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SHELLEY'S POETICAL WORKS

VOL. II.

*Large Paper Edition limited to 100 copies,
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No. 9.....

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

FROM THE ORIGINAL EDITIONS

EDITED, PREFACED, AND ANNOTATED

BY

RICHARD HERNE SHEPHERD

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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BEFORE passing from this poem [the Revolt of Islam], I have to express a hope that *a final edition of Shelley's Works will some day, rather sooner than later, restore to it the proper title and the genuine text.* Every change made in it was forced upon the author by pressure from without: *every change is for the worse.* Has no reader ever asked himself what can be the meaning of the second title? What is the Revolt of Islam? Islam is not put forward as the sole creed of the tyrants and slaves who play their parts here with such frank ferocity; Persian and Indian, Christian and Mahometan mythologies are massed together for attack. And certainly Islam is not, as the rules of language would imply, the creed of the insurgents. Could the phrase "revolt of the Christians" be taken to signify a revolt against the Christians? There is at least meaning in the first title—"Laon and Cythna, or the Revolution of the Golden City." Readers may prefer a text which makes hero and heroine strangers in blood, but the fact remains that Shelley saw fit to make them brother and sister, and to defend their union as essentially innocent even if socially condemnable.—A. C. SWINBURNE, "Notes on the Text of Shelley" (*Fortnightly Review*, May 1869, p. 544).

Laon and Cythna;

OR,

THE REVOLUTION

OF

THE GOLDEN CITY:

A Vision of the Nineteenth Century.

IN THE STANZA OF SPENSEL.



BY

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ΔΟΣ ΠΟΥ ΣΤΩ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΣΜΟΝ ΚΙΝΗΣΩ.
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VOL. II.

B



P R E F A C E.

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 the 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 sym-

pathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The Poem, therefore, (with the exception of the first Canto, which is purely introductory,) is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses; its impatience at "all the oppressions which are done under the sun;" its tendency to awaken public hope and to enlighten and improve mankind; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity; the faithlessness of tyrants; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World, and the restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power; the consequences of legitimate despotism, civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections; the judicial murder of the advocates of Liberty; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its

final and inevitable fall ; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the Poem consists. And if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story, shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong, such as belongs to no meaner desires—let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings, in the vivid presence of which, within his own mind, consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

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

The French revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilized mankind, produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the im-

provement, 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 realize. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilized world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state, according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave, suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleapt the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good, have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored, appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the charac-

teristics 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

* I ought to except Sir. W. Drummond's *Academical Questions*; a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.—(*Author's note*)

† It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr. Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of population. This concession answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the "Essay on Population," to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of "Political Justice."—(*Author's note*)

simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

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

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

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

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

† Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.

seem 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 blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity: you must either succeed or fail. This, perhaps, an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also, by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts, can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt, and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left most inadvertently an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this, as in every other respect, I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age, that its writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own: it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded the opinion of mankind, and would

even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought, therefore, to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton wrote, with an utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavour to extract from the midst of insult and contempt, and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the public. If certain critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality, and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was laid captive, and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigoted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroath, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and

Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freed men, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which, arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

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

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in referenc to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage, entertain of the

Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature, which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to Revenge, or Envy, or Prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.

* In the personal conduct of my hero and heroine, there is one circumstance which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life. It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions on which established institutions depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings, and have endeavoured to strengthen the moral sense, by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention. It is because there is so great a multitude of artificial vices that there are so few real virtues. Those feelings alone which are benevolent or malevolent, are essentially good or bad. The circumstance of which I speak, was introduced, however, merely to accustom men to that charity and toleration which the exhibition of a practice widely differing from their own, has a tendency to promote.† Nothing indeed can be more mischievous than many actions innocent in themselves, which might bring down upon individuals the bigoted contempt and rage of the multitude.

* This final paragraph, and the note accompanying it, disappear in *The Revolt of Islam*.—ED.

† The sentiments connected with and characteristic of this circumstance, have no personal reference to the writer. - (*Author's note*)



DEDICATION.

THERE IS NO DANGER TO A MAN THAT KNOWS
WHAT LIFE AND DEATH IS: THERE'S NOT ANY LAW
EXCEEDS HIS KNOWLEDGE; NEITHER IS IT LAWFUL
THAT HE SHOULD STOOP TO ANY OTHER LAW.

*Chapman.**

* These four lines occur towards the close of the third Act of *Byron's Conspiracy*, 1608. Shelley probably took the lines from Lamb's *Specimens*: it is extremely improbable that he had read Chapman's tragedy, which had not then been republished, in its integrity.—ED.



TO
MARY ——— ———.

I.

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

2.

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

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3.

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

4.

And then I clasp'd my hands and look'd around—
 But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
 Which pour'd 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 controll'd
 My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

5.

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

6.

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 crush'd and wither'd mine, that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clog, until revived by thee.

7.

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 walk'd as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long.

8.

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journey'd 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 cherish'd friends turn with the multitude
To trample : this was ours, and we unshaken stood !

9.

Now has descended a serener hour,
And with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
Tho' suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says :—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
And from thy side two gentle babes are born

To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
 Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn ;
 And these delights, and thou, have been to me
 The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

10.

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

11.

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

12.

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

13.

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

14.

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 unextinguish'd light.





LAON AND CYTHNA.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

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

II.

So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
When, gathering fast, around, above, and under,
Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,
Until their complicating lines did steep
The orient sun in shadow :—not a sound

Was heard ; one horrible repose did keep
The forests and the floods, and all around
Darkness more dread than night was pour'd 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 lash'd deeps
Glitter and boil beneath : it rages on,
One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,
Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by.
There is a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth, to spy
What calm has fall'n on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV.

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen
Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven
Most delicately, and the ocean green,
Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
Quiver'd 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'd to lie
Far, deep, and motionless ; while thro' the sky
The pallid semicircle of the moon
Past on, in slow and moving majesty ;
Its upper horn array'd 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 remain'd:—the hue
 Of the white moon, amid that heaven so blue,
 Suddenly stain'd with shadow did appear;
 A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching grew,
 Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
 Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear.

VII.

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

VIII.

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed,
 Suspending thought and breath; a monstrous sight!
 For in the air do I behold indeed
 An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight:—
 And now relaxing its impetuous flight,
 Before the ærial rock on which I stood,
 The Eagle, hovering, wheel'd 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 gleam'd therein—

Feather and scale inextricably blended.
The Serpent's mail'd and many-colour'd skin
Shone thro' the plumes its coils were twined within
By many a swoln and knotted fold, and high
And far, the neck receding lithe and thin,
Sustain'd a crested head, which warily
Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's stedfast eye.

X.

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sail'd
Incessantly—sometimes on high concealing
Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it fail'd,
Droop'd thro' the air; and still it shriek'd and wail'd,
And casting back its eager head, with beak
And talon unremittingly assail'd
The wreathed Serpent, who did ever seek
Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

XI.

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

XII.

Swift chances in that combat—many a check,
And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil;
Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck
Lock'd in stiff rings his adamantine coil,
Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil,

Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea
Languidly flutter'd, hopeless so to foil
His adversary, who then rear'd on high
His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

XV.

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere—
Only, '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.

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

And when she saw the wounded Serpent make
His path between the waves, her lips grew pale,
Parted, and quiver'd; 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
Pour'd forth her voice; the caverns of the vale
That open'd to the ocean, caught it there,
And fill'd with silver sounds the overflowing air.

XIX.

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I heard, alone,

What made its music more melodious be,
 The pity and the love of every tone;
 But to the Snake those accents sweet were known,
 His native tongue and hers; nor did he beat
 The hoar spray idly then, but winding on
 Thro' 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 clasp'd her hands, and all between,
 Renew'd the unintelligible strain
 Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien ;
 And she unveil'd 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, coil'd in rest in her embrace it lay.

XXI.

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

XXII.

Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone,
 Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago.
 I wept. Shall this fair woman all alone,
 Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go ?
 His head is on her heart, and who can know

How soon he may devour his feeble prey?—
Such were my thoughts, when the tide 'gan to flow ;
And that strange boat, like the moon's shade did sway
Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay.

XXIII.

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
But its own curved prow of thin moonstone,
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
To catch those gentlest winds which are not known
To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
With which it cleaves the sparkling sea ; and now
We are embark'd, 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 sail'd, a strange and awful tale
That Woman told, like such mysterious dream
As made the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale !
'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless stream,
Wide ocean roll'd, when that majestic theme
Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent
Her looks on mine ; those eyes a kindling beam
Of love divine into my spirit sent,
And ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

XXV.

Speak not to me, but hear ! much shalt thou learn,
Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn :
Know then, that from the depth of ages old,
Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold,
Ruling the world with a divided lot,
Immortal, all pervading, manifold.

Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential Nought.

XXVI.

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

XXVII.

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

XXVIII.

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

XXIX.

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

XXX.

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

XXXI.

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

XXXII.

Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages,
In dream, the golden pinion'd Genii came,

Even where they slept amid the night of ages,
 Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame,
 Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name !
 And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
 New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame .
 Upon the combat shone—a light to save,
 Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

XXXIII.

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

XXXIV.

Thou hast beheld that fight—when to thy home
 Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears ;
 Tho' thou may'st hear that earth is now become
 The tyrant's garbage, which to his compeers,
 The vile reward of their dishonour'd 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 wearest—touch me—shrink not now !
 My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but warm

With human blood.—'Twas many years ago,
 Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
 The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep
 My heart was pierced with sympathy, for woe
 Which could not be mine own—and thought did keep
 In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep.

XXXVI.

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

XXXVII.

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

XXXVIII.

Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold,
 I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
 For they weep not ; and Wisdom had unroll'd
 The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe :
 To few can she that warning vision shew,

For I loved all things with intense devotion ;
 So that when Hope's deep source in fullest flow,
 Like earthquake did uplift the stagnant ocean
 Of human thoughts—mine shook beneath the wide
 emotion.

XXXIX.

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

XL.

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

XLI.

'Twas like an eye which seem'd to smile on me.
 I watch'd, till by the sun made pale, it sank
 Under the billows of the heaving sea ;
 But from its beams deep love my spirit drank,
 And to my brain the boundless world now shrank
 Into one thought—one image—yes, for ever !

Even like the dayspring, pour'd on vapours dank,
The beams of that one Star did shoot and quiver
Thro' my benighted mind—and were extinguish'd never.

XLII.

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

XLIII.

And said : a Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden,
How wilt thou prove thy worth ? Then joy and sleep
Together fled, my soul was deeply laden,
And to the shore I went to muse and weep ;
But as I moved, over my heart did creep
A joy less soft, but more profound and strong
Than my sweet dream ; and it forbade to keep
The path of the sea-shore : that Spirit's tongue
Seem'd 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 walk'd 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 spurn'd at peace, and power, and fame ; and when
Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth,
How sadly I return'd—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
 Sustain'd 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 awaken'd by a shriek of woe ;
 And over me a mystic robe was thrown,
 By viewless hands, and a bright Star did glow
 Before my steps—the Snake then met his mortal foe.

XLVII.

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

XLVIII.

And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion,
 So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain —

Wild music woke me: we had pass'd the ocean
 Which girds the pole, Nature's remotest reign—
 And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain
 Of waters, azure with the noon-tide day.
 Æthereal 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,
 Rear'd in the cities of enchanted land:
 'Twas likest Heaven, ere yet day's purple stream
 Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the gleam
 Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
 Is gathering—when with many a golden beam
 The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
 Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods.

L.

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

LI.

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
 Whose blosmy forest starr'd the shadowy deep,
 The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair
 Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep,
 Encircling that vast Fane's aërial heap:

We disembark'd, and thro' a portal wide
 We past—whose roof of moonstone carved, did keep
 A glimmering o'er the forms on every side,
 Sculptures like life and thought; immoveable, deep-eyed.

LII.

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

LIII.

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

LIV.

Beneath, there sate on many a sapphire throne,
 The Great, who had departed from mankind,
 A mighty Senate;—some, whose white hair shone
 Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and blind.
 Some, female forms, whose gestures beam'd with mind;
 And ardent youths, and children bright and fair;
 And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined

With pale and clinging flames, which ever there
Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the crystal
air.

LV.

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

LVI.

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

LVII.

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

LVIII.

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

LIX.

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

LX.

