind.

FRAGMENT: 'WHEN SOFT WINDS AND SUNNY SKIES'
When soft winds and sunny skies
With the green earth harmonize,
And the young and dewy dawn,
Bold as an unhunted fawn,
Up the windless heaven is gone,—
Laugh—for ambushed in the day,—
Clouds and whirlwinds watch their prey.

FRAGMENT: 'AND THAT I WALK THUS PROUDLY CROWNED'
And that I walk thus proudly crowned withal
Is that 'tis my distinction; if I fall,
I shall not weep out of the vital day,
To-morrow dust, nor wear a dull decay.

FRAGMENT: 'THE RUDE WIND IS SINGING'
The rude wind is singing
The dirge of the music dead;
The cold worms are clinging
Where kisses were lately fed.

FRAGMENT: 'GREAT SPIRIT'
Great Spirit whom the sea of boundless thought
Nurtures within its unimagined caves,
In which thou sittest sole, as in my mind,
Giving a voice to its mysterious waves—

FRAGMENT: 'O THOU IMMORTAL DEITY'
O thou immortal deity
Whose throne is in the depth of human thought,
I do adjure thy power and thee
By all that man may be, by all that he is not,
By all that he has been and yet must be!

FRAGMENT: THE FALSE LAUREL AND THE TRUE
'What art thou, Presumptuous, who profanest
The wreath to mighty poets only due,
Even whilst like a forgotten moon thou wanest?
Touch not those leaves which for the eternal few
Who wander o'er the Paradise of fame,
In sacred dedication ever grew:
One of the crowd thou art without a name.'
'Ah, friend, 'tis the false laurel that I wear;
Bright though it seem, it is not the same
As that which bound Milton's immortal hair;
Its dew is poison; and the hopes that quicken
Under its chilling shade, though seeming fair,
Are flowers which die almost before they sicken.'

FRAGMENT: MAY THE LIMNER
When May is painting with her colours gay
The landscape sketched by April her sweet twin . . .

FRAGMENT: BEAUTY'S HALO
Tily beauty hangs around thee like
Splendour around the moon—
Thy voice, as silver bells that strike
Upon
FRAGMENT: 'THE DEATH KNELL IS RINGING'

The death knell is ringing
The raven is singing
The earth worm is creeping
The mourners are weeping
Ding dong, bell—

FRAGMENT: 'I STOOD UPON A HEAVEN-CLEAVING TURRET'

I stood upon a heaven-cleaving turret
Which overlooked a wide Metropolis—
And in the temple of my heart my Spirit
Lay prostrate, and with parted lips did kiss
The dust of Desolations [altar] hearth—
And with a voice too faint to falter
It shook that trembling flame with its weak prayer
'Twas noon,—the sleeping skies were blue
The city

NOTE ON POEMS OF 1821, BY MRS. SHELLEY

My task becomes inexpressibly painful as the year draws near that which sealed our earthly fate, and each poem, and each event it records, has a real or mysterious connexion with the fatal catastrophe. I felt that I am incapable of putting on paper the history of those times. The heart of the man, abbored of the poet, who could

'peep and botanize,

Upon his mother's grave,'

does not appear to me more inexplicably framed than that of one who can dissect and probe past woes, and repeat to the public ear the groans drawn from them in the throes of their agony.

The year 1821 was spent in Pisa, or at the Baths of San Julian. We were not, as our wont had been, alone; friends had gathered round us. Nearly all are dead, and, when Memory recurs to the past, she wanders among tombs. The genius, with all his blighting errors and mighty powers; the companion of Shelley's ocean-wanderings, and the sharer of his fate, than whom no man ever existed more gentle, generous, and fearless; and others, who found in Shelley's society, and in his vast knowledge and warm sympathy, delight, instruction, and solace; have joined him beyond the grave. A few survive who have felt life a desert since he left it. What misfortune can equal death? Change can convert every other into a blessing, or heal its sting—death alone has no cure. It shakes the foundations of the earth on which we tread; it destroys its beauty; it casts down our shelter; it exposes us bare to desolation. When those we love have passed into eternity, 'life is the desert and the solitude' in which we are forced to linger—but never find comfort more.
the part of the country where chance appeared to cast us. Sometimes he projected taking a farm situated on the height of one of the near hills, surrounded by chestnut and pine woods, and overlooking a wide extent of country: or settling still farther in the maritime Apennines, at Massa. Several of his slighter and unfinished poems were inspired by these scenes, and by the companions around us. It is the nature of that poetry, however, which overflows from the soul oftener to express sorrow and regret than joy; for it is when oppressed by the weight of life, and away from those he loves, that the poet has recourse to the solace of expression in verse.

Still, Shelley's passion was the ocean; and he wished that our summers, instead of being passed among the hills near Pisa, should be spent on the shores of the sea. It was very difficult to find a spot. We shrunk from Naples from a fear that the heat would disagree with Percy; Leghorn had lost its only attraction, since our friends who had resided there were returned to England; and, Monte Nero being the resort of many English, we did not wish to find ourselves in the midst of a colony of chance travellers. No one then thought it possible to reside at Via Reggio, which latterly has become a summer resort. The low lands and bad air of Maremma stretch the whole length of the western shores of the Mediterranean, till broken by the rocks and hills of Spezia. It was a vague idea, but Shelley suggested an excursion to Spezia, to see whether it would be feasible to spend a summer there. The beauty of the bay enchanted him. We saw no house to suit us; but the notion took root, and many circumstances, enchained as by fatality, occurred to urge him to execute it.

He looked forward this autumn with great pleasure to the prospect of a visit from Leigh Hunt. When Shelley visited Lord Byron at Ravenna, the latter had suggested his coming out, together with the plan of a periodical work in which they should all join. Shelley saw a prospect of good for the fortunes of his friend, and pleasure in his society; and instantly exerted himself to have the plan executed. He did not intend himself joining in the work: partly from pride, not wishing to have the air of acquiring readers for his poetry by associating it with the compositions of more popular writers; and also because he might feel shackled in the free expression of his opinions, if any friends were to be compromised. By those opinions, carried even to their utmost extent, he wished to live and die, as being in his conviction not only true, but such as alone would conduce to the moral improvement and happiness of mankind. The sale of the work might meanwhile, either really or supposably, be injured by the free expression of his thoughts; and this evil he resolved to avoid.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1822

THE ZUCCA

I

Summer was dead and Autumn was expiring,
And infant Winter laughed upon the land
All cloudlessly and cold;—when I, desiring
More in this world than any understand,
Wept o'er the beauty, which, like sea retiring,
Had left the earth bare as the wave-worn sand
Of my lorn heart, and o'er the grass and flowers
Paled for the falsehood of the flattering Hours.

II

Summer was dead, but I yet lived to weep
The instability of all but weeping;
And on the Earth hung in her winter sleep
I woke, and envied her as she was sleeping.
Too happy Earth! over thy face shall creep
The wakening vernal airs, until thou, leaping
From unremembered dreams, shalt see
No death divide thy immortality.

III

I loved—oh, no, I mean not one of ye,
Or any earthly one, though ye are dear
As human heart to human heart may be;—
I loved, I know not what—but this low sphere
And all that it contains, contains not thee,
Thou, whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.
From Heaven and Earth, and all that in them are,
Veiled art thou, like a star.

IV

By Heaven and Earth, from all whose shapes thou flowest,
Neither to be contained, delayed, nor hidden;
Making divine the loftiest and the lowest,
When for a moment thou art not forbidden
To live within the life which thou bestowest;
And leaving noblest things vacant and chidden,
Cold as a corpse after the spirit's flight,
Blank as the sun after the birth of night.
SHELEY

V
In winds, and trees, and streams, and all things common,
In music and the sweet unconscious tone
Of animals, and voices which are human,
Meant to express some feelings of their own;
In the soft motions and rare smile of woman,
In flowers and leaves, and in the grass fresh-shown,
Or dying in the autumn, I the most
Adore thee present or lament thee lost.

VI
And thus I went lamenting, when I saw
A plant upon the river's margin lie,
Like one who loved beyond his nature's law,
And in despair had cast him down to die;
Its leaves, which had outlived the frost, the thaw
Had blighted; like a heart which hatred's eye
Can blast not, but which pity kills; the dew
Lay on its spotted leaves like tears too true.

VII
The Heavens had wept upon it, but the Earth
Had crushed it on her unmaternal breast.

VIII
I bore it to my chamber, and I planted
It in a vase full of the lightest mould:
The winter beams which out of Heaven slanted
Fall through the window-panes, disrob'd of cold,
Upon its leaves and flowers; the stars which panted
In evening for the day, whose car has rolled
Over the horizon's wave, with looks of light
Smiled on it from the threshold of the night.

IX
The mitigated influences of air
And light revived the plant, and from it grew
Strong leaves and tendrils, and its flowers fair,
Full as a cup with the vine's burning dew,
O'erflow'd with golden colours; an atmosphere
Of vital warmth enfolded it anew,
And every impulse sent to every part
The unhealed pulsations of its heart.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1822

X
Well might the plant grow beautiful and strong,
Even if the air and sun had smiled not on it;
For one wept o'er it all the winter long
Tears pure as Heaven's rain, which fell upon it
Hour after hour; for sounds of softest song
Mixed with the stringed melodies that won it
To leave the gentle lips on which it slept,
Had loosed the heart of him who sat and wept.

XI
Had loosed his heart, and shook the leaves and flowers
On which he wept, the while the savage storm
Waked by the darkest of December's hours
Was raving round the chamber hushed and warm;
The birds were shivering in their leafless bower,
The fish were frozen in the pools, the form
Of every summer plant was dead . . .
Whilst this . . .

THE MAGNETIC LADY TO HER PATIENT

I
'Sleep, sleep on! forget thy pain;
My hand is on thy brow,
My spirit on thy brain;
My pity on thy heart, poor friend;
And from my fingers flow
The powers of life, and like a sign,
Seal thee from thine hour of woe;
And brood on thee, but may not blend
With thine.

II
'Sleep, sleep on! I love thee not;
But when I think that he
Who made and makes my lot
As full of flowers as thine of weeds,
Might have been lost like thee;
And that a hand which was not mine
Might then have charmed his agony
As I another's—my heart bleeds
For thine.

III
'Sleep, sleep, and with the slumber of
The dead and the unborn
Forget thy life and love;
Forget that thou must wake forever;
Forget the world's dull scorn;
Forget lost health, and the divine feelings which died in youth's brief morn;
And forget me, for I can never be thine.

IV
'Like a cloud big with a May shower,
My soul weeps healing rain
On thee, thou withered flower!
It breathes mute music on thy sleep;
Its odour calms thy brain!
Its light within thy gloomy breast
SHErley

Spreads like a second youth
again.
By mine thy being is to its deep 35
Possessed.

v
'The spell is done. How feel you
now?'
'Better—Quite well,' replied
The sleeper.—What would do 39

LINES: 'WHEN THE LAMP IS SHATTERED'

I
WHEN the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead—
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

II
As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes renders
No song when the spirit is mute:—
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

TO JANE: THE INVITATION

Best and brightest, come away!
Fairer far than this fair Day,
Which, like thee to these in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle on the brake.
The brightest hour of unborn Spring,
Through the winter wandering,

Found, it seems, the hyacinth pond
To hear February born.
Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,
It kissed the forehead of the Earth,
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free,

And waked to music all their fountains,
And breathed upon the frozen mountains,
And like a prophetess of May
Strewed flowers upon the barren way,
Making the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smiledst, dear.

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs—
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of Nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart,
I leave this notice on my door
For each accustomed visitor:
I am gone into the fields
To take what this sweet hour yields.—
Reflection, you may come to-morrow,
Sit by the fireside with Sorrow.
You with the unpaid bill,
Despair,—
You, tiresome verse-reciter,
Care,—
I will pay you in the grave,
Death will listen to your stave.
Expectation too, be off!

TO JANE: THE RECOLLECTION

I
Now the last day of many days,
All beautiful and bright as thou,
The loveliest and the last, is dead,
Rise, Memory, and write its praise!
Up—to thy wondering! Come on,
Trace the epitaph of glory fled,—

For now the Earth has changed its face,
A crown is on the Heaven's brow.

II
We wandered to the Pine Forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.
The magic circle there
Was one fair form that filled with love
The lifeless atmosphere.

We paused beside the pools that lie
Under the forest bough.—
Each seemed as were a little sky 65
Guised in a world below,
A firmament of purple light
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,
And purer than the day—
In which the lovely forests grew,
As in the upper air,
More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any spreading there.
There lay the glade and neighbouring lawn,
And through the dark green wood
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Out of a speckled cloud.
Sweet views which in our world above
Can never well be seen,
Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.
And all was interfused beneath
With an Elysian glow,
An atmosphere without a breath,
A softer day below
Like one beloved the scene had seen
To the dark water's breast,
Its every leaf and lineament
With more than truth expressed
Until an envious wind crept in,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from the mind's too faithful eye
Blots one dear image out.
Though thou art ever fair and kind,
The forests ever green,
Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind,
Than calm in waters, seen.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1822

THE PINE FOREST OF THE CASCADES NEAR PISA

Dearest, best and brightest,
Come away,
To the woods and to the fields!
Dearer than this fairest day
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle in the brake.
The eldest of the Hours of Spring,
Into the Winter wandering,
Looks upon the leafless wood,
And the banks all bare and rude;
Round, it seems, this halcyon Morn
In February's bosom born,
Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,
Kissed the cold forehead of the Earth.
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free;
And walked to music all the fountains,
And breathed upon the rigid mountains,
And made the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.
Radian this Day of the Year,
Awake! arise! and come away!
To the wild woods and the plains,
To the pools where winter rains
Image all the soft motion made
Where the pine its garland weaves
Unsleeping, gray, and jelly dumb
Round stems that never kiss the sun;
To the sandhills of the sea,
Where the earliest violets

The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the bosom of the deep
The smile of Heaven lay:
It seemed as if the hour were one
Sent from beyond the skies,
Which scattered from above the sun
A light of Paradise.

The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude
As serpents interlaced,
And soothed by every azure breath,
That under Heaven is blown,
To harmonies and hues beneath,
As tender as its own;
Now all the tree-tops lay asleep,
Like green waves on the sea,
As still as in the silent deep
The ocean woods may be.

How calm it was!—the silence there
By such a chain was bound
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound
The inviolable quietness.
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.
There seemed from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain waste,
To the soft flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced,—
A spirit interfused around,
A thrilling, silent life.—
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife;
And still I felt the centre of
Rise, Memory, and write its praise!
And do thy wonted work and trace
The epitaph of glory fled;
For now the Earth has changed its face,
A frown is on the Heaven's brow.
We wandered to the Pine Forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.
The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the woods, and on the deep
The smile of Heaven lay.
It seemed as if the day were one
Sent from beyond the skies,
Which shed to earth above the sun
A light of Paradise.
We paused amid the pines that stood,
The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude
With stems like serpents interlaced.
How calm it was—the silence there
By such a chain was bound
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound
The inviolable quietness.
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.

SHELLEY

A spirit interfused around,
A thinking, silent life;—
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife;—
And still, it seemed, the centre of
The magic circle there,
Was one whose being filled with love
The breathless atmosphere. 76

Were not the crocuses that grew
Under that hazel tree
As beautiful in scent and hue
As ever fed the bee? 80

We stood beneath the pools that lie
Under the forest bough,
And each seemed like a sky
Gulfed in a world below;
A purple firmament of light
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,
And clearer than the day—
In which the massy forests grew
As in the upper air,
More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any waving there.
Like one beloved the scene had lent
To the dark water's breast.

ITS EVERY LEAF AND LINEMENT 95
With that clear truth expressed;
There lay fair glades and neighbouring lawn,
And through the dark green crowd
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Under a speckled cloud. 100
Sweet views, which in our world above
Can never well be seen,
Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.
And all was interfused beneath 105
With an Elysian air,
An atmosphere without a breath,
A silence sleeping there.
Until a wandering wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from my mind's too faithful eye
Blots thy bright image out.
For thou art good and dear and kind,
The forest ever green,
But less of peace in S—'s mind,
Than calm in waters, seen. 115

WITH A GUITAR, TO JANE

Ariel to Miranda:—Take
This slave of Music, for the sake
Of him who is the slave of thee,
And teach it all the harmony
In which thou canst, and only thou,
Make the delighted spirit glow,
Till joy denies itself again,
And, too intense, is turned to pain;
For by permission and command
Of thine own Prince Ferdinand,
Poor Ariel sends this silent token
Of more than ever can be spoken;
Your guardian spirit, Ariel, who,
From life to life, must still pursue

Ariel guides you o'er the sea
Of life from your nativity.
Many changes have been run
Since Ferdinand and you begun
Your course of love, and Ariel still
Has tracked your steps, and served
Your will;
Now, in humbler, happier lot,
This is all remembered not;
And now, alas! the poor sprite is
Imprisoned, for some fault of his,
In a body like a grave:—
From you he only dares to crave,
For his service and his sorrow,
A smile to-day, a song to-morrow.

The artist who this idol wrought,
To echo all harmonious thought,
Felled a tree, while on the steep
The woods were in their winter sleep,
Rocked in that repose divine,
On the wind-swept Apeninne;
And dreaming, some of Autumn past,
And some of Spring approaching fast,
And some of April buds and showers,
And some of songs in July bowers,
And all of love; and so this tree,—
O that such our death may be!—
 Died in sleep, and felt no pain,
To live in happier form again:
From which, beneath Heaven's fairest star,

The artist wrought this loved Guitar,
And taught it justly to reply,
To all who question skillfully,
In language gentle as thine own;
Whispering in enamoured tone
Sweet oracles of woods and dells,
And summer winds in sylvan cells;
For it had learned all harmonies
Of the plains and of the skies,
Of the forests and the mountains,
And the many-voiced fountains;
The clearest echoes of the hills,
The softest notes of falling rills,
The melodies of birds and bees,
The murmuring of summer seas,
And pattering rain, and breathing dew,
And airs of evening; and it knew
That seldom-heard mysterious sound,
Which, driven on its diurnal round,
As it floats through boundless day,
Our world enkindles on its way—
All this it knows, but will not tell
To those who cannot question well
The Spirit that inhabits it;
It talks according to the will
Of its companions; and no more
Is heard than has been felt before,
By those who tempt it to betray;
These secrets of an elder day:
But, sweetly as its answers will
Flutter bands of perfect skill,
It keeps its highest, holiest tone
For our beloved Jane alone.

TO JANE: 'THE KEEN STARS WERE TWINKLING'

I
The keen stars were twinkling,
And the fair moon was rising among them,
Dear Jane!—
The guitar was tinkling,

But the notes were not sweet till you sung them 5
Again.

II
As the moon's soft splendour
O'er the faint cold starlight of Heaven
SHELLEY

Is thrown,
So your voice most tender
To the strings without soul had
Then given
Its own.

WHilst the dews of your melody
Scatter 
Delight.

IV

Though the sound overpowers,
Sing again, with your dear voice
Revealing
A tone
Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and
Feeling
Are one.

A DIRGE

Rough wind, that mœnest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;

LINES WRITTEN IN THE BAY OF LERICI

She left me at the silent time
When the moon had ceased to climb
The azure path of Heaven's steep,
And like an albatross asleep,
Balanced on her wings of light,
Hovered in the purple night,
Ere she sought her ocean nest
In the chambers of the West.
She left me, and I stayed alone
Thinking over every tone
Which, though silent to the ear,
The enchanted heart could hear,
Like notes which die when born, but
Still
Haunt the echoes of the hill;
And feeling ever—oh, too much!—
The soft vibration of her touch,
As if her gentle hand, even now,
Lightly trembled on my brow;
And thus, although she absent were,
Memory gave me all of her.
That even Fancy dares to claim—
Her presence had made weak and
tame
All passions, and I lived alone
In the time which is our own;

The past and future were forgot,
As they had been, and would be
Not
But soon, the guardian angel gone,
The daemon reassumed his throne
In my faint heart. I dare not speak
My thoughts, but thus disturbed
I sat and saw the vessels glide
Over the ocean bright and wide,
Like spirit-winged chariots sent
O'er some serenest element
For ministrations strange and
far.
As if to some Elysian star
Sailed for drink to medicine
Such sweet and bitter pain as mine
And the wind that winged their flight
From the land came fresh and light
And the scent of winged flowers;
And the coolness of the hours
Of dew, and sweet warmth left by
day.
Were scattered o'er the twinkling day;

LINES: 'WE MEET NOT AS WE PARTED'

I

We meet not as we parted,
We feel more than all may see;
My bosom is heavy-hearted,
And thine full of doubt for me;
One moment has bound the free.

II

That moment is gone for ever,
Like lightning that flashed and died—
Like a snowflake upon the river—
Like a sunbeam upon the title,
Which the dark shadows hide.

III

That moment from time was singled
As the first of a life of pain;
The cup of its joy was mingled
Methinks too little cost
For a moment so found, so lost!

THE ISLE

There was a little lawnly islet
By anemone and violet,
Like mosaic, paven;
And its roof was flowers and leaves
Which the summer's breath enweaves,
Where nor sun nor showers nor breeze
Pierce the pines and tallest trees,
Each a gem engraven;—
Girt by many an azure wave
With which the clouds and mountains pave
A lake's blue chasm.

FRAGMENT: TO THE MOON

Bright wanderer, fair coquette of
Heaven,
To whom alone it has been given
To change and be adored for ever,

Too happy they, whose pleasure sought
Extinguishes all sense and thought
Of the regret that pleasure leaves,
Destroying life alone, not peace!
SHELLEY

EPITAPH

These are two friends whose lives were undivided; So let their memory be, now they have glided

Under the grave; let not their bones
For their two hearts in life were single-hearted.

NOTE ON POEMS OF 1822, BY MRS. SHELLEY

Toss mourn thy gallant bark
Sailed on a sunny sea so fair and bright
Under the deep blue sky
With all thy brave crew
And all thy sailor's pride

By spirits of the deep
The voyagers' good fortune
Thou art the pilot of the deep
Thou seest the wave and the wind
Thou seest the wave and the wind

While near thy seaweed pillow
By Echo's voice for thee
I hear a loud lament
From Ocean's caverns sent.

O list! O list!
The Spirits of the deep!
That day may never be repeated
While I forever weep.

With this last year of the life of Shelley these Notes end. They are not what I intended them to be. I began with energy, and a burning desire to impart to the world, in worthy language, the sense I have of the virtues and genius of the beloved and the lost; my strength has failed under the task. Recurrence to the past, full of its own deep and unforgotten joys and sorrows, contrasted with succeeding years of painful and solitary struggle, has shaken my health. Days of great suffering have followed my attempts to write, and these again produced a weakness and languor that spread their sinister influence over these Notes. I dislike speaking of myself, but cannot help apologizing to the dead, and to the public, for not having succeeded in the manner I desired the history I engaged to give of Shelley's writings.¹

¹ At one time feared that the correction of the press might be less exact through my illness; but I believe that it is nearly free from error. Some mistakes occur in a few pages, as they did in the volume of Forsaken Poems, where, because they refer to private concerns, or because the original manuscript was imperfect. Did any one see the papers from which I drew that volume, the reader would be how any eyes or patience were capable of extracting it from so confused a mass, intermixed and broken into fragments, so that the sense could only be deciphered and joined by guesses which might seem rather intuitive than founded on reasoning. Yet I believe no mistake was made.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1822

The winter of 1822 was passed in Pisa, if we might call that season winter in which autumn merged into spring after the interval of but few days of bleaker weather. Spring sprang up early, and with extreme beauty. Shelley had conceived the idea of writing a tragedy on the subject of Charles I. It was one that he believed adapted for a drama; full of intense interest, contrasted character, and busy passion. He had recommended it long before, when he encouraged me to attempt a play. Whether the subject proved more difficult than he anticipated, or whether in fact he could not bend his mind away from the broodings and wanderings of thought; divested from human interest, which he best loved, I cannot tell; but he proceeded slowly, and threw it aside for one of the most mystical of his poems, the Triumph of Life, on which he was employed at the last.

His passion for boating was fostered at this time by having among our friends several sailors. His favourite companion, Edward Ellerker Williams, of the 8th Light Dragons, had begun his life in the navy, and had afterwards entered the army; he had spent several years in India, and his love for adventure and many exercises accorded with Shelley's taste. It was their favourite plan to build a boat such as they could manage themselves, and, living on the sea-coast, to enjoy at every hour and season the pleasure they loved best. Captain Roberts, R.N., undertook to build the boat at Genoa, where he was also occupied in building the Bolivar for Lord Byron. Ours was to be an open boat, on a model taken from one of the royal dockyards. I have since heard that there was a defect in this model, and that it was never seaworthy. In the month of February, Shelley and his friend went to Spezia to seek for houses for us. Only one was to be found at all suitable; however, a trifle such as not finding a house could not stop Shelley; the one found was to serve for all. It was unfurnished; we sent our furniture by sea, and with a good deal of precipitation, arising from his impatience, made our removal. We left Pisa on the 26th of April.

The Bay of Spezia is of considerable extent, and divided by a rocky promontory into a larger and smaller one. The town of Lerici is situated on the eastern point, and in the depth of the smaller bay, which bears the name of this town, is the village of San Terenzo. Our house, Casa Magni, was close to this village; the sea came up to the door, a steep hill sheltered it behind. The proprietor of the estate on which it was situated was insane; he had begun to erect a large house at the summit of the hill, but his malady prevented its being finished, and it was falling into ruin. He had (and this to the Italians had seemed a genuine symptom of very decided madness) rooted up the olives on the hillside, and planted forest trees. These were mostly young, but the plantation was more in English taste than I ever elsewhere saw in Italy. Some fine walnut and ilex trees intermingled their dark massy foliage, and formed groups which still haunt my memory, as they together charmed the eye with a sense of loneliness. The scene was indeed of unspeakable beauty. The blue extent of waters, the almost landlocked
bay, the near castle of Lerici shutting it in to the east, and distant Porto Venere to the west; the varied forms of the precipitous rocks that bound the beach, over which there was only a winding rugged footpath in the sand, and sometimes the sunshine vanished when the scirocco raged—the ‘ponente’ the wind was called on that shore. The gales and squalls that hailed our first arrival surrounded the bay with foam; the howling wind swept round our exposed house, and the sea roared unseemingly, so that we almost fancied ourselves on board ship. At other times sunshine and calm invested the sea and sky, and the rich tints of Italian heaven bathed the scene in bright and ever-varying tints.

The natives were wilder than the place. Our near neighbours of San Terenzo were more like savages than any people I ever before lived among. Many a night they passed on the beach, singing, or rather howling; the women dancing about among the waves that broke at their feet, and the men leaning against the rocks and joining in their loud wild chorus. We could get no provisions nearer than Sarzana, at a distance of three miles and which proved at length to be Shelley’s boat. She had left Genoa on Thursday last, but had been driven back by the prevailing bad weather. A Mr. Haslop and two English seamen brought her round, and they spoke most highly of her performances. She does indeed excite my surprise and admiration. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch and admiration of her. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch and admiration of her. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch and admiration of her. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch and admiration of her. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch and admiration of her. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch and admiration of her. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch and admiration of her. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch and admiration of her. Shelley and I walked to Lerici, and made a stretch and admiration of her.

It was thus that short-sighted mortals welcomed Death, he having disguised his grim form in a pleasing mask! The time of the friends was now spent on the sea; the weather became fine, and our whole party often passed the evenings on the water when the wind promised pleasant sailing. Shelley and Williams made longer excursions; they sailed several times to Massa. They had engaged one of the seamen who brought them round, a boy, by name Charles Vivian; and they had not the slightest apprehension of danger. When the weather was unfavourable, they employed themselves with alterations in the rigging, and by building a boat of canvas and reeds, as light as possible, to have on board the other for the convenience of landing in waters too shallow for the larger vessel. When Shelley was on board, he had his papers with him; and much of the Triumph of Life was written as he sailed or waded on that sea which was-worth to engulf him.

The heats set in in the middle of June; the days became excessively hot. But the sea-breeze cooled the air at noon, and extreme heat always put Shelley in spirits. A long drought had preceded the heat; and prayers for rain were being put up in the churches, and processions of relics for the same effect took place in every town. At this time we received letters announcing the arrival of Leigh Hunt at Genoa. Shelley was very eager to see him. I was confined to my room by severe illness, and could not move; it was agreed that Shelley and Williams should go to Leghorn in the boat. Strange that no fear of danger crossed our minds! Living on the sea-shore, the ocean became as a plaything: as a child may sport with a lighted stick, till a spark falls upon the ground, and spreads destruction over all, so did we fearlessly and blindly tamper with danger, and make a game of the terrors of the ocean. Our Italian neighbours, even, trusted themselves as far as Massa in the skiff; and the running down the line of coast to Leghorn gave no more notion of peril than a fair-weather inland navigation would have done to those who had never seen the sea. Once, some months before, Trelawny had raised a warning voice as to the difference of our calm bay and the open sea beyond; but Shelley and his friend, with their one sailor-boy, thought themselves a match for the storms of the Mediterranean, in a boat which they looked upon as equal to all it was put to do.

On the 1st of July they left us. If ever shadow of future ill darkened the present hour, such was over my mind when they went. During the whole of our stay at Lerici, an intense presentiment of coming evil brooded over my mind, and covered this beautiful place and genial summer with the shadow of coming misery. I had vainly struggled with these emotions—they seemed accounted for by my illness; but this fear of separation they recurred with renewed violence. I did not anticipate danger for them, but a vague expectation of evil shook me to agony, and I could scarcely bring myself to let them go. The day was calm and clear; and, a fine breeze rising at twelve, they weighed for Leghorn.

They made the run of about fifty miles in seven hours and a half. The Belgrave was in port; and, the regulations of the Health-office not permitting them to sail after sunset, they borrowed cushions from the larger vessel, and slept on board their boat.

They spent a week at Pisa and Leghorn. The want of rain was severely felt in the country. The weather continued sultry and fine. I have heard that Shelley all this time was in brilliant spirits. Not long before, talking of presentiment, he had said the only one that he ever found infallible was that to advance to some evil fortune when he felt peculiarly joyous. Yet, if ever fate whispered of coming disaster, such inaudible but not unfelt prognostics hovered around us. The beauty of the place seemed unearthly in its excess; the distance we were at from all signs
of civilization, the sea at our feet, its murmurs or its roaring for ever in our ears— all these things led the mind to brood over strange thoughts, and, lifting it from everyday life, caused it to be familiar with the unreal. A sort of spell surrounded us; and each day, as the voyagers did not return, we grew restless and disquieted, and yet, strange to say, we were not fearful of the most apparent danger.

The spell snapped; it was all over; an interval of agonizing doubt— of days passed in miserable journeys to gain tidings, of hopes that took firmer root even as they were more baseless— was changed to the certainty of the death that eclipsed all happiness for the survivors for evermore.

There was something in our fate peculiarly harrowing. The remains of those we lost were cast on shore; but, by the quarantine-laws of the coast, we were not permitted to have possession of them—the law with respect to everything cast on land by the sea being that such should be buried to prevent the possibility of any remnant bringing the plague into Italy; and no representation could alter the law. At length, through the kind and unweeting exertions of Mr. Dawkins, our Chargé d'Affaires at Florence, we gained permission to receive the ashes after the bodies were consumed. Nothing could equal the zeal of Trelawny in carrying out our wishes into effect. He was indefatigable in his exertions, and full of forethought and sagacity in his arrangements. It was a fearful task; he stood before us at last, his hands scorched and blistered by the flames of the funeral-pyre, and by touching the burnt relics as he placed them in the receptacle prepared for the purpose. And there, in compass of that small case, was gathered all that remained on earth of him whose genius and virtue were a crown of glory to the world—whose love had been the source of happiness, peace, and good— to be buried with him.

The concluding stanzas of the Adonais pointed out where the remains ought to be deposited; in addition to which our beloved child lay buried in the cemetery at Rome. Thither Shelley's ashes were conveyed; and they rest beneath one of the antique weed-grown towers that reject intervals in the circuit of the massey ancient wall of Rome. He selected the hallowed place himself; there is

the sepulchre,

Oh, not of him, but of our joy!—

And gray walls monder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow waters, upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilions the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.'

Could sorrow for the lost, and shuddering anguish at the vacancy left behind, be soothed by poetic imaginations, there was something in Shelley's fate to mitigate pangs which yet, alas! could not be so mitigate; for hard reality brings too miserably home to the mourner all that is lost of happiness, all of lonely unsoaked struggle that remains. Still, though dreams and hues of poetry cannot blunt grief, it invests his fate with a sublime fitness, which those less nearly allied may regard with complacency. A year before he had poured into verse all such ideas about death as give it a glory of its own. He had, as it now seems, almost anticipated his own destiny; and, when the mind figures his skiff wrapped from sight by the thunder-storm, as it was last seen upon the purple, and then, as the cloud of the tempest passed away, no sign remained of where it had been—who but will regard as a prophecy the last stanza of the Adonais?

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massey earth and spibered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst burning through the utmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonis, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.'
PUTNAY, May 7, 1825.

TRANSLATIONS

HYMN TO MERCURY

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF HOMER

I

Sinc, Muse, the son of Maia and of Jove,
The herald-child, king of Arcadia,
And ambi in its pastoral hills, whom in sweet love
Having been interwoven, modest May
Bore Heaven's dread Supreme. An antique grove
Shadowed the cavern where the lovers lay
In the deep night, unseen by Gods or Men,
And white-arm'd Juno lumbered sweetly then.

1 Captain Roberts watched the vessel with his glass from the top of the light-house of Lighthouse, on its homeward track. They were off Vis Regale, at some distance from shore, when a storm was driven over the sea. It enveloped them and several larger vessels in darkness. When the cloud passed onwards, Roberts looked about, and saw every other vessel sailing on the ocean except their little schooner, which had vanished. From that time he could scarcely doubt the fatal truth; yet we fancied that they might have been driven towards Elba or Corica, and so been saved. The observation made as to the spot where the boat disappeared caused it to be found, through the exertions of Trelawny for that effect. It had gone down in ten fathom water; it had not capsized, and, except such things as had floated from her, everything was found on board exactly as it had been placed when they sailed, the boat itself was uninjured. Roberts possessed himself of her, and despatched her; but she proved not seaworthy, and her shattered planks now lie rocking on the shore of one of the Ionian islands, on which she was wrecked.
SHELLEY

II

Now, when the joy of Jove had its fulfilling,
And Heaven's tenth moon chronicled her relief,
She gave to light a babe all babes excelling;
A schemer subtle beyond all belief;
A shepherd of thin dreams, a cow-stealing,
A night-watching, and door-waylaying thief,
Who 'mongst the Gods was soon about to thieve,
And other glorious actions to achieve.

III

The babe was born at the first peep of day;
He began playing on the lyre at noon,
And the same evening did he steal away
Apollo's herds;—the fourth day of the moon
On which him bore the venerable May,
From her immortal limbs he leaped full soon,
Nor long could in the sacred cradle keep,
But out to seek Apollo's herds would creep.

IV

Out of the lofty cavern wandering
He found a tortoise, and cried out—'A treasure!'
(For Mercury first made the tortoise sing)
The beast before the portal at his leisure
The flowery herbage was depasturing,
Moving his feet in a deliberate measure
Over the turf. Jove's profitable son
Eying him laughed, and laughing thus begun:—

V

'A useful godsend are you to me now,
King of the dance, companion of the feast,
Lovely in all your nature! Welcome, you
Excellent plaything! Where, sweet mountain-beast,
Got you that speckled shell? Thus much I know,
You must come home with me and be my guest;
You will give joy to me, and I will do
All that is in my power to honour you.

VI

'Better to be at home than out of door,
So come with me; and though it has been said
That you alive defend from magic power,
I know you will sing sweetly when you're dead.'

TRANSLATIONS

Thus having spoken, the quaint infant bore,
Lifting it from the grass on which it fed
And grasping it in his delighted hold,
His treasured prize into the cavern old.

VII

Then scooping with a chisel of gray steel,
He bored the life and soul out of the beast.—
Not swifter a swift thought of woe or weal
Darts through the tumult of a human breast
Which throbbing cares annoy—not swifter wheel
The flashes of its torture and unrest
Out of the dizzy eyes—than Mala's son
All that he did devise hath feantly done.

VIII

And through the tortoise's hard stony skin
At proper distances small holes he made;
And fastened the cut stems of reeds within,
And with a piece of leather overlaid
The open space and fixed the cubits in,
Fitting the bridge to both, and stretched o'er all
Symphonic cords of sheep-gut rhythmical.

IX

When he had wrought the lovely instrument,
He tried the chords, and made division meet,
Preluding with the plectrum, and there went
Up from beneath his hand a tumult sweet
Of mighty sounds, and from his lips he sent
A strain of unpremeditated wit
Joyous and wild and wanton—such you may
Hear among revellers on a holiday.

X

He sung how Jove and May of the bright sandal
Dallied in love not quite legitimate;
And his own birth, still scoffing at the scandal,
And naming his own name, did celebrate;
His mother's cave and servant maids he planned all
In plastic verse, her household stuff and state,
Perennial pot, tripod, and brazen pan,—
But singing, he conceived another plan.
Seized with a sudden fancy for fresh meat,
He in his sacred crib deposited
The hollow lyre, and from the cavern sweet
Rushed with great leaps up to the mountain's head,
Revolving in his mind some subtle feat
Of thievish craft, such as a swindler might
Devise in the lone season of dull night.