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
He stood thus beautiful : but there was One
Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
And held his hand—far lovelier—she was known
To be thus fair, by the few lines alone
Which thro' her floating locks and gather'd 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 SECOND.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters,
 And the ethereal shapes which are suspended
 Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters,
 The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended
 The colours of the air since first extended
 It cradled the young world, none wander'd forth
 To see or feel : a darkness had descended
 On every heart : the light which shews 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 murder'd 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, yawn'd ; behind,
 Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore
 On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore.

VII.

Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe
 Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,

And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
The worship thence which they each other taught.
Well might men loathe their life, well might they turn
Even to the ills again from which they sought
Such refuge after death !—well might they learn
To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern !

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

I wander'd thro' the wrecks of days departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even
O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise ; in the northern Heaven,

Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
 The mountains lay beneath one planet pale ;
 Around me, broken tombs and columns riven
 Look'd vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale
 Waked in those ruins grey its everlasting wail !

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

It shall be thus no more ! too long, too long,
 Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain bound
 In darkness and in ruin.—Hope is strong,
 Justice and Truth their winged child have found—
 Awake ! arise ! until the mighty sound
 Of your career shall scatter in its gust

The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
Whose Idol has so long betray'd 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 fill
The world with cleansing fire : it must, it will—
It may not be restrain'd !—and who shall stand
Amid the rocking earthquake stedfast still,
But Laon ? on high Freedom's desert land
A tower whose marble walls the leagued storms withstand !

XV.

One summer night, in commune with the hope
Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins grey
I watch'd, beneath the dark sky's starry cope ;
And ever from that hour upon me lay
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 follow'd where I fled, and watch'd when I did rest

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

Yes, oft beside the ruin'd labyrinth
Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep,
Did Laon and his friend on one grey plinth,
Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap,
Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep :
And that 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
Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
Amid the snares and scoffs of human kind,
Is hard—but I betray'd it not, nor less
With love that scorn'd return, sought to unbind
The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX.

With deathless minds which leave where they have past
A path of light, my soul communion knew ;

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

XXI.

I had a little sister, whose fair eyes*
Were loadstars 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 turn'd from all, to be,
Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee.

XXII.

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

XXIII.

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
A power, that from its objects scarcely drew

* An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes.—*Revolt of Islam.*

One impulse of her being—in her lightness
 Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew,
 Which wanders thro' the waste air's pathless blue,
 To nourish some far desert : she did seem
 Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
 Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
 Which walks when tempest sleeps, the wave of life's dark
 stream.

XXIV.

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

XXV.

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

XXVI.

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
 When twined in mine : she follow'd where I went,

* this playmate sweet.—*Revolt of Islam.*

Thro' the lone paths of our immortal land.
It had no waste, but some memorial lent
Which strung me to my toil—some monument
Vital with mind : then, Cythna by my side,
Until the bright and beaming day were spent,
Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

XXVII.

And soon I could not have refused her—thus
For ever, day and night, we two were ne'er
Parted, but when brief sleep divided us :
And when the pauses of the lulling air
Of noon beside the sea, had made a lair
For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept,
And I kept watch over her slumbers there,
While, as the shifting visions 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 woven to Freedom, strong
The source of passion whence they rose, to be ;
Triumphant strains, which, like a spirit's tongue,
To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung.

XXIX.

Her white arms lifted thro' the shadowy stream
Of her loose hair—oh, excellently great
Seem'd to me then my purpose, the vast theme
Of those impassion'd songs, when Cythna sate

Amid the calm which rapture doth create
 After its tumult, her heart vibrating,
 Her spirit o'er the ocean's floating state
 From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing
 Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring.

XXX.

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

XXXI.

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

XXXII.

In me, communion with this purest being
 Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
 In knowledge, which in her's mine own mind seeing,
 Left in the human world few mysteries :
 How without fear of evil or disguise
 Was Cythna !—what a spirit strong and mild,

Which death, or pain or peril could despise,
Yet melt in tenderness ! what genius wild
Yet mighty, was inclosed within one simple child !

XXXIII.

New lore was this—old age with its grey hair,
And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
And icy sneers, is nought : it cannot dare
To burst the chains which life for ever flings
On the entangled soul's aspiring wings,
So is it cold and cruel, and is made
The careless slave of that dark power which brings
Evil, like blight on man, who still betray'd,
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 thro' which she wrought
The woof of such intelligible thought,
As from the tranquil strength which cradled lay
In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit sought
Why the deceiver and the slave has sway
O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

XXXV.

Within that fairest form, the female mind
Untainted by the poison clouds which rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find :
But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,
Victorious Evil, which had dispossess'd
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 learn'd to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI.

This misery was but coldly felt, till she
 Became my only friend, who had indued
 My purpose with a wider sympathy ;
 Thus, Cythna mourn'd with me the servitude
 In which the half of humankind were mew'd
 Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves,
 She mourn'd 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 flush'd o'er her.—“Cythna sweet,
 Well with the world art thou unreconciled ;
 Never will peace and human nature meet
 Till free and equal man and woman greet
 Domestic peace ; and ere this power can make
 In human hearts its calm and holy seat ;
 This slavery must be broken”—as I spake,
 From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII.

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

XXXIX.

I smiled, and spake not—“wherefore dost thou smile
 At what I say ? Laon, I am not weak,

And though my cheek might become pale the while,
With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
Through their array of banded slaves to wreak
Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek
To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XL.

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

XLI.

“ Think’st thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
And none will heed me ? I remember now,
How once, a slave in tortures doom’d 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 flow’d, shall flow,
Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent
As renovates the world ; a will omnipotent !

XLII.

“ Yes, I will tread Pride’s golden palaces,
Thro’ Penury’s roofless huts and squalid cells
Will I descend, where’er in abjectness
Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells.

There with the music of thine own sweet spells
 Will disenchant the captives, and will pour
 For the despairing, from the crystal wells
 Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore,
 And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more.

XLIII.

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

XLIV.

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

XLV.

“ Wait yet awhile for the appointed day—
 Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand
 Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean grey ;
 Amid the dwellers of this lonely land
 I shall remain alone—and thy command
 Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance,

And, multitudinous as the desert sand,
Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance,
Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI.

“ Then, like the forests of some pathless mountain,
Which from remotest glens two warring winds
Involve in fire, which not the loosen'd 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 thro' the paths of men
Will pass, as the charm'd bird that haunts the serpent's
den.

XLVII.

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

XLVIII.

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

XLIX.

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

CANTO THIRD.

I.

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

II.

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
 More time than might make grey the infant world,
 Roll'd thus, a weary and tumultuous space :
 When the third came, like mist on breezes curl'd,

* o'er Cythna's lonely slumber.—*Revolt of Islam.*

From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurl'd :
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna ; drooping briony, pearl'd
With dew from the wild streamlet's shatter'd wave,
Hung, where we sat 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 shewn
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 prolong'd 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 seem'd 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 ?
Thro' the air and over the sea we sped,
And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
And the winds bore me—thro' the darkness spread
Around, the gaping earth then vomited
Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung

Upon my flight ; and ever as we fled,
 They pluck'd 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,
 Tho', still deluded, strove the tortured sense
 To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
 Which in the light of morn was pour'd around
 Our dwelling—breathless, pale, and unaware
 I rose, and all the cottage crowded found
 With armed men, whose glittering swords were bare,
 And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb did wear.

VII.

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

VIII.

I started to behold her, for delight
 And exultation, and a joyance free,
 Solemn, serene and lofty, fill'd the light
 Of the calm smile with which she look'd on me :
 So that I fear'd some brainless ecstasy,
 Wrought from that bitter woe, had wilder'd her—
 “ Farewell ! farewell !” she said, as I drew nigh.
 “ At first my peace was marr'd 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 know’st—return, dear friend !
Let our first triumph trample the despair
Which would ensnare us now, for in the end,
In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend.”

X.

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

XI.

What follow’d 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 fill’d with slaughter,—overthrown
The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow
Of blazing roofs shone far o’er the white Ocean’s flow.

XII.

Upon that rock a mighty column stood,
Whose capital seem’d 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 day-light far thro' the aërial waste.

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

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
Sway'd 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 shewn
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 shadows 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 watch'd it with such thoughts as must remain untold

XVIII.

I watch'd, until the shades of evening wrapt
Earth like an exhalation—then the bark
Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapt.
It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark :

Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark
 Its path no more !—I sought to close mine eyes,
 But like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark ;
 I would have risen, but ere that I could rise,
 My parched skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

Two days thus past—I neither raved nor died—
 Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest
 Built in mine entrails : I had spurn'd aside
 The water-vessel, while despair possess'd

My thoughts, and now no drop remain'd ! the uprest
Of the third sun brought hunger—but the crust
Which had been left, was to my craving breast
Fuel, not food. I chew'd the bitter dust,
And bit my bloodless arm, and lick'd the brazen rust.

XXII.

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

XXIII.

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
I well remember—like a quire of devils,
Around me they involved a giddy dance ;
Legions seem'd 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 bemock'd 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, tho' not distincter, were immersed
 In hues which, when thro' memory's waste they flow,
 Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

XXV.

Methought that gate was lifted, and the seven
 Who brought me thither, four stiff corpses bare,
 And from the frieze to the four winds of Heaven
 Hung them: on high by the entangled hair:
 Swarthy were three—the fourth was very fair:
 As they retired, the golden moon upsprung,
 And eagerly, out in the giddy air,
 Leaning that I might eat, I stretch'd 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-colour'd worm
 Hung there, the white and hollow cheek I drew
 To my dry lips—what radiance did inform
 Those horny eyes? whose was that wither'd form?
 Alas, alas! it seem'd that Cythna's ghost
 Laugh'd in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
 Within my teeth!—a whirlwind keen as frost
 Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit toss'd.

XXVII.

Then seem'd it that a tameless hurricane
 Arose, and bore me in its dark career
 Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane
 On the verge of formless space—it languish'd 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 fall'n, I saw
That column, and those corpses, and the moon,
And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw
My vitals, I rejoiced, as if the boon
Of senseless death would be accorded soon;—
When from that stony gloom a voice arose,
Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune
The midnight pines: the grate did then unclose,
And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

XXIX.

He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled:
As they were loosen'd by that Hermit old,
Mine eyes were of their madness half beguiled,
To answer those kind looks—he did unfold
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, thro' 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 stirr'd
My hair;—I look'd abroad, and saw a star
Shining beside a sail, and distant far
That mountain and its column, the known mark
Of those who in the wide deep wandering are,
So that I fear'd some Spirit, fell and dark,
In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish bark.

XXXI.

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

XXXII.

A soft and healing potion to my lips
At intervals he raised—now look'd 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 joy'd as those a human tone to hear,
Who in cells deep and lone have languish'd many a year.

XXXIII.

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

XXXIV.

And then the night-wind steaming from the shore,
Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,

And the swift boat the little waves which bore,
Were cut by its keen keel, tho' slantingly ;
Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
The myrtle blossoms starring the dim grove,
As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
On sidelong wing, into a silent cove,
Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

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

II.

When the old man his boat had anchored,
He wound me in his arms with tender care,
And very few, but kindly words he said,
And bore me thro' the tower adown a stair,
Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear
For many a year had fall'n. 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 open'd 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-colour'd as the snake
That girds eternity? in life and truth,
Might not my heart its cravings ever slake?
Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth?

V.

Thus madness came again,—a milder madness,
Which darken'd 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 heal'd, he led me forth to shew
The wonders of his sylvan solitude,
And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

VI.

He knew his soothing words to weave with skill
From all my madness told; like mine own heart,

Of Cythna would he question me, until
That thrilling name had ceased to make me start,
From his familiar lips—it was not art,
Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke—
When mid soft looks of pity, there would dart
A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
The loftiest hearts:—he had beheld the woe
In which mankind was bound, but deem'd that fate
Which made them abject, would preserve them so;

And in such faith, some stedfast joy to know,
He sought this cell: but when fame went abroad
That one in Argolis did undergo
Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood;

X.

And that the multitude was gathering wide;
His spirit leap'd 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, tho' tyrants sung
Hymns of triumphant joy our scatter'd tribes among.

XI.

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

XII.

“ Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoever my waken'd thoughts create
Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore

Doctrines of human power my words have told,
They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gain'd or ever lost of yore.

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

XV.

“ Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds
Abound, for fearless love, and the pure law
Of mild equality and peace, succeeds
To faiths which long have held the world in awe,
Bloody and false, and cold:—as whirlpools draw
All wrecks of Ocean to their chasm, the sway
Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw

This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array.

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

“ Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
 To woman, outraged and polluted long;
 Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
 For those fair hands now free, while armed wrong
 Trembles before her look, tho' 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 abandon'd urn.

XXIII.

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

XXIV.

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

XXV.

“ There is a plain beneath the City's wall,
 Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast,
 Millions there lift at Freedom's thrilling call
 Ten thousand standards wide, they load the blast

Which bears one sound of many voices past,
 And startles on his throne their sceptred foe :
 He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,
 And that his power hath past away, doth know—
 Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow?

XXVI.

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

XXVII.

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

XXVIII.

“ If blood be shed, ’tis but a change and choice
 Of bonds,—from slavery to cowardice
 A wretched fall!—uplift thy charmed voice,
 Pour on those evil men the love that lies
 Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes—

* This is the alexandrine alluded to by Shelley in his Introduction, as having been inadvertently left in the middle of a stanza.—ED.

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 look'd upon the depth of that reposing lake.

XXIX.

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

XXX.

And tho' their lustre now was spent and faded,
 Yet in my hollow looks and wither'd 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 brother'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 slumber'd with the dead.
 Glory and joy and peace, had come and gone.
 Doth the cloud perish, when the beams are fled
 Which steep'd its skirts in gold? or dark and lone,
 Doth it not thro' the paths of night unknown,
 On outspread wings of its own wind upborne

* 'twas her lover's face.—*Revolt of Islam.*

Pour rain upon the earth? the stars are shewn,
When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn
Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

XXXII.

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

XXXIII.

My powers revived within me, and I went
As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass,
Thro' many a vale of that broad continent.
At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass
Before my pillow;—my own Cythna was
Not like a child of death, among them ever;
When I arose from rest, a woeful mass
That gentlest sleep seem'd 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 rear'd
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 whatsoever 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 FIFTH.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

And now the Power of Good held victory,
 So, thro' 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 show'd
 An armed youth—over his spear he bent
 His downward face—" A friend !" I cried aloud,
 And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

IV.

I sate beside him while the morning beam
Crept slowly over Heaven, and talk'd 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 look'd on me, and cried in wonder—" thou art here !"

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

“ Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain.
 Ye murder’d them, I think, as they did sleep !

Alas, what have ye done? the slightest pain
 Which ye might suffer, there were eyes to weep ;
 But ye have quench'd 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 stabb'd as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now.

XI.

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

XII.

“ Join then your hand 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, lean'd beside
 With quivering lips and humid eyes ;—and all
 Seem'd like some brothers on a journey wide
 Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall

In a strange land, round one whom they might call
Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array
Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

XIV.

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation,
Towards the City then the multitude,
And I among them, went in joy—a nation
Made free by love ;—a mighty brotherhood
Link'd by a jealous interchange of good ;
A glorious pageant, more magnificent
Than kingly slaves array'd 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 throng'd on high,
And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
And to each spire far lessening in the sky,
Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung ;
As we approach'd a shout of joyance sprung
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
And peopled Earth its boundless skies among
The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
When from before its face some general wreck had past.

XVI.

Our armies thro' the City's hundred gates
Were pour'd, like brooks which to the rocky lair
Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits,
Throng from the mountains when the storms are there ;
And as we past thro' the calm sunny air
A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed,

The token flowers of truth and freedom fair,
 And fairest hands bound them on many a head,
 Those angels of love's heaven, that over all was spread.

XVII.

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

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
Even tho' 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 past, and there was found aghast, alone,
The fallen Tyrant!—silently he sate
Upon the footstool of his golden throne.
Which starr'd with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

XXI.

Alone, but for one child, who led before him
A graceful dance: the only living thing
Of all the crowd, which thither to adore him
Flock'd 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 clasp'd his feet
When human steps were heard:—he moved nor spoke,
Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet
The gaze of strangers—our loud entrance woke
The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
The calm of its recesses,—like a tomb
Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
Of footfalls answer'd, and the twilight's gloom,
Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII.

The little child stood up when we came nigh ;
Her lips and cheeks seem'd 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 lean'd;—the King with gather'd 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 vanish'd days,—as the tears past
Which wrapt it, even as with a father's kiss
I press'd those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

XXV.

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

XXVI.

I led him forth from that which now might seem
A gorgeous grave: thro' portals sculptured deep

With imagery beautiful as dream
 We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
 Over its unregarded gold to keep
 Their silent watch.—The child trod faintly,
 And as she went, the tears which she did weep
 Glanced in the star-light; wilder'd seemed she,
 And when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII.

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

XXVIII.

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

XXIX.

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours
 Once in a thousand years, now gather'd round
 The fallen tyrant;—like the rush of showers

Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground,
Their many footsteps fell, else came no sound
From the wide multitude: that lonely man
Then knew the burthen of his change, and found,
Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
Refuge from the keen looks which thro' his bosom ran.

XXX.

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

XXXI.

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

XXXII.

Then was heard—He who judged let him be brought
To judgment! blood for blood cries from the soil
On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought!
Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?
Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil

Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries,
Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil,
Or creep within his veins at will?—Arise!
And to high justice make her chosen sacrifice.

XXXIII.

“What do ye seek? what fear ye?” then I cried,
Suddenly starting forth, “that ye should shed
The blood of Othman—if your hearts are tried
In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
This one poor lonely man—beneath Heaven spread
In purest light above us all, thro’ earth
Maternal earth, who doth 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 wish’d another’s ill?—
Are ye all pure? let those stand forth who hear,
And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill,
If such they be? their mild eyes can they fill
With the false anger of the hypocrite?
Alas, such were not true—the chasten’d will
Of virtue sees that justice is the light
Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite.”

XXXV.

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

XXXVI.

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

XXXVII.

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

XXXVIII.

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

XXXIX.

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

XL.

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

XLI.

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

XLII.

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethæan joy! so that all those assembled

Cast off their memories of the past outworn;
 Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
 And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled;
 So with a beating heart I went, and one,
 Who having much, covets yet more, resembled;
 A lost and dear possession, which not won,
 He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII.

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

XLIV.

A Form most like the imagined habitant
 Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
 By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to inchant
 The faiths of men: all mortal eyes were drawn,
 As famish'd mariners thro' 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 turn'd in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance
 bright.

XLV.

And, neither did I hear the acclamations,
 Which from brief silence bursting, fill'd the air
 With her strange name and mine, from all the nations,
 Which we, they said, in strength had gather'd 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 fever'd cheeks, a voice flow'd o'er my troubled mind

XLVI.

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

XLVII.

At first Laone spoke most tremulously:
 But soon her voice the calmness which it shed
 Gather'd, and—"thou art whom I sought to see,
 And thou art our first votary here," she said:
 "I had a brother 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

* I had a dear friend once.—*Revolt of Islam.*

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 crush’d, as it were
In dream, sceptres and crown; and one did keep
Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep;

L.

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

LI.

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

Burn'd o'er the isles ; all stood in joy and deep amaze.

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

I.

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

2.

“ O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven !
 Mother and soul of all to which is given
 The light of life, the loveliness of being,
 Lo ! thou dost re-ascend the human heart,
 Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert,
 In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
 The shade of thee :—now, millions start
 To feel thy lightnings thro' them burning
 Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure,
 Or Sympathy the sad tears turning
 To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,

Descends amidst us ;—Scorn, and Hate,
 Revenge and Selfishness are desolate—
 A hundred nations swear that there shall be
 Pity and Peace and Love, among the good and free !

3.

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

4.

“ My brethren we are free ! the plains and mountains,
 The grey sea shore, the forests and the fountains,
 Are haunts of happiest dwellers ;—man and woman,
 Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
 From lawless love a solace for their sorrow ;
 For oft we still must weep, since we are human,
 A stormy night's serenest morrow,
 Whose showers are pity's gentle tears,
 Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
 Like infants without hopes or fears,
 And whose beams are joys that lie
 In blended hearts, now holds dominion ;

The dawn of mind, which upwards on a pinion
 Borne, swift as sun-rise, far illumines space,
 And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace !

5.

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

6.

“ Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations !
 Bear witness Night, and ye mute Constellations
 Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars !
 Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more !
 Victory ! Victory ! Earth's remotest shore,
 Regions which groan beneath the Antarctic stars,
 The green lands cradled in the roar
 Of western waves and wildernesses
 Peopled and vast, which skirt the oceans
 Where morning dyes her golden tresses,
 Shall soon partake our high emotions :

Kings shall turn pale ! Almighty Fear
 The Fiend-God, when our charmed name he hear,
 Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes,
 While Truth with Joy enthroned o'er his lost empire reigns !"

LII.

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

LIII.

Her voice was as a mountain stream which sweeps
 The wither'd leaves of Autumn to the lake,
 And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps
 In the shadow of the shores ; as dead leaves wake
 Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make
 Those green depths beautiful when skies are blue,
 The multitude so moveless did partake
 Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
 As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

LIV.

Over the plain the throngs were scatter'd 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 sway'd in the red light,
 Reclining as they ate, of Liberty,
 And Hope, and Justice, and Laonc's name,
 Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.

LV.

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

LVI.

Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
 Or poison none this festal did pollute,
 But piled on high, an overflowing store
 Of pomegranates, and citrons, fairest fruit,
 Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
 Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
 Accursed fire their mild juice could transmute
 Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
 In baskets ; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet.

LVII.

Laone had descended from the shrine,
 And every deepest look and holiest mind
 Fed on her form, though now those tones divine
 Were silent as she past ; she did unwind
 Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
 She mix'd ; 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 burn'd beside the dusky main.

LVIII.

And joyous was our feast ; pathetic talk,
 And wit, and harmony of choral strains,

While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
That flow among the isles, held us in chains
Of sweet captivity, which none disdains
Who feels : but when his zone grew dim in mist
Which clothes the Occan's bosom, o'er the plains
The multitudes went homeward, to their rest,
Which that delightful day with its own shadow blest.

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

I strove, as drifted on some cataract
 By irresistible streams, some wretch might strive

Who hears its fatal roar:—the files compact
Whelm'd me, and from the gate avail'd to drive
With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive
Their ranks with bloodier chasm:—into the plain
Disgorged at length the dead and the alive
In one dread mass, were parted, and the stain
Of blood, from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

A band of brothers gathering round me, made,
Although unarm'd, a stedfast front, and still
Retreating, with stern looks beneath the shade
Of gather'd eyebrows, did the victors fill

With doubt even in success; deliberate will
 Inspired our growing troop, not overthrown
 It gain'd the shelter of a grassy hill,
 And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
 And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown

X.

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

XI.

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

XII.

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
 So vast that phalanx of unconquer'd men,
 And there the living in the blood did welter
 Of the dead and dying, which, in that green glen
 Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
 Under the feet—thus was the butchery waged

While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern steep—but when
It 'gan to sink—a fiercer combat raged,
For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

XIII.

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

XIV.

That onset turn'd 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, fail'd like a mountain river
Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands forever.

XV.

Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind
Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood
To mutual ruin arm'd by one behind
Who sits and scoffs!—That friend so mild and good,
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 strew'd
Under my feet!—I lost all sense or care,
And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI.

The battle became ghastlier—in the midst
I paused, and saw, how ugly and how fell
O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shed'st
For love. The ground in many a little dell
Was broken, up and down whose steps 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 loathed slave. I saw all shapes of death
And minister'd to many, o'er the plain
While carnage in the sun-beam's warmth did see the,
Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

XVIII.

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm
Around me fought. At the decline of day
Winding above the mountain's snowy term
New banners shone: they quiver'd 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:

XIX.

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

XX.

And its path made a solitude.—I rose
And mark'd its coming: it relax'd its course
As it approach'd me, and the wind that flows
Thro' 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, Laon, 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 dispread
Like the pine's locks upon the lingering blast;
Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread
Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
As o'er their glimmering forms the steed's broad shadow
 past.

XXII.

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust,
 His strong sides made the torrents rise in spray,
 And turbulence, as of a whirlwind's gust
 Surrounded us;—and still away! away!
 Thro' the desert night we sped, while she alway
 Gazed on a mountain which we near'd, 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 panted
 Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion
 Of waters, as in spots forever haunted
 By the choicest winds of Heaven, which are enchanted
 To music, by the wand of Solitude,
 That wizard wild, and the far tents implanted
 Upon the plain, be seen by those who stood
 Thence marking the dark shore of Ocean's curved flood.

XXIV.

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

* My own sweet Cythna look'd—*Revolt of Islam*.

XXV.

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

XXVI.

" Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer,
And we are here."—Then turning to the steed,
She press'd the white moon on his front with pure
And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed
From the green ruin pluck'd, 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 heap'd up the courser's bed
In a green mossy nook, with mountain flowers dispread.

XXVII.

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

XXVIII.