Lo! the great Sun under the ocean's bed has
Driven steeds and chariot—the child meanwhile strode
O'er the Pierian mountains clothed in shadows,
Where the immortal oxen of the God
Are pastured in the flowering unfrown meadows,
And safely stilled in a remote abode.—
The archer Argicle, elate and proud,
Drove fifty from the herd, lowing aloud.

He drove them wandering o'er the sandy way,
But, being ever mindful of his craft,
Backward and forward drove he them astray,
So that the tracks which seemed before, were aft;
His sandals then he threw to the ocean spray
And for each foot he wrought a kind of raft
Of tamarisk, and tamarisk-like sprigs,
And bound them in a lump with withy twigs.

And on his feet he tied these sandals light,
The trail of whose wide leaves might not betray
His track; and then, a self-sufficing might,
Like a man hastening on some distant way,
He from Plera's mountain bent his flight;
But an old man perceived the infant pass,
Down green Onchestus heaped like beds with grass.

The old man stood dressing his sunny vine:
'Halloo! old fellow with the crooked shoulder!
You grub those stumps? before they will bear wine
Methinks even you must grow a little older.'

Attend, I pray, to this advice of mine,
As you would 'scape what might appal a bolder—
Seeing, see not—and hearing, hear not—and—
If you have understanding—understand.'

So saying, Hermes roused the oxen vast;
O'er shadowy mountain and resounding dell,
And flower-paven plains, great Hermes passed;
Till the black night divine, which favouring fell
Around his steps, grew gray, and morning fast
Wakened the world to work, and from her cell
Sea-strewn, the Pallantine Moon sublime
Into her watch-tower just began to climb.

Now to Alpheus he had driven all
The broad-foreheaded oxen of the Sun;
They came unwearied to the lofty stall;
And to the water-troughs which ever run
Through the fresh fields—and when with rushgrass tall,
Lotus and all sweet herbage, every one
Had pastured been, the great God made them move
Towards the stall in a collected drove.

A mighty pile of wood the God then heaped,
And having soon conceived the mystery
Of fire, from two smooth laurel branches stripped
The bark, and rubbed them in his palms,—on high
Suddenly forth the burning vapour leaped
And the divine child saw delightedly,—
Mercury first found out for human use
Tinder-box, matches, fire-irons, flint and steel.

And fine dry logs and roots innumerable
He gathered in a delve upon the ground—
And kindled them—and instantaneous
The strength of the fierce flame was breathed around:
And whilst the might of glorious Vulcan thus
Wrapped the great pile with glare and roaring sound,
Hermes dragged forth two heifers, lowing loud,
Close to the fire—such might was in the God.
SHELLEY

XX

And on the earth upon their backs he threw
The panting beasts, and rolled them o'er and o'er,
And bled their lives out. Without more ado
He cut fat and flesh, and down before
The fire, on spits of wood he placed the two,
Toasting their flesh and ribs, and all the gore
Pursec in the bowels; and while this was done
He stretched their hides over a craggy stone.

XXI

We mortals let an ox grow old, and then
Cut it up after long consideration,—
But joyous-minded Hermes from the glen
Drew the fat spools to the more open station
Of a flat smooth space, and portioned them; and when
He had by lot assigned to each a ration
Of the twelve Gods, his mind became aware
Of all the joys which in religion are.

XXII

For the sweet savour of the roasted meat
Tempted him though immortal. Nathless
He checked his haughty will and did not eat,
Though what it cost him words can scarce express,
And every wish to put such morsels sweet
Down his most sacred throat, he did repress;
But soon within the lofty portalled stall
He placed the fat and flesh and bones and all.

XXIII

And every trace of the fresh butcherly
And cooking, the God soon made disappear,
As if it all had vanished through the sky;
He burned the hoofs and horns and head and hair,—
The insatiate fire devoured them hungrily;—
And when he saw that everything was clear,
He quenched the coal, and trampled the black dust,
And in the stream his bloody sandals tossed.

XXIV

All night he worked in the serene moonshine—
But when the light of day was spread abroad
He sought his natal mountain-peaks divine.
On his long wandering neither Man nor God

TRANSLATIONS

Had met him, since he killed Apollo's kine,
Nor hound-dog had barked at him on his road;
Now he obliquely through the keyhole passed,
Like a thin mist, or an autumnal blast.

XXV

Right through the temple of the spacious cave
He went with soft light feet—as if his tread
Fell not on earth; no sound their falling gave;
Then to his cradle he crept quick, and spread
The swaddling-clothes about him; and the knave
Lay playing with the covering of the bed
With his left hand about his knees—the right
Hold his beloved tortoise-lyre tight.

XXVI

There he lay innocent as a new-born child,
As gossips say; but though he was a God,
The Goddess, his fair mother, unabated,
Knew all that he had done being abroad:
Whence come you, and from what adventure wild,
You cunning rogue, and where have you abode
All the long night, clothed in your impudence?
What have you done since you departed hence?

XXVII

'Apollo soon will pass within this gate
And bind your tender body in a chain
Inextricably tight, and fast as fate,
Unless you can delude the God again,
Even when within his arms—ah, runagate!
A pretty torment both for Gods and Men
Your father made when he made you!'—'Dear mother,'
Replied sly Hermes, 'wherefore scold and bother?

XXVIII

'As if I were like other babes as old,
And understood nothing of what is what;
And cared at all to hear my mother scold.
I in my subtle brain a scheme have got,
Which whilst the sacred stars round Heaven are rolled
Will profit you and me—nor shall our lot
Be as you counsel, without gifts or food,
To spend our lives in this obscure abode.
of their soft beds and their sweet food bereft.
Now tell me, man born ere the world begun,
Have you seen any one pass with the cows?
To whom the man of overhanging brows:

'And then I thought I saw, but dare not speak
With certainty of such a wondrous thing,
A child, who could not have been born a week,
Those fair-horned cattle closely following,
And in his hand he held a polished stick;
And, as on purpose, he walked wavering
From one side to the other of the road,
And with his face opposed the steps he trod.'

Apollo hearing this, passed quickly on—
No winged omen could have shown more clear
That the deceiver was his father's son.
So the God wraps a purple atmosphere
Around his shoulders, and like fire is gone
To famous Pylos, seeking his kine there,
And found their track and his, yet hardly cold,
And cried—What wonder do mine eyes behold!

'Here are the footsteps of the horned herd
Turned back towards their fields of asphodel;—
But these are not the tracks of beast or bird,
Gray wolf, or bear, or lion of the dell,
Or maned Centaur—sand was never stirred
By man or woman thus! Inexplicable!
Who with unwearied feet could e'er impress
The sand with such enormous vestiges?'
"That was most strange—but this is stranger still!"
Thus having said, Phoebus impetuously
Sought high Cyllene's forest-cinctured hill,
And the deep cavern where dark shadows lie,
And where the ambrosial nymph with happy will
Bore the Saturnian's love-child, Mercury—
And a delightful odour from the dew
Of the hill pastures, at his coming, flew.

And Phoebus stooped under the craggy roof
Arched over the dark cavern;—Maia's child
Perceived that he came angry, far aloof,
About the cows of which he had been beguiled;
And over him the fine and fragrant woof
Of his ambrosial swaddling-clothes he piled—
As among fire-brands lies a burning spark
Covered, beneath the ashes cold and dark.

There, like an infant who had sucked his fill
And now was newly washed and put to bed,
Awake, butcourting sleep with weary will,
And gathered in a lump, hands, feet, and head,
He lay, and his beloved tortoise still
He grasped and held under his shoulder-blade.
Phoebus the lovely mountain-goddess knew,
Not less her subtle, swirling baby, who

Lay swathed in his sly wiles. Round every crook
Of the ample cavern, for his kine, Apollo
Looked sharp; and when he saw them not, he took
The glittering key, and opened three great hollow
Recesses in the rock,—where many a nook
Was filled with the sweet food immortals swallow,
And mighty heaps of silver and of gold
Were piled within—a wonder to behold!

And white and silver robes, all overwrought
With cunning workmanship of tracery sweet—
Except among the Gods there can be nought
In the wide world to be compared with it.

Latona's offspring, after having sought
His herds in every corner, thus did greet
Great Hermes:—'Little cradled rogue, declare
Of my illustrious heifers, where they are!

'Speak quickly! or a quarrel between us
Must rise, and the event will be, that I
Shall hurl you into dismal Tartarus,
In fiery gloom to dwell eternally;
Nor shall your father nor your mother loose
The bars of that black dungeon—utterly
You shall be cast out from the light of day,
To rule the ghosts of men, unblest as they.'

To whom thus Hermes sily answered:—'Son
Of great Latona, what a speech is this!
Why come you here to ask me what is done
With the wild oxen which it seems you miss?
I have not seen them, nor from any one
Have heard a word of the whole business;
If you should promise an immense reward,
I could not tell more than you now have heard.

'An ox-stealer should be both tall and strong,
And I am but a little new-born thing;
Who, yet at least, can think of nothing wrong:—
My business is to suck, and sleep, and fling
The cradle-clothes about me all day long,—
Or half asleep, hear my sweet mother sing,
And to be washed in water clean and warm,
And hushed and kissed and kept secure from harm.

'O, let not e'er this quarrel be averted!
The astounded Gods would laugh at you, if e'er
You should allege a story so absurd
As that a new-born infant forth could fare
Out of his home after a savage herd.
I was born yesterday—my small feet are
Too tender for the roads so hard and rough:—
And if you think that this is not enough,
SHELLEY

XLVII

'I swear a great oath, by my father's head,
That I stole not your cows, and that I know
Of no one else, who might, or could, or did.—
Whatever things cows are, I do not know,
For I have only heard the name.'—This said,
He winked as fast as could be, and his brow
Was wrinkled, and a whistle loud gave he,
Like one who hears some strange absurdity.

XLVIII

Apollo gently smiled and said:—'Ay, ay,—
You cunning little rascal, you will bore
Many a rich man's house, and your array
Of thieves will lay their siege before his door,
Silent as night, in night; and many a day
In the wild glens rough shepherds will deplore
That you or yours, having an appetite,
Met with their cattle, comrade of the night!

XLIX

'And this among the Gods shall be your gift,
To be considered as the lord of those
Who swindle, house-break, sheep-steal, and shop-lift;—
But now if you would not your last sleep doze;
Crawl out!'—Thus saying, Phoebus did uplift
The subtle infant in his swaddling clothes,
And in his arms, according to his wont,
A scheme devised, the Illustrious Argiphont.

LI

And sneezed and shuddered—Phoebus on the grass
Him threw, and whilst all that he had designed
He did perform—eager although to pass,
Apollo darted from his mighty mind
Towards the subtle babe the following scoff:—
'Do not imagine this will get you off,

LII

'You little swaddled child of Jove and May!
And seized him:—'By this omen I shall trace
My noble herds, and you shall lead the way.'—
Cyllenius Hermes from the grassy place,

TRANSLATIONS

Like one in earnest haste to get away,
Rose, and with hands lifted towards his face
Round both his ears up from his shoulders drew
His swaddling clothes, and—What mean you to do

LIII

'With me, you unkind God?'—said Mercury:
'Is it about these cows you tease me so?
I wish the race of cows were perished!—I
Stole not your cows—I do not even know
What things cows are. Ahas! I well may sigh
That, since I came into this world of woe,
I should have ever heard the name of one—
But I appeal to the Saturnian's throne.'

LIII

Thus Phoebus and the vagrant Mercury
Talked without coming to an explanation,
With adverse purpose. As for Phoebus, he
Sought not revenge, but only information,
And Hermes tried with lies and roguerly
To cheat Apollo.—But when no evasion
Served—for the cunning one his match had found—
He paced on first over the sandy ground.

LV

He of the Silver Bow the child of Jove
Followed behind, till to their heavenly Sire
Came both his children, beautiful as Love,
And from his equal balance did require
A judgement in the cause wherein they strove.
O'er odorous Olympus and its snows
A murmuring tumult as they came arose.—

LV

And from the folded depths of the great Hill,
While Hermes and Apollo reverent stood
Before Jove's throne, the indestructible
Immortals rushed in mighty multitude;
And whilst their seats in order due they fill,
The lofty Thunderer in a careless mood
To Phoebus said:—'Whence drive you this sweet prey,
This herald-baby, born but yesterday?—
A most important subject, trifle, this
To lay before the Gods!—"Nay, Father, nay,
When you have understood the business,
Say not that I alone am fond of prey.
I found this little boy in a recess
Under Cyllene's mountains far away—
A manifest and most apparent thief,
A scandalmonger beyond all belief.

I never saw his like either in Heaven
Or upon earth for knavery or craft:—
Out of the field my cattle yester-even,
By the low shore on which the loud sea laughed,
He right down to the river-ford had driven;
And mere astonishment would make you daft
To see the double kind of footsteps strange
He has impressed wherever he did range.

The cattle's track on the black dust, full well
Is evident, as if they went towards
The place from which they came—that asphodel
Meadow, in which I feed my many herds,—
His steps were most incomprehensible—
I know not how I can describe in words
Those tracks—he could have gone along the sands
Neither upon his feet nor on his hands:—

He must have had some other stranger mode
Of moving on: those vestiges immense,
Far as I traced them on the sandy road,
Seemed like the trail of oak-toppings:—but thence
No mark nor track denoting where they trod
The hard ground gave:—but, working at his fence,
A mortal hedger saw him as he passed
To Pylos, with the cows, in fiery haste.

I found that in the dark he quietly
Had sacrificed some cows, and before light
Hail thrown the ashes all dispersedly
About the road—then, still as gloomy night,

Had crept into his cradle, either eye
Rubbing, and cogitating some new slight,
No eagle could have seen him as he lay
Hid in his cavern from the peering day.

I taxed him with the fact, when he averred
Most solemnly that he did neither see
Nor even had in any manner heard
Of my lost cows, whatever things cows be;
Nor could he tell, though offered a reward,
Not even who could tell of them to me.'
So speaking, Phoebus sate; and Hermes then
Addressed the Supreme Lord of Gods and Men:—

Great Father, you know clearly beforehand
That all which I shall say to you is sooth;
I am a most veracious person, and
Totally unacquainted with untruth.
At sunrise Phoebus cante, but with no band
Of Gods to bear him witness, in great wrath,
To my abode, seeking his bethers there,
And saying that I must show him where they are,

Or he would hurl me down the dark abyss.
I know that every Apollonian limb
Is clothed with speed and might and manliness,
As a green bank with flowers—but unlike him
I was born yesterday, and you may guess
He well knew this when he indulged the whim
Of bullying a poor little new-born thing
That slept, and never thought of cow-driving.

'Am I like a strong fellow who steals kine?
Believe me, dearest Father—such you are—
This driving of the herds is none of mine;
Across my threshold did I wander ne'er,
So may I thrive! I reverence the divine
Sun and the Gods, and I love you, and care
Even for this hard accuser—who must know
I am as innocent as they or you.
I swear by these most gloriously-wrought portals
(As you will allow, an oath of might)
Through which the multitude of the Immortals
Pass and repass forever, day and night,
Devising schemes for the affairs of mortals—
That I am guiltless; and I will requite,
Although mine enemy be great and strong,
His cruel threat—do thou defend the young!

So speaking, the Cyllene Argiphont
Winked, as if now his adversary was fitted:—
And Jupiter, according to his wont,
Laughed heartily to hear the subtle-witted
Infant give such a plausible account,
And every word a lie. But he remitted
Judgement at present—and his exhortation
Was, to compose the affair by arbitration.

And they by mighty Jupiter were bidden
To go forth with a single purpose both,
Neither the other chiding nor yet chidden:
And Mercury with innocence and truth
To lead the way, and show where he had hidden
The mighty heifers.—Hermes, nothing loth,
Obeyed the Aegis-bearer’s will—for he
Is able to persuade all easily.

These lovely children of Heaven’s highest Lord
Hastened to Pylos and the pastures wide
And lofty stalls by the Alphean ford,
Where wealth in the mute night is multiplied
With silent growth. Whilst Hermes drove the herd
Out of the stony cavern, Phoebus spied
The hides of those the little babe had slain,
Stretched on the precipice above the plain.

‘How was it possible,’ then Phoebus said,
‘That you, a little child, born yesterday,
A thing on mother’s milk and kisses fed,
Could two prodigious heifers ever lay?

Even I myself may well hereafter dread
Your prowess, offspring of Cyllene May,
When you grow strong and tall.’—He spoke, and bound
Stiff withy bands the infant’s wrists around,

He might as well have bound the oxen wild;
The withy hands, though starkly interknit,
Fell at the feet of the immortal child,
Loosened by some device of his quick wit.
Phoebus perceived himself again beguiled,
And stared—while Hermes sought some hole or pit,
Looking askance and winking fast as thought,
Where he might hide himself and not be caught.

Sudden he changed his plan, and with strange skill
Subdued the strong Latoian, by the might
Of winning music, to his mightier will;
His left hand held the lyre, and in his right
The plectrum struck the chords—unconquerable
Up from beneath his hand in circling flight
The gathering music rose—and sweet as Love
The penetrating notes did live and move

Within the heart of great Apollo—be
Listened with all his soul, and laughed for pleasure.
Close to his side stood harping fearlessly
The unabashed boy; and to the measure
Of the sweet lyre, there followed loud and free
His joyous voice; for he unlocked the treasure
Of his deep song, illustrating the birth
Of the bright Gods, and the dark desert Earth:

And how to the Immortals every one
A portion was assigned of all that is;
But chief Mnemosyne did Maia’s son
Clothe in the light of his loud melodies;—
And, as each God was born or had begun,
He in their order due and fit degrees
Sung of his birth and being—and did move
Apollo to unutterable love.
SHELLEY

LXXIV

These words were winged with his swift delight:
'You heller-stealing schemer, well do you
Deserve that fifty oxen should require
Such minstrelsy as I have heard even now.
Comrade of feasts, little contriving wight,
One of your secrets I would gladly know,
Whether the glorious power you now show forth
Was folded up within you at your birth,

LXXV

'Or whether mortal taught or God inspired
The power of unprompted song?
Many divinest sounds have I admired,
The Olympian Gods and mortal men among;
But such a strain of wondrous, strange, untired,
And soul-awakening music, sweet and strong,
Yet did I never hear except from thee,
Offspring of May, impostor Mercury!

LXXVI

'What Muse, what skill! what unimagined use,
What exercise of sublimest art, has given
Thy songs such power?—for those who hear may choose
From thee, the choicest of the gifts of Heaven,
Delight, and love, and sleep,—sweet sleep, whose dews
Are sweeter than the balmy tears of even:—
And I, who speak this praise, am that Apollo
Whom the Olympian Muses ever follow.

LXXVII

'And their delight is dance, and the blithe noise
Of song and overflowing poesy;
And sweet, even as desire, the liquid voice
Of pipes, that fills the clear air thrillingly;
But never did my innest soul rejoice
In this dear work of youthful revelry
As now. I wonder at thee, son of Jove;
Thy harpings and thy song are soft as love.

LXXVIII

'Now since thou hast, although so very small,
Science of arts so glorious, thus I swear,—
And let this cornel javelin, keen and tall,
Witness between us what I promise here,
SHELLEY
LXXXIII
'To those who are unskilled in its sweet tongue,
Though they should question most impetuously
Its hidden soul, it gossips something wrong—
Some senseless and impertinent reply.
But thou who art as wise as thou art strong
Canst compass all that thou desir'st. I
Present thee with this music-flowing shell,
Knowing thou canst interrogate it well.

LXXXIV
'And let us two henceforth together feed,
On this green mountain-slope and pastoral plain,
The herds in litigation—they will breed
Quickly enough to recompense our pain,
If to the bulls and cows we take good heed;—
And thou, though somewhat over fond of gain,
Grudge me not half the profit.'—Having spoke,
The shell he proffered, and Apollo took;

LXXXV
And gave him in return the glittering lash,
Installing him as herdsman;—from the look
Of Mercury then laughed a joyous flash.
And then Apollo with the plectrum strok
The chords, and from beneath his hands a crash
Of mighty sounds rushed up, whose music shook
The soul with sweetness, and like an adept
His sweeter voice a just accordance kept.

LXXXVI
The herd went wandering o'er the divine mead,
Whilst these most beautiful Sons of Jupiter
Won their swift way up to the snowy head
Of white Olympus, with the joyous lyre
Soothing their journey; and their father dread
Gathered them both into familiar
Affection sweet,—and then, and now, and ever,
Hermes must love Him of the Golden Quiver,

LXXXVII
To whom he gave the lyre that sweetly sounded,
Which skillfully he held and played thereon.
He piped the while, and far and wide rebounded
The echo of his pipings; every one
Translations
Of the Olympians sat with joy astounded;
While he conceived another piece of fun,
One of his old tricks—which the God of Day
Perceiving, said:—I fear thee, Son of May;—

LXXXVIII
'I fear thee and thy sly chameleon spirit,
Lest thou should steal my lyre and crooked bow;
This glory and power thou dost from Jove inherit,
To teach all craft upon the earth below;
Thieves love and worship thee—it is thy merit
To make all mortal business ebb and flow
By roguery:—now, Hermes, if you dare
By sacred Styx a mighty oath to swear

LXXXIX
'That you will never rob me, you will do
A thing extremely pleasing to my heart.'
Then Mercury sware by the Stygian dew,
That he would never steal his bow or dart,
Or lay his hands on what to him was due,
Or ever would employ his powerful art
Against his Pythian fame. Then Phoebus swore
There was no God or Man whom he loved more.

XC
'And I will give thee as a good-will token,
The beautiful wand of wealth and happiness;
A perfect three-leaved rod of gold unbroken,
Whose magic will thy footsteps ever bless;
And whatsoever by Jove's voice is spoken
Of earthly or divine from its recess,
It, like a loving soul, to thee will speak,
And more than this, do thou forbear to seek.

XCI
'For, dearest child, the divinations high
Which thou requirest, 'tis unlawful ever
That thou, or any other deity
Should understand—and vain were the endeavour;
For they are hidden in Jove's mind, and I,
In trust of them, have sworn that I would never
Betray the counsels of Jove's inmost will
To any God—the oath was terrible.
SHELLEY

Then, golden-wanded brother, ask me not
To speak the fates by Jupiter designed;
But be it mine to tell their various lot
To the unnumbered tribes of human-kind.
Let good to these, and ill to those be wrought
As I dispense—but he who comes consigned
By voice and wings of perfect augury
To my great shrine, shall find avail in me.

XCVI

Him will I not deceive, but will assist;
But he who comes relying on such birds
As chatter vainly, who would strain and twist
The purpose of the Gods with idle words,
And deems their knowledge light, he shall have missed
His road—whilst I among my other hoards
His gifts deposit. Yet, O son of May,
I have another wondrous thing to say.

XCVII

There are three Fates, three virgin Sisters, who
Rejoicing in their wind-outspeeding wings,
Their heads with flour snowed over white and new,
Sit in a vale round which Parnassus fings
Its circling skirts—from these I have learned true
Vaticinations of remotest things.
My father cared not. Whilst they search out dooms,
They sit apart and feed on honecombs.

XCVIII

They, having eaten the fresh honey, grow
Drunk with divine enthusiasm, and utter
With earnest willingness the truth they know;
But if deprived of that sweet food, they mutter
All plausible delusions—these to you
I give;—if you inquire, they will not stutter;
Delight your own soul with them:—any man
You would instruct may profit if he can.

XCVIIII

Take these and the fierce oxen, Maia’s child—
O’er many a horse and toil-enduring mule,
O’er jagged-jawed lions, and the wild
White-tusked bears, o’er all, by field or pool,
SHELLEY

But when the Moon divine from Heaven is gone
Under the sea, her beams within abide,
Till, bathing her bright limbs in Ocean's tide,
Clothing her form in garments glittering far,
And having yoked to her immortal car
The beam-invested steeds whose niece on high
Curve back, she drives to a remoter sky
A western Crescent, borne impetuously.
Then is made full the circle of her flight,
And as she grows, her beams move brighter and bright
Are poured from Heaven, where she is hovering then,
A wonder and a sign to mortal men.

The Sun of Saturn with this glorious Power
Mingled in love and sleep—to whom she bore
Pandela, a bright maid of beauty rare
Among the Gods, whose lives eternal are.

Hall Queen, great Moon, white-armed Divinity,
Fair-haired and favourable! thus with thee
My song beginning, by its music sweet
Shall make immortal many a glorious feat
Of demigods, with lovely lips, so well
Which minstrels, servants of the Muses, tell.

HOMER'S HYMN TO THE SUN

Offspring of Jove, Calliope, once more
To the bright Sun, thy hymn of music pour;
Whom to the child of star-clad Heaven and Earth
Euryphaessa, large-eyed nymph, brought forth;
Euryphaessa, the famed sister fair
Of great Hyperion, who to him did bear
A race of loveliest children; the young Mom,
Whose arms are like twin roses newly born,
The fair-haired Moon, and the immortal Sun,
Who borne by heavenly steeds his race doth run
Unconquerably, illumining the abodes
Of mortal Men and the eternal Gods.

Fiercely look forth his awe-inspiring eyes,
Beneath his golden helmet, whence arise
And are shot afar, clear beams of light;
His countenance, with radiant glory bright,
Beneath his graceful locks far shines around,
And the light vest with which his limbs are bound,
Of wool aesthetic delicately twined,
Glows in the stream of the uplifting wind.

TRANSLATIONS

His rapid steeds soon bear him to the West;
Where their steep flight his hands divine arrest,
And the fleet car with yoke of gold, which he
Seeds from bright Heaven beneath the shadowy sea.

HOMER'S HYMN TO THE EARTH: MOTHER OF ALL

O universal Mother, who dost keep
From everlasting thy foundations deep,
Eldest of things, Great Earth, I sing of thee!
All shapes that have their dwelling in the sea,
All things that fly, or on the ground divine
Live, move, and there are nourished—these are thine;
These from thy wealth thou dost sustain; from thee
Fair babes are born, and fruits on every tree
Hang ripe and large, revered Divinity!

The life of mortal men beneath thy sway
Is held; thy power both gives and takes away!
Happy are they whom thy mild favours nourish;
All things unstinted round them grow and flourish.
For them, endures the life-sustaining field
Its load of harvest, and their cattle yield
Large increase, and their house with wealth is filled.
Such honoured dwell in cities fair and free.
The homes of lovely women, prosperously;
Their sons exult in youth's new budding gladness,
And their fresh daughters free from care or sadness,
With bloom-inwoven dance and happy song,
On the soft flowers the meadow-grass among,
Leap round them sporting—such delights by thee
Are given, rich Power, revered Divinity.

Mother of gods, thou Wife of starry Heaven,
Farewell! be thou propitious, and be given
A happy life for this brief melody,
Nor thou nor other songs shall unremembered be.

HOMER'S HYMN TO MINERVA

I sing the glorious Power with azure eyes,
Athenian Pallas! timeless, chaste, and wise,
Tritogeneia, town-preserving Maid,
Revered and mighty; from his awful head
Whom Jove brought forth, in warlike armour dressed,
Golden, all radiant! wonder strange possessed
The everlasting Gods that Shape to see,
Shaking a javelin keen, impetuously
Rush from the crest of Aegis-bearing Jove;  
Fearfully Heaven was shaken, and did move  
Beneath the might of the Cerulean-eyed;  
Earth dreadfully resounded, far and wide:  
And, lifted from its depths, the sea swelled high  
in purple billows, the tide suddenly  
Stood still, and great Hyperion's son long time  
Checked his swift steeds, till where she stood sublime,  
Pallas from her immortal shoulders threw  
The arms divine; wise Jove rejoiced to view.  
Child of the Aegis-bearer, hail to thee,  
Nor thine nor others' praise shall unremembered be.  

HOMER'S HYMN TO VENUS  
[Vv. 1-55, with some omissions.]  
Mus, sing the deeds of golden Aphrodite,  
Who wakens with her smile the lulled delight  
Of sweet desire, tasting the eternal kings  
Of Heaven, and men, and all the living things  
That fleet along the air, or whom the sea,  
Or earth, with her maternal ministr'y,  
Nourish innumerable, thy delight  
All seek O crowned Aphrodite!  
Three spirits canst thou not deceive or quell:—  
Minerva, child of Jove, who loves too well  
Fierce war and mingling combat, and the fame  
Of glorious deeds, to heed thy gentle flame.  
Diana, golden-shafted queen,  
Is tamed not by thy smiles; the shadows green  
Of the wild woods, the bow, the . . .  
And piercing cries amid the swift pursuit  
Of beasts among waste mountains,—such delight  
Is hers, and men who know and do the right.  
Nor Saturn's first-born daughter, Vesta chaste,  
Whom Neptune and Apollo wood the last,  
Such was the will of aegis-bearing Jove;  
But sternly she refused the ills of Love,  
And by her mighty Father's head she swore  
An oath not unperformed, that evermore  
A virgin she would live mid deities  
Divine: her father, for such gentle ties  
Renounced, gave glorious gifts—thus in his hall  
She sits and feeds luxuriously. O'er all  
In every fate, her honours first arise  
From men—the eldest of Divinities.  

TRANSLATIONS  
These spirits she persuades not; nor deceives,  
But none beside escape, so well she weaves  
Her unseen toil; nor mortal men, nor gods  
Who live secure in their unseen abodes.  
She won the soul of him whose fierce delight  
Is thunder,—first in glory and in might.  
And, as she willed, his mighty mind deceiving,  
With mortal limbs his deathless limbs inweaving,  
Concealed him from his spouse and sister fair,  
Whom to wise Saturn ancient Rhea bare.  
but in return,  
In Venus Jove did soft desire awaken,  
That by her own enchantments overtaken,  
She might, no more from human union free,  
Burn for a nursling of mortality.  
For once, amid the assembled Deities,  
The laughter-loving Venus from her eyes  
Shot forth the light of a soft starlight smile,  
And boasting said, that she, secure the while,  
Could bring at will to the assembled Gods  
The mortal tenants of earth's dark abodes,  
And mortal offspring from a deathless stem  
She could produce in scorn and spite of them.  
Therefore he poured desire into her breast  
Of young Anchises,  
Feeding his herds among the mossy fountains  
Of the wide Ida's many-folded mountains,—  
Whom Venus saw, and loved, and the love clung  
Like wasting fire her senses wild among.  

THE CYCLOPS  
A SATYRIC DRAMA  
TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF EURIPIDES  
SILENUS.  
CHORUS OF SATYRS.  
ULYSSES.  
THE CYCLOPS.  
Silenus: O Bacchus, what a world of toil, both now  
And ere these limbs were overworn with age,  
Have I endured for thee! First, when thou fled'st  
The mountain-nymphs who nursed thee, driven afar  
By the strange madness Juno sent upon thee;  
Then in the battle of the sons of Earth,  
When I stood foot by foot close to thy side,  
No unpropitious fellow-combatant,  
And, driving through his shield my winged spear,  
Slew vast Enceladus. Consider now,
SHELDON

Is it a dream of which I speak to thee?
By Jove, it is not, for you have the trophies!
And now I suffer more than all before.
For when I heard that Juno had devised
A tedious voyage for you, I put to sea
With all my children quibled in search of you,
And I myself stood on the beaked prow
And fixed the naked mast; and all my boys
Leaning upon their oars, with splash and strain
Made white with foam the green and purple sea,—
And so we sought you, king. We were sailing
Near Malea, when an eastern wind arose,
And drove us to this waste Actean rock;
The one-eyed children of the Ocean God,
The man-destroying Cyclopes, inhabit,
On this wild shore, their solitary caves,
And one of these, named Polyphemus, has caught us
To be his slaves; and so, for all delight
Of Bacchic sports, sweet dance and melody,
We keep this lawless giant's wandering flocks.
My sons indeed, on far declivities,
Young things themselves, tend on the youngling sheep,
But I remain to fill the water-casks,
Or sweeping the hard floor, or ministering
Some impious and abominable meal
To the fell Cyclops. I am wearied of it!
And now I must scrape up the littered floor
With this great iron rake, so to receive
My absent master and his evening sheep
In a cave neat and clean. Even now I see
My children tending the flocks hitherward.
Ha! what is this? are your Sicilian measures
Even now the same, as when with dance and song
You brought young Bacchus to Althaed's halls?

Chorus of Satyrs.

STROPHIE

Where has he of race divine
Wandered in the winding rocks?
Here the air is calm and fine.
For the father of the flocks;—
Here the grass is soft and sweet,
And the river-eddies meet
In the trough beside the cave,
Bright as in their fountain wave.—
Neither here, nor on the dew

TRANSLATIONS

Of the lawny uplands feeding?
Oh, you come!—a stone at you
Will I throw to mend your breeding;—
Get along, you horrid thing,
Wild, seditious, rambling!

EPIDÉ

An Iachic melody
To the golden Aphrodite
Will I lift, as erst did I
Seeking her and her delight
With the Maenads, whose white feet
To the music glance and fleet.
Bacchus, O beloved, where,
Shaking wide thy yellow hair,
Wanderest thou alone, afar?
To the one-eyed Cyclops, we,
Who by right thy servants are,
Minister in misery,
In these wretched goat-skins clad,
Far from thy delights and thee.

Silenus. Be silent, sons; command the slaves to drive
The gathered flocks into the rock-roofed cave.
Chorus. Go! But what needs this serious haste, O father?
Silenus. I see a Grecian vessel on the coast,
And thence the rowers with some general
Approaching to this cave. —About their necks
Hang empty vessels, as they wished food,
And water-flasks. —Oh, miserable strangers!
Whence come they, that they know not what and who
My master is, approaching in ill hour
The inhospitable roof of Polyphemus,
And the Cyclopian jaw-bone, man-destroying?
Be silent, Satyrs, while I ask and hear
Whence coming, they arrive the Actean hill.
Ulysses. Friends, can you show me some clear water-spring,
The remedy of our thirst? Will any one
Furnish with food seamen in want of it?
Ha! what is this? We seem to be arrived
At the blithe court of Bacchus. I observe
This sportive band of Satyrs near the caves.
First let me greet the elder. —Hail!
Silenus. Hail thou,
O stranger! tell thy country and thy race.
Ulysses. The Ithacan Ulysses and the king
Of Cephalonia.
SILENUS. Oh! I know the man,  
Worried and shrewd, the son of Siyphus.  
ULYSSES. I am the same, but do not rail upon me,—  
SILENUS. Then you sailed do you come to Sicily?  
ULYSSES. From Ilium, and from the Trojan toils.  
SILENUS. How, touched you not at your paternal shore?  
ULYSSES. The strength of tempests bore me here by force.  
SILENUS. The self-same accident occurred to me.  
ULYSSES. Were you then driven here by stress of weather?  
SILENUS. Following the Pirates who had kidnapped Bacchus.  
ULYSSES. What land is this, and who inhabit it?—  
SILENUS. Aeolia, the loftiest peak in Sicily.  
ULYSSES. And are there walls, and tower-surrounded towns?  
SILENUS. There are not.—These lone rocks are bare of men.  
ULYSSES. And who possess the land? the race of beasts?  
SILENUS. Cyclopes, who live in caverns, not in houses.  
ULYSSES. Obeying whom? Or is the state popular?  
SILENUS. Shepherds: no one obeys any in aught.  
ULYSSES. How live they? do they sow the corn of Ceres?  
SILENUS. On milk and cheese, and on the flesh of sheep.  
ULYSSES. Have they the Borean drink from the vine's stream?  
SILENUS. Ah! not: they live in an ungracious land.  
ULYSSES. And are they just to strangers?—hospitable?  
SILENUS. They think the sweetest thing a stranger brings  
Is his own flesh.  
ULYSSES. What! do they eat man's flesh?  
SILENUS. No one comes here who is not eaten up.  
ULYSSES. The Cyclopes—where is he? Not at home?  
SILENUS. Absent on Aetna, hunting with his dogs.  
ULYSSES. Know'st thou what thou must do to aid us hence?  
SILENUS. I know not: we will help you all we can.  
ULYSSES. Provide us food, of which we are in want.  
SILENUS. Here is not anything, as I said, but meat.  
ULYSSES. But meat is a sweet remedy for hunger.  
SILENUS. Cow's milk there is, and store of curdled cheese.  
ULYSSES. Bring out:—I would see all before I bargain.  
SILENUS. But how much gold will you engage to give?  
ULYSSES. I bring no gold, but Bacchic juice.  
SILENUS.  
ULYSSES. Oh, joy!  
*This long since these dry lips were wet with wine.  
ULYSSES. Maron, the son of the God, gave it me.  
SILENUS. Whom I have nursed a baby in my arms.  
ULYSSES. The son of Bacchus, for your clearer knowledge.  
SILENUS. Have you it now?—or is it in the ship?  
ULYSSES. Old man, this skin contains it, which you see.  
SILENUS. Why, this would hardly be a mouthful for me.  
ULYSSES. Nay, twice as much as you can draw from thence.
Ten thousand Phrygians!—if I needs must die, 
Yet will I die with glory,—if I live, 
The praise which I have gained will yet remain. 
Silenus. What! ho! assistance, comrades, haste, assistance!

The Cyclops, Silenus, Ulysses; Chorus.

Cyclops. What is this tumult? Bacchus is not here, 
Nor tympanies nor brazen castanets. 
How are my young lambs in the cavern? Milking 
Their dams or playing by their sides? And is 
The new cheese pressed into the bulrush baskets? 
Speak! I'll beat some of you till you rain tears— 
Look up, not downwards when I speak to you. 
Silenus. See! I now gaze at Jupiter himself; 
I stare upon Orion and the stars. 
Cyclops. Well, is the dinner fitly cooked and laid? 
Silenus. All ready, if your throat is ready too. 
Cyclops. Are the bowls full of milk besides? 
Silenus. O'er-brimming; 
So you may drink a tawny if you will. 
Cyclops. Is it ewe's milk or cow's milk, or both mixed? — 
Silenus. Both, in fact; only pray don't swallow me. 
Cyclops. By no means——

What is this crowd I see beside the stalls? 
Outlaws or thieves? for near my cavern-home 
I see my young lambs coupled two by two 
With willow bands; mixed with my cheeses lie 
Their implements; and this old fellow here 
Has his bald head broken with stripes. 
Silenus. Ah me! I have been beaten till I burn with fever. 
Cyclops. By whom? Who laid his fist upon your head? 
Silenus. Those men, because I would not suffer them 
To steal your goods. 
Cyclops. Did not the rascals know 
I am a God, sprung from the race of Heaven? 
Silenus. I told them so, but they bore off your things, 
And ate the cheese in spite of all I said, 
And carried out the lambs—and said, moreover, 
They'd pin you down with a three-cubit collar, 
And pull your vitals out through your eye, 
Furrow your back with stripes, then, binding you, 
Throw you as ballast into the ship's hold, 
And then deliver you, a slave, to move 
Enormous rocks, or found a vestibule. 
Cyclops. In truth? Nay, haste, and place in order quickly 

Translations

The cooking-knives, and heap upon the hearth, 
And kindle it, a great fragot of wood,— 
As soon as they are slaughtered, they shall fill 
My belly, broiling warm from the live coals, 
Or boiled and seathed within the bubbling caldron. 
I am quite sick of the wild mountain game; 
Of stags and lions I have gorged enough, 
And I grow hungry for the flesh of men. 
Silenus. Nay, master, something new is very pleasant 
After one thing forever, and of late. 
Very few strangers have approached our cave. 
Ulysses. Hear, Cyclops, a plain tale on the other side. 
We, wanting to buy food, came from our ship 
Into the neighbourhood of your cave, and here 
This old Silenus gave us in exchange 
These lambs for wine, the which he took and drank, 
And all by mutual compact, without force. 
There is no word of truth in what he says, 
For slyly he was selling all his store. 
Silenus. If you perish, wretch— 
Ulysses. If I speak false! 
Silenus. Cyclops, I swear by Neptune who begot thee, 
By mighty Triton and by Nereus old, 
Calypso and the glaucous Ocean Nymphs, 
The sacred waves and all the race of fishes— 
Be these the witnesses, my dear sweet master, 
My darling little Cyclops, that I never 
Give any of your stores to these false strangers; — 
If I speak false may those whom most I love, 
My children, perish wretchedly! 
Chorus. There stop! 
I saw him giving these things to the strangers. 
If I speak false, then may my father perish, 
But do not thou wrong hospitality. 
Cyclops. You lie! I swear that he is juster far 
Than Rhadamantus—I trust more in him. 
But let me ask, whence have ye sailed, O strangers? 
Who are you? And what city nourished ye? 
Ulysses. Our race is Ithacan—having destroyed 
The town of Troy, the tempests of the sea 
Have driven us on thy land, O Polyphemus. 
Cyclops. What, have ye shared in the unenvied spoil 
Of the false Helen, near Scamander's stream? 
Ulysses. The same, having endured a woful toil. 
Cyclops. Oh, basest expedition! sailed ye not 
From Greece to Phrygia for one woman's sake? 
Ulysses. 'Twas the Gods' work—no mortal was in fault.
SHELLEY

But, O great Offspring of the Ocean-King,
We pray thee and admonish thee with freedom,
That thou dost spare thy friends who visit thee,
And place no impious foot within thy jaws.
For in the depths of Greece we have upreared
Temples to thy great Father, which are all
His homes. The sacred bay of Temenus
Remains inviolate, and each dim recess
Scooped high on the Malean promontory,
And ætary Sunium's silver veined crag,
Which divine Pallas keeps unprofaned ever,
The Gerastian assurances, and what's e'er
Within wide Greece our enterprise has kept
From Phrygian contumely; and in which
You have a common care, for you inhabit
The skirts of Grecian land, under the roots
Of Aetna and its crags, spotted with fire.
Turn then to converse under human laws,
Receive us shipwrecked suppliants, and provide
Food, clothes, and fire, and hospitable gifts;
Nor fix upon oxen-piercing spits
Our limbs, so fill your belly and your jaws.
Pram's wide land has widowed Greece enough;
And weapon-wing'd murder heaped together
Enough of dead, and wives are husbandless,
And ancient women and gray fathers wail
Their childless age;—if you should roast the rest—
And 'tis a bitter feast that you prepare—
Where then would any turn? Yet be persuaded;
Fargo the lust of your jaw-bone: prefer
Pious humanity to wicked will.
Many have bought too dear their evil joys.
Silenus. Let me advise you, do not spare a morsel
Of all his flesh. If you should eat his tongue
You would become most eloquent, O Cyclops.
Cyclops. Wealth, my good fellow, is the wise man's God,
All other things are a pretence and boast.
What are my father's ocean promontories,
The sacred rocks whereon he dwells, to me?
Stranger, I laugh to scorn Jove's thunderbolt,
I know not that his strength is more than mine.
As to the rest I care not.—When he pours
Rain from above, I have a close pavilion
Under this rock, in which I lie supine,
Feasting on a roast calf or some wild beast,
And drinking pans of milk, and gloriously
Emulating the thunder of high Heaven.

TRANSLATIONS

And when the Thracian wind pours down the snow,
I wrap my body in the skins of beasts,
Kindle a fire, and bid the snow swirl on.
The earth, by force, whether it will or no,
Bringing forth grass, fattens my flocks and herds,
Which, to what other God but to myself
And this great belly, first of deities,
Should I be bound to sacrifice? I well know
The wise man's only Jupiter is this,
To eat and drink during his little day,
And give himself no care. And as for those
Who complicate with laws the life of man,
I freely give them tears for their reward.
I will not cheat my soul of its delight,
Or hesitate in dining upon you:
And that I may be quit of all demands,
These are my hospitable gifts;—fierce fire
And ye ancestral caldron, which o'er-bubbling
Shall finely cook your miserable flesh.
Creep in!—

Ulysses. All aii! I have escaped the Trojan toils,
I have escaped the sea, and now I fall
Under the cruel grasp of one impious man.
O Pallas, Mistress, Goddess, sprung from Jove,
Now, now, assist me! Mightier toils than Troy
Are these;—I totter on the casms of peril;—
And thou who inhabitst the throne
Of the bright stars, look, hospitable Jove,
Upon this outrage of thy deity,
Otherwise be considered as no God!

Chorus (alone).

For your gaping gulf and your gullet wide,
The ravin is ready on every side,
The limbs of the strangers are cooked and done;
There is boiled meat, and roast meat, and meat from the coal,
You may chop it, and tear it, and mash it for fun,
An hairy goat's skin contains the whole.
Let me but escape, and ferry me o'er
The stream of your wrath to a safer shore.
The Cyclops Aetnean is cruel and bold,
He murders the strangers
That sit on his hearth,
And dreads no avengers
To rise from the earth.
He roasts the men before they are cold,
He snatcheth them broiling from the coal,  
And from the caldron pullst hem whole,  
And minces their flesh and gnaws their bone  
With his cursed teeth, till all be gone.  
Farewell, foul pavilion:  
Farewell, rites of dread!  
The Cyclops vermin,  
With slaughter unceasing,  
Now feasts on the dead,  
In the flesh of strangers joying!

Ulysses. O Jupiter! I saw within the cave  
Horrible things; deeds to be feigned in words,  
But not to be believed as being done.

Chorus. What sawest thou the impious Polyphemus  
Feasting upon your loved companions now?

Ulysses. Selecting two, the plumpest of the crowd,  
He grasped them in his hands—  

Chorus. Unhappy man!

Ulysses. Soon as we came into this craggy place,  
Kindling a fire, he cast on the broad hearth  
The knotty limbs of an enormous oak.  
Three waggon-loads at least, and then he strewed  
Upon the ground, beside the red firelight,  
His couch of pine-leaves; and he milked the cows,  
And pouring forth the white milk, filled a bowl  
Three cubits wide and four in depth, as much  
As would contain ten amphorae, and bound it  
With ivy wreaths; then placed upon the fire  
A brazier pot to boil, and made red hot  
The points of spits, not sharpened with the sickle,  
But with a fruit tree bough, and with the jaws  
Of axes for Aetolian slaughterings.  
And when this God-abandoned Cook of Hell  
Had made all ready, he seized two of us  
And killed them in a kind of measured manner;  
For he flung one against the brazen rivets  
Of the huge caldron, and seized the other  
By the foot's tendon, and knocked out his brains  
Upon the sharp edge of the craggy stone:  
Then peeled his flesh with a great cooking-knife  
And put him down to roast. The other's limbs  
He chopped into the caldron to be boiled.  
And I, with the tears raining from my eyes  
Stood near the Cyclops, ministering to him;  

1 I confess I do not understand this.—[Shelley’s Note.]

Translations

The rest, in the recesses of the cave,  
Clung to the rock like bats, bloodless with fear.  
When he was filled with his companions' flesh,  
He threw himself upon the ground and sent  
A loathsome exhalation from his nostrils.  
Then a divine thought came to me. I filled  
The cup of Maron, and I offered him  
To taste, and said:—Child of the Ocean God,  
Behold what drink the vines of Greece produce,  
The exaltation and the joy of Bacchus.  
He, satiated with his unnatural food,  
Received it, and at one draught drank it off,  
And taking my hand, praised me:—Thou hast given  
A sweet draught after a sweet meal, dear guest.  
And I, perceiving that it pleased him, filled  
Another cup, well knowing that the wine  
Would wound him soon and take a sure revenge.  
And the charm fascinated him, and I  
Piled him cup after cup, until the drink  
Had warmed his entrails, and he sang aloud  
In concert with my waiting fellow-seamen  
A hideous disord—and the cavern rang.  
I have stolen out, so that if you will  
You may achieve my safety and your own.  
But say, do you desire, or not, to fly  
This uncompanionable man, and dwell  
As was your wont among the Grecian Nymphs  
Within the fanes of your beloved God?  
Your father there within agrees to it,  
But he is weak and overcome with wine,  
And caught as if with bird-like by the cup,  
He claps his wings and crows in dozing joy.  
You who are young escape with me, and find  
Bacchus your ancient friend; unsuited he  
To this rude Cyclops.

Chorus. Oh my dearest friend,  
That I could see that day, and leave for ever  
The impious Cyclops.

Ulysses. Listen then what a punishment I have  
For this fell monster, how secure a flight  
From your hard servitude.

Chorus. O sweeter far  
Than is the music of an Asian lyre  
Would be the news of Polyphemus destroyed.  

Ulysses. Delighted with the Bacchic drink he goes  
To call his brother Cyclops—who inhabits...
A village upon Aetna not far off.

Chorus. I understand, catching him when alone
You think by some measure to dispatch him,
Or thrust him from the precipice.

Ulysses.
Nothing of that kind; my device is subtle.

Chorus. How then? I heard of old that thou wert wise.

Ulysses. I will dissuade him from this plan, by saying
It were unwise to give the Cyclopes
This precious drink, which if enjoyed alone
Would make life sweeter for a longer time.

When, vanquished by the Bacchic power, he sleeps,

Chorus. There is a trunk of olive wood within,
Whose point having made sharp with this good sword
I will conceal in fire, and when I see
It is alight, will fix it, burning yet,
Within the socket of the Cyclops' eye
And melt it out with fire—as when a man
Turns by its handle a great auger round,
Fitting the framework of a ship with beams,
So will I, in the Cyclops' fiery eye
Turn round the brand and dry the pupil up.

Chorus. Joy! I am mad with joy at your device.

Ulysses. And then with you, my friends, and the old man,
We'll load the hollow depth of our black ship,
And row with double strokes from this dread shore.

Chorus. May I, as in libations to a God,
Share in the blinding him with the red brand?

Ulysses. I would have some communion in his death.

Chorus. Doubtless: the brand is a great brand to hold.

Ulysses. Oh! I would lift an hundred wagon-loads,
If like a wasp's nest I could scoop the eye out
Of the detested Cyclops.

Chorus. Silence now!

Ye know the close device—and when I call,
Look ye obey the masters of the craft.
I will not save myself and leave behind
My comrades in the cave; I might escape,
Having got clear from that obscure recess,
But 'twere unjust to leave in jeopardy
The dear companions who sailed here with me.

Chorus.

Come! who is first, that with his hand
Will urge down the burning brand
Through the lids, and quench and pierce
The Cyclops' eye so fiery fierce?
That coronal, and taste the cup to you.
Cylops! Thou wily traitor!
Silenus. But the wine is sweet.
Ay, you will roar if you are caught in drinking.
Silenus. See now, my lip is clean and all my beard.
Silenus. Now put your elbow right and drink again.
As you see me drink—
Cylops. How now?
Silenus. Ye Gods, what a delicious gulp!
Cylops. Guest, take it;—you pour out the wine for me.
Silenus. The wine is well accustomed to my hand.
Silenus. Pour out the wine!
Silenus. I pour; only be silent.
Cylops. Silence is a hard task to him who drinks.
Silenus. Take it and drink it off; leave not a drop.
Oh, that the drinker died with his own draught!
Cylops. Papal! the vine must be a sapient plant.
Silenus. If you drink much after a mighty feast,
Moistening your thirsty maw, you will sleep well;
If you leave aught, Bacchus will dry you up.
Cylops. Ho! ho! I can scarce rise. What pure delight!
The heavens and earth appear to whirl about
Confusedly. I see the throne of Jove
And the clear congregation of the Gods.
Now if the Graces tempted me to kiss
I would not—for the loveliest of them all
I would not leave this Ganymede.
Silenus. Polyphemus,
I am the Ganymede of Jupiter.
Cylops. By Jove, you are; I bore you off from Dardanus.

Ulysses and the Cumaean Sibyl

Silenus. Come, boys of Bacchus, children of high race,
This man within is folded up in sleep,
And soon will vomit flesh from his fell maw;
The brand under the shed thrusts out its smoke,
No preparation needs, but to burn out
The monster's eye;—but bear yourselves like men.
Chorus. We will have courage like the adamant rock,
All things are ready for you here; go in,
Before our father shall perceive the noise.
Ulysses. Vulcan, Aetnaean king! burn out with fire
The shining eye of this thy neighbouring monster!
And thou, O Sleep, nursling of gloomy Night,
Descend unmixed on this God-hated beast,
And suffer not Ulysses and his comrades,
Returning from their famous Trojan toils,
SHELLEY

To perish by this man, who cares not either
For God or mortal; or I needs must think
That Chance is a supreme divinity,
And things divine are subject to her power.

Chorus.

Soon a crab the throat will seize
Of him who feeds upon his guest,
Fire will burn his lamp-like eyes
In revenge of such a feast!
A great oak stump now is lying
In the ashes yet undying.
Come, Maron, come!
Raging let him fix the doom,
Let him tear the eyelid up
Of the Cyclops—that his cup
May be evil!
Oh! I long to dance and revel
With sweet Bromian, long desired,
In loved ivy wreaths attired;
Leaving this abandoned home—
Will the moment ever come?

Ulysses. Be silent, ye wild things! Nay, hold your peace,
And keep your lips quite close; dare not to breathe,
Or spit, or e'en wink, lest ye wake the monster,
Until his eye be tortured out with fire.

Chorus. Nay, we are silent, and we shew the air.

Ulysses. Come now, and lend a hand to the great stake
Within—it is delightfully red hot.

Chorus. You then command who first should seize the stake
To burn the Cyclops' eye, that all may share
In the great enterprise.

Semitchorus I. We are too far;
We cannot at this distance from the door
Thrust fire into his eye.

Semitchorus II. And we just now
Have become lame! I cannot move hand or foot.

Chorus. The same thing has occurred to us,—our ankles
Are sprained with standing here, I know not how.

Ulysses. What, sprained with standing still?

Chorus. And there is dust

Or ashes in our eyes, I know not whence.

Ulysses. Cowardly dogs! ye will not aid me then?

Chorus. With piling my own back and my back-bone,
And with not wishing all my teeth knocked out,
This cowardice comes of itself—but stay,

TRANSLATIONS

I know a famous Orphic incantation
To make the brand stick of its own accord
Into the skull of this one-eyed son of Earth.

Ulysses. Of old I knew ye thus by nature; now
I know ye better—I will use the aid
Of my own comrades. Yet though weak of hand
Speak cheerfully, that so ye may awaken
The courage of my friends with your blithe words,
Chorus. This I will do with peril of my life,
And blind you with my exhortations, Cyclops.

Hasten and thrust,
And parch up to dust,
The eye of the beast
Who feeds on his guest.
Burn and blind
The Aeolian hind!
Scoop and draw,
But beware lest he claw
Your limbs near his maw.

Cyclops. Ah me! my eyesight is parched up to cinders.
Chorus. What a sweet peace; sing me that again!

Cyclops. Ah me! indeed, what woe has fallen upon me!
But, wretched nothings, think ye not to flee
Out of this rock; I, standing at the outlet,
Will bar the way and catch you as you pass.
Chorus. What are you roaring out, Cyclops?

Cyclops. For you are wicked.
Cyclops. And besides miserable.
Cyclops. What, did you fall into the fire when drunk?
Cyclops. 'Twas Nobody destroyed me.

Chorus. Why then no one
Can be to blame.

Cyclops. I say 'twas Nobody
Who blinded me.

Chorus. Why then you are not blind.

Cyclops. I wish you were as blind as I am.

Chorus. Nay, It cannot be that no one made you blind.

Cyclops. You jeer me; where, I ask, is Nobody?

Chorus. Nowhere, O Cyclops.

Cyclops. It was that stranger ruined me:—the wretch
First gave me wine and then burned out my eye,
For wine is strong and hard to struggle with.

Chorus. They stand under the darkness of the rock
And cling to it.
SHELLEY

Cyclops. At my right hand or left?
Chorus. Close on your right.
Cyclops. Where?
Chorus. Near the rock itself.

You have them.
Cyclops. Oh, misfortune on misfortune!

I've cracked my skull.
Chorus. Now they escape you—there.
Cyclops. Not there, although you say so.
Chorus. Not on that side.
Cyclops. Where then?
Chorus. They creep about you on your left.

Cyclops. Ah! I am mocked! They joy in my ills.
Chorus. Not there: he is a little there beyond you.
Cyclops. Detested wretch! where are you?

Ulysses. Far from you

I keep with care this body of Ulysses.
Cyclops. What do you say? You proffer a new name.
Ulysses. My father named me so; and I have taken
A full revenge for your unnatural feast;
I should have done ill to have burned down Troy
And not revenged the murder of my comrades.
Cyclops. Ah! all the ancient oracle is accomplished;
It said that I should have my eye sight blinded
By your coming from Troy, yet it foretold
That you should pay the penalty for this
By wandering long over the homeless sea.

Ulysses. I bid thee weep—consider what I say;
I go towards the shore to drive my ship
To mine own land, o'er the Sicilian wave.
Cyclops. Not so, if, whelming you with this huge stone,
I can crush you and all your men together;
I will descend upon the shore, though blind,
Groping my way adown the steep ravine.
Chorus. And we, the shipmates of Ulysses now,
Will serve our Bacchus all our happy lives.

EPIGRAMS

I.—TO STELLA

FROM THE GREEK OF PLATO

Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled;
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
New splendour to the dead.

TRANSLATIONS

II.—KISSING HELENA

FROM THE GREEK OF PLATO

KISSING Helena, together
With my kiss, my soul beside it
Came to my lips, and there I kept it,—
For the poor thing had wandered thither,
To follow where the kiss should guide it,
Oh, cruel I, to intercept it!

III.—SPIRIT OF PLATO

FROM THE GREEK

EAGLE! why sorest thou above that tomb?
To what sublime and starry-paven home
Floatest thou?—
I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven; Athens doth inherit
His corpse below.

IV.—CIRCUMSTANCE

FROM THE GREEK

A man who was about to hang himself,
Finding a purse, then threw away his rope;
The owner, coming to reclaim his pelf,
The halter found, and used it. So is Hope
Changed for Despair—one laid upon the shelf,
We take the other. Under Heaven's high cope
Fortune is God—all you endure and do
Depends on circumstance as much as you.

FRAGMENT OF THE ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF ADONIS

FROM THE GREEK OF PHON

I MOURN Adonis dear—loveliest Adonis—
Dead, dear Adonis—and the Loves lament.
Sleep no more, Venus, wrapped in purple woof—
Wake violet-stoled queen, and weave the crown
Of Death,—'tis Misery calls,—for he is dead.
The lovely one lies wounded in the mountains,
His white thigh struck with the white tooth; he scarce
Yet breathes; and Venus hangs in agony there.
The dark blood waders o'er his snowy limbs,
His eyes beneath their lids are lustreless.
The rose has fled from his wan lips, and there
That kiss is dead, which Venus gathers yet.
SHELLEY

A deep, deep wound Adonis... A deeper Venus bears upon her heart. See, his beloved dogs are gathering round— The Cretan nymphs are weeping—Aphrodite With hair unbound is wandering through the woods, Wildered, ungirt, unsandalled—thorns pierce Her hastening feet and drink her sacred blood. Bitterly screaming out, she is driven on Through the long vales; and her Assyrian boy, Her love, her husband, calls—the purple blood From his struck thigh stains her white navel now, Her bosom, and her neck before like snow. Alas for Cytherea—the Loves mourn— The lovely, the beloved is gone!—and now Her sacred beauty vanishes away. For Venus whilst Adonis lived was fair— Alas! her loveliness is dead with him. The oaks and mountains cry, Al! al! Adonis! The springs their waters change to tears and weep— The flowers are withered up with grief...

All! all! Adonis is dead
Echo resounds
Who will weep not thy dreadful woe, O Venus? Soon as she saw and knew the mortal wound Of her Adonis—saw the life-blood flow From his fair thigh, now wasting,—wailing loud She clasped him, and cried: Stay, Adonis!

Stay, dearest one,... and mix my lips with thine—

Wake yet a while, Adonis—oh, but once,
That I may kiss thee now for the last time— But for as long as one short kiss may live
Oh, let thy breath flow from thy dying soul Even to my mouth and heart, that I may suck That...

FRAGMENT OF THE ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF BION

FROM THE GREEK OF MOSCHUS

Ye Dorian woods and waves, lament aloud,—
Augment your tide, O streams, with fruitless tears,
For the beloved Bion is no more.
Let every tender herb and plant and flower,
From each dejected bud and drooping bloom,
Shed dews of liquid sorrow, and with breath
Of melancholy sweetness on the wind

TRANSLATIONS

Diffuse its languid love; let roses blush,
Anemones grow paler for the loss
Their dells have known; and thou, O myrrhinth,
Utter thy legend now—yet more, dumb flower,
Than 'Al' alis!'—thine is no common grief—

Bion the [sweetest singer] is no more.

FROM THE GREEK OF MOSCHUS

Τὰν ἅλα τὰν γλυκάνων διὰν ὅνεμος σίμηρα βάλλῃ—κ.τ.λ.
WHEN winds that move not its calm surface sweep
The azure sea, I love the land no more;
The smiles of the serene and tranquil deep
Tempt my unquiet mind.—But when the roar
Of Ocean's gray abyss resounds, and foam
Gathers upon the sea, and vast waves burst,
I turn from the drear aspect to the home
Of Earth and its deep woods, where, interspersed,
When winds blow loud, pines make sweet melody.
Whose house is some lone bark, whose toil the sea,
Whose prey the wandering fish, an evil lot
Has chosen.—But I my languid limbs will fling
Beneath the plane, where the brook's murmuring
Moves the calm spirit, but disturbs it not.

PAN, ECHO, AND THE SATYR

FROM THE GREEK OF MOSCHUS

PAN loved his neighbour Echo—but that child
Of Earth and Air pined for the Satyr leaping;
The Satyr loved with wasting madness wild
The bright nymph Lyda,—and so three went weeping.
As Pan loved Echo, Echo loved the Satyr;
The Satyr, Lyda; and so love consumed them—
And thus to each—which was a woful matter—
To bear what they inflicted Justice doomed them;
For, inasmuch as each might hate the lover,
Each, loving, so was hated.—Yet that love not
Be warned—in thought turn this example over,
That when ye love, the like return ye prove not.

FROM VERGIL'S TENTH ELOCUIGE

[Mv. 1-26]

MELANCHOLIC Arethusa, o'er my verse
Shed thou once more the spirit of thy stream:
Who denies verse to Gallus? So, when thou
SHELLEY

Gliest beneath the green and purple gleam
Of Syracusan waters, mayst thou flow
Unmingled with the bitter Doric dew!
Begin, and, whilst the goats are browsing now
The soft leaves, in our way let us pursue
The melancholy loves of Gallus, List!
We sing not to the dead: the wild woods knew
His sufferings, and their echoes ...
Young Naiads, ... in what far woodlands wild
Wandered ye when unworthy love possessed
Your Gallus? Not where Pindus is up-plied,
Nor where Parnassus' sacred mount, nor where
Aonian Aganippe expands ...
The laurels and the myrtle-copse dim.
The pine-en circled mountain, Maenalus,
The cold crags of Lycaeus, weep for him;
And Sylvan, crowned with rustic coronals,
Came shaking in his speed the budding wands
And heavy lilies which he bore: we knew
Pan the Arcadian.

'What madness is this, Gallus! Thy heart's care
With willing steps pursues another there.'

FROM VERGIL'S FOURTH GEORGIC

[1v. 3o0 et seq.]
And the claven waters like a charm of mountains
Stood, and received him in its mighty portal
And let him through the deep's untrampled fountains
He went in wonder through the path immortal
Of his great Mother and her humd reign
And groves profanen not by the step of mortai
Which sounded as he passed, and lakes which rain
Replendenl not gilt round by marble caves
Wildened by the watery motion of the main
Half wildered he beheld the bursting waves
Of every stream beneath the mighty earth
Phasis and Lycus which the sand paves,
[And] the chasm where old Enipeus has its birth
And father Tyber and Anlenes? glow
And whence Cucius, Mystian stream, comes forth
And rock-resounding Hypanis, and thou
Eridanus who hearest like empire's sign
Two golden horns upon thy taurine brow

TRANSLATIONS

Thou than whom none of the streams divine
Through garden-fields and meadows with fiercer power,
Burst in their tumult on the purple brine.

SONNET

FROM THE ITALIAN OF DANTE

Dante Alighieri to Guido Cavalcaci

GUIDO, I would that Lapo, thou, and I,
Led by some strong enchantment, might ascend
A magic ship, whose charmed sails should fly
With winds at will where'er our thoughts might wend,
So that no change, nor any evil chance
Should mar our joyous voyage; but it might be,
That even satire should still enhance
Between our hearts their strict community:
And that the bounteous wizard then would place
Vanna and Bice and my gentle love,
Companions of our wandering, and would grace
With passionate talk, wherever we might rove,
Our time, and each were as content and free
As I believe that thou and I should be.

THE FIRST CANZONE OF THE CONVITO

FROM THE ITALIAN OF DANTE

I

Ye who intelligent the Third Heaven move,
Hear the discourse which is within my heart,
Which cannot be declared, it seems so new.
The Heaven whose course follows your power and art,
Oh, gentle creatures that ye are! me drew,
And therefore may I dare to speak to you,
Even of the life which now I live—and yet
I pray that ye will bear me when I cry,
And tell of mine own heart this novelty;
How the lamenting Spirit moans in it,
And how a voice there murmurs against her
Who came on the refugence of your sphere.

II

A sweet Thought, which was once the life within
This heavy heart, many a time and oft
Went up before our Father's feet, and there
It saw a glorious Lady throne aloft;
And its sweet talk of her my soul did win,
SHELLEY

So that I said, 'Thither I too will fare.'
That Thought is fled, and one doth now appear
Which tyrannizes me with such fierce stress,
That my heart trembles—ye may see it leap—
And on another Lady bids me keep
Mine eyes, and says—Who would have blessedness
Let him but look upon that Lady's eyes,
Let him not fear the agony of signs.

III

This lowly Thought, which once would talk with me
Of a bright seraph sitting crowned on high,
Found such a cruel foe it died, and so
My Spirit wept, the grief is hot even now—
And said, Alas for me! how swift could flee
That piteous Thought which did my life console!
And the afflicted one questioning
Mine eyes, if such a Lady saw they never,
And why they would . . .
I said: 'Beneath those eyes might stand for ever
He whom regards must kill with
To have known their power stood me in little stead,
Those eyes have looked on me, and I am dead.'

IV

'Thou art not dead, but thou hast wandered,
Thou Soul of ours, who thyself dost fret,'
A Spirit of gentle Love beside me said;
For that fair Lady, whom thou dost regret,
Hath so transformed the life which thou hast led,
Thou scornest it, so worthless art thou made.
And see how meek, how pitiful, how staid,
Yet courteous, in her majesty she is.
And still call thou her Woman in thy thought;
Her whom, if thou thyself deceivest not,
Thou wilt behold decked with such loveliness,
That thou wilt cry [Love] only Lord, lo! here
Thy handmaiden, do what thou wilt with her.

V

My song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning
Of such hard matter dost thou entertain.
Whence, if by misadventure chance should bring
Thee to have company, as chance may do,
Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
I prithee comfort thy sweet self again,
SHELLEY

Which starred that night, when, even as a thing
That suddenly, for blank astonishment,
Charms every sense, and makes all thought take wing,—
A solitary woman! and she went
Singing and gathering flower after flower,
With which her way was painted and bespangled.
‘Bright lady, who, if looks had ever power
To bear true witness of the heart within,
Dost bask under the beams of love, come lower
Towards this bank. I prithee let me win
This much of thee, to come, that I may bear
Thy song: like Proserpine, in Emma’s glen,
Thou seest to my fancy, singing here
And gathering flowers, as that fair maiden when
She lost the Spring, and Ceres her, more dear.’

FRAGMENT

ADAPTED FROM THE VITA NUOVA OF DANTE

What Mary is when she a little smiles
I cannot even tell or call to mind,
It is a miracle so new, so rare.

UGOLINO

INFERNO XXIII. 22-75

Now had the loophole of that dungeon, still
Which bears the name of Famine’s Tower from me,
And where its fit that many another will
Be doomed to linger in captivity,
Shown through its narrow opening in my cell
Moon after moon slow waning, when a sleep
That of the future burst the veil, in dream
Visited me. It was a slumber deep
And evil; for I saw, or I did seem
To see, that tyrant Lord he revels keep,
The leader of the cruel hunt to them,
Chasing the wolf and wolf-cubs up the steep
Ascent, that from the Pison is the screen
Of Lucca; with him Gualandia came,
Sienoni, and Lanfranchi, bloodhoods lean,
Trained to the sport and eager for the game
Wide ranging in his front; but soon were seen
Though by so short a course, with spirit tame,

TRANSLATIONS

The father and his whelp to flag at once,
And then the sharp fangs gored their bosoms deep
Ere morn I roused myself; and heard my sons,
For they were with me, moaning in their sleep,
And begging bread. Ah, for those darling ones!
Right cruel art thou, if thou dost not weep
In thinking of my soul’s sad augury;
And if thou woepest not now, weep never more!
They were already waked, as soon drew nigh
The allotted hour for food, and in that hour
Each drew a passage from his dream. When I
Heard locked beneath me of that horrible tower
The outlet; then into their eyes alone
I looked to read myself, without a sign
Or word. I wept not—turned within to stone.
They wept aloud, and little Anselm mine,
Said—‘twas my youngest, dearest little one,—
‘What ails thee, father? Why look so at thine?’
In all that day, and all the following night,
I wept not, nor replied; but when to shine
Upon the world, not us, came forth the light
Of the new sun, and thwart my prison thrown
Gleamed through its narrow chink, a doleful sight,
Three faces, each the reflex of my own,

Were imaged by its faint and ghostly ray;
Then I, of either hand unto the bone,
Gnawed, in my agony; and thinking they
‘Twere done from sudden pangs, in their excess,
All of a sudden raise themselves, and say,
‘Father! our woes, so great, were yet the less
Would you but eat of us,—‘twas you who clad
Our bodies in these weeds of wretchedness;
Despoil them.’ Not to make their hearts more sad,
I hushed myself. That day is at its close.—
Another—still we were all mute. Oh, had
The obdurate earth opened to end our woes!

The fourth day dawned, and when the new sun shone,
Outstretched himself before me as it rose
My Gaddo, saying, ‘Help, father! hast thou none
SHELLEY

For thine own child—is there no help from thee?
He died—there at my feet—and one by one,
I saw them fall, plainly as you see me.

Between the fifth and sixth day, ere 'twas dawn,
I found myself blind-grapling o'er the three.
Three days I called them after they were gone.
Famine of grief can get the mastery.

SONNET

FROM THE ITALIAN OF CAVALCANTI

GUIDO CAVALCANTI TO DANTE ALIGHIERI

RETURNING from its daily sport, my Spirit
Changed thoughts and vile in thee doth weep to find:
It grieves me that thy mild and gentle mind
Those ample virtues which it did inherit.
Has lost. Once thou didst loathe the multitude
Of blind and maddening men—I then loved thee
I loved thy lofty songs and that sweet mood
When thou wast faithful to thyself and me.
I dare not now through thy degraded state
Own the delight thy strains inspire—in vain
I seek what once thou wert—we cannot meet
And we were wont. Again and yet again
Fonder my words: so the false Spirit shall fly
And leave to thee thy true integrity.

SCENES FROM THE MAGICO PRODIGIOSO

FROM THE SPANISH OF CALDERON

SCENE I.—Enter CYPRIAN, dressed as a Student; CLARIN and MOSCON as poor Scholars, with books.

CYPRIAN. In the sweet solitude of this calm place,
This intricate wild wilderness of trees
And flowers and undergrowth of odorous plants,
Leave me; the books you brought out of the house
To me are ever best society.

And while with glorious festival and song,
Antioch now celebrates the consecration
Of a proud temple to great Jupiter,
And bears his image in loud jubilee
To its new shrine, I would consume what still
Lives of the dying day in studious thought,
Far from the throng and turmoil. You, my friends,
Go, and enjoy the festival; it will

TRANSLATIONS

Be worth your pains. You may return for me
When the sun seeks its grave among the billows
Which, among dim gray clouds on the horizon,
Dance like white plumes upon a hearse;—and here
I shall expect you.

MOSCON.
I cannot bring my mind,

GREAT AS MY HASTE TO SEE THE FESTIVAL

Certainly is, to leave you, Sir, without
Just saying some three or four thousand words.

How is it possible that on a day
Of such festivity, you can be content
To come forth to a solitary country
With three or four old books, and turn your back
On all this mirth?

CLARIN. My master's in the right;
There is not anything more tiresome
Than a procession day, with troops, and priests,
And dances, and all that.

MOSCON. From first to last,

CLARIN, you are a temporizing flatterer;

You praise not what you feel but what he does;—
Toadeater!

CLARIN. You lie—under a mistake—
For this is the most civil sort of lie
That can be given to a man's face. I now
Say what I think.

CYPRIAN. Enough, you foolish fellows!
Puffed up with your own doting ignorance,
You always take the two sides of one question.
Now go; and as I said, return for me
When night falls, veiling in its shadows wide
This glorious fabric of the universe.

MOSCON. How happens it, although you can maintain

The folly of enjoying festivals,
That yet you go there?

CLARIN. Nay, the consequence
Is clear:—who ever did what he advises
Others to do?—

MOSCON. Would that my feet were wings,
So would I fly to Livia.

CLARIN. To speak truth,

Livia is she who has surprised my heart;
But he is more than half-way there.—Soho!
Livia, I come; good sport, Livia, soho!

CYPRIAN. Now, since I am alone, let me examine

The question which has long disturbed my mind
With doubt, since first I read in Plinius
Much pains must we expend on one cause, And even then attain not;—but it is
not for us to grudge the labour; the
thing to be considered is, whether we do
right and justly the work we perform.

The words of mystic import and deep sense
in which he defines God, is an added
magnificence to the whole. Without it, the
whole must falter.
Examining the question with more care,  
It follows, that the Gods would always will  
That which is best, were they supremely good.  
How then does one will one thing, one another?  
And that you may not say that I allege  
Poetical or philosophic learning:—  
Consider the ambiguous responses  
Of their oracular statues: from two shrines  
Two armies shall obtain the assurance of  
One victory. Is it not indisputable  
That two contending wills can never lead  
To the same end? And, being opposite,  
If one be good, is not the other evil?  
Evil in God is inconceivable;  
But supreme goodness falls among the Gods  
Without their union.  

**Daemon.** I deny your major.  
These responses are means towards some end  
Unfathomed by our intellectual beam.  
They are the work of Providence, and more  
The battle's loss may profit those who lose,  
Than victory advantage those who win.  

**Cyprian.** That I admit; and yet that God should not  
(Falseness is incompatible with deity)  
Assure the victory; it would be enough  
To have permitted the defeat. If God  
Be all sight,—God, who had beheld the truth,  
Would not have given assurance of an end  
Never to be accomplished: thus, although  
The Deity may according to his attributes  
Be well distinguished into persons, yet  
Even in the minutest circumstance  
His essence must be one.  

**Daemon.** To attain the end  
The affections of the actors in the scene  
Must have been thus influenced by his voice.  

**Cyprian.** But for a purpose thus subordinate  
He might have employed Gentil, good or evil,—  
A sort of spirits called so by the learned,  
Who roam about inspring good or evil,  
And from whose influence and existence we  
May well infer our immortality.  
Thus God might easily, without descent  
To a gross falsehood in his proper person,  
Have moved the affections by this mediation  
To the just point.  