The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
A natural couch of leaves in that recess,

Which seasons none disturb'd, but in the shade
Of flowering parasites, did spring love to dress
With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars, when'er
The wandering wind her nurslings might caress;
Whose intertwining fingers ever there,
Made music wild and soft that fill'd the listening air.

XXIX.

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

XXX.

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

XXXI.

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses
Of inexpressive speech:—the youthful years

Which we together past, their hopes and fears,
 The common blood which ran within our frames,*
 That likeness of the features which endears
 The thoughts express'd 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 thro' a rent
 Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass,
 A wandering Meteor by some wild wind sent,
 Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent
 A faint and pallid lustre; while the song
 Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent,
 Strew'd strangest sounds the moving leaves among;
 A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

XXXIII.

The Meteor shew'd the leaves on which we sate,
 And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties
 Of her soft hair, which bent with gather'd 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 return'd:
 The beating of our veins one interval
 Made still; and then I felt the blood that burn'd
 Within her frame, mingle with mine, and fall
 Around my heart like fire; and over all

* The blood itself which ran within our frames.—*Revolt of Islam*.

A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
 And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
 Two disunited spirits when they leap
 In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

XXXV.

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

XXXVI.

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

XXXVII.

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
 But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
 Whose divine darkness fled not, from that green
 And lone recess, where lapt in peace did lie
 Our linked frames; till, from the changing sky,
 That night and still another day had fled;

And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
 And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread
 Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

XXXVIII.

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

XXXIX.

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
 Of interchanged vows, which, with a rite
 Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamp'd our union.—
 Few were the living hearts which could unite
 Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
 With such close sympathies, for to each other
 Had high and solemn hopes, the gentle might
 Of earliest love, and all the thoughts which smother
 Cold Evil's power, now link'd a sister and a brother.*

XL.

And such is Nature's modesty,† that those
 Who grow together cannot choose but love,

* With such close sympathies, for they had sprung
 From linked youth, and from the gentle might
 Of earliest love, delay'd and cherish'd long,
 Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest, strong.

Revolt of Islam.

† And such is Nature's law divine—*Ib.*

If faith or custom do not interpose,
 Or common slavery mar what else might move
 All gentlest thoughts; as in the sacred grove
 Which shades the springs of Æthiopian Nile,
 That living tree, which, if the arrowy dove
 Strike with her shadow, shrinks in fear awhile,
 But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sunbeams
 smile;

XLI.

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

XLII.

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

XLIII.

Since she had food:—therefore I did awaken
 The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane,

Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
Following me obediently; with pain
Of heart, so deep and dread, that one caress,
When lips and heart refuse to part again,
Till they have told their fill, could scarce express
The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness.

XLIV.

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

XLV.

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

XLVI.

There was a desolate village in a wood
Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
The hungry storm; it was a place of blood,
A heap of hearthless walls;—the flames were dead

Within those dwellings now,—the life had fled
 From all those corpses now,—but the wide sky
 Flooded with lightning was ribb'd overhead
 By the black rafters, and around did lie
 Women, and babes, and men, slaughter'd confusedly.

XLVII.

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

XLVIII.

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

XLIX.

"My name is Pestilence—this bosom dry,
 Once fed two babes—a sister and a brother—
 When I came home, one in the blood did lie
 Of three death-wounds—the flames had ate the other!
 Since then I have no longer been a mother,
 But I am Pestilence;—hither and thither

I flit about, that I may slay and smother:—
 All lips which I have kiss'd 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 kiss'd, alone. No more, no
 more!”

LI.

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

LII.

She leap'd 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 spurn'd 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 offer'd me;

LIII.

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

LIV.

And joy was ours to meet: she was most pale,
 Famish'd, 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 seem'd a deeper joy to taste,
 Than e'er the prosperous know; the steed behind
 Trod peacefully along the mountain waste,
 We reach'd our home ere morning could unbind
 Night's latest veil, and on our bridal couch reclined.

LV.

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

CANTO SEVENTH.

I.

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

II.

I told her of my sufferings and my madness,
And how, awaken'd 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 pursued
Each other down her fair and listening cheek
Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood
From sunbright dales; and when I ceased to speak,
Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

Her madness was a beam of light, a power
 Which dawn'd thro' the rent soul; and words it gave

Gestures and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore
Which might not be withstood, whence none could save
All who approach'd their sphere, like some calm wave
Vex'd 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
Of all things ill—distorted, bow'd 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 anchor'd then, where, be there calm or breeze,
The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
Shakes with the sleepless surge ;—the Æthiop there
Wound his long arms around her, and with knees
Like iron clasp'd 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 thro' the green silence of the main,
Thro' many a cavern which the eternal flood

Had scoop'd, 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 touch'd a golden chain—a sound arose like thunder.

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

“ Below, the fountain's brink was richly paven
 With the deep's wealth, coral, and pearl and sand
 Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven
 With mystic legends by no mortal hand,

Left there, when thronging to the moon's command,
The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate
Of mountains, and on such bright floor did stand
Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state
Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her heart create.

XIV.

“ The fiend of madness which had made its prey
Of my poor heart, was lull'd to sleep awhile :
There was an interval of many a day,
And a sea-eagle brought me food the while,
Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle,
And who, to be the jailor 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
Transform'd into the agony which I wore
Even as a poison'd 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 seem'd a being
Within me—a strange load my heart did bear,

As if some living thing had made its lair
 Even in the fountains of my life :—a long
 And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,
 Then grew, like sweet reality among
 Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

XVII.

“Methought I was about to be a mother—
 Month after month went by, and still I dream’d
 That we should soon be all to one another,
 I and my child ; and still new pulses seem’d
 To beat beside my heart, and still I deem’d
 There was a babe within—and when the rain
 Of winter thro’ the rifted cavern stream’d,
 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,—
 Tho’ ’twas a dream.”—Then Cythna did uplift
 Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to
 shift :

XIX.

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
 Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears ;
 Which, having past, as one whom sobs opprest,
 She spoke : “Yes, in the wilderness of years

Her memory, aye, like a green home appears,
She suck'd her fill even at this breast, sweet love,
For many months. I had no mortal fears ;
Methought I felt her lips and breath approve,—
It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

“ Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown
Weary with joy, and tired with our delight,
We, on the earth, like sister twins lay down
On one fair mother's bosom :—from that night

She fled ;—like those illusions clear and bright,
Which dwell in lakes, when the red moon on high
Pause ere it wakens tempest ;—and her flight,
Tho' 'twas the death of brainless phantasy,
Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

XXIII.

“ It seem'd 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,
Vex'd the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXIV.

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

XXV.

“ So now my reason was restored to me,
I struggled with that dream, which, like a beast
Most fierce and beautiful, in my memory
Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast ;

But all that cave and all its shapes possess
By thoughts which could not fade, renew'd each one
Some smile, some look, some gesture which had blest
Me heretofore : I sitting there alone,
Vex'd the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXVI.

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

XXVII.

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

XXVIII.

“ This waken'd me, it gave me human strength
And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose,
But I resumed my ancient powers at length ;
My spirit felt again like one of those

Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
 Of humankind their prey—what was this cave?
 Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows,
 Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
 Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX.

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

XXX.

“ We live in our own world, and mine was made
 From glorious phantasies of hope departed:
 Aye, we are darken'd 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
 Von dim and tading clouds which load the weary wind.

XXXI.

“ My mind became the book through which I grew
 Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
 Which like a mine I rifled through and through,
 To me the keeping of its secrets gave—

One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave
Whose calm reflects all moving things that are,
Necessity, and love, and life, the grave,
And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear ;
Justice, and truth, and time, and the world's natural
 sphere.

XXXII.

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

XXXIII.

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

XXXIV.

“ For to my will my fancies were as slaves
To do their sweet and subtle ministries ;
And oft from that bright fountain's shadowy waves
They would make human throngs gather and rise

To combat with my overflowing eyes,
 And voice made deep with passion—thus I grew
 Familiar with the shock and the surprise
 And war of earthly minds, from which I drew
 The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts
 anew.

XXXV.

“ And thus my prison was the populous earth—
 Where I saw—even as misery dreams of morn
 Before the east has given its glory birth—
 Religion’s pomp made desolate by the scorn
 Of Wisdom’s faintest smile, and thrones upturn,
 And dwellings of mild people 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 recompence
 For hope whose fountain can be thus profound,
 Even throned Evil’s splendid impotence,
 Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound
 Of hymns to truth and freedom—the dread bound
 Of life and death past fearlessly and well,
 Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
 Racks which degraded woman’s greatness tell,
 And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII.

“ Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare
 In storm-encompass’d 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 past, when sudden earthquake rent
 The depth of ocean, and the cavern crack'd
 With sound, as if the world's wide continent
 Had fall'n in universal ruin wrack'd;
 And thro' the clift stream'd in one cataract,
 The stifling waters:—when I woke, the flood
 Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sack'd
 Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode
 Before me yawn'd—a chasm desert, and bare, and broad.

XXXIX.

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

XL.

“My spirit moved upon the sea like wind
 Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover,
 Tho' it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
 The strength of tempest: day was almost over,
 When thro' 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 row’d
In awe thro’ many a new and fearful jag
Of overhanging rock, thro’ which there flow’d
The foam of streams that cannot make abode.
They came and question’d me, but when they heard
My voice, they became silent, and they stood
And moved as men in whom new love had stirr’d
Deep thoughts: so to the ship we past without a word.

CANTO EIGHTH.

I.

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

II.

“The Mariners obey’d—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 sail'd, came to my bed
 In dream, like that!—The Pilot then replied,
 ' It cannot be—she is a human Maid—
 Her low voice makes you weep—she is some bride,
 Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside.'

III.

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

IV.

" What dream ye? Your own hands have built 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 that God thus builds* for man in solitude?

V.

" What then is God? ye mock yourselves, and give
 A human heart to what ye cannot know:

* Dream ye some Power thus builds, &c.—*Revolt of Islam.*

As if the cause of life could think and live!
 'Twere as if man's own works should feel, and shew
 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 then is God? 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 worshipp'd was his own,
 His likeness in the world's vast mirror shewn;
 And 'twere an innocent dream, but that a faith
 Nursed by fear's dew of poison, grows thereon,
 And that men say, God has appointed Death*
 On all who scorn his will to wreak immortal wrath.

VII.

“Men say they have seen God, and heard from God,
 Or known from others who have known such things,
 And that his will is all our law, a rod
 To scourge us into slaves—that Priests and Kings,†
 Custom, domestic sway, ay, all that brings

* And that men say that Power has chosen Death
 On all who scorn its laws to wreak, &c.—*Revolt of Islam.*

† 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—*Ibid.*

Man's free-born soul beneath the oppressor's heel,
 Are his strong ministers, and that the stings
 Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel,
 Tho' truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold steel.

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

“ Its names are each a sign which maketh holy
 All power—ay, the ghost, the dream, the shade
 Of power,—lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly;
 The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made,
 A law to which mankind has been betray'd;

* And it is said, this Power will punish wrong.—*Revolt of Islam.*

† And deepest hell, and deathless snakes among—*Ibid.*

And human love, is as the name well known
 Of a dear mother, whom the murderer laid
 In bloody grave, and into darkness thrown,
 Gather'd her wilder'd 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
 Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.
 To give to all an equal share of good,
 To track the steps of freedom thro' thro' graves
 She pass, to suffer all in patient mood,
 To weep for crime tho' stain'd with thy friend's dearest
 blood.

XII.

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

XIII.

“But children near their parents tremble now,
 Because they must obey—one rules another,
 For it is said God rules both high and low,
 And man is made* the captive of his brother,

* And as one Power rules both high and low,
 So man is made, &c.—*Revolt of Islam.*

And Hate is throned on high with Fear his mother,
Above the Highest—and those fountain-cells,
Whence love yet flow'd when faith had choked all other,
Are darken'd—Woman, as the bond-slave, dwells
Of man a slave; and life is poison'd in its wells.

XIV.

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

XV.

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

Dungeons and palaces are transitory—
 High temples fade like vapour—Man alone
 Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

XVII.

“ Let all be free and equal!—from your hearts
 I feel an echo; thro’ 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 famish’d poor, pale, weak, and cold,
 Bear ye the earnings of their toil? unfold!
 Speak! are your hands in slaughter’s sanguine hue
 Stain’d freshly? have your hearts in guile grown old?
 Know yourselves thus! ye shall be pure as dew,
 And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

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

XXIII.

“ Speak thou! whence come ye?”...A Youth made reply,
“ Wearily, wearily o'er the boundless deep

We sail;—thou readest well the misery
 Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep
 Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,
 Or dare not write on the dishonour'd brow;
 Even from our childhood have we learn'd to steep
 The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
 And never dream'd of hope or refuge until now.

XXIV.

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

XXV.

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

XXVI.

“For she must perish in the tyrant's hall—
 Alas, alas!”—He ceased, and by the sail
 Sate cowering—but his sobs were heard by all,
 And still before the ocean and the gale

The ship fled fast 'till the stars 'gan to fail,
And round me gather'd with mute countenance,
The Seamen gazed, the Pilot, worn and pale
With toil, the Captain with grey locks, whose glance
Met mine in restless awe—they stood as in a trance.

XXVII.

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

XXVIII.

“The very darkness shook, as with a blast
Of subterranean thunder at the cry;
The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
Into the night, as if the sea, and sky,
And earth, rejoiced with new-born liberty,
For in that name they swore! Bolts were undrawn,
And on the deck, with unaccustom'd 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 unawaken'd 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 alter'd lot,
 In the bright wisdom of youth's breathless noon,
 Sweet talk, and smiles, and sighs, all bosoms did attune.

XXX.

“ But one was mute, her cheeks and lips most fair,
 Changing their hue like lilies newly blown,
 Beneath a bright acacia's shadowy hair,
 Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
 Shew'd 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 NINTH.

I.

“ THAT night we anchor'd in a woody bay,
 And sleep no more around us dared to hover
 Than, when all doubt and fear has past away,
 It shades the couch of some unresting lover,
 Whose heart is now at rest: thus night past over
 In mutual joy:—around, a forest grew
 Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover
 The waning stars prank'd 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 wreathes of budding foliage seem'd to flow
 Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow
 Were canopied with blooming boughs,—the while
 On the slant sun's path o'er the waves we go
 Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle
 Doom'd 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 thro' human hearts with stream which drown'd
 Its struggling fears and cares, dark custom's brood,
 They knew not whence it came, but felt around
 A wide contagion pour'd—they call'd aloud
 On Liberty—that name lived on the sunny flood.

V.

“We reach'd the port—alas! from many spirits
 The wisdom which had waked that cry was fled,
 Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits
 From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,

Upon the night's devouring darkness shed:
Yet soon bright day will burst—even like a chasm
Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead,
Which wrap the world; a wide enthusiasm,
To cleanse the fever'd world as with an earthquake's spasm!

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

“ Some said I was a maniac wild and lost;
Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave
The Prophet's virgin bride, a heavenly ghost:—
Some said, I was a fiend from my weird cave,
Who had stolen human shape, and o'er the wave,

The forest, and the mountain came;—some said
I was the child of God, sent down to save
Women from bonds and death, and on my head
The burthen of their sins would frightfully be laid.

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

“ Those who were sent to bind me, wept, and felt
Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasp'd them round,
Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt
In the white furnace; and a vision'd swound,
A pause of hope and awe the City bound,

Which, like the silence of a tempest's birth,
 When in its awful shadow it has wound
 The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth,
 Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leapt forth.

XII.

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

XIII.

“ The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear,
 The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event—
 That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
 And whatsoever, when force is impotent,
 To fraud the sceptre of the world has lent,
 Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway.
 Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent
 To curse the rebels.—To their God 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,

* To their gods, &c.—*Revolt of Islam.*

Because her sons were free,—and that among
 Mankind, the many to the few belong,
 By God, and Nature, and Necessity.*
 They said, that age was truth, and that the young,
 Marr'd with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
 With which old times and men had quell'd 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, and must ever be,
 They said, even God, who, the necessity
 Of rule and wrong had arm'd against mankind,
 His slave and his avenger there to be ;
 That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind,
 And that the will of one was peace, and we
 Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery.

XVI.

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

* By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity.—*Revolt of Islam.*

† There was one teacher, who necessity
 Had arm'd with strength and wrong against mankind,
 His slave and his avenger aye to be.—*Ibid.*

XVII.

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

XVIII.

“ For gold was as a God whose faith began
 To fade, so that its worshippers were few,
 And Hell and Awe, which in the heart of man*
 Is God itself; the Priests its downfall knew,
 As day by day their altars lonelier grew,
 Till they were left 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, tho’ human love should make me weep.

* 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—*Revolt of Islam.*

We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
And I do feel a mighty calmness creep
Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-
morrow.

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

“ O Spring, of hope, and love, and youth, and gladness,
Wind-winged emblem! brightest, best and fairest!
Whence comest thou, when, with dark winter’s sadness
The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest;
Sister of joy, thou art the child who wearest
Thy mother’s dying smile, tender and sweet;

Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest
 Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet,
 Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding-sheet.

XXIII.

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

XXIV.

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

XXV.

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

XXVI.

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

XXVII.

“ In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
Which made them great, the good will ever find;
And tho’ some envious shade may interlope
Between the effect and it, one comes behind,
Who aye the future to the past will bind—
Necessity, whose sightless strength forever
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 heap’d over our remains
 Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot,
 Whate’er it be, when in these mingling veins
 The blood is still, be ours; let sense and thought
 Pass from our being, or be number’d not
 Among the things that are; let those who come
 Behind, for whom our stedfast will has bought
 A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
 Insult with careless tread, our undivided tomb.

XXX.

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

XXXI.

“ And Calumny meanwhile shall feed on us,
 As worms devour the dead, and near the throne
 And at the altar, most accepted thus
 Shall sneers and curses be;—what we have done
 None shall dare vouch, tho’ 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 perish’d scrolls of unending brass.

XXXII.

“ The while we two, beloved, must depart.
 And Sense and Reason, those enchanters fair

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

XXXIII.

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

XXXIV.

“Yes, yes—thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm—
 O! willingly beloved, would these eyes,
 Might they no more drink being from thy form,
 Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
 Close their faint orbs in death: I fear nor prize
 Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee—
 Yes, Love when wisdom fails make Cythna wise:
 Darkness and death, if death be true, must be
 Dearer than life and hope, if unenjoy'd 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,
 Tho' it change all but thee!"—She ceased, night's gloom
 Meanwhile had fall'n on earth from the sky's sunless dome.

XXXVI.

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

CANTO TENTH.

I.

WAS there a human spirit in the steed,
 That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,
 He broke our linked rest? or do indeed
 All living things a common nature own,
 And thought erect 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 answer'd me with her most soothing song,
Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale
With grief, and sigh'd beneath ; from many a dale
The Antelopes 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 bore me abroad,
And I return'd with food to our retreat,
And dark intelligence ; the blood which flow'd
Over the fields, had stain'd the courser's feet ;—
Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew,—then meet
The vulture, and the wild-dog, and the snake,
The wolf, and the hyæna grey, and eat
The dead in horrid truce : their throngs did make
Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
His countenance in lies,—even at the hour
When he was snatch'd 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 call'd :—they knew his cause their own, and swore
Like wolves, and serpents to their mutual wars
Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven
abhors.

VIII.

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

IX.

“ But first, go slay the rebels—why return
 The victor bands ?” he said ; “ millions yet live,
 Of whom the weakest with one word might turn
 The scales of victory yet ;—let none survive
 But those within the walls—each fifth shall give
 The expiation for his brethren here.—
 Go forth, and waste and kill !”—“ O king, forgive
 My speech,” a soldier answer'd—“ 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 flash'd among the stars, past.”—“ Dost thou stand
 Parleying with me, thou wretch ?” the king replied ;
 “ Slaves, bind him to the wheel ; and of this band,
 Whoso will drag that woman to his side
 That scared him thus, may burn his dearest foe beside ;

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

First Want, then Plague came on the beasts; their food
Fail'd, 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 track'd the hosts in festival array,
From their dark deserts; gaunt and wasting now,
Stalk'd like fell shades among their perish'd prey;
In their green eyes a strange disease did glow,
They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

XV.

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

XVI.

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

XVII.

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare;
So on those strange and congregated hosts
Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air
Groan'd with the burthen of a new despair;
Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
Feeds from her thousand breasts, tho' 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 perish'd; on the shore
The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown;
The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
Creak'd 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 burn'd;—so that the meanest food was weigh'd
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 weigh'd it in small scales—and many a face
Was fix'd in eager horror then: his gold
The miser brought, the tender maid, grown bold
Thro' hunger, bared her scorned charms in vain;
The mother brought her eldest born, controll'd
By instinct blind as love, but turn'd again
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

XX.

Then fell blue Plague upon the race of man.
“O, for the sheathed steel, so late which gave

Oblivion to the dead, when the streets ran
 With brothers' blood! O, that the earthquake's grave
 Would gape, or Ocean lift its stifling wave!¹⁹
 Vain cries—throughout the streets, thousands pursued
 Each by his fiery torture howl and rave,
 Or sit, in frenzy's unimagined mood,
 Upon fresh heaps of dead; a ghastly multitude.

XXI.

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

XXII.

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

* The avenging Power his hell on earth has spread.

Revolt of Islam.

XXIII.

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

XXIV.

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

XXV.

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
That linger'd on his lips, the warrior's might
Was loosen'd, and a new and ghastlier night
In dreams of frenzy lapp'd 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, thro' the desolate streets to the high fane,
 Of their Almighty God, the 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 scorn'd 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 suffer'd for thy fame
 Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven,
 Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be driven.

XXVIII.

"O God Almighty! 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 stabb'd thine enemies, and made
 The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a fane,
 Where thou wert worshipp'd with their blood, and laid

* The many-tongued and endless armies wind—*Revolt of Islam.*

† O King of Glory! thou alone hast power!—*Ibid.*

Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works
have weigh'd ?

XXIX.

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

XXX.

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

XXXI.

And Oromaze, and Christ, and Mahomet,*
Moses, and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, 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 howl

* And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet—*Revolt of Islam.*

“ 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 thro’ every
 soul.

XXXII.

He was a Christian Priest* from whom it came,
 A zealous man, who led the legion’d west
 With words which faith and pride had steep’d in flame,
 To quell the rebel Atheists ; † a dire guest
 Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
 Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,
 Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest ;
 He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined
 To wreak his fear of God‡ in vengeance on mankind.

XXXIII.

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
 Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear,
 Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
 Even where his Idol stood ; for, far and near
 Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
 That faith and tyranny were trampled down ;
 Many a pale victim, doom’d 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 mock’d his keen desire :
 So he made truce with those who did despise

* ’Twas an Iberian Priest—*Revolt of Islam*.

† To quell the unbelievers—*Ibid*.

‡ his fear of Heaven—*Ibid*.

His cradled Idol, and the sacrifice
 Of God to God's own wrath,—that Islam's creed*
 Might crush for him those deadlier enemies ;
 For fear of God did in his bosom breed
 A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV.

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

XXXVI.

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

* The expiation, and the sacrifice,
 That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed—

Revolt of Islam.

† And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturn'd.—

Ibid.

XXXVII.

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

XXXVIII.

“ Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep :—
 Pile high the pyre of expiation now !
 A forest's spoil of boughs, and on the heap
 Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow,
 When touch'd 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,
 Link'd tight with burning brass, perish !—then pray
 That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire
 Of God 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.

* Of Heaven may be appeased.—*Revolt of Islam*.

XL.

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

XLI.

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

XLII.

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

* Girt round with storms and shadows sate alone

Revolt of Islam.

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
 Heap'd corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
 The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
 Earth's cold and sullen brooks ; in silence still,
 The pale survivors stood ; ere noon, the fear
 Of hell became a panic, which did kill
 Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear
 As "hush ! hark ! Come they yet ? God, God, thine hour
 is near !"*

XLV.

And Priests rush'd thro' their ranks, some counterfeiting
 The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed
 With their own lies ; they said their God was waiting
 To see his enemies writhe, and burn, and bleed,—
 And that, till then, the snakes of hell had need
 Of human souls :—three hundred furnaces
 Soon blazed thro' the wide City, where, with speed,

* Just heaven ! thine hour is near.—*Revolt of Islam.*

Men brought their atheist kindred* to appease
 God's wrath, and while they burn'd, knelt round on quiver-
 ing knees.

XLVI.

The noontide sun was darken'd with that smoke,
 The winds of eve dispersed those ashes grey,
 The madness which these rites had lull'd, 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 dragg'd three children then,
 To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head,
 And laugh'd and died; and that unholy men,
 Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead,
 Look'd from their meal, and saw an Angel tread
 The threshold of God's throne, 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 burn'd 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,

* Men brought their infidel kindred—*Revolt of Islam*.

† The visible floor of heaven, and it was she!—*Ibid*.

And sung a low sweet song, of which alone
One word was heard, and that was Liberty ;
And that some kiss'd their marble feet, with moan
Like love, and died, and then that they did die
With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

CANTO ELEVENTH.

I.