**Daemon.** These trilling contradictions

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**TRANSLATIONS**

Do not suffice to impugn the unity  
Of the high Gods; in things of great importance  
They still appear unanimous; consider  
That glorious fabric, man,—his workmanship  
Is stamped with one conception.  

**Cyprian.** Who made man  
Must have, methinks, the advantage of the others.  
If they are equal, might they not have risen  
In opposition to the work, and being  
All hands, according to our author here,  
Have still destroyed even as the other made?  
If equal in their power, unequal only  
In opportunity, which of the two  
Will remain conqueror?  

**Daemon.** On impossible  
And false hypothesis there can be built  
No argument. Say, what do you infer  
From this?  

**Cyprian.** That there must be a mighty God  
Of supreme goodness and of highest grace,  
All sight, all hands, all truth, infallible,  
Without an equal and without a rival,  
The cause of all things and the effect of nothing,  
One power, one will, one substance, and one essence.  
And, in whatever persons, one or two,  
His attributes may be distinguished, one  
Sovereign power, one solitary essence,  
One cause of all cause.  

**Daemon.** How can I impugn  
So clear a consequence?  

**Cyprian.** Do you regret  
My victory?  

**Daemon.** Who but regrets a check  
In rivalry of wit? I could reply  
And urge new difficulties, but will now  
Depart, for I hear steps of men approaching,  
And it is time that I should now pursue  
My journey to the city.  

**Cyprian.** Go in peace!  

**Daemon.** Remain in peace!—Since thus it profits him  
To study, I will wrap his senses up  
In sweet oblivion of all thought but of  
A piece of excellent beauty; and, as I  
Have power given me to wage enmity  
Against Justinian's soul, I will extract  
From one effect two vengeances.  

**Cyprian.** I never
Met a more learned person. Let me now
Revolve this doubt again with careful mind.

Floro and Lelio enter.

Lelio. Here stop. These topping rocks and tangled boughs,
Impenetrable by the noonday beam,
Shall be sole witnesses of what we——

Floro. Draw!
If there were words, here is the place for deeds.
Lelio. Thou needest not instruct me; well I know
That in the field, the silent tongue of steel
Speaks thus,—

Cyprian. Ha! what is this? Lelio,—Floro,
Be it enough that Cyprian stands between you,
Although unarmed.
Lelio. Whence comest thou, to stand
Between me and my vengeance?

Floro. From what rocks
And desert cells?

Enter Moscon and Clarin.

Moscon. Run! run! for where we left
My master, I now hear the clash of swords.

Camarin. I never run to approach things of this sort,
But only to avoid them. Sir! Cyprian! sir!

Cyprian. Be silent, fellows! What! two friends who are
In blood and fame the eyes and hope of Antioch,
One of the noble race of the Colalti,
The other son of the Governor, adventure
And cast away, on some slight cause no doubt,
Two lives, the honour of their country?

Cyprian. Although my high respect towards your person
Holds now my sword suspended, thou canst not
Restore it to the slumber of the scabbard:
Thou knowest more of science than the duel;
For when two men of honour take the field,
No counsel not respect can make them friends
But one must die in the dispute.
Floro. I pray
That you depart hence with your people, and
Leave us to finish what we have begun

Without advantage.—

Cyprian. Though you may imagine
That I know little of the laws of duel,
Which vanity and valour instituted,
You are in error. By my birth I am
Held no less than yourselves to know the limits

Of honour and of infamy, nor has study
Quenched the free spirit which first ordered them;
And thus to me, as one well experienced
In the false quicksands of the sea of honour,
You may refer the merits of the case;
And if I should perceive in your relation
That either has the right to satisfaction
From the other, I give you my word of honour
To leave you.
Cyprian. Under this condition then
I will relate the cause, and you will cede
And must confess the impossibility
Of compromise; for the same lady is
Beloved by Floro and myself.
Floro. It seems
Much to me that the light of day should look
Upon that idol of my heart—but he——
Leave us to fight, according to thy word.
Cyprian. Permit one question further: is the lady
Impossible to hope or not?

Lelio. She is
So excellent, that if the light of day
Should excite Floro’s jealousy, it were
Without just cause, for even the light of day
Trembles to gaze on her.

Cyprian. Would you for your
Part, marry her?

Floro. Such is my confidence.
Cyprian. And you?

Lelio. Oh! would that I could lift my hope
So high, for though she is extremely poor;
Her virtue is her dowry.
Cyprian. And if you both
Would marry her, is it not weak and vain,
Culpable and unworthy, thus beforehand
To slur her honour? What would the world say
If one should slay the other, and if she
Should afterwards espouse the murderer?

[The rivals agree to refer their quarrel to Cyprian; who in consequence visits Justina, and becomes enamoured of her; she disdains him, and he retires to a solitary sea-shore.

Scene II.

Cyprian.

O memory! permit it not
That the tyrant of my thought
SHELY

Be another soul that still
Holds dominion o'er the will,
That would refuse, but can no more,
To bend, to tremble, and adore.

Vain idolatry!—I saw,
And gazing, became blind with error;
Weak ambition, which the awe
Of her presence bound to terror!

So beautiful she was—and I,
Between my love and jealousy,
Am so convulsed with hope and fear,
Unworthy as it may appear;—

So bitter is the life I live,
That, hear me, Hell! I now would give
To thy most detested spirit
My soul, for ever to inherit,
To suffer punishment and pine,
So this woman may be mine.

Heardst thou, Hell! dost thou reject it?
My soul is offered!

Daemon (within). I accept it.

Tempest, with thunder and lightning.

Cyprian.

What is this? ye heavens for ever pure,
At once intensely radiant and obscure!

Athenart the aethereal halls
The lightning's arrow and the thunder-halls
The day afaroff,
As from the horizon round,
Burst with earthquake sound,

In mighty torrents the electric fountains;—
Clouds quench the sun, and thunder-smoke

Strangles the air, and fire eclipses Heaven.

Philosophy, thou canst not even
Compel their causes underneath thy yoke:

From yonder clouds even to the waves below
The fragments of a single ruin choke
Imagination's flight:

For, on flakes of cloud, even to the waves below
The ashes of the desolation, cast
Upon the gloomy blast,

Tell of the footsteps of the storm;

And nearer, see, the melancholy form
Of a great ship, the outcast of the sea,

Drives miserably!

And it must fly the pity of the port,

TRANSLATIONS

Or perish, and its last and sole resort
Is its own raging enemy,
The terror of the thrilling cry
Was a fatal prophecy
Of coming death, who hovers now
Upon that shattered prow,

That they who die not may be dying still.
And not alone the insane elements

Are populous with wild portents,
But that sad ship is as a miracle

Of sudden ruin, for it drives so fast
It seems as if it had arrayed its form
With the headlong storm.

It strikes—I almost feel the shock,—
It stumbles on a jagged rock,—

Sparkles of blood on the white foam are cast.

All exclaim (within). We are all lost!

Daemon (within). Now from this plank will I

Pass to the land and thus fulfil my scheme.

Cyprian.

As in contempt of the elemental rage
A man comes forth in safety, while the ship's

Great form is in a watery eclipse

Obliterated from the Ocean's page,

And round its wreck the huge sea-monsters sit,
A horrid conclave, and the whistling wave

Is heaped over its carcase, like a grave.

The Daemon enters, as escaped from the sea.

Daemon (aside). It was essential to my purposes

To wake a tumult on the sapphire ocean,

That in this unknown form I might at length

Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture

Sustained upon the mountain, and assault

With a new war the soul of Cyprian,
Forsaking the instruments of his destruction

Even from his love and from his wisdom.—O

Beloved earth, dear mother, in thy bosom

I seek a refuge from the monster who

Precipitates itself upon me.

Cyprian.

Friend,
Collect thyself; and be the memory
Of thy late suffering, and thy greatest sorrow
But as a shadow of the past,—for nothing

Beneath the circle of the moon, but flows
SHELLEY

And changes, and can never know reposse.

Daemon. And who art thou, before whose feet my fate has prostrated me?

Cyprian. One who, moved with pity,
Would soothe its stings.

Daemon. Oh, that can never be!

No solace can my lasting sorrows find.

Cyprian. Wherefore?

Daemon. Because my happiness is lost.

Yet I lament what has long ceased to be.
The object of desire or memory,
And my life is not life.

Cyprian. Now, since the fury
Of this earthquaking hurricane is still,
And the crystalline Heaven has resumed
Its windless calm so quickly, that it seems
As if its heavy wrath had been awakened
Only to overwhelm that vessel,—speak,
Who art thou, and whence comest thou?

Daemon. Far more
My coming hither cost, than thou hast seen
Or I can tell. Among my misadventures
This shipwreck is the least. Wilt thou hear?

Cyprian. Speak.

Daemon. Since thou desirest, I will then unveil
Myself to thee;—for in myself I am
A world of happiness and misery;
This I have lost, and that I must lament
Forever, in my attributes I stood
So high and so heroically great,
In lineage so supreme, and with a genius
Which penetrated with a glance the world
Beneath my feet, that, won by my high merit,
A king,—whom I may call the King of kings,
Because all others tremble in their pride
Before the terrors of His countenance,
In His high palace roofed with brightest gems
Of living light,—call them the stars of Heaven
Named me His counsellor. But the high praise
Stung me with pride and envy, and I rose
In mighty competition to ascend
His seat and place my foot triumphantly
Upon His subject thrones. Chastised, I know
The depth to which ambition falls; too mad
Was the attempt, and yet more mad were now
Repentance of the irrevocable deed:—
Therefore I chose this ruin, with the glory

TRANSLATIONS

Of not to be subdued, before the shame
Of reconciling me with Him who reigns
By coward cession.—Nor was I alone,
Nor am I now, nor shall I be alone;
And there was hope, and there may still be hope,
For many suffrages among His vessels
Hailed me their lord and king, and many still
Are mine, and many more, perchance shall be.
Thus vanished, though in fact victorious,
I left His seat of empire, from mine eye
Shooting forth poisonous lightning, while my words
With inauspicious thunderings shook Heaven,
Proclaiming vengeance, public as my wrong,
And imprecating on His prostrate slaves
Rapine, and death, and outrage. Then I sailed
Over the mighty fabric of the world,—
A pirate ambushed in its pathless sands,
A lynx crouched watchfully among its caves
And craggy shores; and I have wandered over
The expanses of these wide wildernesses
In this great ship, whose bulk is now dissolved
In the light breathings of the invisible wind,
And which the sea has made a dustless ruin,
Seeking ever a mountain, through whose forests
I seek a man, whom I must now compel
To keep his word with me. I came arrayed
In tempest, and although my power could well
Bridle the forest winds in their career,
For other causes I forbore to soothe
Their fury to Favanian gentleness;
I could and would not; (thus I wake in him
A love of magic art). Let not this tempest,
Nor the succeeding calm excite thy wonder;
For by my art the sun would turn as pale
As his weak sister with unwonted fear;
And in my wisdom are the orbs of Heaven
Written as in a record; I have pierced
The flaming circles of their wondrous spheres
And know them as thou knowest every corner
Of this dim spot. Let it not seem to thee
That I boast vainly; wouldest thou that I work
A charm over this waste and savage wood,
This Babylon of crags and agid trees,
Filling its leafy covert with a horror
Thrilling and strange? I am the friendless guest
Of these wild oaks and pines—and as from thee
I have received the hospitality
SHELLEY

Of this rude place, I offer thee the fruit
Of years of toil in recompense; whate'er
Thy wildest dream presented to thy thought
As object of desire, that shall be thine.

And thenceforth shall so firm an amity
'Twixt thee and me be, that neither Fortune,
The monstrous phantom which pursues success,
That careful miser, that free prodigal,
Who ever alternates, with changeful hand,
Evil and good, reproach and fame; nor Time,
That lodestar of the ages, to whose beam
The winged years speed o'er the intervals
Of their unequal revolutions; nor
Heaven itself, whose beautiful bright stars
Rule and adorn the world, can ever make
The least division between thee and me,
Since now I find a refuge in thy favour.

SCENE III.—The DAEMON tempts JUSTINA, who is a Christian.

Daemon.

Abyss of Hell! I call on thee,
Thou wild misrule of thine own anarchy!
From thy prison-house set free
The spirits of voluptuous death,
That with their mighty breath
They may destroy a world of virgin thoughts;
Let her chaste mind with fancies thick as motes
Be peopled from thy shadowy deep,
Till her guiltless fantasy
Full to overflowing be!
And with sweetest harmony,
Let birds, and flowers, and leaves, and all things move
To love, only to love.
Let nothing meet her eyes
But signs of Love's soft victories;
Let nothing meet her ear
But sounds of Love's sweet sorrow,
So that from faith no succour she may borrow,
But, guided by my spirit blind
And in a magic saare entwined,
She may now seek Cyprian.
Begin, while I in silence blind
My voice, when thy sweet song thou hast began.

TRANSLATIONS

A Voice (within).

What is the glory far above
All else in human life?

All,

Love! love!

[While these words are sung, the DAEMON goes out at one door, and
JUSTINA enters at another.

The First Voice.

There is no form in which the fire
Of love its traces has impressed not.
Man lives far more in love's desire
Than by life's breath, soon possessed not.
If all that lives must love or die,
All shapes on earth, or sea, or sky,
With one consent to Heaven cry
That the glory far above
All else in life is—

All.

Love! oh, Love!

JUSTINA.

Thou melancholy Thought which art
So flattering and so sweet, to thee
When did I give the liberty
Thou to afflic my heart?
What is the cause of this new Power
Which doth my fevered being move,
Momently raging more and more?
What subtle Pain is kindled now
Which from my heart doth overflow
Into my senses?—

All.

Love! oh, Love!

JUSTINA.

'Tis that enamoured Nightingale
Who gives me the reply;
He ever tells the same soft tale
Of passion and of constancy
To his mate, who rapt and fond,
Listening sits, a bough beyond.
SHELLEY

Be silent, Nightingale—no more
Make me think, in hearing thee
Thus tenderly thy love deplore,
If a bird can feel his so,
What a man would feel for me.
And, voluptuous Vine, O thou
Who seekest most when least pursuing,—
To the thrush thou intertwist
Art the verdure which embracest,
And the weight which is its ruin,—
No more, with green embraces, Vine,
Make me think on what thou lovest,—
For whilst thou boughs entwine,
I fear lest thou shouldst teach me, sophist,
How arms might be entangled too.

Light-enchanted Sunflower, thou
Who gazest ever true and tender
On the sun's revolving splendour!
Follow not his faultless glance
With thy faded countenance.
Nor teach my beating heart to fear,
If leaves can mourn without a tear,
How eyes must weep! O Nightingale,
Cease from thy enamoured tale,—
Leafy Vine, unwrath the bower,
Restless Sunflower, cease to move,—
Or tell me all, what poisonous Power
Ye use against me—

All.

Love! Love! Love! Love!

Justina. It cannot be!—Whom have I ever loved?
Trophies of my oblivion and disdain,
Floro and Lello did I not reject?
And Cyprian?—She becomes troubled at the name of Cyprian.

Did I not requite him
With such severity, that he has fled
Where none has ever heard of him again?—
Ah! I now begin to fear that this
May be the occasion whereon desire grows bold,
As if there were no danger. From the moment
That I pronounced to my own listening heart,
'Cyprian is absent!'—O me miserable!
I know not what I feel! [More calmly.] It must be pity
To think that such a man, whom all the world
Admired, should be forgot by all the world,

TRANSLATIONS

And I the cause. [She again becomes troubled.

And yet if it were pity,
Floro and Lello might have equal share,
For they are both imprisoned for my sake.
(Calmly.) Alas! what reasonings are these? it is
Enough I pity him, and that, in vain,
Without this ceremonious subtlety.
And, woe is me! I know not where to find him now,
Even should I seek him through this wide world.

Enter Daemon.

Daemon. Follow, and I will lead thee where he is.

Justina. And who art thou, who hast found entrance hither,
Into my chamber through the doors and locks?

Art thou a monstrous shadow which my madness
Has formed in the idle air?

Daemon. No, I am one
Called by the Thought which tyrannizes thee
From his eternal dwelling; who this day
Is pledged to bear thee unto Cyprian.

Justina. So shall thy promise fail. This agony
Of passion which alicts my heart and soul
May sweep imagination in its storm;
The will is firm.

Daemon. Already half is done
In the imagination of an act.
The sin incurred, the pleasure then remains;
Let not the will stop half-way on the road.

Justina. I will not be discouraged, nor despair,
Although I thought it, and although 'tis true
That thought is but a prelude to the deed:—
Thought is not in my power, but action is:
I will not move my foot to follow thee.

Daemon. But a far mightier wisdom than thine own
Exerts itself within thee, with such power
Compelling thee to that which it inclines
That it shall force thy step; how wilt thou then
Resist, Justina?

Justina. By my free-will.

Daemon. I

Must force thy will.

Justina. It is invincible;
It were not free if thou hadst power upon it.

[He draws, but cannot move her.

Daemon. Come, where a pleasure waits thee.

Justina. It were bought

Too dear.
SHELLEY

Daemon. 'Twill soothe thy heart to softest peace.
Justina. 'Tis dread captivity.
Daemon. 'Tis joy, 'tis glory.
Justina. 'Tis shame, 'tis torment, 'tis despair.
Daemon. But how
Canst thou defend thyself from that or me,
If my power drags thee onward?
Justina. My defence
Consists in God.

[He wildly endeavours to force her, and at last releases her.
Daemon. Woman, thou hast subdued me,
Only by not owning thyself subdued.
But since thou thus findest defence in God,
I will assume a feigned form, and thus
Make thee a victim of my baffled rage.
For I will mask a spirit in thy form,
Who will betray thy name to infamy,
And doubly shall I triumph in thy loss,
First by dishonouring thee, and then by turning
False pleasure to true ignominy.

Justina. I
Appeal to Heaven against thee; so that Heaven
May scatter thy delusions, and the blot
Upon my fame vanish in idle thought,
Even as flame dies in the envious air,
And as the floweret wanes at morning frost;
And thou shouldst never—But, alas! to whom
Do I still speak?—Did not a man but now
Stand here before me?—No, I am alone.
And yet I saw him. Is he gone so quickly?
Or can the heated mind engender shapes
From its own fear? Some terrible and strange
Peril is near. Lisander! father! lord!
Livia!—

Enter Lisander and Livia.

Lisander. Oh, my daughter! What?
Livia. What! Saw you
Justina.
A man go forth from my apartment now?—
I scarce contain myself!
Lisander. A man here!
Justina. Have you not seen him?
Livia. No, Lady.
Justina. I saw him.
Lisander. 'Tis impossible; the doors
Which led to this apartment were all locked.

TRANSLATIONS

Livía (aside). I daresay it was Moscon whom she saw,
For he was locked up in my room.

Lisander. It must
Have been some image of thy fantasy.
Such melancholy as thou feelest is
Skilful in forming such in the vain air
Out of the motes and atoms of the day.

Livia. My master's in the right.

Justina. Oh, would it were
Delusion: but I fear some greater ill.
I feel as if out of my bleeding bosom
My heart was torn in fragments; ay,
Some mortal spell is wrought against my frame;
So potent was the charm that, had not God
Shielded my humble innocence from wrong,
I should have sought my sorrow and my shame
With willing steps.—Livía, quick, bring my cloak,
For I must seek refuge from these extremes
Even in the temple of the highest God
Where secretly the faithful worship.

Livía. Here.

Justina (putting on her cloak). In this, as in a shroud of snow, may I
Quench the consuming fire in which I burn,
Wasting away!

Lisander. And I will go with thee.

Livía. When I once see them safe out of the house
I shall breathe freely.

Justina. So do I confide
In thy just favour, Heaven!

Lisander. Let us go.

Justina. Thine is the cause, great God! turn for my sake,
And for Thine own, mercifully to me!

STANZAS FROM CALDERON'S CISMA DE INGLATERRA

Hast thou not seen, officious with delight,
Move through the illuminated air about the flower
The Bee, that fears to drink its purple light,
Lest danger lurk within that Rose's bower?
Hast thou not marked the moth's enamoured flight
About the Taper's flame at evening hour,
Till kindles in that monumental fire
His sunflower wings their own funereal pyre?
SHELLEY

II

My heart, its wishes trembling to unfold,
Thus round the Rose and Taper hovering came,
And Passion's slave, Distrust, in ashes cold,
Smothered awhile, but could not quench the flame,—
Till Love, that grows by disappointment bold,
And Opportunity, had conquered Shame;
And like the Bee and Moth, in act to close,
I burned my wings, and settled on the Rose.

SCENES FROM THE FAUST OF GOETHE

SCENE I.—PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN. The Lord and the Host of Heaven.

Enter three Archangels.

Raphael.

The sun makes music as of old
Amid the rival spheres of Heaven,
On its predetermined circle rolled
With thunder speed: the Angels even
Draw strength from gazing on its glance,
Though none its meaning fathom may:—
The world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as at Creation's day.

Gabriel.

And swift and swift, with rapid lightness,
The adored Earth spins silently,
Alternating Elysian brightness
With deep and dreadful night; the sea
Foams in broad billows from the deep
Up to the rocks, and rocks and Ocean,
Onward, with spheres which never sleep,
Are hurried in eternal motion.

Michael.

And tempests in contention roar
From land to sea, from sea to land;
And, raging, weave a chain of power,
Which girds the earth, as with a band.—
A flashing desolation there,
Flames before the thunder's way;
But Thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle changes of Thy day.

TRANSLATIONS

Chorus of the Three.

The Angels draw strength from Thy glance,
Though no one comprehend Thee may;—
Thy world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as on Creation's day.¹

Enter Mephistopheles.

Mephistopheles. As thou, O Lord, once more art kind enough
To interest Thyself in our affairs,
And ask, 'How goes it with you there below?'
And as indulgently at other times
Thou tookest not my visits in ill part,
Thou sentest me here once more among Thy household,
Though I should scandalize this company,
You will excuse me if I do not talk
In the high style which they think fashionable;
My pathos certainly would make You laugh too,
Had You not long since given over laughing.
Nothing know I to say of suns and worlds;
I observe only how men plague themselves;—

¹ Raphael. The sun sounds, according to ancient custom,
In the song of emulation of his brother-spheres.
And its fore-written circle
Fulfils a step of thunder.
Its countenance gives the Angels strength
Though no one can fathom it.
The incredible high works
Are excellent as at the first day.
Gabriel. And swift, and inconceivably swift
The adornment of earth winds itself round,
And exchanges Paradise-clearness
With deep dreadful night.
The sea foams in broad waves
From its deep bottom, up to the rocks,
And rocks and sea are torn on together
In the eternal swift course of the spheres.
Michael. And storms roar in emulation
From sea to land, from land to sea,
And, raging, a chain
Of deepest operation round about.
There frames a flashing destruction
Before the path of the thunderbolt.
But Thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle alternations of Thy day.

Chorus. Thy countenance gives the Angels strength,
Though none can comprehend Thee:
And all Thy lofty works
Are excellent as at the first day.

Such is a literal translation of this astonishing chorus; it is impossible to represent it in another language the melody of the verification; even the voluble strength, and facility of the ideas escape in the crucible of translation, and the reader is surprised to find a caput mortuum. —Shelly's Note.
The little god o' the world keeps the same stamp,
As wonderful as on creation's day:—
A little better would he live, hadst Thou
Not given him a glimpse of Heaven's light
Which he calls reason, and employs it only
To live more beastly than any beast.
With reverence to Your Lordship be it spoken,
He's like one of those long-legged grasshoppers,
Who flits and jumps about, and sings for ever
The same old song i' the grass. There let him lie,
Burying his nose in every heap of dung.

The Lord. Have you no more to say? Do you come here
Always to scold, and cavil, and complain?
Seems nothing ever right to you on earth?
Mephistopheles. No, Lord! I find all there, as ever, bad at best.
Even I am sorry for man's days of sorrow;
I could myself almost give up the pleasure
Of plaguing the poor things.

The Lord. Knowest thou Faust?
Mephistopheles. The Doctor?

The Lord. Ay; My servant Faust.

Mephistopheles. He serves You in a fashion quite his own;
And the fool's meat and drink are not of earth.
His aspirations bear him on so far
That he is half aware of his own folly,
For he demands from Heaven its fairest star,
And from the earth the highest joy it bears,
Yet all things far, and all things near, are vain
To calm the deep emotions of his breast.

The Lord. Though he now serves Me in a cloud of error,
I will soon lead him forth to the clear day.
When trees look green, full well the gardener knows
That fruits and blossoms will deck the coming year.

Mephistopheles. What will You bet?—now I am sure of winning—
Only, observe You give me full permission
To lead him softly on my path.

The Lord. As long
As he shall live upon the earth, so long
Is nothing unto thee forbidden,—Man
Must err till he has ceased to struggle.

Mephistopheles. Thanks.
And that is all I ask; for willingly
I never make acquaintance with the dead.
The full fresh cheeks of youth are food for me,
And if a corpse knocks, I am not at home.
For I am like a cat—I like to play.

A little with the mouse before I eat it.

The Lord. Well, well! it is permitted thee. Draw thou
His spirit from its springs; as thou find'st power,
Seize him and lead him on thy downward path;
And stand asumed when failure teaches thee
That a good man, even in his darkest longings,
Is well aware of the right way.

Mephistopheles. Well and good.
I am not in much doubt about my bet,
And if I lose, then 'tis Your turn to crow;
Enjoy Your triumph then with a full breast.
Ay; dust shall be devoured, and that with pleasure,
Like my old paramour, the famous Snake.

The Lord. Pray come here when it suits you; for I never
Had much dislike for people of your sort.
And, among all the Spirits who rebelled,
The knave was ever the least tedious to Me.
The active spirit of man soon sleeps, and soon
He seeks unbroken quiet; therefore I
Have given him the Devil for a companion,
Who may provoke him to some sort of work,
And must create forever.—But ye, pure
Children of God, enjoy eternal beauty;—
Let that which ever operates and lives
Clasp you within the limits of its love,
And seize with sweet and melancholy thoughts
The floating phantoms of its loveliness.

[Heaven closes the Archangels exempt.

Mephistopheles. From time to time I visit the old fellow,
And I take care to keep on good terms with Him.
Civil enough is the same God Almighty,
To talk so freely with the Devil himself.

SCENE II.—MAY-DAY NIGHT. The Hartz Mountain, a desolate
Country. FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES.

Mephistopheles. Would you not like a broomstick? As for me
I wish I had a good stout ram to ride;
For we are still far from the appointed place.

Faust. This knotted staff is help enough for me,
Whilst I feel fresh upon my legs. What good
Is there in making short a pleasant way?
To creep along the labyrinth of the vales,
And climb those rocks, where ever-babbling springs,
Precipitate themselves in waterfalls,
Is the true sport that seasons such a path.
Already Spring kindles the birchen spray,
And the hoar pines already feel her breath:
SHELLEY

Shall she not work also within our limbs?

Mephistophiles. Nothing of such an influence do I feel.

My body is all wintry, and I wish

The flowers upon our path were frost and snow.

But see how melancholy rises now,

Dimly uplifting her belated beam,

The blank unwelcome round of the red moon,

And gives so bad a light, that every step

One stumbles 'gainst some crag. With your permission,

I’ll call an Ignis-fatuus to our aid:

I see one yonder burning jollity.

Halloo, my friend! May I request that you

Would favour us with your bright company?

Why should you blaze away there to no purpose?

Pray be so good as light us up this way.

Ignis-fatuus. With reverence be it spoken, I will try

To overcome the lightness of my nature;

Our course, you know, is generally zigzag.

Mephistophiles. Ha, ha! your worship thinks you have to deal

With men. Go straight on, in the Devil’s name,

Or I shall puff your flickering life out.

Ignis-fatuus. Well, I see you are the master of the house;

I will accommodate myself to you.

Only consider that to-night this mountain

Is all enchanted, and if Jack-a-lantern
Shows you his way, though you should miss your own,

You ought not to be too exact with him.

FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES, AND IGNIS-FATUUS, IN ALTERNATE CHORUS.

The limits of the sphere of dream,
The bounds of true and false, are past.

Lead us on, thou wandering Gleam,

Lead us onward, far and fast,

To the wide, the desert waste.

But see, how swift advance and shift

Trees behind trees, row by row,—

How, cliff by cliff, rocks bend and lift

Their frowning foreheads as we go.

The giant-souled crags, hol, hol!

How they shunt, and how they blow!

Through the mossy sods and stones,

Stream and streamlet hurry down—

A rushing throng! A sound of song

Beneath the vault of Heaven is blown!

Sweet notes of love, the speaking tones

TRANSLATIONS

Of this bright day, sent down to say

That Paradise on Earth is known,

Resound around, beneath, above.

All we hope and all we love

Finds a voice in this blithe strain,

Which wakens hill and wood and rill,

And vibrates far o'er field and vale,

And which Echo, like the tale

Of old times, repeats again.

To-whoof! to-whoof! near, nearer now

The sound of song, the rushing throng!

Are the screech, the lupwing, and the jay,

All awake as if 'twere day?

See, with long legs and belly wide,

A salamander in the brake!

Every root is like a snake,

And along the loose hillsides,

With strange contortions through the night,

Curls, to seize or to affright;

And, animated, strong, and many,

They dart forth polypus-antennae,

To blister with their poison spume

The wanderer. Through the dazzling gloom

The many-coloured mice, that thread

The dewy turf beneath our tread,

In troops each other's motions cross,

Through the heath and through the moss;

And, in legions intertangled,

The fire-flies lit, and swarm, and throng,

Till all the mountain depths are spangled.

Tell me, shall we go or stay?

Shall we onward? Come along!

Everything around is swept

Forward, onward, far away!

Trees and masses intercept

The sight, and wisps on every side

Are puffed up and multiplied.

Mephistophiles. Now vigorously seize my skirt, and gain

This pinnacle of isolated crag.

One may observe with wonder from this point,

Now Mammon glows among the mountains.

FAUST.

And strangely through the solid depth below

A melancholy light, like the red dawn,

Shoots from the lowest gorge of the abyss

Of mountains, lightning litherward: there rise
SHELLEY

Pillars of smoke, here clouds float gently by;
Here the light burns soft as the enkindled air,
Or the illumined dust of golden flowers;
And now it glides like tender colours spreading;
And now bursts forth in fountains from the earth;
And now it winds, one torrent of broad light,
Through the far valley with a hundred veins;
And now once more within that narrow corner
Masses itself into intense splendour.
And near us, see, sparks spring out of the ground,
Like golden sand scattered upon the darkness;
The pinacles of that black wall of mountains
That hems us in are kindled.

Mephistopheles. Rare: in faith!
Does not Sir Mammon gloriously illuminate
His palace for this festival?—it is
A pleasure which you had not known before.
I spy the boisterous guests already.

Faust. How
The children of the wind rage in the air!
With what fierce strokes they fall upon my neck!

Mephistopheles.
Cling tightly to the old ribs of the craig.
Beware! for if with them thou warrest
In their fierce flight towards the wilderness,
Their breath will sweep thee into dust, and drag
Thy body to a grave in the abyss.
A cloud thickens the night.
Hark! how the tempest crashes through the forest!
The owls fly out in strange affright;
The columns of the evergreen palaces
Are split and shattered;
The roots creak, and stretch, and groan;
And ruinously overthrown,
The trunks are crushed and shattered
By the fierce blast's unconquerable stress.
Over each other crack and crash they all
In terrible and intertangled fall;
And through the ruins of the shaken mountain
The airs hiss and howl—
It is not the voice of the fountain,
Nor the wolf in his midnight prowl.
Dost thou not hear?
Strange accents are ringing
Aloft, afar, anew?
The witches are singing!

TRANSLATIONS

The torrent of a raging wizard song
Streams the whole mountain along.

Chorus of Witches.
The stubble is yellow, the corn is green,
Now to the Brocken the witches go;
The mighty multitude here may be seen
Gathering, wizard and witch, below.
Sir Urian is sitting aloft in the air;
Hey over stock! and hey o'er stone!
'Twixt witches and incubi, what shall be done?
Tell it who dare! tell it who dare!

A Voice.
Upon a sow-swine, whose farrows were nine,
Old Baubo rideth alone.

Chorus.
Honour her, to whom honour is due,
Old mother Baubo, honour to you!
An able sow, with old Baubo upon her,
Is worthy of glory, and worthy of honour!
The legion of witches is coming behind,
Darkening the night, and outspeeding the wind—

A Voice.
Which way comest thou?

A Voice.
Over Iliesenstain;
The owl was awake in the white moonshine;
I saw her at rest in her downy nest,
And she stared at me with her broad, bright eyne.

Voices.
And you may now as well take your course on to Hell,
Since you ride by so fast on the headlong blast.

A Voice.
She dropped poison upon me as I passed.
Here are the wounds——

Chorus of Witches.
Come away! come along!
The way is wide, the way is long,
But what is that for a Bedlam throng?
Stick with the prong, and scratch with the broom.
SHELLEY

The child in the cradle lies strangled at home,
And the mother is clapping her hands.—

*Semichorus of Wizards I.*

We glide in
Like snails when the women are all away;
And from a house once given over to sin
Woman has a thousand steps to stray.

*Semichorus II.*

A thousand steps must a woman take,
Where a man but a single spring will make.

*Voices above.*

Come with us, come with us, from Felmsense.

*Voices below.*

With what joy would we fly through the upper sky!
We are washed, we are 'hointed, stark naked are we;
But our tail and our pain are forever in vain.

*Both Choruses.*

The wind is still, the stars are fled,
The melancholy moon is dead;
The magic notes, like spark on spark,
Drizzle, whistling through the dark.

*Come away!*

*Voices below.*

Stay, Oh, stay!

*Voices above.*

Out of the crannies of the rocks
Who calls?

*Voices below.*

Oh, let me join your flocks!
I, three hundred years have striven
To catch your skirt and mount to Heaven,—
And still in vain, Oh, might I be
With company akin to me!

*Both Choruses.*

Some on a ram and some on a prong,
On poles and on broomsticks we flutter along;
Forlorn is the wight who can rise not to-night.

TRANSLATIONS

A Half-Witch below.

I have been tripping this many an hour:
Are the others already so far before?
No quiet at home, and no peace abroad!
And less methinks is found by the road.

*Chorus of Witches.*

Come onward, away! araint thee, araint!
A witch to be strong must anoint—anoint—
Then every trough will be boat enough;
With a rag for a sail we can sweep through the sky,
Who flies not to-night, when means he to fly?

*Both Choruses.*

We cling to the skirt, and we strike on the ground;
Witch-legions thicken around and around;
Wizard-swarms cover the heath all over. [They descend.

*Mephistophiles.*

What thronging, dashing, raging, rustling;
What whispering, babbling, hissing, bustling;
What glimmering, spurtling, stinking, burning,
As Heaven and Earth were overturning.
There is a true witch element about us;
Take hold on me, or we shall be divided:—
Where are you?

*Faust (from a distance).* Here! [Mephistophiles.

What!

I must exert my authority in the house.
Place for young Voland! pray make way, good people.
Take hold on me, doctor, and with one step
Let us escape from this unpleasant crowd:
They are too mad for people of my sort.
Just there shines a peculiar kind of light—
Something attracts me in those bushes. Come
This way: we shall slip down there in a minute.

*Faust. Spirit of Contradiction! Well, lead on—
'Twere a wise feat indeed to wander out
Into the Brouken upon May-day night,
And then to isolate oneself in scorn,
Disgusted with the humours of the time.

*Mephistophiles. See yonder, round a many-coloured flame
A merry club is huddled altogether:
Even with such little people as sit there
One would not be alone.

*Faust.* Would that I were
SHELLEY

Up yonder in the glow and whirling smoke,
Where the blind million rush impetuously
To meet the evil ones; there might I solve
Many a riddle that torments me!

Mephistopheles.

Yet

Many a riddle there is tied anew
Inextricably. Let the great world rage!
We will stay here safe in the quiet dwellings.
'Tis an old custom. Men have ever built
Their own small world in the great world of all.
I see young witches naked there, and old ones
Wisely attired with greater decency.
Be guided now by me, and you shall buy
A pound of pleasure with a dram of trouble.
I hear them tune their instruments—one must
Get used to this damned scraping. Come, I'll lead you
Among them; and what there you do and see,
As a fresh compact 'twixt us two shall be.
How say you now? this space is wide enough—
Look forth, you cannot see the end of it—
An hundred bonfires burn in rows, and they
Who throng around them seem innumerable:
Dancing and drinking, jabbering, making love,
And cooking, are at work. Now tell me, friend,
What is there better in the world than this?

Faust. In introducing us, do you assume
The character of Wizard or of Devil?

Mephistopheles. In truth, I generally go about
In strict incognito; and yet one likes
To wear one's orders upon gala days.
I have no ribbon at my knee; but here
At home, the cloven foot is honourable.

See you that snail there?—she comes creeping up,
And with her feeling eyes hath smelt out something. I
Could not, if I would, mask myself here.
Come now, we'll go about from fire to fire:
I'll be the Pimp, and you shall be the Lover.

[To some old Women, who are sitting round a heap of glistening coals.

Old gentlewomen, what do you do out here?
You ought to be with the young rioters
Right in the thickest of the revelry—
But every one is best content at home.

General.

Who dare confide in right or a just claim?
So much as I had done for them! and now—
With women and the people 'tis the same,

TRANSLATIONS

Youth will stand foremost ever,—age may go
To the dark grave unhonoured.

Minister.

Nowadays

People assert their rights: they go too far;
But as for me, the good old times I praise:
Then we were all in all—twas something worth
One's while to be in place and wear a star;
That was indeed the golden age on earth.

Parvenu.