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

II.

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains ;
Before its blue and moveless depth were flying
Grey mists pour'd 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 shatter'd vapours, which defying
The power of light in vain, toss'd 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 gush'd forth like fire, and as if sway'd
By some mute tempest, roll'd on *her* ; the shade
Of her bright image floated on the river
Of liquid light, which then did end and fade—
Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver ;
Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

IV.

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

V.

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
Was now heard there ;—her dark and intricate eyes
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
Absorb'd the glories of the burning skies,
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
Array'd her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright

VI.

She would have clasp'd 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 past by
On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

VIII.

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

IX.

Not death—death was no more refuge or rest;
Not life—it was despair to be!—not sleep,

For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossess'd
 All natural dreams: to wake was not to weep,
 But to gaze mad and pallid, at the leap
 To which the Future, like a snaky scourge,
 Or like some tyrant's eye, which aye doth keep
 Its withering beam upon his slaves, did urge
 Their steps; they heard the roar of Hell's sulphureous
 surge.

X.

Each of that multitude alone, and lost
 To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew;
 As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tost,
 Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew
 Whilst now the ship is splitting thro' and thro';
 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 stirr'd.

XI.

Why became cheeks wan with the kiss of death,
 Paler from hope? they had sustain'd despair.
 Why watch'd 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 contain'd? see! hark!
 They come, they come, give way! alas, ye deem
 Falsely—'tis but a crowd of maniacs stark

Driven, like a troop of spectres, thro' the dark,
From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung,
A lurid earth-star, which dropp'd 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,
Join'd that strange dance in fearful sympathies ;
There was the silence of a long despair,
When the last echo of those terrible cries
Came from a distant street, like agonies
Stifled afar. Before the Tyrant's throne
All night his aged Senate sate, their eyes
In stony expectation fix'd; 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
Conceal'd 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 address'd
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 obey'd
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 God for aid* in your distress;
Alas, that ye, the mighty and the wise,
Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less
Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies
Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
To blind your slaves:—consider your own thought,
An empty and a cruel sacrifice
Ye now prepare, for a vain idol wrought
Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brought.

XVII.

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

XVIII.

“Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
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

* Ye turn to Heaven for aid—*Revolt of Islam*.

Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came,
That Want, and Plague, and Fear, from slavery flow;
And that mankind is free, and that the shame
Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom's fame!

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

"It doth avail not that I weep for ye—
Ye cannot change, since ye are old and grey,
And ye have chosen your lot—your fame must be
A book of blood, whence in a milder day
Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapt in clay:
Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon's friend,

And him to your revenge will I betray,
 So ye concede one easy boon. Attend!
 For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

XXII.

“ There is a People mighty in its youth,
 A land beyond the Occans of the West,
 Where, tho’ with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
 Are worshipp’d; 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 oppress’d,
 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 noontide beam, whose golden plume
 Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
 Of sunrise gleams when Earth is wrapt in gloom;
 An epitaph of glory for the tomb
 Of murder’d Europe may thy fame be made,
 Great People: as the sands shalt thou become;
 Thy growth is swift as morn, when night must fade;
 The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade.

XXIV.

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

XXV.

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

CANTO TWELFTH.

I.

THE transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness
 Spread thro' the multitudinous streets, fast flying
 Upon the wings 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 fill'd 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

* Swear by the Power ye dread.—*Revolt of Islam.*

The blackness of the faith it seems to hide;
And see, the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide
Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears—
A Shape of light is sitting by his side,
A child most beautiful. I' the midst appears
Laon,—exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

And see! beneath a sun-bright canopy,
Upon a platform level with the pile,
The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
Girt by the chieftains of the host; all smile

In expectation, but one child: the while
I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
Of fire, and look around; each distant isle
Is dark in the bright dawn; towers far and near,
Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

VI.

There was such silence through the host, as when
An earthquake trampling on some populous town,
Has crush'd 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.

VII.

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

VIII.

They fly—the torches fall—a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant!—they recede!
For ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed
Dark and gigantic, with the tempest's speed,
Bursts thro' their ranks: a woman sits thereon,

Fairer it seems than aught that earth can breed,
 Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn,
 A spirit from the caves of day-light wandering gone.

IX.

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

X.

They pause, they blush, they gaze,—a gathering shout
 Bursts like one sound from the ten thousand streams
 Of a tempestuous sea:—that sudden rout
 One check'd, 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 sear'd with blistering ice—but he misdeems
 That he is wise, whose wounds do only bleed
 Inly for self, thus thought that Christian Priest indeed,*

XI.

And others too, thought he was wise to see,
 In pain, and fear, and hate, something divine
 In love and beauty—no divinity.—
 Now with a bitter smile, whose light did shine

* thus thought the Iberian Priest indeed—*Revolt of Islam.*

Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and cync,
 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? God has sent his other victim here."*

XII.

"Were it not impious," said the King, "to break
 Our holy oath?"—"Impious to keep it, say!"
 Shrick'd the exulting Priest—"Slaves, to the stake
 Bind her, and on my head the burthen lay
 Of her just torments:—at the Judgment Day
 Will I stand up before God's golden throne
 And cry, O Lord, to thee did I betray
 An Atheist;† but for me she would have known
 Another moment's joy! the glory be thine own."

XIII.

They trembled, but replied not, nor obey'd,
 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 kiss'd 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 beam'd from Cythna now.

* Heaven has sent its other victim here.—*Revolt of Islam*.

† Will I stand up before the golden throne
 Of Heaven, and cry, to thee did I betray
 An Infidel; &c.—*Ibid*.

XIV.

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

XV.

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

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approach'd, borne by the musical air
Along the waves which sung and sparkled under
Its rapid keel—a winged shape sate there,
A child with silver-shining wings, so fair,
That as her bark did thro' 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 turn'd 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 spoke ; “ Ay, this is Paradise
And not a dream, and we are all united !
Lo, that is mine own child, who in the guise
Of madness came, like day to one benighted
In lonesome woods : my heart is now too well requited !”

XXIII.

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

XXIV.

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

XXV.

" When the consuming flames had wrapt me round,
The hope which I had cherish'd went away ;
I fell in agony on the senseless ground,
And hid mine eyes in dust, and far astray
My mind was gone, when bright, like dawning day,
The Spectre of the Plague before me flew,
And breathed upon my lips, and seem'd 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-extinguish'd pyre
In its own grey and shrunken ashes lying ;
The pitchy smoke of the departed fire
Still hung in many a hollow dome and spire
Above the towers like night ; beneath whose shade
Awed by the ending of their own desire
The armies stood ; a vacancy was made
In expectation's depth, and so they stood dismay'd.

XXVII.

“ The frightful silence of that alter'd 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 evenom'd dream
A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste, I deem.

XXVIII.

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

XXIX.

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

XXX.

“ ‘ For me the world is grown too void and cold,
 Since hope pursues immortal destiny
 With steps thus slow—therefore shall ye behold
 How Atheists and Republicans can die ;†
 Tell to your children this ! then suddenly
 He sheathed a dagger in his heart and fell ;
 My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me
 There came a murmur from the crowd, to tell
 Of deep and mighty change which suddenly befell.

XXXI.

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

* In pain and fire have unbelievers gone—*Revolt of Islam*.

† How those who love, yet fear not, dare to die—*Ibid*.

XXXII.

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

XXXIII.

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

XXXIV.

A scene of joy and wonder to behold
That river's shapes and shadows changing ever,
Where the broad sunrise, fill'd 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 pour'd a holier day,
One vast and glittering lake around green islands lay.

XXXV.

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

XXXVI.

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

XXXVII.

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

XXXVIII.

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

XXXIX.

Steady and swift, where the waves roll'd 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 past, and our aerial speed suspended.
 We look behind ; a golden mist did quiver
 When its wild surges with the lake were blended :
 Our bark hung there, as one line* suspended
 Between two heavens, that windless waveless lake ;
 Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
 By mists, aye feed ; from rocks and clouds they break,
 And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

* Qy?—on a line.

XLI.

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

THE CENCI.

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY PERCY B. SHELLEY.



ITALY.

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DEDICATION.

TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,



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

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

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

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

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

All happiness attend you!

Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Rome, May 29, 1819.



P R E F A C E.

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 crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue. The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty. Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

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

I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice, which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

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

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous : any thing like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes, may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself ; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant

and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well : but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another ; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better ; but she would never have been a tragic character : the few whom such an exhibition would have interested, could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification ; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge, that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered, consists.

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

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

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

* An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in "El Purgatorio de San Patricio" of Calderon : the only

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects I have written more carelessly ; that is, without an over-fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert, that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men ; and that our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted ; I need not be assured that success is a very different matter ; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavoured whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is most admirable as a work of art : it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features : she seems sad and stricken

plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece

down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery, from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate ; the eye-brows are distant and arched : the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed, and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear : her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another : her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and 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.



THE CENCI.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.		ORSINO, a Prelate.
GIACOMO, } his sons.		SAVELLA, the Pope's Legate.
BERNARDO, }		OLIMPIO, } Assassins.
CARDINAL CAMILLO.		MARZIO, }

ANDREA, Servant to Cenci.

Nobles, Judges, Guards, Servants.

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

BEATRICE, his daughter.

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

TIME.—During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter COUNT CENCI and CARDINAL CAMILLO.

Cam. THAT matter of the murder is hush'd up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.
It needeth 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
 Enrich'd the Church, and respited from hell
 An erring soul which might repent and live :—
 But that the glory and the interest
 Of the high throne he fills, little consist
 With making it a daily mart of guilt
 So manifold and hideous as the deeds
 Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

Cen. 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 threaten'd to divulge,
 Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
 The deed he saw could not have rated higher
 Than his most worthless life :—it angers me !
 Respited me from Hell !—So may the Devil
 Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope
 Clement,
 And his most charitable nephews, pray
 That the Apostle Peter and the saints
 Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
 Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
 Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
 Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
 To which they shew no title.

Cam. 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
 Thro' 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 barr'd 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 vanish'd not : I mark'd
 Your desperate and remorseless manhood ; now
 Do I behold you, in dishonour'd 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.

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

Cam. Thou execrable man, beware !—

Cen. Of thee ?
 Nay, this is idle : we should know each other.
 As to my character for what men call crime,
 Seeing I please my senses as I list,
 And vindicate that right with force or guile,
 It is a public matter, and I care not

If I discuss it with you. I may speak
 Alike to you and my own conscious heart ;
 For you give out that you have half reform'd me,
 Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent
 If fear should not ; both will, I do not doubt.
 All men delight in sensual luxury,
 All men enjoy revenge ; and most exult
 Over the tortures they can never feel—
 Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
 But I delight in nothing else. I love
 The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
 When this shall be another's and that mine.
 And I have no remorse and little fear,
 Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
 This mood has grown upon me, until now
 Any design my captious fancy makes
 The picture of its wish, and it forms none
 But such as men like you would start to know,
 Is as my natural food and rest debarr'd
 Until it be accomplish'd.

Cam.

Art thou not

Most miserable ?

Cen.

Why miserable ?—

No. I am what your theologians call
 Harden'd ; which they must be in impudence,
 So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
 True, I was happier than I am, while yet
 Manhood remain'd to act the thing I thought ;
 While lust was sweeter than revenge ; and now
 Invention palls : ay, we must all grow old :
 But that there yet remains a deed to act
 Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
 Duller than mine—I'd do,—I know not what.
 When I was young I thought of nothing else
 But pleasure, and I fed on honey sweets :

Men, by St. Thomas ! cannot live like bees,
 And I grew tired : yet, till I kill'd 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 fix'd 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 my power,
 Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
 For hourly pain.

Cam. Hell's most abandon'd 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.

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

Cen. Bid him attend me in the grand saloon.
(*Exit Andrea.*)

Cam. Farewell ; and I will pray
 Almighty God that thy false, impious words
 Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee.
(*Exit Camillo.*)

Cen. The third of my possessions ! I must use
 Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
 Falls from my wither'd 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 damn'd : then, as to Beatrice—

(Looking around him suspiciously.)

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

Enter ANDREA.

Andr. My Lord !

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

(Exeunt.)

SCENE II.

A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter BEATRICE and ORSINO,
as in conversation.

Beatr. Pervert not truth,
Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation ;—nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress ;—two long years are past
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.

Ors. You said you loved me then.

Beatr. You are a priest,
Speak to me not of love.

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

Beatr. As I have said, speak to me not of love.
Had you a dispensation, I have not ;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino ! all the love that once
I felt for you is turn'd to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might ;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we should 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
Discover'd that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah ! No, forgive me ; sorrow makes me seem
Stern than else my nature might have been ;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forbode—but what can they forbode
Worse than I now endure ?