We too are active, and we did and do
What we ought not, perhaps; and yet we now
Will seize, whilst all things are whirled round and round,
A spoke of Fortune's wheel, and keep our ground.

Author.

Who now can taste a treatise of deep sense
And ponderous volumes? 'tis impertinence
To write what none will read, therefore will I
To please the young and thoughtless people try.

Mephistopheles (who at once appears to have grown very old). I

find the people ripe for the last day,
Since I last came up to the wizard mountain;
And as my little cask runs turbid now,
So the world drained to the dregs.

Feudal-witch. Look here,

Gentlemen; do not hurry on so fast;
And lose the chance of a good pennyworth.
I have a pack full of the choicest wares
Of every sort, and yet in all my bundle
Is nothing like what may be found on earth;
Nothing that in a moment will make rich.
Men and the world with fine malicious mischief—
There is no dagger drunk with blood; no bowl,
From which consuming poison may be drained
By innocent and healthy lips; no jewel,
The price of an abandoned maiden's shame;
No sword which cuts the bond it cannot loose,
Or stabs the wearer's enemy in the back;

No—

Mephistopheles. Gossip, you know little of these times.

What has been, has been; what is done, is past,
They shape themselves into the innovations
They breed, and innovation drags us with it.
The torrent of the crowd sweeps over us:
You think to impel, and are yourself impelled.
SHELLEY

Faust. What is that yonder?
Mephistopheles. Mark her well. It is Lilith.

Faust. Who?
Mephistopheles. Lilith, the first wife of Adam.
Beware of her fair hair, for she excels All women in the magic of her locks;
And when she winds them round a young man's neck,
She will not ever set him free again.

Faust.
There sits a girl and an old woman—they
Seem to be tired with pleasure and with play.

Mephistopheles.
There is no rest to-night for any one:
When one dance ends another is begun;
Come, let us to it. We shall have rare fun.
[FAUST DANCES AND SINGS WITH A GIRL, AND MEPHISTOPHELES WITH AN OLD WOMAN.

Faust.
I had once a lovely dream
In which I saw an apple-tree,
Where two fair apples with their gleam
To climb and taste attracted me.

The Girl.
She with apples you desired
From Paradise came long ago;
With you I feel that if required,
Such still within my garden grow.

Procto-Phantasmist. What is this cursed multitude about?
Have we not long since proved to demonstration
That ghosts move not on ordinary feet?
But these are dancing just like men and women,
The Girl. What does he want then at our ball?

Faust.
Oh! he is far above us all in his conceit:
Whilst we enjoy, he reasons of enjoyment;
And any step which in our dance we tread,
If it be left out of his reckoning,
Is not to be considered as a step.
There are few things that scandalize him not:
And when you whirl round in the circle now,
As he went round the wheel in his old mill,
He says that you go wrong in all respects,
Especially if you congratulate him

TRANSLATIONS

Upon the strength of the resemblance,

Procto-Phantasmist. Fly!
Vanish! Unheard-of impudence! What, still there!
In this enlightened age too, since you have been
Proved not to exist!—But this infernal brood
Will hear no reason and endure no rule.
Are we so wise, and is the pond still haunted?
How long have I been in the magic of her locks?
Of superstition, and the world will not
Come clean with all my pains!—it is a case
Unheard of!

The Girl. Then leave off teasing us so.

Procto-Phantasmist. I tell you, spirits, to your faces now,
That I should not regret this despoticism
Of spirits, but that mine can wield it not.
To-night I shall make poor work of it,
Yet I will take a round with you, and hope
Before my last step in the living dance
To beat the poet and the devil together.
Mephistopheles. At last he will sit down in some foul puddle;
That is his way of solacing himself;
Until some leech, diverted with his gravity,
Cures him of spirits and the spirit together.

[TO FAUST, WHO HAS SECEDED FROM THE DANCE.

Why do you let that fair girl pass from you,
Who sung so sweetly to you in the dance?

Faust. A red mouse in the middle of her singing
Sprung from her mouth.

Mephistopheles. That was all right, my friend:
Be it enough that the mouse was not gray.
Do not disturb your hour of happiness
With close consideration of such trifles,

Faust. Then saw I

Mephistopheles. What?

Faust.
See thou not a pale.

Pain girl, standing alone, far, far away?
She drags herself now forward with slow steps,
And seems as if she moved with shackled feet:
I cannot overcome the thought that she
Is like poor Margaret.

Mephistopheles. Let it be—pass on—
No good can come of it—it is not well
To meet it—it is an enchanted phantom,
A lifeless idol; with its numbing look,
It freezes up the blood of man; and they
Who meet its ghastly stare are turned to stone,
Like those who saw Medusa.
SHELLEY

Faust.
Oh, too true!
Her eyes are like the eyes of a fresh corpse
Which no belovèd hand has closed, alas!
That is the breast which Margaret yielded to me—
Those are the lovely limbs which I enjoyed!
Mephistopheles. It is all magic, poor deluded fool!
She looks to every one like his first love.
Faust. Oh, what delight! what woe! I cannot turn
My looks from her sweet piteous countenance.
How strangely does a single blood-red line,
Not broader than the sharp edge of a knife,
Adorn her lovely neck?
Mephistopheles. Ay, she can carry
Her head under her arm upon occasion;
Perseus has cut it off for her. These pleasures
End in delusion.—Gain this rising ground,
It is as airy here as in a...
And if I am not mightily deceived,
I see a theatre.—What may this mean?
Attendant. Quite a new piece, the last of seven, for 'tis
The custom now to represent that number.
'Tis written by a Dilettante, and
The actors who perform are Dilettanti;
Excuse me, gentlemen; but I must vanish.
I am a Dilettante curtain-lifter.

JUVENILIA

QUEEN MAB

A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM, WITH NOTES

ECRASEZ L'INFAIME!—Correspondence de Voltaire.
Avia Plinium peragro loca, nullius ante
Trias sole; juvat integros accedere fontes;
Atque haurire: juvatque novos decerpere flores.

Unde prius nulli velarunt tempora muse.
Primum quod magis doceo de rebus; et arctis
Religionem animos nodis evoluwre pergo.—Lucret. lib. iv.
Αὐτοί δὲ στατὶ καὶ οἵονισσον κατηφωροῦσαν.—Archimedes.

TO HARRIET ** ** **

Whose is the love that gleaming
Through the world,
Wards off the poisonous arrow of
Its scorn?
Whose is the warm and partial
Praise,
Virtue's most sweet reward?
Beneath whose looks did my reviving
Soul
Riper in truth and virtuous daring
Grow?

QUEEN MAB

Whose eyes have I gazed fondly
On,
And loved mankind the more?
HARRIER! on thine:—thou wert
My purer mind;
Thou wert the inspiration of my
Song:
Thine are these early wilding
Flowers,
Though garnished by me.
Then press into thy breast this
Pledge of love;
And know, though time may change
And years may roll,
Each floweret gathered in my
Heart
Is consecrates to thine.

I

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning
Moon
With lips of lurid blue;
The other, rosy as the morn
When crowned on ocean's wave
It blushes o'er the world:
Yet both so passing wonderful!
Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
Seized on her sinless soul?
Must then that peerless form
Which love and admiration cannot
View
Without a beating heart, those
Azure veins
Which steal like streams along a
Field of snow,
That lovely outline, which is fair
As breathing marble, perish?
Must purefaction's breath
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight

But loathsomeness and ruin?
Spare nothing but a gloomy
Theme,
On which the lightest heart might
Moralize?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
Stealing o'er sensation,
Which the breath of rosy rose
Might steal into darkness?
Will I awake never,
And give that faithful bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to
Catch
Light, life and rapture from her
Smile?

Yes! she will wake again,
Although her glowing limbs are
Motionless,
And silent those sweet lips,
Once breathing eloquence,
That might have soothed a
tiger's rage,
Or thaved the cold heart of a
Conqueror.
Her dewy eyes are closed,
And on their lids, whose texture
Fines
Succre hides the dark blue orbs
Beneath,
The Baby Sleep is pillow'd:
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Curling like tendrils of the
PAROSITE

Around a marble column,
Hark! whence that rushing
Sound?
'Tis like the wondrous strain
That round a lonely ruin swells,
Which, wandering on the echoing
Shore,
The enthusiast hears at
Evening:
'Tis softer than the westwind's
Sigh.
The broad and yellow moon
Shone dimly through her form—
That form of faultless symmetry;
The pearly and pellucid car
Moved not the moonlight's line.
'Twas not an earthly pageant:
Those who had looked upon the sight,
Passing all human glory,
Saw not the yellow moon,
Saw not the mortal scene,
Heard not the night-wind's rush,
Heard not an earthly sound,
Saw but the fairy pageant,
Heard but the heavenly strains
That filled the lonely dwelling.
The Fairy's frame was slight,
yon fibrous cloud,
That catches but the palest tinge of even,
And which the straining eye can hardly seize
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
Were scarce so thin, so slight;
But the fair star
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion,
Swayed to her outline gracefully.
From her celestial car
The Fairy Queen descended,
And thrice she waved her wand
Circled with wreaths of amaranth:
Her thin and misty form
Moved with the moving air,
And the clear silver tones,
As thus she spoke, were such
As are unheard by all but gifted ear.
Fairy.
'Stars! your balmiest influence shed!' 114
Elements! your wrath suspend!
Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
That circle thy domain!
Let not a breath be seen to stir
Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,
Let even the restless gossamer
Sleep on the moveless air!
Soul of Ianthe! thou,
Judged alone worthy of the envied boon,
That waits the good and the sincere; that waits
Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains,
The icy chains of custom, and have shone
The day-stars of their age:—Soul of Ianthe!
Awake! arise!
Sudden arose
Ianthe's Soul; it stood
All beautiful in naked purity,
The perfect semblance of its bodily frame.
Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,
Each stain of earthliness
Had passed away, it assumed its native dignity, and stood
Immortal amid ruin.
Upon the couch the body lay
Wrapped in the depth of slumber:
Its features were fixed and meaningless,
Yet animal life was there,
And every organ yet performed its natural functions: 'twas a sight
Of wonder to behold the body and soul.
The self-same lineaments, the same
Marks of identity were there;
Yet, oh, how different! One aspires to Heaven,
Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
And ever-changing, ever-rising still,
Wantons in endless being.
The other, for a time the unwilling sport
Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;
Flies through its sad duration rapidly:
Then, like an useless and worn-out machine,
Rots, perishes, and passes.
Fairy.
'Spirit! who hast dived so deep;
Spirit! who hast soared so high;
Thou the fearless, thou the mild,
Accept the boon thy worth hath earned.
Ascend the car with me.'
Spirit.
'Do I dream? Is this new feeling
But a visioned ghost of slumber? If indeed I am a soul,
A free, a disembodied soul, Speak again to me.'
Fairy.
'I am the Fairy MAB: to me 'tis given
Oh! not the visioned poet in his dreams,
When all the clouds float through the wildered brain,
When every sight of lovely, wild and grand
Astonishes, enraptures, elevates,
When fancy at a glance combines
The wondrous and the beautiful.
—So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
Hath ever yet beheld,
As that which reigned the courser's reign,
And poured the magic of her gaze
Upon the maiden's sleep.
The wonders of the human world
To keep:
The secrets of the immeasurable
Past,
In the unfailing consciences of
Men,
Those stern, unflattering chroni-
Cles, I find: 171
The future, from the causes which
Arose
In each event, I gather: not the
Sting
Which retributive memory im-
Plants
In the hard bosoms of the selfish
Man;
Nor that ecstatic and exulting
Throb
Which virtue's votary feels when
He sums up 177
The thoughts and actions of a well-
Spent day,
Are unforeseen, unregistered by me:
And it is yet permitted me, to
Rend 180
The veil of mortal frailty, that the
Spirit,
Clothed in its changeless purity, may
Know
How soonest to accomplish the
great end
For which it hath its being, and
May taste
That peace, which in the end all
Life will share. 185
This is the meed of virtue: happy
Soul,
Ascend the car with me!

The chains of earth's immure-
Ment
Fell from Satan's spirit;
They shrunk and brake like ban-
Dages of straw
Beneath a wakened giant's
Strength.
She knew her glorious change,
And felt in apprehension un-
Controlled
New raptures opening round;
Each day-dream of her mortal
Life,
Each frenzied vision of the slum-
Bers
That closed each well-spent
day,
Seemed now to meet reality.
The Fairy and the Soul pro-
Ceeded;
The silver clouds dispersed;
And as the car of magic they as-
Cended, 201
Again the speechless music
Swelled,
Again the coursers of the air
Unfurled their azure pennons, and
the
Queen
Shaking the bearny reins 205
Bade them pursue their way.
The magic car moved on.
The night was fair, and countless
Stars
Studded Heaven's dark blue
Vault,
—Just o'er the eastern wave 210
Peeped the first faint smile of
Morn.
The magic car moved on—
From the celestial hoofs
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles
Flew,
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's lofti-
est peak 216
Was traced a line of lightning:
Now it flew far above a rock,
The utmost verge of earth,
The rival of the Andes, whose
Life
Brown
Lowered o'er the silver sea.
Far, far below the chariot's path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous Ocean lay.

The mirror of its stillness showed
The pale and waning stars, 226
The chariot's fiery track,
And the gray light of morn
Tingling those fleecy clouds
That canopied the dawn. 230
Seemed it, that the chariot's way
Lay through the midst of an im-
Mense concave,
Radiant with million constella-
tions, tinged
With shades of infinite colour,
And semicircled with a belt 235
Flashing incessant meteors.
The magic car moved on;
As they approached their goal
The coursers seemed to gather
Speed;
The sea no longer was distin-
Guished; earth 240
Appeared a vast and shadowy
Sphere;
The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black con-
cave;
Its rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter
Course. 245
And fell, like ocean's feathery
Spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.
The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
The smallest light that twinkles
In the heaven; 251
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems rolled,
And countless spheres diffused
An ever-varying glory. 255
It was a sight of wonder: some
Were hewn like the crescent
Moon;
Some shed a mild and silver
Beam.

Like Hesperus o'er the western
Sea;
Some dished athwart with trains
Of flame, 260
Like worlds to death and ruin
Driven;
Some shone like suns, and, as the
Chariot passed,
Eclipsed all other light.

Spirit of Nature! here!
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the lightest leaf
That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee. 271
Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fathoms on
the
dead
Less shares thy eternal breath.
Spirit of Nature! thou art?
Imperishable as this scene,
Here is thy fitting temple.

II
If solitude hath ever led thy step
To the wild Ocean's echoing
Shore,
And thou hast lingered there,
Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the burnished
Wave,
Thou must have marked the
Lines
Of purple gold, that motionless
Hung o'er the sinking sphere;
Thou must have marked the bil-
Low clouds;
Edged with intolerable radiance
Towering like rocks of jet
Crowned with a diamond
Wreath.
And yet there is a moment,
When the sun's highest point
Peeps like a star o'er Ocean's western edge, 15
When those far clouds of feathery gold,
Shaded with deepest purple, gleam
Like islands on a dark blue sea;
Then has thy fancy soared above the earth,
And furled its woofed wing 20
Within the Fairy's bower.

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

Yet likest evening's vault, that fairy Hall! 30
As Heaven, low resting on the wave, it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome,
Its fertile golden islands
Floating on a silver sea; 35
Whilst suns their mingling beamings darts
Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
And pearly battlements around
Looked o'er the immense of Heaven.

The magic car no longer moved;
The Fairy and the Spirit 41
Entered the Hall of Spells:
Those golden clouds
That rolled in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy 45
With the ethereal footsteps trembled not:
The light and crimson mist,
Floating to strains of thrilling melody
Through that unearthly dwelling,
Yielded to every movement of the Spirit's being.
Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned, 51
And, for the varied bliss that pressed around,
Used not the glorious privilege
Of virtue and of wisdom.

'Spirit!' the Fairy said, 55
And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
'This is a wondrous sight
And mocks all human grandeur;
But, were it virtue's only need, to dwell
In a celestial palace, all resigned to pleasure's impulse, immured
Within the prison of itself, the will
Of changeless Nature would be unfulfilled.
Learn to make others happy, Spirit!
This is thine high reward:—the past shall rise; 65
Thou shalt behold the present; I will teach
The secrets of the future.'

The Fairy and the Spirit approached the overhanging battlement—
Below lay stretched the universe!
There, far as the remotest line
That bounds imagination's flight,
Countless and unending orbs

In many motion intermingled,
Yet still fulfilled immutably
Eternal Nature's law. 76
Above, below, around
The circling systems formed
A wilderness of harmony;
Each with undeviating aim,
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.

There was a little light
That twinkled in the misty distance:
None but a spirit's eye
Might ken that rolling orb;
None but a spirit's eye
And in no other place
But that celestial dwelling, might behold
Each action of this earth's inhabitants.

But matter, space and time,
In these aerial mansions cease to act;
And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps
The harvest of its excellence, over bounds
Those obstacles, of which an earthly soul
Fears to attempt the conquest.

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

Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
In the great chain of Nature.

'Behold,' the Fairy cried,
'Palmyra's ruined palaces!—110
Behold! where grandeur frowned;
Behold! where pleasure smiled;
What now remains?—the memory
Of senselessness and shame—
What is immortal there? 115
Nothing—it stands to tell
A melancholy tale, to give
An awful warning: soon
Oblivion will steal silently
The remnant of its fame, 120
Monarchs and conquerors there
Proud o'er prostrate millions are
The earthquakes of the human race;
Like them, forgotten when the ruin
That marks their shock is past.

'Beside the eternal Nile
The Pyramids have risen.
The Nile shall pursue its changeless way:
The Pyramids shall fall;
Veil not a stone stand to tell
The spot whereon they stood!
Their very site shall be forgotten,
As is their builder's name!

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

There once old Salem's haughty
dane
Rear'd high to Heaven its thou-
sand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameless glory.
Oh! many a widow, many an
orphan cursed
The building of that fame; and
many a father,
Worn out with toil and slavery,
implored The poor man's God to speed it
from the earth,
And spare his children the detested
rack Of piling stone on stone, and poi-
soning
The choicest days of life,
To soothe a dotard's vanity.
There an inhuman and uncultured
race
Howled hideous praises to their
Demon-God;
They rushed to war, tore from the
mother's womb
The unborn child,—old age and
infancy,
Promiscuous perished; their vic-
torious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh! they
were fiends:
But what was he who taught them
that the God
Of nature and benevolence hath
given
A special sanction to the trade of
blood?
His name and theirs are fading, and the
tales
Of this barbarian nation, which im-
posture
Recites till terror credits, are pur-
suing
Itself into forgetfulness.

WHERE Athens, Rome, and
Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now:
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched pal-
ters,
Contrasted with those ancient
danes,
Now crumbling to oblivion;
The long and lonely colonnades;
Through which the ghost of
Freedom stalks,
Seem like a well-known
tune,
Which in some dear scene we have
loved to hear,
Remembered now in sadness.
But, oh! how much more
changed,
How gloomier is the con-
trast
Of human nature there! Where
Socrates expired, a tyrant's
slave,
A coward and a fool, spreads death
around—
Then, shuddering, meets his
own.
Where Cicero and Antoninus
lived,
A cowed and hypocritical
monk
Prays, curses and deceives.

'Spirit, ten thousand years
Have scarcely passed away.
Since, in the waste where now the
savage drinks
His enemy's blood, and aging Eu-
rop'e's sons,
Wakes the unholy song of war,
Across a sately city,
Metropolis of the western conti-
nent:
There, now, the mossy column-
stone,
Indented by Time's unrelaxing
grasp,
Which once appeared to
brave
All, save its country's ruin;
There was the wild forest
scene,
Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
Of gardens long run wild,
Seems, to the unwilling sojourner,
whose steps
Chance in that desert has de-
layed,
Thus to have stood since earth was
what it is.
Yet once it was the busiest
haunt,
Whither, as to a common centre,
flocked
Strangers, and ships, and mer-
chandise:
Once peace and freedom
blessed
The cultivated plain:
But wealth, that curse of
man,
Blighted the bud of its prosperity:
Virtue and wisdom, truth and
liberty
Fled, to return not, until man shall
know
That they alone can give the
bliss
Worthy a soul that claims
Its kindred with eternity.

'There's not one atom of you
earth
But once was living man;
Nor the minutest drop of rain,
That bangeth in its thinnest
cloud
But flowed in human veins:
And from the burning plains
Where Libyan monsters
yell,
From the most gloomy gles.

QUEEN MAB

Of Greenland's sunless
clime,
To where the golden fields
Of fertile England spread
Their harvest to the day,
Thou canst not find one spot
Whereon no city stood.

'How strange is human
pride!
I tell thee that those living things,
To whom the fragile blade of grass,
That springeth in the morn
And perisheth ere noon,
Is an unbounded world;
I tell thee that those viewless
beings,
Whose mansion is the smallest
particle
Of the immeasurable atmosphere,
Think, feel and live like man;
That their affections and antipa-
thies,
Like his, produce the laws
Ruling their moral state;
And the minutest throb
That through their frame dif-
fuses
The slightest, faintest motion,
Is fixed and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule thy rolling orbs.'

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
In ecstasy of admiration, felt
All knowledge of the past revived;
the events
Of old and wondrous times,
Which dim tradition interrupted
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were
unfolded
In just perspective to the view;
Yet dim from their infinitude.
The Spirit seemed to stand
High on an isolated pinnacle;
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded uni-
verse
Above, and all around 256
Nature’s unchanging harmony.

III

‘Fairy!’ the Spirit said,
And on the Queen of Spells
Fixed her aethereal eyes,
‘I thank thee. Thou hast given
A boon which I will not resign,
And taught
A lesson not to be unlearned. I know
The past, and thence I will essay
to glean
A warning for the future, so that
man
May profit by his errors, and derive
Experience from his folly: 10
For, when the power of imparting joy
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other Heaven.’

Mab.

‘Turn thee, surpassing Spirit!
Much yet remains unascended.
Thou knowest how great is
man,
Thou knowest his imbecility:
Yet learn thou what he is:
Yet learn the lofty destiny
Which restless time prepares
For every living soul. 21

‘Behold a gorgeous palace, that,
And seems itself a city. Gloomy towers
Of sentinels, in stern and silent ranks,
Encompass it around: the dweller there
Cannot be free and happy; nearest thou not

The curses of the fatherless, the
groans
Of those who have no friend? He passes on:
The King, the wearer of a gilded chain
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave
Even to the basest appetites—that
man
Heeds not the shriek of penury; he smiles
At the deep curses which the destinatute
Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy
Pervades his bloodless heart when
thousands groan
But for these morsels which his
wantonness
Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save
All that they love from famine: when he hears
The tale of horror, to some readily
made face
Of hypocritical assent he turns,
Smothering the glow of shame,
that, spite of him,
Flushes his bloated cheek.
Now to the meal
Of silence, grandeur, and excess he
drugs
His palate unwilling appetite. If
gold,
Cleansing around, and numerous
viands culled
From every clime, could force the
loathing sense
To overcome satiety,—if wealth
The spring it draws from poisons
not,—or vice
Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not
Its food to deadliest venom; that
that king

Is happy; and the peasant who
fulfills
His unforced task, when he returns
at even,
And by the blazing faggot meets
again,
Her welcome for whom all his toil
is sped,
Tastes not a sweeter meal.
Behold him now
Stretched on the gorgeous couch; his fevered brain
Reels dizzyly awhile: but ah! too soon
The slumber of intemperance subsides,
And conscience, that undying serpent,
calls
Her venous brood to their nocturnal task.
Listen! he speaks! oh! mark that frenzied eye—
Oh! mark that deadly visage.’

King. ‘No cessation!
Oh! must this last for ever? Awful Death,
I wish, yet fear to clasp thee!—Not one moment
Of dreamless sleep! O dear and blessed peace!
Why do thou shed thy vestal purity
In penury and dungeons? wherefore lurkest
With danger, death, and solitude; yet shunnest
The palace I have built thee? Sacred peace!
Oh visit me but once, but pitying shed
One drop of balm upon my withered soul.

The Fairy.
‘Vain man! that palace is the virtuous heart,
And Peace defileth not her snowy robes
In such a shed as thine. Hark! yet he mutters;
His slumbers are but varied agonies,
They prey like scorpions on the
springs of life.
There needeth not the hell that
bigots frame
To punish those who err: earth in itself
Contains at once the evil and the cure;
And all-sufficing Nature can chastise
Those who transgress her law,—she only knows
How justly to proportion to the fault
The punishment it merits.
Is it strange 85
That this poor wretch should pride himself in his woes?
Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpio that consumes him?

Death. That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,
Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured
Within a splendid prison, whose stern bounds
Shut him from all that’s good or dear on earth,
His soul asserts not its humanity?
That man’s mild nature rises not in war
Against a king’s employ? No,—tis not strange.
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts and lives
Just as his father did; the unconquered powers
Of precedent and custom interpose
Between a king and virtue. Stranger yet, To those who know not Nature, nor deduce The future from the present, it may seem, That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes Of this unnatural being; not one wretch, Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed Is earth’s upbuilding bosom, rears an arm To dash him from his throne! Those gilded flies fly, That, basking in the sunshine of a court, Fatten on its corruption!—what are they?—The drones of the community; they feed On the mechanic’s labour: the starved hind For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield Its unshared harvest; and you Toil and unvanquishable penury On those who build their palaces, and bring Their daily bread?—From vice, black leathsome vice; From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong; From all that ‘generations misery, and makes Of earth this thorny wilderness: from lust, Revenge, and murder... And when Reason’s voice, Loud as the voice of Nature, shall have waked The nations; and mankind perceive that virtue Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue is peace, and happiness and harmony. When man’s maturcer nature shall disdain The playthings of its childhood;—kingly glare Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall, Fast falling to decay; whilst false-nobility’s trade Shall be as hateful and unprofitable As that of truth is now. Where is the fame Which the vainglorious mighty of the earth seek to eternize? Oh! the faintest sound From Time’s light footfall, the minute wave That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing. The unsubstantial bubble. Ay! to-day Stern is the tyrant’s mandate, red the gaze That flashes desolation, strong the These multitudes, To-morrow comes!

That mandate is a thunder-peal that died In ages past; that gaze, a transient On which the midnight closed, and on that arm The worm has made his meal. The virtuous man, Who, great in his humility, as kings Are little in their grandeur; he who leads Invincible a life of resolute good, And stands amid the silent dungeon-deeps More free and fearless than the trembling judge, Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove To bind the impassive spirit; when he fails, His mild eye beams benevolence no more: Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve; Sunk Reason’s simple eloquence, that rolled But to appall the guilty. Yes! the grave Hath quenched that eye, and Death’s relentless frost Withered that arm: but the unfading fame Which Virtue hangs upon its votary’s tomb; The deathless memory of that man, whom kings Call to their mind and tremble: the remembrance With which the happy spirit contemplates Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth, Shall never pass away.

‘Nature rejects the monarch, not the man; And subjects, mutual foes, forever play A losing game into each other’s hands, Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys, Power, like a desolating pestilence, Pollutes whate’er it touches; and obedience, Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth, Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame, A mechanism automatized. When Nero, High over flaming Rome, with savage joy Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld The frightful desolation spread, and felt A new-created sense within his soul Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound; Think’st thou his grandeur had not overcome The force of human kindness? and, when Rome, With one stern blow, hurled not the tyrant down, Crushed not the arm red with her dearest blood, Had not submissive abjectness destroyed Nature’s suggestions? Look on yonder earth: The golden harvests spring; the unfalling sun Sheds light and life; the fruits, the flowers, the trees, Arise in due succession; all things speak
Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,
In Nature's silent eloquence, declares
That all fulfill the works of love and joy,—
All but the outcast, Man. He fabricates
The sword which stabs his peace; he cherisheth
The snakes that gnaw his heart; he raiseth up
The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,
Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
Lights they the great alone? Yon silver beams,
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch
Than on the dome of kings? Is mother Earth
A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil;
A mother only to those puleing babes
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
The playthings of their babyhood, and mar,
In self-important childishness, that peace
Which men alone appreciate?

'Spirit of Nature!' no.
The pure diffusion of thy essence throns
Alike in every human heart.
Thou, aye, erectest there
Thy throne of power unapproachable.
Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
Man's brief and frail authority
Is powerless as the wind
That passeth idly by.

Thine the tribunal which sur-passeth
The show of human justice,
As God surpasses man. 225

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

IV

How beautiful this night! the balmiest sigh,
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
Were discord to the speaking quietude
That wraps this moveless scene.
Heaven's ever-bounton, Studded with stars unutterably bright,
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a canopy which love had spread
To cover her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;

Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend,
So stainless, that their white and glittering spires
Tinge not the moon's pure beam;
You castled steep,
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace;—all form a scene
Where musing Solitude might love
to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthly lines,
Where Silence undisturbed might watch alone,
So cold, so bright, so still.
The orb of day,
In southern climse, o'er ocean's waveless field
Sinks sweetly smiling; not the faintest breath
Steals o'er the unruffled deep; the clouds of eve
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day;
And vesper's image on the western
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes;
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
Roll o'er the blackened waters; the deep roar
Of distant thunder mutters awfully;
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom
That shrouds the boiling surge; the pitiless fiend,
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey;
The torn deep yawns,—the vessel finds a grave
Beneath its jagged gulf.

Ah! whence you glare
That fires the arch of Heaven?—
that dark red smoke
Blotting the pearly moon? The stars are quenched;
In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round!
Hark to that roar, whose swift and deafening peals
In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
Starting pale Midnight on her starry throne!
Now swells the intermining din; the jar
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb;
The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
The ceaseless clangour, and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage;—louder, and more loud
The discord grows; till pale Death shuts the scene,
And o'er the conqueror and the main conquered draws
His cold and bloody shroud.—Of all the men
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there,
In proud and vigorous health; of all the hearts
That beat with anxious life at sunset there;
How few survive, how few are beating now!
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause;
Save when the frantic wail of widened love
Comes shuddering on the blast, or
the faint moan
With which some soul bursts from
the frame of clay
Wrapped round its struggling pow-
ers.

The gray morn
Dawns on the mournful scene; the
sulphurous smoke
Before the icy wind slow rolls
away,
And the bright beams of frosty
morning dance 61
Along the spangling snow. There
tracks of blood
Even to the forest's depth, and
scattered arms,
And lifeless warriors, whose hard
lineaments
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path 62
Of the outstiling victors: far beh-
ind,
Black ashes note where their proud
city stood.
Within yon forest is a gloomy
glen,
Each tree which guards its dark-
ness from the day,
Waves o'er a warrior's tomb. I see thee shrink, 70
Surpassing Spirit!—wert thou hu-
man else?
I see a shade of doubt and horror
fleet
Across thy stainless features: yet
fear not;
This is no unconnected misery,
Nor stands uncaused and irretriev-
able
Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, and cowards
who crouch, set up
For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
Which desolates the discord-wasted
land.

From kings, and priests, and states-
men, war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbet-
tered woe, 105
Whose grandeur his debasement.
Let the axe
Strike at the root, the poison-tree
will fall;
And where its venomous exhalations
spread,
Ruin, and death, and woe, where
millions lay 83
Quenching the serpent's famine, and
their bones
Bleaching unburied in the putrid
air,
A garden shall arise, in loveliness
Surpassing fabled Eden.
Hath Nature's soul, that formed this world so bea-
"tiful, that spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's
smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that
gave
The happy birds their dwelling in
the grove,
That yielded to the wanderers of
the deep
The lovely silence of the unfath-
"omed main,
And filled the mearest worm that
crawls in dust
With spirit, thought, and love; on
Man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wan-
tony
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery; his
soul
Blasted with withering curses; placed afar
The meteor-happiness, that shuns
his grasp,
But serving on the frightful gulf to
glare,
Rent wide beneath his footsteps? Nature! — no!

Kings, priests, and statesmen, blast
the human flower
Even in its tender bud; their influ-
ence darts
Like subtle poison through the
bloodless veins
Of desolate society. The child,
Ere he can sip his mother's sacred
name,
Swells with the unnatural pride of
crime, and lifts
His baby-sword even in a hero's
mood.

This infant-arm becomes the blood-
est scourg
Of devastated earth; whilst spe-
cious names,
Learned in soft childhood's unsus-
pecting hour,
Serve as the sophisms with which
manhood dims
Bright Reason's ray, and sanctifies
the sword

Upraised to shed a brother's inno-
cent blood.
Let priest-led slaves cease to pro-
claim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when
Force
And Falseness hang even o'er the
cradled babe,
Stifling with rudest grasp all natu-
ral good.

Abt to the stranger-soul, when
first it peeps
From its new temencment, and looks
abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how

And desolate a tract is this wide
world!
How withered all the buds of natu-
ral good!

No shade, no shelter from the
sweeping storms
Of pitless power! On its wretched
frame,
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease
and woe
Heaped on the wretched parent
where it sprung
By morals, law, and custom, the
pure winds
Of Heaven, that renovate the in-
sect tribes,
May breathe not. The untaught
light of day
May visit not its longings. It is
bound
Ere it has life: yea, all the chains
are forged
Long ere its being: all liberty and
love
And peace is torn from its defense-
lessness;
Cursed from its birth, even from
its cradle doomed
To abjectness and bondage!

"Throughout this varied and eternal
world
Soul is the only element: the
block
That for uncounted ages has re-
mained
The moveless pillar of a mountain's
weight
Is active, living spirit. Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and
part,
And the minutest atom compre-
hends
A world of loves and hatreds; these
beget
Evil and good: hence truth and
falsehood spring;
Hence will and thought and action,
all the germs
Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or
hate,
That variegate the eternal uni-
verse.
Soul is not more polluted than the
beams
Of Heaven's pure orb, ere round
their rapid lines
The taint of earth-born atmos-
pheres arise.
'Man is of soul and body, formed
for deeds
Of high resolve, on fancy's boldest
wing
To soar unawed, fearlessly to
turn
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and
taste
The joys which mingled sense and
spirit yield.
Or he is formed for abjection and
woe.
To grovel on the dunghill of his
fears,
To shrink at every sound, to quench
the
Of natural love in sensualism, to
know
That hour as blessed when on his
worthless days
The frozen hand of Death shall set
its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the
disease.
The one is man that shall hereafter
be;
The other, man as vice has made
him now.
'War is the statesman's game, the
priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assas-
sin's trade,
And, to those royal murderers,
whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery
and gore,
The bread they eat, the staff on
which they lean.
Guards, garbed in blood-red livery,
surround
Their palaces, participate the
crimes
That force defends, and from a na-
tion's rage
Secure the crown, which all the
curses reach
That famine, frenzy, weep and
penury breathe.
These are the hired braves who de-
 fend
The tyrant's throne—the bullies of
his fear:
These are the sinks and channels
of worst vice
The refuse of society, the dregs
Of all that is most vile: their cold
hearts blend
Deceit with sternness, ignorance
with pride,
All that is mean and villainous, warn
rage
Which hopelessness of good, and
self-contempt,
Alone might kindle; they are
decked in wealth,
Honour and power, then are sent
abroad
To do their work. The pestilence
that stalks
In gloomy triumph through some
eastern land
Is less destroying. They cajole with
gold,
And promises of fame, the thought-
less youth
Already crushed with servitude: he
knows
His wretchedness too late, and
cherishes
Repentance for his ruin, when his
doom
Is sealed in gold and blood!
Those too the tyrant serve, who,
skilled to snare
The feet of Justice in the toils of
law
Stand, ready to oppress the weaker
still;
And right or wrong will vindicate
for gold,
Sneering at public virtue, which
beneath
Their pitiless tread lies torn and
trampled, where
Honour sits smiling at the sale of
truth.
'Then grave and hoary-headed
hypocrites,
Without a hope, a passion, or a
love,
Who, through a life of luxury and
lies,
Have crept by flattery to the seats
of power,
Support the system whence their
honours flow...
They have three words:—well ty-
rants know their use,
Well pay them for the loan, with
usury
Torn from a bleeding world!—God,
Hell, and Heaven.
A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty
fend,
Whose mercy is a nickname for the
rage
Of nameless tigers hungering for
blood.
Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying
worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless
slaves
Whose life has been a penance for
its crimes.
And Heaven, a meed for those who
humbly
Their human nature, quake, be-
lieve, and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly
power
'These tools the tyrant tempers to
his work,
Wields in his wrath, and as he wills
destroys,
Omnipotent in wickedness: the
while
Youth springs, age moulders, man-
hood tamely does
His bidding, bribed by short-lived
joys to lend
Force to the weakness of his trem-
bling arm.
'They rise, they fall; one generation
comes
Yielding its harvest to destruction's
scythe.
It fades, another blossoms: yet be-
hold!
Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark
on its bloom,
Withering and cankered deep its
passive prime.
He has invented lying words and
modes,
Empty and vain as his own careless
heart;
Evasive meanings, nothings of
much sound,
To lure the heedless victim to the
Toils
Spread round the valley of its para-
dise.
'Look to thyself, priest, conqueror,
or prince!
Whether thy trade is falsehood, and
thy lusts
Deep wallow in the earnings of the
poor.
With whom thy Master was:—or
thou delight'st
In numbering o'er the myriads of
thy slain,
All misery weighing nothing in the
scale.
Against thy short-lived fame: or
thou dost load
With cowardice and crime the
A pomp-fed king. Look to thy
wretched self!
Ay, art thou not the vilest slave
that e’er
Crawled on the loathing earth?
Are not thy days
Days of unsatisfying lissome
ness?
Doth thou not cry, ere night’s long
rack is o’er,
"When will the morning come?" Is
not thy youth
A vain and feverish dream of sen-
sualism?
Thy manhood blighted with unripe
disease?
Are not thy views of unregretted
death
Drear, comfortless, and horrible?
Thy mind,
Is it not morbid as thy nerveless
frame,
Incapable of judgment, hope, or
love?
And dost thou wish the errors to
survive
That bar thee from all sympathies of
good,
After the miserable interest
Thou hold’st in their prostration?
When the grave
Has swallowed up thy memory and
thyselh,
Dost thou desire the bane that
poisons earth
To twine its roots around thy
confined clay,
Spring from thy bones, and blossom
on thy tomb,
That of its fruit thy babes may
eat and die?

Thus do the generations of the
earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the
womb,
Surviving still the imperishable
change
That renovates the world; even as
the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the
waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil, and
heaped
For many reasons there—though
long they choke,
Loading with loathsomsomeness
the land,
All germs of promise, yet when the
tall trees
From which they fell, shorn of their
lovely shapes,
Lie level with the earth to moulder
there,
They fertilize the land they long
deformed,
Till from the breathing lawn a for-
est springs
Of youth, integrity, and loveliness,
Like that which gave it life, to
spring and die,
Thus suicidal selfishness, that
blights
The fairest feelings of the opening
heart,
Is destined to decay, whilst from the
soil
Shall spring all virtue, all delight,
all love,
And judgment cease to wage un-
natural war,
With passion’s unsubduable array.
Twin-sister of religion, selfishness!
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping
all
The wanton horrors of her bloody
play;
Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spirit-
less,
Shunning the light, and owning not
its name,
Compelled, by its deformity, to
screen
With flimsy veil of justice and of
change
Its unattractive lineaments, that
scare
All, save the brood of ignorance: at
once
The cause and the effect of ty-
ranny;
Unblushing, hardened, sensual, and
vile;
Dead to all love but of its abject-
ness,
With heart impassive by more
noble powers?
Than unshared pleasure, sordid
gain, or fame;
Despising its own miserable
being,
Which still it longs, yet fears to dis-
enthrall.

Hence commerce springs, the venal
interchange
Of all that human art or nature
yield;
Which wealth should purchase not, but
want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to sup-
ply
From the full fountain of its bound-
less love,
For ever stilled, drained, and
wasted now.
Commerce! beneath whose poison-
breathing shade
No solitary virtue dares to
spring;
But Poverty and Wealth with
equal band
Scatter their withering curses, and
unfold
The doors of premature and vio-
 lent death,
To pining famine and full-fed
disease,
To all that shares the lot of human
life,
Which poisoned, body and soul,
scarce drags the chain,
That lengthens as it goes and
clanks behind.

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

Since tyrants, by the sale of hu-
man life,
Heap luxuries to their sensualism,
and fame
To their wide-wasting and inanimate
pride,
Success has sanctioned to a credu-
los world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of
war.
His hosts of blind and unresting
dupes
The despot numbers; from his
cabinet
These puppets of his schemes he
moves at will,
Even as the slaves by force or
famine driven,
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery;
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pulleys of a dead machine,
Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth!

The harmony and happiness of man
Yields to the wealth of nations;
That which lifts his pride
Is bartered for the poison of his soul;
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes,
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprise and daring, even the pulse
That fancy kindles in the beating heart
To mingle with sensation, it destroys;
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed
Even by hypocrisy.
And statesmen boast
Of wealth! The wordy eloquence, that lives
After the ruin of their hearts, can
gold
Is venal; gold or fame will surely reach
The price prefixed by selfishness, to all
But him of resolute and unchanging will;
Whom, not the plaudits of a servile crowd,
Nor the vile joys of taunting luxury,
Can bribe to yield his elevated soul.
To Tyranny or Falsehood, though they wield
With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

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

'Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience; for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith:
A little passing pomp, some servile souls,
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
To deck the triumph of their lank and guid zeal,
Can make him minister to tyranny,
More daring crime requires a loftier need:
Without a shudder, the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steel's his heart,
When the dread eloquence of dying men,
Low musing on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature, whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of a patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
And for a cold world's good word,—viler still!

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

'This commerce of sincerest virtue needs
No mediate signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,
No balances of prudence, cold and long;
In just and equal measure all is weighed,
One scale contains the sum of human woe,
And one, the good man's heart.

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

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

VI

All touch, all eye, all ear,
The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.
O'er the thin texture of its frame,
The varying periods painted chang ing glows,
As on a summer even, 5
When soul-enfolding music floats
around,
The stainless mirror of the lake
Re-images the eastern gloom,
Mingling convulsively its purple
hues
With sunset's burnished gold. 10

Then thus the Spirit spoke:
'It is a wild and miserable world!
Thorny, and full of care,
Which every hand can make his
prey at will.
O Fairy! in the lapse of years, 15
Is there no hope in store?
Will you vast suns roll on
Interminably, still illumining
The night of so many wretched
souls,
And see no hope for them? 20
Will not the universal Spirit e'er
Revivy this withered limb of
Heaven?'
The Fairy calmly smiled
In comfort, and a kindling gleam of
hope
Suffused the Spirit's lineaments. 25
'O! rest thee tranquil; chase those
fearful doubts,
Which never could rack an ever-
lasting soul,
That sees the chains which bind it
to its doom.
Yes! crime and misery are in yon-
der earth,
Falsehood, mistake, and lust;
But the eternal world
Contains at once the evil and the
cure.
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
Even in perversest time:
The truths of their pure lips, that
never die,
Shall bind the scorpion falsehood
with a wreath
Of ever-living flame,
Until the monster sting itself to
death.

How sweet a scene will earth be-
come!
Of purest spirits a pure dwelling-
place,
Symphonious with the planetary
spheres;
When man, with changeless Nature
concealing,
Will undertake regeneration's
work,
When its ungenial poles no longer
point
To the red and baleful sun 45
That faintly twinkles there.

'Spirit! on yonder earth,
Falsehood now triumphs; deadly
power
Has fixed its seal upon the lip of
truth!
Madness and misery are there! 50
The happiest is most wretched! Yet
confide,
Until pure health-drops, from the
cup of joy,
Fall like a dew of balm upon the
world.
Now, to the scene I show, in silence
turn,
And read the blood-stained charter
of all woe;
Which Nature soon, with re-creating
hand,
Will blot in mercy from the book
of earth.
How bold the flight of Passion's
wandering wing,
How swift the step of Reason's
firmer tread,'
High in Heaven's realm, upon a golden throne,
Even like an earthly king; and whose dread work,
Hell, gapes for ever for the unhappy slaves
Of fate, whom He created, in his sport,
To triumph in their torments when they fell!
Earth heard the name; Earth trembled, as the smoke
Of His revenge ascended up to Heaven,
Blotting the constellations; and the cries
Of millions, butchered in sweet confidence
And unsuspecting peace, even when the bonds
Of safety were confirmed by woody oaths
Sworn in His dreadfal name, rung through the land;
Whilst innocent babes writhed on thy stubborn spear,
And thou didst laugh to hear the mother's shriek
Of maniac gladness, as the sacred steel
Felt cold in her torn entrails!

That still consumed thy being, even when
Thou heardst the step of Fate,—that flames might light
Thy funeral scene, and the shrill, horrent shrieks
Of parents dying on the pile that burned
To light their children to thy paths, the roar
Of the encreling flames, the exulting cries
Of thine apostles, loud commingling there,
Might sate thine hungry ear
Even on the bed of death!

But now contempt is mocking thy gray hairs;
Thou art descending to the darksome grave,
Unhonoured and unpitied, but by those
Whose pride is passing by like thine, and sheds,
Like thine, a glare that fades before the sun
Of truth, and shines but in the dreadful night
That long has lowered above the ruined world.

Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffused
A Spirit of activity and life,
That knows no terms, cessation, or decay;
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,
Extinguished in the dampness of the grave,
Awhile there slumbers, more than when the babe
In the dim newness of its being feels
The impulses of sublunary things,
And all is wonder to unpractised sense:
But, active, steadfast, and eternal,
Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,
Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,
Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease;
And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly
Rolls round the eternal universe, and shakes
Its underlaying battlement, pre-sides,
Apparition with irresistible law
The place each spring of its machine shall fill;
So that when waves on waves tumultuous heap
Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven
Heaven's lightnings scorch the up-rooted ocean-tords,
Whilst, to the eye of shipwrecked mariner,
Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
All seems unlinked contingency and chance:
No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unacquainted task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
Even the minutest molecule of light,
That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow
Fulfil its destined, though invisible work,
The universal Spirit guides; nor less,
When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,
Has led two hosts of dupes to battle-field,
That, blind, they there may dig each other's graves,
And call the sad work glory, does it rule
All passions: not a thought, a will, an act,
No working of the tyrant's moody mind,
Nor one misgiving of the slaves who beast
Their servitude, to hide the shame they feel,
Nor the events enchaining every will,
That from the depths of unrecorded time
Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
Unrecognized, or unforeseen by thee,
Soul of the Universe! eternal spring
Of life and death, of happiness and woe,
Of all that cherishes the phantasmal scene
That floats before our eyes in wavering light,
Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison,
Whose chains and massy walls
We feel, but cannot see.

'Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
Necessity! thou mother of the world!
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requirest no prayers or praises; the caprice
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
Than do the changeful passions of his breast.
To thy unvarying harmony: the slave,
Whose horrible lusts spread misery
o'er the world,
And the good man, who lifts, with
virtuous pride,
203
His being, in the sight of happiness,
That springs from his own works;
the poison-tree,
Beneath whose shade all life is
withered up,
And the fair oak, whose leafy
dome affords
A temple where the vows of happy
love
Are registered, are equal in thy
sight:
No love, no hate thou cherishest;
revenge
And favouritism, and worst desire
of fame
Thou know'st not: all that the wide
world contains
Are but thy passive instruments,
and thou
Regard'st them all with an impartial
eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature can
not feel,
Because thou hast not human
sense,
Because thou art not human
mind.

'Yes! when the sweeping storm of
time
Has sung its death-dirge o'er the
ruined fames
And broken altars of the almighty
Fiend
Whose name usurps thy honours,
and the blood
Through centuries clotted there, has
floated down
The tainted flood of ages, shalt
thou live
Unchangeable! A shrine is raised
to thee,
Which, nor the tempest-breath of
time,
Nor the interminable flood,
Over earth's slight pageant
rolling,
Arrived to destroy,—
230
The sensitive extension of the
world.
That wondrous and eternal
fane,
Where pain and pleasure, good and
evil,
To do the will of strong necessity,
And life, in multitudinous shapes,
Still pressing forward where no
term can be,
236
Like hungry and unresting
flame;
Curls round the eternal columns of
its strength.'

VII

Spirit.

'I was an infant when my mother
went
To see an atheist burned. She took
me there:
The dark-robed priests were met
around the pile;
The multitude was gazing silently;
And as the culprit passed with
damnless mien,
Tempered disdain in his unaltering
eye,
Mixed with a quiet smile, shone
calmly forth:
The thirsty fire crept round his
manly limbs;
His resolute eyes were scorched to
blindness soon;
His death-pang rent my heart! the
insanee mob
10
Utted a cry of triumph, and I
wept.
"Weep not, child!" cried my
mother, "for that man
Has said, There is no God."

Fairy.

'There is no God!
Nature confirms the faith his death-
groan sealed
Let heaven and earth, let man's
revolving race,
His ceaseless generations tell their
tale;
Yet every part depending on the
chain
That links it to the whole, point to the
hand
That grasps its term! let every seed
that falls
In silent eloquence unfold its
store
Of argument, of infinity within,
Infinity without, belie creation;
The exterminable spirit it contains
Is nature's only God; but human
pride
Is skilful to invent most serious
names
To hide its ignorance.

The name of God
Has fenced about all crime with
holiness,
Himself the creature of His wor-
shipers,
Whose names and attributes and
passions change,
Sessa, Budhi, Foh, Jehovah, God,
or Lord,
Even with the human dupes who
build His shrines,
Still serving o'er the war-polluted
world
For desolation's watchword;
whether hosts
Stain His death-blushing chariot-
wheels, as on
Triumphantly they roll, whilst
Brahmins raise
A sacred hymn to mingle with the
groans;
Or countless partners of His power
divide
His tyranny to weakness; or the
smoke
Of burning towns, the cries of fe-
male helplessness,
Unarmed old age, and youth, and
infancy,
Horribly massacred, ascend to
Heaven
In honour of His name; or, last and
worst,
Earth groans beneath religion's iron
age,
And priests dare babble of a God
of peace,
Even whilst their hands are red
with guiltless blood,
Mourning the while, uprooting
every germ
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling
all,
Making the earth a slaughter-
house!

'O Spirit! through the sense
By which thy inner nature was apprised
Of outward shows, vague dreams
I have rolled,
And varied reminiscences have
waked
Tablets that never fade;
All things have been imprinted
there,
The stars, the sea, the earth, the
sky,
Even the unshapeliest lineaments
Of wild and fleeting visions
Have left a record there
To testify of earth.

'These are my empire, for to me is
given
The wonders of the human world
to keep,
And Fancy's thin creations to
dew
With manner, being, and reality;
Therefore a wondrous phantom, from the dreams
Of human error's dense and pure-blind faith,
I will evoke, to meet thy question-
ing,
Abasuerus, rise!
A strange and woebegone wight
Arose beside the battlement, And stood unmoving there.
His inessential figure cast no shade Upon the golden floor; His port and mien bore mark of many years, And chronicles of untold ancient
Were legible within his beamless eye:
Yet his cheek bore the mark of youth;
Freshness and vigour knit his manly frame; The wisdom of old age was mingled there With youth's primeval dauntless-
And inexpressible woe, Chastened by fearless resignation, gave An awful grace to his all-speaking brow.

Spirit.
Is there a God?
Abasuerus.
'Is there a God'—ay, an almighty God, And vengeance as almighty! Once His voice Was heard on earth; earth shudder-
dered at the sound; The fiery-visaged firmament ex-
pressed Abhorrence, and the grave of Nature yawned To swallow all the dauntless and the good That dared to hurl defiance at His throne, Girt as it was with power. None but slavesSurvived, the cold-blooded slaves, who did the work Of tyrannous omnipotence; whose souls No honest indignation ever urged To elevate daring, to one deed Which gross and sensual self did not pollute. These slaves built temples for the omnipotent Fiend, Gorgeous and vast: the costly altars smoked With human blood, and hideous paens rung Through all the long-drawn aisles. A murderer heard His voice in Egypt, one whose gifts and arts Had raised him to his eminence in power, Accomplish of omnipotence in crime, And confidant of the all-knowing one. These were Jehovah's words:—
'From an eternity of idleness I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth From nothing; rested, and created man: I placed him in a Paradise, and there Planted the tree of evil, so that he Might eat and perish, and My soul procure Wherewith to sate its malice, and to turn, Even like a heartless conqueror of the earth,'
Of unoffending infidels, to quench
Their thirst for ruin in the very blood;
That flowed in their own veins, and pitiless zeal
Froze every human feeling, as the wife,
Sheathed in her husband's heart
the sacred steel,
Even whilst its hopes were dreaming of her love;
And friends to friends, brothers to brothers stood
Opposed in bloodiest battle-field, and war.
Scarcely satisfied by fate's last death-dealings, wag'd,
Drunk from the winewpess of the Almighty's wrath;
Whereas the red cross, in mockery of peace,
Pointed to victory! When the fray was done,
No remnant of the exterminated
Survived to tell its ruin, but the flesh,
With putrid smoke poisoning the atmosphere,
That rotted on the half-extinguisht pile.

And blood-red rainbows canopied the land.

'Spirit, no year of my eventful being
Has passed unstained by crime and misery,
Which flows from God's own faith,
I've marked His slaves
With tongues whose lies are venomous, beguile,
The insensate mob, and whilst one hand was red
With murder, feign to stretch the other out.
For brotherhood and peace; and that they now
Babble of love and mercy, whilst their deeds
Are marked with all the narrowness and crime
That freedom's young arm dare not yet chaste,
Reason may claim our gratitude, who now
Establishing the imperishable
Throne of truth, and stubborn virtue,
maketh vain
The unprevailing malice of my foes,
Whose bruseless rage becometh torment to the brave.
Adds impotent eternities to pain,
Whilst keenest disappointment
racks His breast.
To see the smiles of peace around them play,
To frustrate or to sanctify their doom.

'Thus have I stood,—through a
wild waste of years
Struggling with whirlwinds of mad
agony,
Yet peaceful, and serene, and self-embraced.
Mocking my powerless Tyrant's horrible curse
SHELLEY

With stubborn and unalterable will,
Even as a giant oak, which Heaven's fierce flame
Had scathed in the wilderness, to stand
A monument of fadeless ruin there;
Yet peacefully and movelessly it braves
The midnight conflict of the wintry storm.
As in the sunlight's calm it spreads
Its worn and withered arms on high
To meet the quiet of a summer's noon.
The Fairy waved her wand:
Ahaeurus fled
Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist,
That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove.
Flee from the morning beam
The matter of which dreams are made
Not more endowed with actual life
Than this phantasmal portraiture
Of wandering human thought.

VIII

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

Joy to the Spirit came.
Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,
Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear:
Earth was no longer Hell;
Love, freedom, health, had given
Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,
And all its pulses beat
Symphonic to the planetary spheres:
Then dulcet music swelled
Concordant with the life-strings of the soul;
It throbbed in sweet and languid beatings there,
Catching new life from transitory death,—
Like the vague sighings of a wind
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits;
Was the pure stream of feeling
That sprung from these sweet notes,
And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies
With mild and gentle motion calmly flowed.

The Fairy waved her wand:
Ahaeurus fled
Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist,
That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove.
Flee from the morning beam
The matter of which dreams are made
Not more endowed with actual life
Than this phantasmal portraiture
Of wandering human thought.

QUEEN MAB

Whose woe to him were bitterness
Than death; 35
Sees her unfaded cheek
Glow mantling in first luxury of health,
Thrills with her lovely eyes,
Which like two stars amid the heaving main
Sparkle through liquid bliss.
Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen:
'I will not call the ghost of ages gone
To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore;
The present now is past,
And those events that desolate the earth
Have faded from the memory of Time,
Who dares not give reality to that
Whose being I annul. To me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
Space, matter, time, and mind;
Futurity
Exposes now its treasure; let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
O human Spirit! spur thee to the goal
Where virtue fixes universal peace,
And midst the ebb and flow of human things,
Show somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
A lighthouse o'er the wild of dreary waves.

The habitable earth is full of bliss;
Those wastes of frozen billows that were buried
By everlasting snowstorms round the poles,
To see a babe before his mother's door,
Sharing his morning's meal 85
With the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
Has seen above the illimitable plain,
Morning on night, and night on morning rise,
90
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
Its shadowy mountains on the sunshine sea,
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind
In melancholy loneliness, and swept
95
The desert of those ocean solitudes,
But vocal to the sea-bird's howling shriek,
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds
Of kindliest human impulses respond.

Those lonely realms bright garden- isles begem,
With lightsome clouds and shining seas betwixt,
And fertile valleys, resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
To meet the kisses of the flow'rs there.

All things are recreated, and the flame

Of consentaneous love inspires all life:
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
110
Rewarding her with their pure perfection:
The balsmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad:
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glows in the fruits, and mantles on the stream:
115
No storms deform the beaming brow of Heaven,
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the ever-verdant trees;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And Autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
120
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of Spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint, and blushes into love.

'The Hon now forgets to thirst for blood:
There might you see him sporting
125
Beside the dreadless kid; his claws are sheathed,
His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made
His nature as the nature of a lamb.
Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting bane
Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows;
130
All bitterness is past; the cup of joy

Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim,
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.

'But chief, ambiguous Man, he that can know
More misery, and dream more joy than all;
Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast
To mingle with a loftier instinct there,
Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,
Yet raising, sharpening, and refining each:
Who stands amid the ever-varying world,
140
The burthen or the glory of the earth;
He chief perceives the change, his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.

'Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
145
Lowers o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost
Basks in the moonlight's ineffual glow,
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night;
His chilled and narrow energies, his heart,
150
Insensible to courage, truth, or love,
His stunted stature and Imbecile frame,
Marked him for some abortion of the earth.
Fit cumber of the bears that roamed around,

Whose habits and enjoyments were his own:
His life a feverish dream of stagnant woe,
Whose meagre wants, but scantily fulfilled,
Apprised him ever of the joyless length
Which his short being's wretchedness had reached;
His death a pang which famine, cold and toil,
160
Long on the mind, whilst yet the vital spark
Clung to the body stubbornly, had brought:
All was inflicted here that Earth's revenge
Could wreak on the infringers of her law;
One curse alone was spared—the name of God.
165

'Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Trembled with all earthquake, tempest and disease,
170
Was Man a nobler being; slavery
Had crushed him to his country's blood-stained dust:
Or he was bartered for the fame of power,
Which all internal impulses destroying,
Makes human will an article of trade;
Or he was changed with Christians for their gold,
And dragged to distant isles, where to the sound
Of the flesh-mangling scourge, he does the work
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth,
Which doubly visits on the tyrants' heads
The long-protracted fulness of their woe;
Or he was led to legal butchery,
To turn to worms beneath that burning sun,
Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,
And priests first traded with the name of God.

'Even where the milder zone afforded Man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered lis,
Spread like a quenchless fire; not truth till late
Availed to arrest its progress, or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime:
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hunger zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with tasteless body and mind;
Blessed from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.

Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing
Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
Dawns on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gifts
With self-enshrouded eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age,
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth: no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which, still avenging Nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.

Now longer now the winged habitants
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadful partners of their play.
All things are void of terror: Man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals: happiness
And science dawn through hate upon the earth;
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here.
Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extend
Their all-subduing energies, and wield
The sceptre of a vast dominion there;
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends
Its force to the omnipotence of mind.
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth
To decorate its Paradise of peace.'

IX

'O happy Earth! reality of Heaven!
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe, aspire;
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point and blend for ever there:
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling place!
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Langour, disease, and ignorance dare not come:
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!
'Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams,
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss.
Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.
Thou art the end of all desire and will.
The product of all action; and the souls
That by the paths of an aspiring change
Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace,
There rest from the eternity of toil.
That framed the fabric of thy perfection.

'Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear;
That hoary giant, who, in lonely pride
So long had ruled the world, that nations fell.
Beneath his silent footsteps, Pyramids,
That for millenniums had withstood the tide
Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand
Across that desert where their stones survived
The name of him whose pride has heaped them there.
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Was but the mushroom of a summer day,
That his light-winged footstep pressed to dust.
Time was the king of earth; all things gave way
Before him, but the fixed and virtuous will.
The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,
That mocked his fury and prepared his fall.

Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love;
Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,
Till from its native Heaven they rolled away:
First, Crime triumphant o'er all hope careered
Unblushing, undiscerning, bold and strong;
Whilst Falsehood, tricked in Virtue's attributes,
Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
Till done by her own venomous sting to death,
She left the moral world without a law,
No longer fettering Passion's fearless wing,
Nor searing Reason with the brand of God;
Then steadily the happy ferment worked;
Reason was free; and wild though Passion went
Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed meads,
Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,
Yet like the bee returning to her queen,
She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
Who meek and sober kissed the sportive child
No longer trembling at the broken rod.

'Shadow the slow necessity of death;
The tranquil spirit failed beneath its grasp,
Without a groan, almost without a fear,
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.

The deadly germs of languor and disease
Died in the human frame, and
Blessed with all gifts her earthy worshippers.
How vigorous then the athletic form of age!
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, nor care,
Had stamped the seal of gray deformity
On all the mingling lineaments of time.
How lovely the intrepid front of youth!
Which meek-eyed courage decked
With freshest grace;
Courage of soul, that dared not a name,
And elevated will, that journeyed
Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness.
With virtue, love, and pleasure, hand in hand.

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

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

'Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung:
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal.
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.

A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
To-day, the breathing marble glows above
Purity.
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life: to-morrow, worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

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

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

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

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

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

Fear not then, Spirit, Death's disrobing hand,
So welcome when the tyrant is awake
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
Death is no foe to Virtue: earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with Freedom's faceless laurels there,
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
Whose stingings bade thy heart look further still,
When, to the moonlight walk by Henry led,
Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death?
And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
Whose iron thongs are red with human gore?
Never: but bravely bearing on, thy will
Is destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon claim,
Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease:
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its stormy hour,
When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.

Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received: Virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.
The Fairy waves her wand of charm,
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankful
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked,
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of Heaven's un trodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew:
The vast and fiery globes that rolled
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessened by slow degrees and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.

Earth floated then below:
The chariot paused a moment there;
The Spirit then descended:
The restless courser panted, 
Gathered to the soul's delight, 
Confused with the winds of Heaven.

A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame:

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

NOTE ON QUEEN MAB, BY MRS. SHELLEY

Shelley was eighteen when he wrote Queen Mab; he never published it. When it was written, he had come to the decision that he was too young to be a 'judge of controversies'; and he was desirous of acquiring 'that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism.' But he never doubted the truth or utility of his opinions; and, in printing and privately distributing Queen Mab, he believed that he should further their dissemination, without occasioning the mischief either to others or himself that might arise from publication. It is doubtful whether he would himself have admitted it into a collection of his works. His severe classical taste, refined by the constant study of the Greek poets, might have discovered defects that escape the ordinary reader; and the change his opinions underwent in many points would have prevented him from putting forth the speculations of his boyish days. But the poem is too beautiful in itself, and far too remarkable as the production of a boy of eighteen, to allow of its being passed over: besides that, having been frequently reprinted, the omission would be vain. In the former edition, certain portions were left out, as shocking the general reader from the violence of their attack on religion. I myself had a painful feeling that such erasures might be looked upon as a mark of disrespect towards the author, and am glad to have the opportunity of restoring them.

A series of articles was published in the New Monthly Magazine during the autumn of the year 1832, written by a man of great talent, a fellow-colleague and warm friend of Shelley: they describe admirably the state of his mind during his collegiate life. Inspired with ardour for the acquisition of knowledge, endowed with the keenest sensibility and with the fortitude of a martyr, Shelley came among his fellow-creatures, congregated for the purposes of education, like a spirit from another sphere, too delicately organized for the rough treatment man uses towards man, especially in the season of youth, and too resolute in carrying out his own sense of good and justice, not to become a victim. To a devoted attachment to those he loved he added a determined resistance to oppression. Refusing to fag at Eton, he was treated with revolting cruelty by masters and boys: this roused instead of taming his spirit, and he rejected the duty of obedience when it was enforced by menaces and punishment. To aversion to the society of his fellow-creatures, such as he found them when collected together in societies, where one egged-on the other to acts of tyranny, was joined the deepest sympathy and compassion; while the attachment he felt for individuals, and the admiration with which he regarded their powers and their virtues, led him to entertain a high opinion of the perfectibility of human nature; and he believed that all could reach the highest grade of moral improvement, did not the customs and prejudices of society foster evil passions and excuse evil actions.

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

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

The cause was that he was sincere; that he believed the opinions which he entertained to be true. And he loved truth with a martyr's love; he was ready to sacrifice station and fortune, and his dearest affections, at its shrine. The sacrifice was demanded from, and made by, a youth of seventeen. It is a singular fact in the history of society in the civilized nations of modern times that no false step is so irretrievable as one made in early youth. Older men, it is true, when they oppose their fellows and transgress ordinary rules, carry a certain prudence or hypocrisy as a shield along with them. But youth is rash; nor can it imagine, while asserting what it believes to be true, and doing what it believes to be right, that it should be denounced as vicious, and pursued as a criminal.

Shelley possessed a quality of mind which experience has shown me to be of the rarest occurrence among human beings: this was his unworldliness. The usual motives that rule men, prospects of present or future
SHELLEY

advantage, the rank and fortune of those around, the taunts and censures, or the praise, of those who were hostile to him, had no influence whatever over his actions, and apparently none over his thoughts. It is difficult even to express the simplicity and directness of purpose that adorned him. Some few might be found in the history of mankind, and some one at least among his own friends, equally disinterested and scornful, even to severe personal sacrifices, like every baser motive. But no one, I believe, even joined this noble but passive virtue to equal active endeavours for the benefit of his friends and mankind in general, and to equal powers to produce the advantages he desired. The world's brightest glories and its most solid advantages were of no worth in his eyes, when compared to the cause of what he considered truth, and the good of his fellow-creatures. Born in a position which, to his inexperienced mind, afforded the greatest facilities to practise the tenets he espoused, he boldly declared the use he would make of fortune and station, and enjoyed the belief that he should materially benefit his fellow-creatures by his actions; while, conscious of surpassing powers of reason and imagination, it is not strange that he should, even while so young, have believed that his written thoughts would tend to disseminate opinions which he believed conducive to the happiness of the human race.

If man were a creature devoid of passion, he might have said and done all this with quietness. But he was too enthusiastic, and too full of hatred of all the ills he witnessed, not to scorn danger. Various disappointments tortured, but could not tame, his soul. The more enmity he felt, the more earnestly he became attached to his peculiar views, and the more hostile to those of the men who persecuted him.

He was animated to greater zeal by compassion for his fellow-creatures. His sympathy was excited by the misery with which the world is burning. He witnessed the sufferings of the poor, and was aware of the evils of ignorance. He was desirous to induce every rich man to despise himself of his superfluity, and to create a brotherhood of property and service, and superstition, and to make a brotherhood of the world. In this he changed somewhat in his opinions, and made a brotherhood of the world. In this he changed somewhat in his opinions, and made a brotherhood of the world. In this he changed somewhat in his opinions, and made a brotherhood of the world.

To THE EDITOR OF THE 'EXAMINER.'

Sir,

Having heard that a poem entitled Queen Mab has been surreptitiously published in London, and that legal proceedings have been instituted against the publisher, I request the favour of your insertion of the following explanation of the affair, as it relates to me.

A poem entitled Queen Mab was written by me at the age of eighteen,
I daresay in a sufficiently intemperate spirit— but even then was not intended for publication, and a few copies only were struck off, to be distributed among my personal friends. I have not seen this production for several years. Indeed not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that, in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression; and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom. I have directed my solicitor to apply to Chancery for an injunction to restrain the sale; but, after the precedent of Mr. Southey's *Wat Tyler* (a poem written, I believe, at the same age, and with the same unreflecting enthusiasm), with little hope of success.

While I exonerate myself from all share in having divulged opinions hostile to existing sanctions, under the form, whatever it may be, which they assume in this poem, it is scarcely necessary for me to protest against the system of inculcating the truth of Christianity or the excellency of Monarchy, however true or however excellent they may be, by such equivocal arguments as confiscation and imprisonment, and invidious and slander, and the insolent violation of the most sacred ties of nature and society.

"Sir,

I am your obliged and obedient servant,

Percy B. Shelley.

*Pisa, June 22, 1821.*

**VERSES ON A CAT**

I

A cat in distress,
Nothing more, nor less;
Good folks, I must faithfully tell ye,
As I am a sinner,
It waits for some dinner,  
To stuff out its own little belly.

II

You would not easily guess
All the modes of distress
Which torture the tenants of earth;
And the various evils,
Which like so many devils,
Attend the poor souls from their birth.

III

Some a living require,
And others desire
An old fellow out of the way;
And which is the best
I leave to be guessed,
For I cannot pretend to say.

IV

One wants society,
Another variety,
Others a tranquil life;
Some want food,
Others, as good,
Only want a wife.

V

But this poor little cat
Only wanted a rat,
To stuff out its own little maw;
And it were as good
Some people had such food,
To make them *hold their jaw*!  

---

**FRAGMENT: OMENS**

**Hark!**

The owl flaps its wings
In the pathless dell beneath;
Hark! 'tis the night-raven sings
Tidings of approaching death.

**EPITAPHIUM**

*Latin Version of the Epitaph in Gray's Elegy.*

I

Hic in seum fessum caput hospitalis
Cespitis dormit juvenis, nec illi
Pata ridebant, popularis ille
Necius aurea.

II

Musa non vului genus arroganti
Rustica natum grege despicata
Et suum tristis puerum notavit
Sollicitudo.

III

Indoles illi bene larga, pectus
Veritas sedem sibi vindicavit,
Et pari tantis meritis beavit
Munere coeulum.

IV

Ommne quod moestis habuit miserto
Corde largivit lacrimam, recept
Ommne quod coelo voluit, fidelis
Pectus amicis.

V

Longius sed tu fuge curious
Caeteras laudes fuge suspiciari,
Caeteras culpas fuge velle tractas
Sede tremenda.

VI

Spe tremescens reuctant in illa
Sede virtute pariterque culpe,
In sui Patris gremio, tremenda
Sede Deique.

**IN HORIZOLOGIUM**

**INTER marmoreas Leoniae pendula colles**

---

**A DIALOGUE**

*Death.*

For my dagger is bathed in the blood of the brave,
I come, care-worn tenant of life,
From the grave.
Where innocence sleeps 'neath the peace-giving sod,
And the good cease to tremble at
Tyranny's nod;
I offer a calm habitation to thee,—
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?
My mansion is damp, cold silence is there,
But it fulls in oblivion the fends of despair;
Not a groan of regret, not a sigh,
Not a breath,
Dares dispute with grim Silence the empire of Death.
I offer a calm habitation to thee,—
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

---

**Mortal.**

Mine eyelids are heavy; my soul seeks repose,
It longs in thy cell to embosom its woe,
It longs in thy cell to depose its load,
Where no longer the scorpions of Perfidy good,
Where the phantoms of Prejudice vanish away,
And Bigotry's bloodhounds lose the scent of their prey.
Yet tell me, dark Death, when this empire is o'er,
Death.

Cease, cease, wayward Mortal! I dare not unveil
The shadows that float o'er Eternity's vale;
Nought waits for the good but a spirit of Love,
That will hail their blest advent to regions above.
For Love, Mortal, gleams through the gloom of my sway,
And the shades which surround me fly fast at its ray.
Hast thou loved?—Then depart from these regions of hate,
And in slumber with me blunt the arrows of fate.
I offer a calm habitation to thee,—
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

Mortal.

Oh! sweet is thy slumber! oh! sweet is the ray
Which after thy night introduces the day;
How concealed, how persuasive,
Self-interest's breath,
Though it floats to mine ear from the bosom of Death!
I hoped that I quite was forgotten by all,
Yet a lingering friend might be grieved at my fall,
And duty forbids, though I languish to die,
When departure might heave Virtue's breast with a sigh.
O Death! O my friend! snatch this form to thy shrine,
And I fear, dear destroyer, I shall not repine.
SHELLEY

As I in this cold bed, and faint expiring groan!
Tremble, ye proud, whose grandeur mocks the woe
Which props the column of unnatural state!
You the plainings, faint and low,
From Misery's tortured soul that flow,
Shall usher to your fate.
Tremble, ye conquerors, at whose fell command
The war-fierd riots o'er a peaceful land!
You Desolation's gory throng
Shall bear from Victory along
To that mysterious strand.

LOVE'S ROSE

I
Hopes, that swell in youthful breasts,
Live not through the waste of time!
Love's rose a host of thorns invests;
Cold, ungenial is the clime, where its honours blow.
Youth says, 'The purple flowers are mine,'
Which die the while they glow.

II
Dear retracted to Fancy given,
Retracted whilst it's granted:

ORIGINAL POETRY

BY VICTOR AND CAZIRE

A Person complained that whenever he began to write, he never could arrange his ideas in grammatical order. Which occasion suggested the idea of the following lines:

I
Here I sit with my paper, my pen and my ink,

First of this thing, and that thing;
And 'tis thing think;
Then my thoughts come so pell-mell all into my mind,

That the sense or the subject I never can find:
This word is wrong placed,—no regard to the sense,
The present and future, instead of past tense,
Then my grammar I want; O dear! what a bore,
I think I shall never attempt to write more,
With patience I then my thoughts must arrange,
Have them all in due order like mutes in a train,
Like them too must wait in due patience and thought,
Or else my minstrelsy will all come to naught.

II
My wit too's so copious, it flows like a river,
But disperses its waters on black and white never;
Like smoke it appears independent and free,
But ah, luckless smoke! it all passes like thee—
Then at length my patience entirely lost,
My paper and pens in the fire are drest,
But come, try again—you must never despair,
Our Murray's or Entick's are not all so rare,
Implore their assistance—they'll come to your aid,
Perform all your business without being paid,
They'll tell you the present tense, future and past,
Which should come first, and which should come last,
This Murray will do—then to Entick repair,
To find out the meaning of any word rare.

This they friendly will tell, and ne'er make you blush,
With a jeering look, taunt, or an O fie! tush!
Then straight all your thoughts in black and white put,
Not minding the if's, the be's, and the but,
Then read it all over, see how it will run,
How answers the wit, the retort, and the pun,
Your writings may then with old Socrates vie,

Mayas Junius be sharp, or as Plato be sage.
The pattern or satire to all of the age;
But stop—a mad author I mean not to turn,
Nor with thirst of applause does my heated brain burn,
Sufficient that sense, wit, and grammar combined,
My letters may make some slight food for the mind,
That my thoughts to my friends I may freely impart,
In all the warm language that flows from the heart.
Hark! futurity calls! it loudly complains,
It bids me step forward and just hold the reins,
My excuse shall be humble, and faithful, and true,
Such as I fear can be made but by few—
Of writers this age has abundance and plenty,
Three score and a thousand, two millions and twenty,
Three score of them, who all sharply vie,
To try what odd creature they best
can believe;
A thousand are prudes who for
Charity write,
And fill up their sheets with spleen,
eye, and spite;
One million are bards, who to
Heaven aspire,
And stuff their works full of bomb-
ast, rant, and fire,
T'other million are wags who in
Grub-street attend,
And just like a cobbler the old writ-
ings mend.
The twenty are those who for pul-
pits indite,
And pore over sermons all Saturday
night.
And now my good friends—who come after I mean,
As I ne'er wore a cassock, or dined
with a dean,
Or like cobblers at mending I never
did try,
Nor with poets in lyrics attempted
to vie;
As for prudes these good souls I both hate and detest,
So here I believe the matter must
rest.—
I've heard your complaint—my
answer I've made,
And since to your calls all the
tribute I've paid,
Adieu my good friend; pray never
despair.
But grammar and sense and every-
thing dare,
Attempt but to write dashing, easy,
and free,
Then take out your grammar and
pay him his fee,
Be not a coward, shrift not to a
tense,
But read it all over and make it
out sense.
What a tiresome girl—pray soon
make an end,
Else my limited patience you'll
quickly expend.
Well adieu, I no longer your pa-
tience will try—
So swift to the post now the letter
shall fly.