Ors. 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.

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

(Aside) Alas !

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

(To Orsino.)

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

Ors. 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 debarr'd 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 slave,
 And live a free life as to wine or women,
 And with a peevish temper may return
 To a dull home, and rate his wife and children ;
 Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
 I shall be well content if on my conscience
 There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
 From the devices of my love—A net
 From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
 Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
 Whose beams 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,
 NOBLES.

Cen. 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.

1. *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 !

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

Cen. 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 accomplish'd, 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.

Beatr. (to Lucretia) Great God ! how horrible ! Some dreadful ill
Must have befall'n my brothers.

Lucr. Fear not, child ;
He speaks too frankly.

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

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

You hear me not :—I tell you they are dead :
And they will need no food or raiment more :
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me, my heart is wondrous glad.

(Lucretia sinks, half fainting ; Beatrice supports her.)

Beatr. 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 know'st that it is false.

Cen. 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 crush'd him to a mummy ;
The rest escaped unhurt. Christofano
Was stabb'd in error by a jealous man,
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival ;

All in the self-same hour of the same night ;
 Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
 I beg those friends who love me, that they mark
 The day a feast upon their calendars.
 It was the twenty-seventh of December :
 Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.
 (*The assembly appears confused; several of the guests
 rise.*)

1. *Guest.* Oh, horrible ! I will depart.

2. *Guest.* And I.

3. *Guest.* No, stay!

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

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

A Guest (rising.) Thou wretch!
 Will none among this noble company
 Check the abandon'd villain?

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

2. *Guest.* Seize, silence him !

1. *Guest.* I will !

3. *Guest.* And I !

Cen. (*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 seal'd commission of a king,
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

(*The banquet is broken up; several of the guests are departing.*)

Beatr. I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
What, although tyranny and impious hate
Stand shelter'd by a father's hoary hair:
What, if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them, and triumphs ? What, if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter ? Shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world ?
Oh, think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence, in a child's prone mind,
Till it thus vanquish shame and fear ! O, think !
I have borne much, and kiss'd the sacred hand
Which crush'd us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement !
Have excused much, doubted ; and, when no doubt
Remain'd, have sought by patience, love, and tears,
To soften him ; and, when this could not be,
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights

And lifted up to God, the Father of all,
 Passionate prayers; and when these were not heard,
 I have still borne—until I meet you here,
 Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
 Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
 His wife remains and I, whom, if ye save not,
 Ye may soon share such merriment again
 As fathers make over their children's graves.
 Oh! Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman;
 Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain;
 Camillo, thou art chief justiciary;
 Take us away!

Cen. (*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.

Beatr. (*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!

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

Colon. Nothing that I see.

Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy;
 Yet I would second any one.

A Card.

And I.

Cen. Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!

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

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

(Exeunt all but Cenci and Beatrice.)

My brain is swimming round;

Give me a bowl of wine!

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

Here, Andrea,

Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening, but I must;
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do.

(Drinking the wine.)

Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,

And age's firm, cold, subtle villany;
 As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
 Which I did thirst to drink! The charm works well;
 It must be done; it shall be done, I swear! (Exit.)

End of the First Act.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Cenci Palace: Enter LUCRETIA and
 BERNARDO.

Lucr. Weep not, my gentle boy; he struck but me,
 Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
 Had kill'd 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.

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

Lucr. Alas! poor boy, what else couldst thou have
 done?

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatr. (In a hurried voice.)
 Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?
 Ah! no, that is his step upon the stairs;
 'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door;

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

Enter a Servant.

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

Serv. My master bids me say, the Holy Father
 Has sent back your petition thus unopen'd.

(Giving a paper.)

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

Lucr. At the Ave Mary. *(Exit Servant.)*
 So, daughter, our last hope has fail'd. Ah me,
 How pale you look; you tremble, and you stand
 Wrapt in some fix'd and fearful meditation,
 As if one thought were over strong for you:
 Your eyes have a chill glare; O dearest child!
 Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.

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

Lucr. You talk'd 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 look'd 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 past I sat all weak and wild;
 Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
 Check'd his unnatural pride; and I could see
 The devil was rebuked that lives in him.

Until this hour thus you have ever stood
 Between us and your father's moody wrath
 Like a protecting presence: your firm mind
 Has been our only refuge and defence:
 What can have thus subdued it? What can now
 Have given you that cold melancholy look,
 Succeeding to your unaccustom'd fear?

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

Lucr. Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
 What did your father do or say to you?
 He stay'd not after that accursed feast
 One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

Ber. O sister, sister, prithee speak to us!

Beatr. (*Speaking very slowly with a forced calmness.*)
 It was one word, mother, one little word;
 One look, one smile. (*Wildly.*)

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

Ah! no, 'tis nothing new.
 The sufferings we all share have made me wild:
 He only struck and cursed me as he pass'd.
 He said, he look'd, he did,—nothing at all
 Beyond his wont, yet it disorder'd me.

Alas! I am forgetful of my duty,
I should preserve my senses for your sake.

Lucr. 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 remember'd only as a dream.

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

Ber. 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!

Lucr. My dear, dear children!

Enter CENCI, suddenly.

Cen. What, Beatrice here!
Come hither.

(She shrinks back, and covers her face.)

Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair;
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,

Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you—but in vain.

Beatr. (Wildly staggering towards the door.)
Oh, that the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!

Cen. Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you: from this day and hour
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unalter'd cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber!
(To Ber.) Thou, too, loathed image of thy cursed mother,
Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!

(Exeunt Beatr. and Ber.)

(Aside.) So much has pass'd 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!

Lucr. (Advancing timidly towards him.)
O husband! pray forgive poor Beatrice,
She meant not any ill.

Cen. Nor you, perhaps?
Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?
Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirr'd
Enmity up against me with the Pope?
Whom in one night merciful God cut off:
Innocent lambs! they thought not any ill.
You were not here conspiring? You said nothing
Of how I might be dungeon'd as a madman;

Or be condemn'd to death for some offence,
 And you would be the witnesses?—This failing,
 How just it were to hire assassins, or
 Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
 Or smother me when overcome by wine?
 Seeing we had no other judge but God,
 And he had sentenced me, and there were none
 But you to be the executioners
 Of his decree enregister'd in heaven?
 Oh, no! You said not this?

Lucr. So help me God,
 I never thought the things you charge me with!

Cen. If you dare speak that wicked lie again
 I'll kill you. What! It was not by your counsel
 That Beatrice disturb'd 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 judg'd that men were bolder than they are;
 Few dared to stand between their grave and me.

Lucr. Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation,
 I knew not aught that Beatrice design'd;
 Nor do I think she design'd any thing
 Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

Cen. Blaspheming liar! You are damn'd for this!
 But I will take you where you may persuade
 The stones you tread on to deliver you:
 For men shall there be none but those who dare
 All things: not question that which I command.
 On Wednesday next I shall set out: you know
 That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella;
 'Tis safely wall'd, 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!

(Exit Lucretia.)

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

(Exit.)

SCENE II.

A chamber in the Vatican. Enter CAMILLO and GIACOMO, in
conversation.

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

Giac. Nothing more? Alas!
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged, sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been train'd in no high-born necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
A hundred servants, and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require?—

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

Giac. 'Tis hard for a firm man to bear: but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father
Without a bond or witness to the deed:
And children who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope would interpose,
And stretch authority beyond the law?

Cam. Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
Your father's cruel hand; he frown'd, and said,
"Children are disobedient, and they sting
Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
"Requiting years of care with contumely.
"I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
"His outraged love perhaps awaken'd 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.

Ors. What words ?

Giac. Alas, repeat them not again !

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

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

Giac. But you, Orsino,

Have the petition : wherefore not present it ?

Ors. I have presented it, and back'd it with
 My earnest prayers and urgent interest ;
 It was return'd unanswer'd. I doubt not
 But that the strange and execrable deeds
 Alleged in it (in truth they might well baffle
 Any belief) have turn'd the Pope's displeasure
 Upon the accusers from the criminal :
 So I should guess from what Camillo said.

Giac. My friend, that palace-walking devil, Gold,

Has whisper'd silence to his Holiness,
 And, being left as scorpions ring'd 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.)

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

Giac. Ask me not what I think ; the unwilling brain
 Feigns often what it would not ; and we trust
 Imagination with such fantasies
 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.

Ors. 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.

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

Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell !
 I would that to my own suspected self
 I could address a word so full of peace.

Ors. Farewell !—Be your thoughts better or more bold.

(Exit Giacomo.)

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
 To feed his hope with cold encouragement :
 It fortunately serves my close designs
 That 'tis a trick of this same family
 To analyse their own and other minds.
 Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
 Dangerous secrets ; for it tempts our powers,
 Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
 Into the depth of darkest purposes :
 So Cenci fell into the pit ; even I,
 Since Beatrice unveil'd me to myself,
 And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
 Shew 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 murder'd ?—Yet, if murder'd,
 Wherefore by me ? And what if I could take
 The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
 In such an action ? Of all earthly things
 I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words ;
 And such is Cenci : and while Cenci lives
 His daughter's dowry were a secret grave,
 If a priest wins her.—Oh, fair Beatrice !
 Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee
 Could but despise danger and gold and all
 That frowns between my wish and its effect,
 Or smiles beyond it ! There is no escape—
 Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,

And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,
So, when I wake my blood seems liquid fire ;
And, if I strike my damp and dizzy head,
My hot palm scorches it : her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant ; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights,
Till weak inagination 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 unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved :
And she !—Once more take courage, my faint heart ;
What dares a friendless maiden match'd with thee ?
I have such foresight as assures success :
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions ; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes
Its empire add its prey of other hearts,
Till it become his slave—as I will do. (Exit.)

End of the Second Act.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. LUCRETIA, to her enter
BEATRICE.

Beatr. (*She enters staggering, and speaks wildly.*)
Reach me that handkerchief!—My brain is hurt;
My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me—
I see but indistinctly:—

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

Beatr. How comes this hair undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—O, horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels—My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is fleck'd with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe
In charnel pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me—'tis substantial, heavy, thick,
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another,
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt

Before ; for I am mad beyond all doubt !

(More wildly.)

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

(A pause.)

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

Lucr. What ails thee, my poor child ?—She answers
not :

Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause ; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung.

Beatr. *(frantically.)* Like parricide—
Misery has kill'd its father : yet, its father
Never like mine—O God ! what thing am I ?

Lucr. My dearest child, what has your father done ?

Beatr. *(doubtfully.)*

Who art thou, questioner ? I have no father. *(Aside.)*
She is the mad-house nurse who tends on me,
It is a piteous office.

(To Lucretia, in a slow, subdued voice.)

Do you know

I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair ;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams,
That I imagined—no, it cannot be !
Horrible things have been in this wild world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange

Of good and ill ; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed

As— *(Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.)*

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

Lucr. Oh !

My sweet child, know you—

Beatr. Yet speak it not :

For then if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Link'd 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 talk'd some wild words, but will no more,

Mother, come near me : from this point of time,

I am— *(Her voice dies away faintly.)*

Lucr. Alas! what has befall'n thee, child?

What has thy father done ?

Beatr. What have I done ?

Am I not innocent ? Is it my crime

That one with white hair, and imperious brow,

Who tortured me from my forgotten years,

As parents only dare, should call himself

My father, yet should be— Oh, what am I ?

What name, what place, what memory, shall be mine ?

What retrospects, outliving even despair ?

Lucr. He is a violent tyrant, surely, child :

We know that death alone can make us free ;

His death or ours. But what can he have done

Of deadlier outrage or worse injury ?

Thou art unlike thyself ; thine eyes shoot forth

A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,

Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.

Beatr. '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 suffer'd but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it ;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done :
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never any thing will move me more.
But now!—Oh blood, which art my father's blood,
Circling through these contaminated veins,
If thou, pour'd forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime and punishment
By which I suffer—no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above
Who sees and permits evil, and so die :
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

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

Beatr. 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 transform'd me : I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror : of all words,
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear ? For there is none to tell
My misery ; if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,

And left it, as I must, without a name.
 Death! Death! Our law and our religion call thee
 A punishment and a reward.—Oh, which
 Have I deserved?

Lucr. The peace of innocence;
 Till in your season you be call'd to heaven.
 Whate'er you may have suffer'd, you have done
 No evil. Death must be the punishment
 Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
 The thorns which God has strew'd upon the path
 Which leads us to immortality.

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

Enter ORSINO.