Shelley

To Miss—[Harriet Grove]
From Miss—[Elizabeth
Shelley]
For your letter, dear—[Hattie],
accept my best thanks,
Rendered long and amusing by
virtue of franks,
Though concise they would please,
yet the longer the better,
The more news that's crammed in,
more amusing the letter,
All EXCEPT of etiquette nonsense I
hate,
Which only are fit for the tardy
and late,
As when converse grows flat, of the
weather they talk,
How fair the sun shines—a fine day
for a walk,
Then to politics turn, of Burdett's
reformation,
One declares it would hurt, 'tis
better the nation,
Will ministers keep? sure they've
acted quite wrong,
The burden this is of each morning-
call song.
So— is going to —— you say,
I hope that success her great efforts
will pay [——]
That [the Colonel] will see her, be
dazzled outright,
And declare he can't bear to be out
of her sight,
Write flaming epistles with love's
pointed dart,
Whose sharp little arrow struck
right on his heart,
Scold poor innocent Cupid for mis-
chievous ways,
He knows not how much to laud
forth her praise,
That he neither eats, drinks or
sleeps for her sake,
And hopes her hard heart some
compassion will take,
A refusal would kill him, so des-
perate his flame,
But he fears, for he knows she is
not common game,
Then praises her sense, wit, dis-
crepancy and grace,
He's not one that's caught by a sly
looking face,
Yet that's too divine—such a black
sparkling eye,
At the bare glance of which near a
man will die;
Thus runs he on meaning but one
word in ten,
More than is meant by most such
kind of men,
For they're all alike, take them one
with another,
Begging pardon—with the excep-
tion of my brother;
Of the drawings you mention much
praise I have heard,
Most opinion's the same, with the
difference of word,
Some get a good name by the voice of
the crowd,
Whilst to poor humble merit small
praise is allowed,
As in parliament votes, so in pic-
tures a name,
Oft determines a fate at the altar
of fame—
So on Friday this City's gay vortex
you quit,
And no longer with Doctors and
Johnny cats sit—

Bysshe's] letter shall go,
I hope all your joy mayn't be
turned into woe
Experience will tell you that pleas-
ure is vain,
When it promises sunshine how
often comes rain,
So when to fond hope every bless-
ing is nigh,
How oft when we smile it is
checked with a sigh,
When Hope, gay deceiver, in pleas-
ure is dressed,
How oft comes a stroke that may
rob us of rest,
When we think ourselves safe, and
the goal near at hand,
Like a vessel just landing, we're
wrecked near the strand,
And though memory forever the
sharp pang must feel,
Tis our duty to bear, and our hard-
ship to steel—
May misfortunes dear Girl, ne'er
thy happiness cloy,
May the days glide in peace, love,
comfort and joy,
May thy tears with soft pity for
other woes flow,
Woes, which thy tender heart
never may know,
For hardships our own, God has
taught us to bear,
Though sympathy's soul to a friend
drops a tear
Oh dear! what sentimental stuff
have I written,
Only fit to tear up and play with a
kitten,
What sober reflections in the midst
of this letter?
Jocularity sure would have suited
much better;
But there are exceptions to all com-
mon rules,
For this is a truth by all boys
learned at schools.

Now adieu my dear —— [Hattie]
I'm sure I must tire; 63
For if I do, you may throw it into
the fire,
So accept the best love of your cou-
sin and friend,
Which brings this nonsensical
rhyme to an end.

April 30, 1810.

III. SONG

Cold, cold is the blast when De-


C
cember is howling,
Cold are the damps on a dying


m
man's brow,—


S

Stern are the seas when the wild


w
waves are rolling,
And sad is the grave where a


l
loved one lies low;
But colder is scorn from the being


w
who loved thee,
More stern is the sneer from the


f
friend who has proved thee,
More sad are the tears when their


s
sorrows have moved thee,
Which mixed with groans, an-


g
ghish and wild madness
flow—
And ah! poor —— has felt all this
horror,
Full long the fallen victim con-
tended with fate:
Till a destitute outcast abandoned


s
sorrow,
She sought her babe's food at her


r
ruiner's gate—


A
Another had charmed the remorse-


l
less betrayer,
He turned laughing aside from her
moans and her prayer,
She said nothing, but wringing the


w

wet from her hair, 15


C

Crosed the dark mountain side,
though the hour was late.


T

'Twas on the wild height of the


F

dark Pennamawau,


Sh

That the form of the wasted ——
reclined;


S

She shrieked to the ravens that


c

croaked from afar,
And she sighed to the gusts of the


w

wild sweeping wind.—


I

I call not you rocks where the


t

thunder peals rattle,
I call not you clouds where the


e

elements battle,
But thee, cruel —— I call thee


u

unknown! —


T

Then she wreathed in her hair the


w

wild flowers of the moun-


t

tain,
And deliriously laughing, a gar-


l

land entwined,
She bedewed it with tears, then she


h

hung o'er the fountain,
And leaving it, cast it a prey


t

to the wind.


A

'Ah! go,' she exclaimed, 'when the


t

tempest is yelling,
'Tis unk
d
	
ind to be cast on the sea


w

that is swelling,
But I left, a pitiless outcast, my


d


w

w

dwelling,
My garments are torn, so they


s

say is my mind—


N
Not long lived ——, but over her


g

 grave
Waved the desolate form of a


s

storm-blasted yew,
Around it no demons or ghosts dare
to rave,
But spirits of peace steep their


s

slumbers in dew.
Then stay thy swift steps mid the


d

dark mountain heather,
Though chill blow the wind and
severe is the weather,
For perfidious, traveller! cannot


b

reave her,
Of the tears, to the tombs of the


i

innocent due—


J

July, 1810.


S

P

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E

T

R

Y

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R

IV. SONG

COME [Harriet!] sweet is the hour,
Soft Zephyrs breathe gently around,
The amaranth's night-boding flower,
Has sunk its pale head on the ground.
'Tis thus the world's keenness hath torn,
Some mild heart that expands to its blast,
'Tis thus that the wretched forlorn,
Sinks poor and neglected at last,—
The world with its keenness and woe,
Has no charms or attraction for me,
Its unkindness with grief has laid low,
The heart which is faithful to thee.
The high trees that wave past the moon,
As I walk in their umbrage with you,
All declare I must part with you soon,
Aid bid you a tender adieu! —
Then [Harriet!] dearest farewell,
You and I love, may never meet again;
These woods and these meadows can tell
How soft and how sweet was the strain.—


A

April, 1810.


V. SONG

DESPAIR

Ask not the pallid stranger's woe,
With beating heart and throbbing breast,
Whose step is faltering, weak, and slow,
As though the body needed rest.
Whose wilder eye no object meets,
Nor cares to ken a friendly glance,
With silent grief his bosom beats,—
Now fixed, as in a deathlike trance.
Who looks around with fearful eye,
And shuns all converse with mankind,
As though some one his griefs might spy,
And soothe them with a kindred mind.
A friend or foe to him the same,
He looks on each with equal eye;
The difference lies but in the name,
To none for comfort can he fly.
'Twas deep despair, and sorrow's trace.
To him too keenly given,
Whose memory, time could not ef-
face—
His peace was lodged in Heaven.
He looks on all this world be-
stows.
The pride and pomp of power,
As trifles best for pageant shows
Which vanish in an hour.
When torn is dear affection's tie,
Sinks the soft heart full low; 26
It leaves without a parting sigh,
All that these realms bestow.


J

June, 1810.
My high strung energies are sank,
And all my blissful hopes lie dead.
The world once smiling to my view,
Showed scenes of endless bliss and joy;
The world I then but little knew,
Ah! little knew how pleasures cloy;
All then was jocund, all was gay,
No thought beyond the present lay.
I danced in pleasure’s fading ray,
Fading alas! as drooping flower.
Nay do the heedless in the throng,
One thought beyond the morrow give[11];
They court the feast, the dance, the song,
Not think how short their time to live.
The heart that bears deep sorrow’s trace,
What earthy comfort can console,
It drags a dull and lengthened pace,
’Till friendly death its woes enroll.—
The sunken cheek, the humid eyes,
E’en better than the tongue can tell;
In whose sad breast deep sorrow lies,
Where memory’s rankling traces dwell.—
The rising tear, the stifled sigh,
A mind but ill at ease display,
Like blackening clouds in stormy sky,
Where fiercely vivid lightnings play.

Thus when souls’ energy is dead,
When sorrow dims each earthly view,
When every fairy hope is fled,
We bid ungrateful world adieu.
August, 1810.

VII. SONG

HOPE

Ann said I that all hope was fled,
That sorrow and despair were mine,
That each enthusiast wish was dead,
Had sank beneth pale Misery’s shrine.—

Seest thou the sunbeam’s yellow glow,
That robes with liquid streams of light;
Yon distant Mountain’s craggy brow,
And shows the rocks so fair,—so bright.

Tis thus sweet expectation’s ray,
In softer view shows distant hours,
And portrays each succeeding day,
As dressed in fairer, brighter flowers,—
The vermeil tinted flowers that blossom;
Are frozen but to bud anew,
Then sweet deceiver calm my bosom,
Although thy visions be not true,—
Yet true they are,—and I’ll believe,
Thy whisperings soft of love and peace.

God never made thee to deceive,
’Tis sin that bade thy empire cease.

865

Yet though despair my life should gloom,
Though horror should around me close,
With those I love, beyond the tomb,
Hope shows a balm for all my woes.
August, 1810.

VIII. SONG

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

Or! what is the gain of restless care,
And what is ambitious treasure? And what are the joys that the modish share,
In their sickly haunts of pleasure?

My husband’s repast with delight I spread,
What though its but rustic fare,
May each guardian angel protect his shed,
May contentment and quiet be there.
And may I support my husband’s years,
May I soothe his dying pain,
And then may I dry my fast falling tears,
And meet him in Heaven again.
July, 1820.

IX. SONG

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

Art! grasp the dire dagger and couch the fell spear,
If vengeance and death to thy bosom be dear,
The dastard shall perish, death’s torment shall prove,
For fate and revenge are decreed from above.

Ah! where is the hero, whose nerves strung by youth,
Will defend the firm cause of justice and truth;
With insatiable desire whose bosom shall swell,
To give up the oppressor to judgement and Hell—
For him shall the fair one twine chaplets of bays,
To him shall each warrior give merited praise,
And triumphant returned from the champaign of arms,
He shall find his reward in his loved maiden’s charms.
In ecstatic confusion the warrior shall sip,
The kisses that glow on his love’s dewy lip,
And mutual, eternal embraces shall prove,
The rewards of the brave are the transports of love.
October, 1829.

X

THE IRISHMAN’S SONG

Thrice stars may dissolve, and the fountain of light
May sink into the ending chaos and night,
Our mansions must fall, and earth vanish away,
But thy courage O Erin! may never decay.
See! the wide wasting ruin extends all around,
Our ancestors’ dwellings lie sunk on the ground,
Our foes ride in triumph throughout our domains,
And our mightiest heroes lie stretched on the plains.
Ah! dead is the harp which was
wont to give pleasure,
Ah! sunk is our sweet country's
rapturous measure,
But the war note is waked, and the
clanger of spears,
The dead yell of Sloghian yet
sounds in our ears.
Ah! where are the heroes! tri-
umphant in death,
Convulsed they recline on the
blood sprinkled heath,
Or the yelling ghosts ride on the
blast that sweeps by,
And 'my countrymen! vengeance!'
incantess cry.

October, 1809.

XI. SONG
FIÉRCE roars the midnight
storm
O'er the wild mountain,
Dark clouds the night deform,
Swift rolls the fountain—
See! o'er you rocky height,
Dim mists are flying—
See by the moon's pale light,
Poor Laura's dying!
Shame and remorse shall howl,
By her false pillow—
Fiercer than storms that roll,
O'er the white billow;
No hand her eyes to close,
When life is flying,
But she will find repose,
For Laura's dying!
Then will I seek my love,
Then will I cheer her,
Then my esteem will prove.
When no friend is near her,
On her grave I will lie,
When life is parted,
On her grave I will die,
For the false hearted.

December, 1809.

XII. SONG
To ——— [HARRIET]
Ah! sweet is the moonbeam that
sleeps on you fountain,
And sweet the mild rush of the
soft-sighing breeze,
And sweet is the glimpse of you
dimly-seen mountain,
'Neath the verdant arches of
your shadowy trees.
But sweeter than all was thy tone
of affection,
Which scarce seemed to break on the
stillness of eve,
Though the time it is past—yet
the dear recollection,
For eye in the heart of thy
[ Percy] must live.
Yet he hears thy dear voice in the
summer winds sighing,
Mild accents of happiness hisp
in his ear,
When the hope-winged moments
attirht him are flying,
And he thinks of the friend to his
bosom so dear—
And thou dearest friend in his
bosom for ever
Must reign unalloyed by the last
rolling year,
He loves thee, and dearest one
never, Oh! never
Canst thou cease to be loved by
a heart so sincere.

August, 1810.

XIII. SONG
To ——— [HARRIET]
STERN, stern is the voice of fate's
fearful command,
When accents of horror it
breathes in our ear,
Or compels us for aye bid adieu to the
land.

August, 1811.

XIV. SONG
O'er! did you observe the Black
Canon pass,
And did you observe his frown?
He goeth to say the midnight mass,
In holy St. Edmond's town.
He goeth to sing the burial chant,
And to lay the wandering sprite,
Whose shadowy, restless form doth
haunt,
The Abbey's drear aisle this
night.
It saith it will not its wailing cease,
'Till that holy man come near,
'Till he pour o'er its grave the prayer of peace,
And sprinkle the hallowed tear.
The Canon's horse is stout and
strong
The road is plain and fair,
But the Canon slowly wends along,
And his brow is gloomed with
care.
Who is it thus late at the Abbey-
gate?
Sullen echoes the portal bell,
It sounds like the whispering voice
of fate,
It sounds like a funeral knell,
The Canon his faltering knee thrice
bowed,
And his frame was convulsed
with fear,
When a voice was heard distinct
and loud,
'Prepare! for thy hour is near.'
He crosses his breast, he mutters a
prayer,
To Heaven he lifts his eye,
He heeds not the Abbot's gazing
stare,
Nor the dark Monks who murmured by.
Bare-headed he worships the sculp-
tured saints,
That frown on the sacred walls,
His face it grows pale,—he trembles,
hes faints,
At the Abbot's feet he falls.
And straight the father's robe he
kissed.
Who cried, 'Grace dwells with thee,
The spirit will fade like the morning mist,
At your benediction.

'Now haste within! the board is spread,
Keen blows the air, and cold,
The spectre sleeps in its earthy bed,
'Till St. Edmond's bell hath tolled,

'Yet rest your wearied limbs to-night,
You've journeyed many a mile,
To-morrow lay the warning sprite,
That shrieks in the moonlight aisle.

'Oh! faint are my limbs and my bosom is cold,
Yet to-night must the sprite be laid,
Yet to-night when the hour of horror's told,
Mist I meet the wandering shade.

'Nor food, nor rest may now delay,
For hark! the echoing pile,
A bell loud santa!—Oh haste away,
O lead to the haunted aisle.

The torches slowly move before,
The cross is raised on high,
A smile of peace the Canon wore,
But horror dimmed his eye—
And now they climb the footstair,
The chapel gates unclose,
Now each breathed low a fervent prayer,
And fear each bosom froze—

And viewed the solemn scene,—
Full dark the clustered columns stand,
The moon gleams pale between—
'Say father, say, what cloisters' gloom
Conceals the unquiet shade,
Within what dark unhallowed tomb,
The corse unblessed was laid.'—
'Through yonder drear aisle alone it walks,
And murmurs a mournful plaint,
Of thee! Black Canon, it wildly talks.
And call on thy patron saint—
'The pilgrim this night with wondering eyes,
As he prayed at St. Edmond's shrine.
From a black marble tomb hath been it rise,
And under yon arch recline.'—
'Oh! say upon that black marble tomb,
What memorial sad appears.'—
'Undistinguished it lies in the chancel's gloom,
No memorial sad it bears—

The Canon his patron's rest,
His rosary hung by his side,
Now swift to the chancel doors he leads,
And untouched they open wide,
Resistless, strange sounds his steps impel,
To approach to the black marble tomb.'—
'Oh! enter, Black Canon,' a whisper fell,
'Oh! enter, thy hour is come.'—

He paused, told his beads, and the threshold passed,

And the storm dies sudden away—
The inscription was gone! a cross
On the ground,
And a rosary shone through the gloom,
But never again was the Canon there found,
Or the Ghost on the black marble tomb.

XV. REVENGE

'Ah! quit me not yet, for the wind whistles shrill,
Its blast wanders mournfully over the hill,
The thunder's wild voice rattles madly above,
You will not then, cannot then, leave me my love.—

I must dearest Agnes, the night is far gone—
I must wander this evening to Strasburg alone,
Must seek the dear tomb of my ancestors' bones,
And must dig their remains from beneath the cold stones.

For the spirit of Conrad there meets me this night,
And we quit not the tomb till dawn of the light,
And Conrad's been dead just a month and a day!
So farewell dearest Agnes for I must away,—

'He bid me bring with me what most I held dear,
Or a month from that time should I lie on my bier,
And I'd sooner resign this false fluttering breath,
Than my Agnes should dread either danger or death,

And viewed the solemn scene,—
Full dark the clustered columns stand,
The moon gleams pale between—
'Say father, say, what cloisters' gloom
Conceals the unquiet shade,
Within what dark unhallowed tomb,
The corse unblessed was laid.'—
'Through yonder drear aisle alone it walks,
And murmurs a mournful plaint,
Of thee! Black Canon, it wildly talks.
And call on thy patron saint—
'The pilgrim this night with wondering eyes,
As he prayed at St. Edmond's shrine.
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And under yon arch recline.'—
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His rosary hung by his side,
Now swift to the chancel doors he leads,
And untouched they open wide,
Resistless, strange sounds his steps impel,
To approach to the black marble tomb.'—
'Oh! enter, Black Canon,' a whisper fell,
'Oh! enter, thy hour is come.'—

He paused, told his beads, and the threshold passed,
And I love you to madness my
Agnes I love,
My constant affection this night
will I prove,
This night will I go to the sepul-
chre's jaw,
Alone will I glut its all conquering
maw—

'No! no loved Adolphus thy Agnes
will share,
In the tomb all the dangers that
wait for you there,
I fear not the spirit,—I fear not the
grave,
My dearest Adolphus I'd perish to
save'—

'Nay seek not to say that thy love
shall not go,
But spare me those ages of horror and
woe,
For I swear to thee here that I'll
perish ere day,
If you go unattended by Agnes
away'—
The night it was bleak the fierce
storm raged around,
The lightning's blue fire-light
flashed on the ground,
Strange forms seemed to flit,—and
deadly tidings of fate,
As Agnes advanced to the sepul-
chre gate.—
The youth struck the portal,—the
choking sound
Was fearfully rolled midst the
tombstones around,
The blue lightning gleamed o'er the
dark chapel spire.
And tinged were the storm clouds
with sulphurous fire.
Still they gazed on the tombstone
where Conrad reclined,
Yet they shrank at the cold chill-
ing blast of the wind,
When a strange silver brilliance
pervaded the scene,
And a figure advanced—tail in
form—fierce in mien.
A mantle encircled his shadowy
form,
As light as a gossamer borne on
the storm,
Celestial terror sat throned in his
gaze,
Like the midnight pestiferous me-
tor's blaze.—

'Spirit.'
Thy father, Adolphus! was false,
false as hell,
And Conrad has cause to remember
it well,
He ruined my Mother, despoiled me
his son,
I quaffed the world ere my ven-
geance was done.
I was nearly expiring—'twas close of
the day—
A demon advanced to the bed
where I lay,
He gave me the power from whence
I was hurled,
To return to revenge, to return to
the world.
Now Adolphus I'll seize thy best
loved in my arms,
I'll drag her to Hades all blooming
in charms,
On the black whirlwind's thunder-
ing pinion I'll ride—
And fierce yelling frenzies shall exult
o'er thy bride—
He spoke, and extending his
ghastly arms wide,
Majestic, advanced with a swift
noiseless stride,
He clasped the fair Agnes—he
raised her on high,
And cleaving the roof sped his
way
to the sky—
All was now silent,—and over the
tomb,
Thicker, deeper, was swiftly ex-
tended a gloom,
Adolphus in horror sank down on
the stone,
And his fleeting soul fled with a
harrowing groan.

XVI. GHASTA

OR, THE AVENGEING DEMON!

The idea of the following tale
was taken from a few unconnected
German Stanzas.—The principal
Character of the following tale is
Wanderer, and although not men-
tioned by name, the burning Cross
on his forehead unhesitatingly as-
tures to that superstition, so preva-
ient in the part of Germany called
the Black Forest, where this scene
is supposed to lie.

Hark! the owl flaps her wing,
In the pathless dell beneath,
Hark! night ravens loudly sing,
Tidings of despair and death—
Horror covers all the sky,
Clouds of darkness blot the
moon,
Prepare! for mortal thou must die,
Prepare to yield thy soul up
soon—
Fierce the tempest raves around,
Fierce the volleys lightnings
fly,
Crashing thunder shakes the
ground,
Fire and tumult fill the sky—
Hark! the tolling village bell,
Tells the hour of midnight come,
Now can blast the powers of Hell,
Fiend-like gobins now can roam—
See! his crest all stained with rain,
A warrior hastening speeds his
way,
He starts, looks round him, starts
again,
And sighs for the approach of
day.

Slow the door is opened wide—
With trackless tread a stranger
came,
His form Majestic, slow his stride,
He sate, nor spake,—nor told his
name—
Terror blanched the warrior's
cheek,
Cold sweat from his forehead ran,
In vain his tongue essayed to
speak,—
At last the stranger thus be-
gan:
'Mortal! thou that saw'st the sprite,
Tell me what I wish to know,
Or come with me before 'tis light,
Where cypress trees and man-
drakes grow.

'Fierce the avenging Demon's ire,
Fiercer than the wintry blast,
Fiercer than the lightning's fire,
When the hour of twilight's past'—
The warrior raised his sunken eye,
It met the stranger's sullen scowl,
'Mortal! Mortal! thou must die.'
In burning letters chilled his soul.

Warrior.

Stranger! whose'er you are,
I feel impelled my tale to tell—
Horrors groan, and demons stare,
O'er my Castle silence reigned,
Late the night and drear the hour,
When on the terrace I observed,
A fleeting shadowy mist to lower.

Light the cloud in summer fog,
Which transient shuns the morning beam;
Fleeting as the cloud on bog,
That hangs or on the mountain stream.

Horror seiz'd my shuddering brain,
Horror dimm'd my staring eye,
In vain I tried to speak,—In vain
My limbs essay'd the spot to fly.

At last the thin and shadowy form
With noiseless, trackless footsteps came,
Its light robe floated on the storm,
Its head was bound with lambent flame.

In chilling voice did he pour forth,
Which sweeps along the autumn ground,
Which wanders through the leafless trees,
Or the mandrake's groan which floats around.
'Thou art mine and I am thine,
Till the sinking of the world,
I am thine and thou art mine,
'Till in ruin death is hurled—

Strong the power and dire the fate,
Which drags me from the depths of Hell,
Breaks the tomb's eternal gate,
Where fiendish shapes and dead men yell,
Haply I might ne'er have shrank
From flames that rack the guilty dead,
Haply I might ne'er have sank
On pleasure's flow'ry, thorny bed—

—but stay! no more I dare disclose,
Of the tale I wish to tell,
On Earth relentless were my woes,
But here'er are my pangs in Hell—

Now I claim thee as my love,
Lay aside all chilling fear,
My affection will I prove.
Where sheeted ghosts and spectres are!

'For thou art mine, and I am thine,
'Till the dreaded judgement day,
I am thine, and thou art mine—'

Night is past— I must away.

Still I gazed, and still the form
Pressed upon my aching sight,
Still I braved the howling storm,
When the ghost dissolved in night.

Restless, sleepless fled the night,
Sleepless as a sick man's head,
When he sighs for morning light,
When he turns his aching head,—

Slow and painful passed the day,
Melancholy seiz'd my brain,
Lingered the hours away,
Lingered to a wretch in pain.

At last came night, ah! horrid hour,
Ach! chilling time that wakes the dead,
When demons ride the clouds that lower,
—The phantom sat upon my bed.

In hollow voice, low as the sound
Which in some channel makes its moan,
What floats along the burying ground,
The phantom claimed me as her own.

Her chilling finger on my head,
With coldest touch congealed my soul—
Cold as the finger of the dead,
Or damps which round a tombstone roll—

Months are passed in lingering round,
Every night the spectre comes,
With thrilling step it shakes the ground,
With thrilling step it round me roams—

Stranger! I have told to thee,
All the tale I have to tell,
Stranger! canst thou tell to me,
How to escape the powers of Hell?

Stranger.

Warrior! I can ease thy woes,
Wilt thou, wilt thou come with me.
Warrior! I can all disclose,
Follow, follow, follow me.

Yet the tempest's dustiest wing,
Its mantle stretches o'er the sky,
Yet the midnight ravens sing,
'Mortal! Mortal! thou must die.'

At last they saw a river clear,
That crossed the heathy path they trod,
The stranger's look was wild and drear,
The arm Earth shook beneath his nod.

He raised a wand above his head,
He traced a circle on the plain,
In a wild verse he called the dead,
The dead in motley crowd were there—

'Gsasta! Gsasta! come along,
Bring thy fiendish crowd with thee,
Quickly raise th'avenging Song,
Gsasta! Gsasta! come to me.'

Horrid shapes in mantles gray,
Flit athwart the stormy night,
'Gsasta! Gsasta! come away,
Come away before 'tis light.'

Seel! the sheeted Ghost they bring,
Yelling dreadful o'er the heath,
Hark! the deadly verse they sing,
Tidings of despair and death! 190

The yelping Ghost before him stands,
Seel! she rolls her eyes around,
Now her bony hands,
Now her footsteps shake the ground.

Stranger.

Phantom of Theresa say,
Why to earth again you came,
Quickly speak, I must away!
Or you must bleach for aye in flame—
Phantom.

Mighty one I know thee now,
Mightiest power of the sky,
Know thee by thy flaming brow,
Know thee by thy sparkling eye.
That fire is scorching! Oh! I came,
From the caverned depth of Hell,
My fleeting false Rodolph to claim,
Mighty one! I know thee well.

Stranger.

Ghasta! seize ye wandering sprite,
Drag her to the depth beneath,
Take her swift, before 'tis light,
Take her to the cells of death!
Thou that hearest the trackless dead,
In the mouldering tomb must lie,
Mortal! look upon my head,
Mortal! Mortal! thou must die.

Of glowing flame a cross was there
Which threw a light around his form,
Whilst his lank and raven hair,
Floated wild upon the storm.
The warrior upwards turned his eyes,
Gazed upon the cross of fire,
There sat horror and surprise,
There sat God's eternal ire.
A shivering through the Warrior flew,
Colder than the nightly blast,
Colder than the evening dew,
When the hour of twilight's past.

Thunder shakes th' expansive sky,
Shakes the bosom of the heath,
'Mortal! Mortal! thou must die,
The warrior sank convulsed in death.

January, 1810.

XVII. FRAGMENT,
OR THE TRIUMPH OF CONSCIENCE

'Twas dead of the night when I
Sat in my dwelling,
One glimmering lamp was expiring and low;
Around the dark tide of the tempest was swelling,
Along the wild mountains night-ravens were yelling,
They bodingly pressed destruction and woe.

'Twas then that I started, the wild storm was howling,
Nought was seen, save the lightning that danced on the sky,
Above me the crash of the thunder was rolling,
And low, chilling murmurs the blast wafted by.

My heart sank within me, unheeded the jar
Of the battling clouds on the mountain-tops broke,
Unheeded the thunder-peal crashed in mine ear,
This heart hard as iron was stranger to fear,
But conscience in low noiseless whispering spoke.

'Twas then that her form on the whirlwind upbearing;
The dark ghost of the murdered Victoria strode,
Her right hand a blood reeking dagger was bearing,
She swiftly advanced to my lone-some abode.
I wildly then called on the tempest to bear me!

'Twas then that her form on the whirlwind upholding,
The ghost of the murdered Victoria strode;
In her right hand, a shadowy shroud she was holding,
She swiftly advanced to my lone-some abode.

I wildly then called on the tempest to bear me.

II.

'Twas then that I started! — the wild storm was howling,
Nought was seen, save the lightning, which danced in the sky;
Above me, the crash of the thunder was rolling,
And low, chilling murmurs, the blast wafted by.

My heart sank within me — unheeded the war
Of the battling clouds on the mountain-tops broke,
Unheeded the thunder-peal crashed in mine ear,
This heart hard as iron is stranger to fear;
But conscience in low noiseless whispering spoke.

'Twas then that her form on the whirlwind upbearing;
The dark ghost of the murdered Victoria strode,
Her right hand a blood reeking dagger was bearing,
She swiftly advanced to my lone-some abode.
I wildly then called on the tempest to bear me!

'Twas then that her form on the whirlwind upholding,
The ghost of the murdered Victoria strode;
IV
On the wing of the whirlwind which
roars o'er the mountain
Perhaps rides the ghost of my
sire who is dead:
On the mist of the tempest which
hangs o'er the fountain, 15
Whilst a wreath of dark vapour
encircles his head.

III.—SISTER ROSA: A BALLAD

I
The death-bell beats!—
The mountain repeats
The echoing sound of the knell;
And the dark Monk now
Wraps the cowl round his brow, 5
As he sits in his lonely cell.

II
And the cold hand of death
Chills his shuddering breath,
As he lies to the fearful lay
Which the ghosts of the sky, 10
As they sweep wildly by,
Sing to departed day,
And they sing of the hour
When the stern fates had power
To resolve Rosa's form to its
clay. 15

III
But that hour is past;
And that hour was the last
Of peace to the dark Monk's brain.
Bitter tears, from his eyes,
gushed silent and fast;
And he strove to suppress them in
vain.

IV
Then his fair cross of gold he
dashed on the floor, 21
When the death-knell struck on his
car.—

*Delight is in store
For her evermore;
But for me is fate, horror, and
fear.' 25

V
Then his eyes wildly rolled,
When the death-bell tolled,
And he raged in terrific
terror and the charm
—
But when ceased the sound, 30
Tears again began to flow.

VI
And the ice of despair
Chilled the wild throb of care,
And he sate in mute agony still;
Till the night-stars shone
through the cloudless air, 35
And the pale moonbeam slept on
the hill.

VII
Then he knelt in his cell:—
And the horrors of hell
Were delights to his agonized pain,
And he prayed to God to dissolve
the spell,
Which else must for ever remain.

VIII
And in fervent prayer he knelt on
the ground,
Till the abbey bell struck One:
His feverish blood ran chill at the
sound:
A voice hollow and horrible mur-
mured around—
"The term of thy penance is done!"

IX
Grew dark the night:
The moonbeam bright
Waxed faint on the mountain high;
And, from the black hill,
Went a voice cold and still,—
"Monk! thou art free to die."
SHELLEY

How sweetly does the monbeam’s glance
With silver tint St. Irvyne’s glade!

II
No cloud along the spangled air, 5
Is borne upon the evening breeze;
How solemn is the scene! how fair
The moonbeams rest upon the trees!

Yon dark gray turret glimmers white,
Upon it sits the mournful owl;
Along the stillness of the night, 11
Her melancholy shriekings roll.

But not alone on Irvyne’s tower,
The silver moonbeam pours her ray;
It gleams upon the ivied bower, 15
It dances in the cascade’s spray.

‘Ah! why do dark’ning shades conceal
The hour, when man must cease to be?
Why may not human minds unveil
The dim mists of futurity?

The keenness of the world hath torn
The heart which opens to its blast;
Despised, neglected, and forlorn,
Sinks the wretch in death at last.’

How stern are the woes of the desolate mourner,
As he bends in still grief o’er the hallowed bier,
As enanguished he turns from the laugh of the sorner,
And drops, to Perfection’s remembrance, a tear;
When floods of despair down his pale cheek are streaming,
When no blissful hope on his bosom is beaming,
Or, if lulled for awhile, soon he starts from his dreaming,
And finds torn the soft ties to affection so dear.

Ah! when shall day dawn on the night of the grave,
Or summer succeed to the winter of death?
Rest awhile, hapless victim, and Heaven will save
The spirit, that faded away with the breath.
Eternity points in its amaranth bower,
Where no clouds of fate o’er the sweet prospect lower,
Unspeakable pleasure, of goodness the dower,
When woe fades away like the mist of the heath.

VI. THE DROWNED LOVER

Art! faint are her limbs, and her footstep is weary,
Yet far must the desolate wanderer roam;
Though the tempest is stern, and the mountain is dreary,
She must quit at deep midnight her pitless home.
I see her swift foot dash the dew from the whortle,
As she rapidly hastens to the green grove of myrtle;

POSTHUMOUS FRAGMENTS
OF MARGARET NICHOLSON

Being Poems found amongst the Papers of that noted Female who attempted the life of the King in 1786. Edited by John Fitzavictor.

ADVERTISEMENT

The energy and native genius of these Fragments must be the only apology which the Editor can make for thus intruding them on the public notice. The first I found with no title, and have left it so. It is intimately connected with the dearest interests of universal happiness; and much as we may deplore the fatal and enthusiastic tendency which the ideas of this poor female had acquired, we cannot fail to pay the tribute of unequivocal regret to the departed memory of genius, which, had it been rightly organized, would have made that intellect, which has since become the victim of frenzy and despair, a most brilliant ornament to society.

In the case of these Fragments evinces that the public have any curiosity to be presented with a more copious collection of my unfortunate Aunt’s poems, I have other papers in my possession which shall, in that case, be subjected to their notice. It may be supposed they require much arrangement; but I send the following to the press in the same state in which they came into my possession.

J. F.
WAR

Oppressors of mankind to you we owe.
The baleful streams from whence these miserable flow;
For you how many a mother weeps
Snatched from life's course ere half his race was run!
For how many a widow drops a tear,
In silent anguish, on her husband's bier!
Is it then Thine, Almighty Power, she cries,
Whence tears of endless sorrow dim these eyes?
Is this the system which Thy powerful sway,
Which else in shapeless chaos sleeping lay,
Formed and approved?—it cannot be—but oh!
Forgive me, Heaven, my brain is warped by woe.
'Tis not—He never bade the war note swell,
He never triumphed in the work of hell—
Monarchs of earth! thine is the baleful deed!
Thine are the crimes for which thy subjects bleed.
Ah! when will come the sacred fated time,
When man unsullied by his leaders' crime,
Despoiling wealth, ambition, pomp, and pride,
Will stretch him fearless by his foes' men's side?
Ah! when will come the time, when o'er the plain
No more shall death and desolation reign?
When will the sun smile on the bloodless field,
And with a parting groan his spirit fled.

FRAGMENTS OF MARGARET NICHOLSON

And the stern warrior's arm the sickle wield?
Not whilst some King, in cold ambition's dreams,
Plans for the field of death his plodding schemes;
Not whilst for private pique the public fall,
And one frail mortal's mandate governs all.
Swelled with command and mad with dizzying sway;
Who sees unmoved his myriads fade away.
Careless who lives or dies—so that he gains
Some trivial point for which he took the pains.
What then are Kings?—I see the trembling crowd,
I hear their fulsome clamours—echoed loud;
Their stern oppressor pleased appears awhile,
But April's sunshine is a Monarch's smile—
Kings are but dust—the last eventful day,
Will level all and make them lose their sway;
Will dash the sceptre from the Monarch's hand,
And from the warrior's grasp wrest the ensanguined band.
Oh! Peace, soft Peace, art thou for ever gone,
Is thy fair form indeed for ever flown?
And love and concord hath thou swept away,
As if incongruous with thy parted sway?
Alas, I fear thou hast, for none appear.
Now o'er the palsied earth stalks giant Fear,
With War, and Woe, and Terror in his train;
List'ning he pauses on the embattled plain.
Then speeding swiftly o'er the ensanguined heath,
Has left the frightful work to Hell and Death.
See! gory Ruin yokes his blood-stained car,
He scents the battle's carnage from afar;
Hell and Destruction mark his mad career,
He tracks the rapid step of hurry ing Fear,
Whilst ruined towns and smoking cities tell,
That thy work, Monarch, is the work of Hell.
'Tis thy work! I hear a voice repeat,
Shakes the broad basis of thy blood-stained seat.
And at the orphan's sigh, the widow's moan,
Totters the fabric of thy guilt-stained throne—
'It is thy work, O Monarch,' now the sound
Fainter and fainter, yet is borne around,
Yet to enthusiast ears the murmurs tell
That Heaven, indignant at the work of Hell,
Will soon the cause, the hated cause remove,
Which tears from earth peace, innocence, and love.

FRAGMENT

SUPPOSED TO BE AN EPIPHALIAMUM
OF FRANCIS BAVAILAC AND CHARLOTTE CORDAY

'Tis midnight now—athwart the murky air,
S H E L L E Y

Dank lurid meteors shoot a livid gleam;
From the dark storm-clouds flashes a fearful glare,
It shows the bending oak, the roaring stream.
I pondered on the woes of lost mankind,
I pondered on the ceaseless rage of Kings;
My rapt soul dwelt upon the ties that bind
The mazy volume of commingling things,
When fell and wild misrule to man stern sorrow brings.
I heard a yell—it was not the knell,
When the blasts on the wild lake sleep,
That floats on the pause of the summer gale's swell,
O' er the breast of the waveless deep.
I thought it had been death's accents cold
That bade me recline on the shore;
I laid mine hot head on the surgeon's moulder,
And thought to breathe no more.
But a heavenly sleep
That did suddenly steep
In balm my bosom's pain,
Pervaded my soul,
And free from control,
Did mine intellect range again.

Methought enthroned upon a silvery cloud,
Which floated mid a strange and brilliant light;
My form upborne by viewless aether roved,
And spurned the lessening realms of earthly night.

What heavenly notes burst on my ravished ears,
What beauteous spirits met my dazzled eye!
Hark! louder swells the music of the spheres,
More clear the forms of speechless bliss float by,
And heavenly verses suit the ethereal melody.

But fairer than the spirits of the air,
More graceful than the Syph of symmetry,
Than the enthusiast's fancied love more far.
Were the bright forms that swept the azure sky.
Enthroned in roseate light, a heavenly band,
Strewed flowers of bliss that never fade away;
They welcome virtue to its native land,
And songs of triumph greet the joyous day.
When endless bliss the woes of fleeting life repay.

Congenial minds will seek their kindred soul,
E'en though the tide of time has rolled between;
They mock weak matter's impotent control,
And seek of endless life the eternal scene.
At death's vain summons this will never die,
In Nature's chaos this will not decay—
These are the bands which closely, warmly, tie
Thy soul, O Charlotte, 'yond this chain of clay,
To him who thine must be till time shall fade away.

Yes! the fierce spirits of the avenging deep
With endless tortures goad their guilty shades.
I see the lank and ghastly spectres sweep
Along the burning length of yon arcades;
And I see Satan stalk athwart the plain;
He hastens along the burning soil of Hell.
'Welcome, ye despots, to my dark domain,
With maddening joy mine anguished senses swell
To welcome to their home the friends I love so well.'
Hark! to those notes, how sweet, how thrilling sweet
They echo to the sounds of angels' feet.
Oh haste to thebower where roses are spread,
For there is prepared thy nuptial bed.

Oh haste—hark! hark!—they're gone.

Chorus of Spirits.
Stay, ye days of contentment and joy,
Whilst love every care is erasing,
Stay ye pleasures that never can die,
And ye spirits that can never cease pleasing.

And if any soft passion be near,
Which mortals, frail mortals, can know,
Let love shed on the bosom a tear,
And dissolve the chill ice-drop of woe.

SYMPHONY.

Francis.
'Sort, my dearest angel, stay,
Oh! you suck my soul away;
Suck on, suck on, I glow, I glow!
Tides of maddening passion roll,
And streams of rapture drown my soul.
Now give me one more billowing kiss,
Let your lips now repeat the bliss,
Endless kisses steal my breath,
No life can equal such a death.'

Charlotte.
'Oh! yes I will kiss thine eyes so fair,
And I will clasp thy form;
Serene is the breath of the balmy air,
But I think, love, thou feelest me warm
And I will recline on thy marble neck
Till I mingle into thee;
And I will kiss the rose on thy cheek,
And thou shalt give kisses to me.'
Louder it floats along the un-ruffled sky;
Some fairy siren has touched the
viewless string—
Now faint in distant air the murmurs die,
Awhile it stills the tide of agony.
Now—now it loiter swells—
Again stern woe arises with the awakening melody.
Again fierce torments, such as demons know,
In bitterer, feller tide, on this torn bosom flow.

Arise ye sightless spirits of the storm,
Ye unseen minstrels of the aereal song,
Pour the fierce tide around this lonely form,
And roll the tempest's wildest swell along.
Dart the red lightning, wing the forked flash,
Pour from thy cloud-formcd hills the thunder's roar;
Arouse the whirlwind—and let the ocean dash.
In fiercest tumult on the rocking shore,—
Destroy this life or let earth's fabric be no more.

Yes! every tie that links me here is dead;
Mysterious Fate, thy mandate I obey,
Since hope and peace, and joy, for aye are fled,
I come, terrific power, I come away.
Then o'er this ruined soul let spirits of Hell,
In triumph, laughing wildly, mock its pain;
And though with direst pangs mine heart-strings swell,
I'll echo back their deadly yells again,
Cursing the power that never made, aught in vain.

FRAGMENT
Yes! all is past—swift time has fled away,
Yet its swell pauses on my sickening mind;
How long will horror nerve this frame of clay?
I'm dead, and lingers yet my soul behind.
Oh! powerful Fate, revoke thy deadly spell,
And yet that may not ever, ever be.
Heaven will not smile upon the work of Hell;
Ah! no, for Heaven cannot smile on me;
Fate, envious Fate, has sealed my wayward destiny.

I sought the cold brink of the midnight surge,
I sighed beneath its wave to hide my woes,
The rising tempest sung a funeral dirge,
And on the blast a frightful yell arose.
Wild flew the meteors o'er the maddened main,
Wild as the unchristian bowling, and a strain,
Swelled mid the tumult of the battling air.
'Twas like a spirit's song, but yet more soft and fair.

I met a maniac—like he was to me,
I said—'Poor victim, wherefore dost thou roam?'
And canst thou not contend with agony?

That thus at midnight thou dost quit thine home?
'Ah there she sleeps, cold in her bloodless form,
And I will go to slumber in her grave.'
And then our ghosts, whilst raves the maddened storm,
Will sweep at midnight o'er the wilder wave;
Wilt thou our lowly beds with tears of pity lave?'

'Ah! no, I cannot shed the pitying tear,
This breast is cold, this heart can feel no more;
But I can rest me on thy chilling bier,
Can shriek in horror to the tempest's roar.'

THE SPECTRAL HORSEMAN

What was the shriek that struck Fancy's ear
As it seethe on the ruins of time that is past?
Hark! It floats on the fitful blast of the wind,
And breathes to the pale moon a funeral sigh.
It is the Bensie's moan on the storm,
Or a shivering fiend that thirsting for sin,
Seeks murder and guilt when virtue sleeps,
Winged with the power of some ruthless king,
And sweeps o'er the breast of the prostrate plain,
It was not a fiend from the regions of Hell
That poured its low moan on the stillness of night.
It was not a ghost of the guilty dead,
Nor a yelling vampire reeking with gore;
But aye at the close of seven years' end,
That voice is mixed with the swell
Of the storm, that aye at the close of seven years' end,
And o'er the same shadow that sleeps on the hill
Awakens and floats on the mist of the heath.
It is the shade of a murdered man,
Who has rushed uncalled to the throne of his God,
And howls in the pause of the eddying storm.
This voice is low, cold, hollow, and chill,
'Tis not heard by the ear, but is felt in the soul.
'Tis more frightful far than the death-daemon's scream,
Or the laughter of fiends when they howl o'er the corpse
Of a man who has sold his soul to Hell.
It tells the approach of a mystic form,
A white courser bears the shadowy sprite;
More thin they are than the mists of the mountain,
When the clear moonlight sleeps on the waveless lake.
More pale his cheek than the snows of Nithona,
When winter rides on the northern blast,
And howls in the midst of the leafless wood.
Yet when the fierce swell of the tempest is raving,
And the whirlwinds howl in the caves of Inisfallen,
Still secure mid the wildest war of the sky,
The phantom courser scours the waste,
And his rider howls in the thunder's roar.
O'er him the fierce bolts of avenging Heaven
Pause, as in fear, to strike his head.
The meteors of midnight recoil
from his figure,
Yet the wilder beast, that oft passes by,
With wonder beholds the blue flesh through his frame:
And his voice, though faint as the sighs of the dead,
The startled passenger shudders to hear,
More distinct than the thunder's whitest roar.
Then does the dragon, who, chained in the caverns
To eternity, curses the champion of Erin,
Moan and yell loud at the lone hour of midnight,
And twine his vast wreaths round the forms of the daemons;
Then in agony roll his death-swimming eyeballs,
Though 'wildered by death, yet never to die!
Then he shakes from his skeleton folds the nightmares,
Who, shrieking in agony, seek the couch
Of some fevered wretch who courts
Sleep in vain;
Then the tombless ghosts of the guilty dead
In horror pause on the fitful gale.
They float on the swell of the eddying tempest,
BIGOTRY'S VICTIM

I

Dares the lama, most fleet of the sons of the wind,
The lion to rouse from his skull-covered lair?
When the tiger approaches can the fast-fleeting hind
Repose trust in his footsteps of air?
No! Abandoned he sinks in a trance of despair,
The monster transfixes his prey,
On the sand flows his life-blood away;
Whilst India's rocks to his death-yells reply,
Protracting the horrible harmony.

II

Yet the fowl of the desert, when danger encroaches,
Dares fearless to perish defending her brood,
Though the fiercest of cloud-piercing tyrants approaches
Thirsting—ay, thirsting for blood;
And demands, like mankind, his brother for food;
Yet more lenient, more gentle than they;
For hunger, not glory, the prey
Must perish. Revenge does not howl in the dead.
Nor ambition with fame crown the murderer's head.

III

Though weak as the lama that bounds on the mountains,
And endued not with fast-fleeting footsteps of air,
Yet, yet will I draw from the purest of fountains,
Though a fiercer than tiger is there.
Though, more dreadful than death, it scatters despair,
Though its shadow eclipses the day,
And the darkness of deepest dismay
Spreads the influence of soul-chilling terror around,
And lowers on the corpses, that rot on the ground.

IV

They came to the fountain to draw from its stream
Waves too pure, too celestial, for mortals to see;
They bathed for awhile in its silvery beam,
Then perished, and perished like me.

For in vain from the grasp of the Bigot I flee;
The most tenderly loved of my soul
Are slaves to his hated control.
He pursues me, he blasts me! 'Tis in vain that I fly: What remains, but to curse him,—
to curse him and die?

ON AN ICICLE THAT CLUNG TO THE GRASS OF A GRAVE

I

Oh! take the pure gem to where southerly breezes,
Waf're rejoice on some bosom as faithful as fair,
In which the warm current of love never freezes,
As it rises unmingled with selfishness there,

Which, untainted by pride, unpolluted by care,
Might dissolve the dim icicrop, might bid it arise,
Too pure for these regions, to gleam in the skies.

II

Or where the stern warrior, his country defending,
Dares fearless the dark-rolling battle to pour,
Or o'er the fell corpse of a dread tyrant bending
Where patriotism red with his guilt-reeking gore
Plants Liberty's flag on the slave-peopled shore,
With victory's cry, with the shout of the free,
Let it fly, taintless Spirit, to mingle with thee.

III

For I found the pure gem, when the daybeam returning,
Ineffectual gleams on the snow-covered plain,
When to others the wished-for arrival of morning
Brings relief to long visions of soul-racking pain;
But regret is an insult—to grieve
And why should we grieve that a spirit so fair
Seeks Heaven to mix with its own kindred there?

IV

But still 'twas some Spirit of kindness descending
To share in the load of mortality's woe,
Who over thy lowly-built sepulchre bending
Bade sympathy's tenderest tear drop to flow.
Not for thy soft compassion, celestial's did know,
But it angels can weep, sure man may repine,
May weep in mute grief o'er thy low-laid shrime.

V

And did I then say, for the altar of glory,
That the earliest, the loveliest of flowers I'd entwine,
Though with millions of blood-reeking victims 'twas gory,
Though the tears of the widow polluted its shrine,
Though around it the orphans, the fatherless pine?
Oh! Fame, all thy glories I'd yield for a tear
To shed on the grave of a heart so sincere.

LOVE

Why is it said thou canst not live
In a youthful breast and fair,
Since thou eternal life canst give,
Canst bloom for ever there?
Since withering pain no power possessed,
Nor age, to Blanch thy vermeil hue,
Nor time's dread victor, death, confessed,
Though bathed with his poison dew,
Still thou retainst unchangeable bloom,
Fixed tranquil, even in the tomb.
And oh! when on the bluest, reviving
The day-star dawns of love,
Each energy of soul surviving
More vivid, soars above,
Hast thou ne'er felt a rapturous thrill,
Like June's warm breath, athwart thee fly?
O'er each idea then to steal,
When other passions die?
Felt it in some wild noonday dream,
When sitting by the lonely stream,
Where Silence says, 'Mine is the dell';
And not a murmur from the plain,
And not an echo from the fell,
Disputes her silent reign.

ON A FETE AT CARLTON HOUSE: FRAGMENT
By the mossy brink,
With me the Prince shall sit and think;
Shall muse in visioned Regency,
Rapt in bright dreams of dawning Royalty.

TO A STAR
Sweet star, which gleaming o'er the darksome scene
Through fleecy clouds of silvery radiance flie,
Spangled of light on evening's shadowy veil,
Which shrouds the day-beam from the waveless lake,
Lighting the hour of sacred love; more sweet
Than the expiring morn-star's paly fires:
Sweet star! When wearied Nature sinks to sleep,
And all is hushed,—all, save the voice of Love,
Whose broken murmuring swell the balmy blast
Of soft Favonius, which at intervals
Sighs in the ear of stillness, art thou aught but
Lulling the slaves of interest to repose
With that mild, pitying gaze? Oh, I would look
In thy dear beam till every bond of sense
Became enamoured—

A TALE OF SOCIETY AS IT IS: FROM FACTS, 1811

I
She was an aged woman; and the years
Which she had numbered on her toilsome way
Had bowed her natural powers to decay.
She was an aged woman; yet the ray
Which faintly glimmered through her starting tears,
Pressed into light by silent misery.
Hath soul's imperishable energy.
She was a cripple, and incapable
To add one mite to gold-fed luxury.
And therefore did her spirit dimly feel
That poverty, the crime of tainting stain.
Would merge her in its depths, never to rise again.

II
Yet is the tie departed
Which bound thy lovely soul to bliss?
Has it left thee broken-hearted
In a world so cold as this?
Yet, though, fainting fair one,
Sorrow's self thy cup has given,
Dream thou'lt meet thy dear one,
Never more to part, in Heaven.

One only son's love had supported her.
She long had struggled with infirmity,
Lingering to human life-scenes; for to die,
When fate has spared to rend some mental tie,
Would many wish, and surely fewer dare.
But, when the tyrant's blood-hounds forced the child
For his cursed power unbalanced arms to wield—
Bend to another's will—become a thing
More senseless than the sword of battlefield—

Then did she feel keen sorrow's keenest sting;
And many years had passed ere comfort they would bring.

For seven years did this poor woman live
In unparticipated solitude, 20
Thou mightst have seen her in the forest rude
Picking the scattered remnants of its wood.
If human, thou mightst then have learned to grieve.
The gleanings of precarious charity.
Her scantiness of food did scarce supply.
The proofs of an unsparking sorrow dwelt
Within her ghostly hollowness of eye;
Each arrow of the season's change she felt.
Yet still she groans, ere yet her race were run,
One only hope: It was—one more to see her son.

It was an eve of June, when every star
Spoke peace from Heaven to those on earth that live.
She rested on the moor. 'Twas such an eve
When first her soul began to deed to grieve;
Then he was here; now he is very far.

The sweetness of the balmy evening
A sorrow o'er her aged soul did fling.
Yet not devoid of rapture's mingled tear:
A balm was in the poison of the sting.
This aged sufferer for many a year
Had never felt such comfort. She was
pressed
A sigh—and turning round, clasped
William to her breast!

v
And, though his form was wasted
by the woe
Which tyrants on their victims
love to wreak,
Though his sunk eyeballs and
his faded cheek
Of slavery’s violence and scorn
did speak,
Yet did the aged woman’s bosom
with joy,
The vital fire seemed re-illumed
By this sweet unexpected welcoming.
Oh, consummation of the fondest hope
That ever soared on Fancy’s
wildest wing!
Oh, tenderness that foundst so
sweet a scope!
Prince who dost pride thee on
thy mighty sway,
When thou canst feel such love,
thy shall be great as they!

vi
Her son, compelled, the country’s
foes had fought.
Had bled in battle; and the stern control
Which ruled his sinews and coerced his soul
Utterly poisoned life’s unmingled bowl,
And unsubduable evils on him brought.

He was the shadow of the lusty child
Who, when the time of summer season smiled,
Did earn for her a meal of honesty,
And with affectionate discourse beguiled
The keen attacks of pain and poverty;
Till Power, as envying her this
only joy,
From her maternal bosom tore the
unhappy boy.

vii
And now cold charity’s unwelcome dole
Was insufficient to support the pair;
And they would perish rather
than would bear
The law’s stern slavery, and the insolent stare
With which law loves to rend the
poor man’s soul—
The bitter scorn, the spirit-sinking
noise
Of heartless mirth which women, men, and boys
Wake in this scene of legal misery.

TO THE REPUBLICANS OF NORTH AMERICA

I
BROTHERS! between you and me
Whirlwinds sweep and billows roar;
Yet in spirit oft I see
On thy wild and winding shore
Freedom’s bloodless banners wave,—
Feel the pulses of the brave

Unextinguished in the grave,—
See them drenched in sacred gore,—
Catch the warrior’s gasping breath
Murmuring ‘Liberty or death!’

II
Shout aloud! Let every slave,
Crouching at Corruption’s throne,
Start into a man, and brave
Racks and chains without a groan;
And the castle’s heartless glow,
And the hovel’s vice and woe,
Fade like gaudy flowers that blow—
Weeds that, then are gone
Whilst, from misery’s ashes risen,
Love shall burst the captive’s prison.

III
Cotopaxi! bid the sound
Through thy sister mountains ring,
Till each valley smile around
At the blissful welcoming
And, O thou stern Ocean deep, 25
Thou whose foamy billows sweep
Shores where thousands wake to weep
Whilst they curse a villain king,
On the winds that fan thy breast
Bear thou news of Freedom’s rest!

IV
Can the daystar dawn of love, 31
Where the flag of war unfurled
Floats with crimson stain above
The fabric of a ruined world?
Never but to vengeance driven
When the patriot’s spirit shriven
Seeks in death its native Heaven!
There, to desolation hurled,
Widowed love may watch thy bier,
Balm thee with its dying tear.

I
BEAR witness, Erin! when thine injured isle
Sees summer on its verdant pastures smile,
Its cornfields waving in the winds that sweep
The billowy surface of thy circling deep!
Thou tree whose shadow o’er the Atlantic gave
Peace, wealth and beauty, to its friendly wave,
Its blossoms fade,
And blighted are the leaves that cast its shade;
Whilst the cold hand gathers its scanty fruit,
Whose chillness struck a cancer to its root.

II
I could stand
Upon thy shores, O Erin, and could count
The billows that, in their unceasing swell,
Dash on thy beach, and every wave might seem
An instrument in Time the giant’s grasp,
To burst the barriers of Eternity.
Proceed, thou giant, conquering and to conquer;
March on thy lonely way! The nations fall
Beneath thy noiseless footsteps; pyramids
That for millenniums have defied the blast,
And laughed at lightnings, thou dost crush to nought.
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Is but the fungus of a winter day
That thy light footsteps press into dust.
The moonlight was my dearer day:  
Then would I wander far away, 10  
And, lingering on the wild brook's shore  
To hear its unremitting roar,  
Would lose in the ideal flow  
All sense of overwhelming woe;  
Or at the noiseless noon of night  
Would climb some healthy mountain's height,  
And listen to the mystic sound  
That stole in fitful gasps around.  
I joyed to see the streaks of day  
Above the purple peaks decay,  
And watch the latest line of light  
Just mingling with the shades of night;  
For day with me was time of woe  
When even tears refused to flow;  
Then would I stretch my languid frame  
Beneath the wild woods' gloomiest shade,  
And try to quench the ceaseless flame  
That on my withered vital prey;  
Would close mine eyes and dream I were  
On some remote and friendless plain.  
And long I'd leave existence there,  
If with it I might leave the pain  
That with a finger cold and lean  
Wrote madness on my withering mien.  
It was not unrequited love  
That bade my wildered spirit rove;  
'Twas not the pride disdaining life,  
That with this mortal world at strife  
Would yield to the soul's inward sense,  
Then groan in human impotence,  
And weep because it is not given  
To taste on Earth the peace of Heaven.  
'Twas not that in the narrow sphere

Where Nature fixed my wayward fate  
There was no friend or kindred dear  
Formed to become that spirit's mate,  
Which, searching on tired pinion,  
Found Barren and cold repulse around;  
Oh, no! yet each one sorrow gave  
New graces to the narrow grave.  
For broken vows had early quelled  
The stainless spirit's vestal flame;  
Yes! whilst the faithful bosom swelled,  
Then the envenomed arrow came,  
And Apas's unaltering eye  
Beamed coldness on the misery;  
And early I had learned to scorn  
The chains of clay that bound a soul  
Panting to seize the wings of morn,  
And where its vital fires were born  
To soar, and spur the cold control  
Which the vile slaves of earthly night  
Would twine around its struggling flight.  
Oh, many were the friends whom fame  
Had linked with the unmeaning name,  
Whose magic marked among mankind  
The casket of my unknown mind,  
Which hidden from the vulgar glare  
Imbied no fleeting radiance there.  
My darksome spirit sought — it found  
A friendless solitude around.  
For who that might undaunted stand,  
The saviour of a sinking land,  
Would crawl, its ruthless tyrant's slave,  
And fatten upon Freedom's grave,  
Though doomed with her to perish, where

The captive clasps abhorred despair.  
They could not share the bosom's feeling,  
Which, passion's every throb revealing,  
Dared force on the world's notice cold.  
Thoughts of unprofitable mould,  
Who bask in Custom's flicker ray,  
Fit sunshine of such wintry day!  
They could not in a twilight walk  
Weave an impassioned web of talk,  
Till mysteries the spirits press.  
In wild yet tender awfulness,  
Then feel within our narrow sphere  
How little yet how great we are!  
But they might shine in courtly grace,  
Attract the rabble's cheapest stare,  
And might command where'er they move  
A thing that bears the name of love;  
They might be learned, witty, gay,  
Foremost in fashion's gilt array,  
On Fame's emblazoned page  
Shine,  
Be princes' friends, but never mine!  
Ye jagged peaks that frown sublime,  
Mocking the blunted scythe of Time,  
Whence I would watch its lustre pale  
Steal from the moon o'er yonder vale  
Thou rock, whose bosom black and vast,  
Bared to the stream's unceasing flow,  
Ever its giant shade doth cast  
On the tumultuous surge below:  
Woods, to whose depths retires to die
The wounded Echo's melody,
And whither this lone spirit bent
The footstep of a wild intent:
Meadows! whose green and span-
gled lid breast
These fevered limbs have often pressed,
Until the watchful fiend Despair
Slept in the soothing coolness there!
Have not your varied beauties seen
The sunken eye, the withering mien,
Sad traces of the unuttered pain
That froze my heart and burned my brain.
How changed since Nature's summer form
Had last the power my grief to charm,
Since last ye soothed my spirit's sadness,
Strange rhymes of a mingled madness!
Changed!—not the loathsome worm that fed
In the dark mansions of the dead,
Now soaring through the fields of air,
And gathering purest nectar there,
A butterfly, whose million hues,
The dazzled eye of wonder views,
Long lingering on a work so strange,
Has undergone so bright a change.
How do I feel my happiness? I cannot tell, but they may guess
Whose every gloomy feeling gone,
Friendship and passion feel alone;
Who see mortality's dull clouds
Before affection's murmurs fly.
Whilst the mild glances of her eye
Pierce the thin veil of flesh that shrouds
The spirit's inmost sanctuary,
O thou! whose virtues latest known,
First in this heart yet claim'st a throne;

Whose downy sceptre still shall share
The gentle sway with virtue there;
Thou fair in form, and pure in mind,
Whose ardent friendship rivets fast
The flowery band our fates that bind,
Which incorruptible shall last
When duty's hard and cold control
Has thawed around the burning soul,—
The gloomiest retrospects that bind
With crowns of thorn the bleeding mind,
The prospects of most doubtful hue
That rise on Fancy's shuddering view,—
Are glit by the reviving ray
Which thou hast flung upon my day.

FRAGMENT OF A SONNET

TO HARRIET

EVER as now with Love and Virtue's glow
May thy unwithering soul not cease to burn,
Still may thine heart with those pure thoughts o'erflow
Which force from mine such quick and warm return.

TO HARRIET

It is not blasphemy to hope that Heaven
More perfectly will give those nameless joys
Which throb within the pulses of the blood
And sweeten all that bitterness which Earth

Infuses in the heaven-born soul.
O thou
Whose dear love gleamed upon the gloomy path
Which this lone spirit travelled, drear and cold,
Yet swiftly leading to those awful limits
Which mark the bounds of Time and of the space
When Time shall be no more; wilt thou not turn
Those spirit-beaming eyes and look on me,
Until I be assured that Earth is Heaven,
And Heaven is Earth?—will not thy glowing cheek,
Glowing with soft suffusion, rest on mine,
And breathe magnetic sweetness through the frame
Of my corporeal nature, through the soul.
Now knit with these fine fibres? I would give
The longest and the happiest day that fate
Has marked on my existence but to feel
One soul-reviving kiss... O thou most dear,
'Tis an assurance that this Earth is Heaven,
And Heaven the flower of that untainted seed
Which springeth here beneath such love as ours.
Harriet! let death all mortal ties dissolve,
But ours shall not be mortal! The cold hand
Of Time may chill the love of earthly minds
Half frozen now; the frigid inter-
course

Of common souls lives but a summer's day;
It dies, where it arose, upon this earth.
But ours! oh, 'tis the stretch of Fancy's hope
To portray its continuance as now,
Warm, tranquil, spirit-healing; nor when age
Has tempered these wild ecstasies, and given
A soberer tinge to the luxurious glow
Which blazes on devotion's pinnacle
Makes virtuous passion supersede the power
Of reason; nor when life's estival sun
To deeper manhood shall have ripened me;
Nor when some years have added judgement's store
To all thy woman sweetness, all the fire
Which throbs in thine enthusiastic heart; not then
Shall holy friendship (for what other name
May love likes ours assume?), not even then
Shall Custom so corrupt, or the cold forms
Of this desolate world so harden us,
As when we think of the dear love that binds
Our souls in silent communion, while we know
Each other's thoughts and feelings, can we say
Unblushingly a heartless compliment,
Praise, hate, or love with the unthinking world
Or dare to cut the unrelaxing nerve
That knits our love to virtue. Can those eyes, 55
Beaming with mildest radiance on my heart, 50
To purify its purity, e'er bend 55
To soothe its vice or consecrate its fears? 55
Never, thou second Sis! Is confidence so vain in virtue that I learn to doubt? 60
The mirror even of Truth? Dark flood of Time, Roll as it listeth thee; I measure not By month or moments thy ambiguous course. 60
Another may stand by me on thy brink, And watch the bubble whirl'd beyond thy ken, Which passes at my feet. The sense of love, The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought Prolong my being; if I wake no more, My life more actual living will contain Than some gray veteran's of the world's cold school, Whose listless hours unprofitably roll By one enthusiast feeling unregarded, Virtue and Love! unbending Fortitude, Freedom, Devotedness and Purity! That life my Spirit consecrates to you. 65

SONNET
ON LAUNCHING SOME BOTTLES FILLED WITH KNOWLEDGE INTO THE BRISTOL CHANNEL
Vessels of heavenly medicine! may the breeze Auspicious waft your dark green forms to shore; 70
Safe may ye stem the wide surrounding roar Of the wild whirlwinds and the raging seas; And oh! if Liberty e'er deigned to stoop From yonder lowly throne her crownless brow, Sure she will breathe around your emerald group

The fairest breezes of her West that blow Yes! she will waft ye to some free-born soul Whose eye-beam, kindling as it meets your freight, Her heaven-born flame in suffered Earth will light, Until its radiance gleams from pole to pole, And tyrants-hearts with powerless envy burst To see their night of ignorance dispersed.

THE DEVIL'S WALK
A BALLAD
ONCE, early in the morning, Beelzebub arose, With care his sweet person adorning, He put on his Sunday clothes. 10
He drew on a boot to hide his hoof, He drew on a glove to hide his claw, His horns were concealed by a Bras de l'antiquité. And the Devil went forth as natty a Beau As Bond-street ever saw.

He sate him down, in London town, Before earth's morning ray, With a favourite imp he began to chat, On religion, and scandal, this and that, Until the dawn of day.

And then to St. James's Court he went, 15
And St. Paul's Church he took on his way; 10
He was mighty thick with every Saint, Though they were formal and he was gay.

The Devil was an agriculturist, And as bad weeds quickly grow, In looking over his farm, I wist, He wouldn't find cause for woe.

He peeped in each hole, to each chamber stole, His promising live-stock to view; Grinning applause, he just showed them his claws, 25
And they shrunk with affright from his ugly sight, Whose work they delighted to do.

Satan poked his red nose into crannies so small One would think that the innocents fair, 30
Poor lambkins! were just doing nothing at all
But settling some dress or arranging some ball,
But the Devil saw deeper there.

A Priest, at whose elbow the Devil during prayer Sate familiarly, side by side,
Declared that, if the Tempter were there, 
35 His presence he would not abide.
Ah! ah! thought Old Nick, that's a very stale trick,
For without the Devil, O favourite of Evil,
In your carriage you would not ride.

X

Satan next saw a brainless King;
40 Whose house was as hot as his own;
Many imps in attendance were there on the wing,
They flapped the pennon and twisted the sting,
Close by the very Throne.

X

Ah! ah! thought Satan, the pasture is good,
45 My Cattle will here thrive better than others;
They dine on news of human blood,
They sup on the groans of the dying and dead,
And supperless never will go to bed;
Which will make them fat as their brothers.

XI

Fat as the Fiends that feed on blood,
50 Fresh and warm from the fields of Spain,
Where Ruin ploughs her gory way,
Where the shoots of earth are dipped in the bud,
Where Hell is the Victor's prey,
Its glory the meed of the slain.

XII

Fat—as the Death-birds on Erin's shore,
That gluttoned themselves in her dearest gore,
And flitted round Castlecragh,
When they snatched the Patriot's heart, that his grasp
Had torn from its widow's maniac clasp,
And died at the dawn of day.

XIII

Fat—as the Reptiles of the tomb,
That riot in corruption's spoil,
That fret their little hour in gloom,
And creep, and live the while.

XIV

Fat as that Prince's maudlin brain,
Which, addled by some gilded toy,
Tired, gives his sweetmeat, and again
Cries for it, like a humoured boy.

XV

For he is fat,—his waistcoat gay,
When strained upon a levee day,
Scarce meets across his princely paunch;
And pantaloons are like half-moons
Upon each brawny haunch.

XVI

How vast his stock of calf! when plenty
Had filled his empty head and heart,
Enough to satiate foplings twenty,
Could make his pantaloon seams start.

XVII

The Devil (who sometimes is called Nature),
For men of power provides thus well,
Whilst every change and every feature,
Their great original can tell.

XVIII

Satan saw a lawyer a viper slay,
That crawled up the leg of his table,
It reminded him most marvellously
Of the story of Cain and Abel.

XIX

The wealthy yeoman, as he wanders
His fertile fields along,
And on his thriving cattle ponder,
Counts his sure gains, and hums a song;
Thus did the Devil, through earth walking,
Hum low a hellish song.

XX

For they thrive well whose garb of gory
Is Satan's choicest livery,
And they thrive well who from the poor
Have snatched the bread of penury,
And heaped the houseless wanderer's store
On the rank pile of luxury.

XXI

The Bishops thrive, though they are big;
The Lawyers thrive, though they are thin;
For every gown, and every wig,
Hides the safe thrust of Hell within.

XXII

Thus pigs were never counted clean,
Although they dine on finest corn,
And cormorants are sin-like lean,
Although they eat from night to morn.

XXIII

Oh! why is the Father of Hell in such glee,
As he grins from ear to ear?
Why does he doff his clothes joyfully,
As he skips, and prances, and flaps his wing,
As he sidles, leers, and twirls his sting,
And dares, as he is, to appear?

XXIV

A statesman passed—alone to him,
The Devil dare his whole shape uncover,
To show each feature, every limb,
Secure of an unchanging lover.

XXV

At this known sign, a welcome sight,
The watchful demons sought their King,
And every Fiend of the Stygian night,
Was in an instant on the wing.

XXVI

Pale Loyalty, his guilt-steeled brow,
With wreaths of gory-crowned laurel:
SHELLEY

Which else obey her powerful command;

... mountain piles 5

That load in grandeur Cambria's emerald vales.

ON LEAVING LONDON FOR WALES

Hall to thee, Cambria; for the unfettered wind
Which from thy wilds even now methinks I feel,
Chasing the clouds that roll in wrath behind,
And tightening the soul's lastest nerves to steel;
True mountain Liberty alone may heal
The pain which Custom's obduracy brings,
And he who dares in fancy even to steal
One draught from Snowdon's ever sacred spring
Blots out the unholiest rede of worldly witnessing.
And shall that soul, to selfish peace resigned,
So soon forget the woe its fellows share?
Can Snowdon's Lethes from the free-born mind
So soon the page of injured pen-
yury tear?
Does this fine mass of human passion dare
To sleep, unhonouring the patri-
ot's fall,
Or life's sweet load in quietude to bear
While millions famish even in Luxury's hall,
And Tyranny, high raised, stern lowers on all?
No, Cambria! never may thy matchless vales

JUVENILIA

A heart so false to hope and virtue shield; 20
Nor ever may thy spirit-breathing gales
Waft freshness to the slaves who dare to yield.
For me! the weapon that I burn to wield
I seek amid thy rocks to ruin hurled,
That Reason's flag may over Freedom's field, 25
Symbol of bloodless victory, wave unfurled,
A meteor-sign of love effulgent o'er the world.

Do thou, wild Cambria, calm each struggling thought;
Cast thy sweet veil of rocks and woods between,
That by the soul to indignation wrought
Mountains and dells be mingled with the scene;
Let me forever be what I have been,
But not forever at my needy door
Let Misery linger speechless, pale and lean;
I am the friend of the unfriended poor,—
Let me not madly stain their righteous cause in gore.

THE WANDERING JEW'S SOLILOQUY

Is it the Eternal Triune, is it He
Who dares arrest the wheels of destiny
And plunge me in the lowest Hell of Hells?
Will not the lightning's blast destroy my frame?
Will not steel drink the blood-life where it swells?

No—let me lie where dark Destruction dwells,
To rouse her from her deeply caverned lair,
And, taunting her cursed sluggishness to ire,
Light Long Oblivion's death-torch at its flame
And calmly mount Annihilation's pyre.

Tyrant of Earth! pale Misery's jackal Thou!
Are there no stores of vengeful violent fate
Within the magazines of Thy fierce hate?
No poison in the clouds to bathe a brow
That lowers on Thee with desperate contempt?

Where is the noisy Pestilence that slew
The myriad sons of Israel's favour'd nation?
Where the destroying Minister that flew
Pouring the fiery tide of desolation
Upon the leagued Assyrian's attempt?

Where the dark Earthquake-daemon who engorged
At the dread word Korah's unconscious crew?
Or the Angel's two-edged sword of fire that urged
Our primal parents from their bower of bliss
(Reared by Thine hand) for errors not their own
By Thine omniscient mind foredoomed, foreknown?
Yes! I would court a ruin such as this.
Almighty Tyrant! and give thanks to Thee—

Drink deeply—drain the cup of hate: remit this—I may die.
EVENING
TO HARLETT
O thou bright Sun! beneath the dark blue line
Of western distance that sublime descent,
And, gleaming lovelier as thy beams decline,
Thy million hues to every vapour lendest,
And, o'er cobweb lawn and grove and stream
Sheddest the liquid magic of thy light,
Till calm Earth, with the parting splendid bright,
In her beams, half promised heaven's delight.

TO IANTHE
I love thee, Baby! for thine own sweet sake;
Those azure eyes, that faintly dimpled cheek,
Thy tender frame, so eloquently weak,
Love in the sternest heart of hate might wake;
But more when o'er thy fitful slumber bending
Thy mother tells thee to her wakeful heart,
Whilst love and pity, in her glances blending,
All that thy passive eyes can feel impart:
More, when some feeble lineaments of her,
Who bore thy weight beneath her spotless bosom,
As with deep love I read thy face, recur,—
More dear art thou, O fair and fragile blossom!
Dearest when most thy tender traits express
The image of thy mother's loveliness.

SONG FROM THE WANDERING JEW
See, now opening flower
Spreads its fragrance to the blast;
It fades within an hour,
Its decay is pale—is fast.
Fairer is thy maiden;
Faster is her heart's decay;
Deep with sorrow laden,
She sinks in death away.

FRAGMENT FROM THE WANDERING JEW
The Elements respect their Maker's seal!
Still like the scathed pine tree's height,
Braving the tempests of the night
I have 'scaped the flickering flame.
Like the scathed pine, which a monument stands
Of faded grandeur, which the brands
Of the tempest-shaken air
Have riven on the desolate heath;
Yet it stands majestic even in death,
And rears its wild form there.
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How wonderful is Death
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SHELLEY

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Night! with all thine eyes look down!
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