(She approaches him solemnly.) Welcome, friend!
 I have to tell you that, since last we met,
 I have endured a wrong so great and strange,
 That neither life nor death can give me rest.
 Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
 Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

Ors. And what is he who has thus injured you?

Beatr. The man they call my father: a dread name.

Ors. It cannot be—

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

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

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

Ors. You will endure it then ?

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

(Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.)

Ay,

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

Ors. Should the offender live ?
 Triumph in his misdeed ? and make, by use,
 His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,

Thine element ; until thou may'st become
Utterly lost ; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest ?

Beatr. (*To herself.*) Mighty death!
Thou double-visaged shadow! Only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter! (*She retires absorbed in thought.*)

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

Ors. 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—

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

Ors. Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.

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

Ors. 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—

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

Ors. Then—

Beatr. Peace, Orsino!
And, honour'd 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 overburthen'd soul,
And be—what ye can dream not. I have pray'd
To God, and I have talk'd with my own heart,
And have unravell'd 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.

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

Lucr. You think we should devise
His death?

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

Ors. And yet most cautious.

Lucr. For the jealous laws

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

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

Ors. 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.

Lucr. To-morrow before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
If he arrive there—

Beatr. He must not arrive.

Ors. Will it be dark before you reach the tower?

Lucr. The sun will scarce be set.

Beatr. 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,
Sustain'd itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulph, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down.
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life, yet clinging, leans ;
And, leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall : beneath this crag,
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns—below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm ; and high above there grow,

With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
 Cedars, and yews, and pines ; whose tangled hair
 Is matted in one solid roof of shade
 By the dark ivy's twine. At noon-day here
 'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

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

Beatr. What sound is that ?

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

Beatr. (*To Orsini as she goes out.*)
 That step we hear approach must never pass
 The bridge of which we spoke.

(*Exeunt Lucretia and Beatrice.*)

Ors. What shall I do ?

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

Enter GIACOMO, in a hurried manner.

How ? Have you ventured hither ? Know you then
 That Cenci is from home ?

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

Ors. Great God !
 Weigh you the danger of this rashness ?

Giac. 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 oppress'd ;
 The slanderer to the slander'd ; foe to foe :
 He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
 And Nature casts him off, who is her shame ;

And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
 Which I will shake, and say, " I ask not gold ;
 " I ask not happy years ; nor memories
 " Of tranquil childhood ; nor home-shelter'd love ;
 " Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more ;
 " But only my fair fame ; only one hoard
 " Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
 " Under the penury heap'd on me by thee ;
 " Or I will"—God can understand and pardon.
 Why should I speak with man ?

Ors. Be calm, dear friend.

Giac. 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,
 Conferr'd this office on a wretch whom thus
 He paid for vilest service. I return'd
 With this ill news, and we sat sad together
 Solacing our despondency with tears
 Of such affection and unbroken faith
 As temper life's worst bitterness ; when he,
 As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
 Mocking our poverty, and telling us
 Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
 And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
 I spoke of my wife's dowry ; but he coin'd
 A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
 The sum in secret riot ; and he saw
 My wife was touch'd, 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 return'd again ;
 Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
 My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
 " Give us clothes, father! give us better food!
 " What you in one night squander were enough
 " For months !" I look'd, and saw that home was hell.
 And to that hell will I return no more
 Until mine enemy has render'd up
 Atonement, or, as he gave life to me,
 I will, reversing nature's law—

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

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

Ors. 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, accomplish'd.

Giac. Is he dead ?

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

Giac. What outrage ?

Ors. That she speaks not, but you may
 Conceive such half conjectures as I do,
 From her fix'd 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,
 Bewilder'd in our horror, talk'd 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 !—

Giac. It is enough. My doubts are well appeased ;
 There is a higher reason for the act
 Than mine ; there is a holier judge than me,
 A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
 Who, in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
 Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
 A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
 With needless tears !—Fair sister, thou in whom
 Men wonder'd how such loveliness and wisdom
 Did not destroy each other !—is there made
 Ravage of thee ? O heart, I ask no more
 Justification ! Shall I wait, Orsino,
 Till he return, and stab him at the door ?

Ors. 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.

Beatr. 'Tis my brother's voice ! You know me not.

Giac. My, sister, my lost sister !

Beatr. Lost, indeed !

I see Orsino has talk'd with you, and
 That you conjecture things too horrible

To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not :
 He might return : yet kiss me ; I shall know
 That then thou hast consented to his death.
 Farewell, Farewell ! Let piety to God,
 Brotherly love, justice, and clemency,
 And all things that make tender hardest hearts,
 Make thine hard, brother. Answer not : farewell.

(Exeunt severally.)

SCENE II.

A mean apartment in GIACOMO'S house. GIACOMO alone.

Giac. 'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.

(Thunder, and the sound of a storm.)

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

Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold :
 It is the form that moulded mine, that sinks
 Into the white and yellow spasms of death :
 It is the soul by which mine was array'd
 In God's immortal likeness, which now stands
 Naked before Heaven's judgment seat !

(*A bell strikes.*)

One! Two !

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

Enter ORSINO.

Speak !

Ors. I am come
 To say he has escaped.

Giac. Escaped !

Ors. And safe
 Within Petrella. He pass'd by the spot
 Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

Giac. 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 seem'd to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
 With which Heaven mocks our weakness ! I henceforth
 Will ne'er repent of aught, design'd or done,
 But my repentance.

Ors. See, the lamp is out.

Giac. 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 harden'd.

Ors. Why, what need of this?
Who fear'd the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Although our first plan fail'd,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark.

Giac. (*Lighting the lamp.*)
And yet, once quench'd, I cannot thus relume
My father's life: do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?

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

Giac. O, speak no more!
I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it.

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

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

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

Giac. Only to talk?

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

Giac. Listen! What sound is that ?

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

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

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

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

Ors. Why, that were well. I must be gone ; good night.
When next we meet—

Giac. May all be done*—And all
Forgotten. Oh, that I had never been!

(*Exeunt*)

End of the Third Act.

* In the Second Edition the four opening words of Giacomo's speech form part of the preceding one of Orsino.—ED.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the Castle of Petrella: Enter CENCI.

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

Enter LUCRETIA.

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

Lucr. Oh,
 Husband, I pray, for thine own wretched sake,
 Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
 Thro' crimes, and thro' 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,
 Pity thy daughter ; give her to some friend
 In marriage : so that she may tempt thee not
 To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

Cen. What ! like her sister, who has found a home
 To mock my hate from with prosperity ?
 Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee
 And all that yet remain. My death may be

Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
 Bid her come hither, and before my mood
 Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

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

Cen. Why—such things are:
 No doubt divine revealings may be made.
 'Tis plain I have been favour'd from above,
 For when I cursed my sons they died—Ay—so—
 As to the right or wrong that's talk—repentance—
 Repentance is an easy moment's work,
 And more depends on God than me. Well—well—
 I must give up the greater point, which was
 To poison and corrupt her soul.

*(A pause; Lucretia approaches anxiously, and then
 shrinks back as he speaks.)* One, two;

Ay—Rocca and Christofano my curse
 Strangled: and Giacomo, I think, will find
 Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave:
 Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
 Die in despair, blaspheming: to Bernardo,
 He is so innocent, I will bequeathe
 The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
 The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
 Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
 When all is done, out in the wide Campagna
 I will pile up my silver and my gold;
 My costly robes, paintings, and tapestries;
 My parchments and all records of my wealth;
 And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave

Of my possessions nothing but my name;
 Which shall be an inheritance to strip
 Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
 My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
 Into the hands of him who wielded it ;
 Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
 He will not ask it of me till the lash
 Be broken its last and deepest wound;
 Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
 Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
 Short work and sure— (Going.)

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

Cen. 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.

Lucr. Oh! to what will ?

What cruel sufferings, more than she has known,
 Canst thou inflict ?

Cen. 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 blazon'd abroad,
 One among which shall be—What ?—Canst thou guess ?
 She shall become (for what she most abhors
 Shall have a fascination to entrap
 Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
 All she appears to others; and, when dead,
 As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
 A rebel to her father and her God,

Her corpse shall be abandon'd 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.

Andr. The lady Beatrice—

Cen. Speak, pale slave! What
 Said she?

Andr. My Lord, 'twas what she look'd; she said:

“Go, tell my father that I see the gulph

“Of Hell between us two, which he may pass,

“I will not.”

(Exit Andrea.)

Cen. Go thou quick, Lucretia,

Tell her to come; yet let her understand

Her coming is consent: and say, moreover,

That if she come not I will curse her.

(Exit Lucretia.)

Ha!

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

Enter LUCRETIA.

Well; what? Speak, wretch!

Lucr. She said, “I cannot come;

“Go tell my father that I see a torrent

“Of his own blood raging between us.”

Cen. (Kneeling.) God!

Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,

Which thou hast made my daughter ; this my blood,
 This particle of my divided being ;
 Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
 Whose sight infects and poisons me ; this devil
 Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant
 To aught good use ; if her bright loveliness
 Was kindled to illumine this dark world ;
 If nursed by thy selectest dew of love,
 Such virtues blossom in her as should make
 The peace of life, I pray thee, for my sake,
 As thou the common God and Father art
 Of her, and me, and all ; reverse that doom !
 Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
 Poison, until she be encrusted round
 With leprous stains ! Heaven, rain upon her head
 The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
 Till she be speckled like a toad : parch up
 Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
 To loathed lameness ! All beholding sun,
 Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
 With thine own blinding beams !

Lucr. Peace ! Peace !

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

Cen. (*Leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards
 Heaven.*)

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

Lucr. Horrible thought !

Cen. That if she ever have a child ; and thou
 Quick Nature ! I adjure thee by thy God,
 That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
 And multiply, fulfilling his command,
 And my deep imprecation ! May it be
 A hideous likeness of herself ; that, as

From a distorting mirror, she may see
 Her image mix'd 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 deform'd,
 Turning her mother's love to misery:
 And that both she and it may live until
 It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
 Or, what may else be more unnatural.
 So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
 Of the loud world to a dishonour'd grave.
 Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
 Before my words are chronicled in heaven.

(*Exit Lucr.*)

I do not feel as if I were a man,
 But like a fiend appointed to chastise
 The offences of some unremember'd 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!

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

Cen. 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 Lucr.*)

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

SCENE II.

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

Beatr. They come not yet.

Lucr. 'Tis scarce midnight.

Beatr. How slow

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

Lucr. The minutes pass—

If he should wake before the deed is done ?

Beatr. 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.

Lucr. 'Tis true he spoke

Of death and judgment with strange confidence
 For one so wicked ; as a man believing

In God, yet recking not of good or ill,
And yet to die without confession !

Beatr. 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.

Lucr. See,
They come.

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

(Exeunt Lucretia and Beatrice from above.)

Olim. How feel you to this work ?

Mar. As one who thinks

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

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

Mar. Is that their natural hue ?

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

Mar. You are inclined then to this business ?

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

Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA below.

Noble ladies !

Beatr. Are ye resolved ?

Olim. Is he asleep ?

Mar. Is all
Quiet ?

Beatr. 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 ?

Olim. We are resolved.

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

Beatr. Well, follow !

Olim. Hush ! Hark ! What noise is that ?

Mar. Ha ! some one comes !

Beatr. 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.

Lucr. They are about it now.

Beatr. Nay, it is done.

Lucr. I have not heard him groan.

Beatr. He will not groan.

Lucr. What sound is that ?

Beatr. List ! 'tis the tread of feet
About his bed.

Lucr. My God !

If he be now a cold stiff corpse.

Beatr. O, fear not

What may be done, but what is left undone :
The act seals all.

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO.

Is it accomplish'd ?

Mar. What ?

Olim. Did you not call ?

Beatr. When ?

Olim. Now.

Beatr. I ask if all is over ?

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

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

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

(Snatching a dagger from one of them and raising it)
Hadst thou a tongue to say,

She murder'd her own father, I must do it!
But never dream ye shall outlive him long!

Olim. Stop, for God's sake!

Mar. I will go back and kill him.

Olim. Give me the weapon, we must do thy will.

Beatr. Take it!—Depart! Return!

(Exeunt Olim. and Mar.)

How pale thou art!

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

Lucr. Would it were done!

Beatr. Even whilst

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

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO.

He is—

Olim. Dead!

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

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

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

(Clothes him in a rich mantle.)

It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state: so may they envy thine.
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God

To a just use. Live long and thrive ! and, mark,
If thou hast crimes, repent : this deed is none.

(A horn is sounded)

Lucr. Hark ! 'tis the castle horn ; my God ! it sounds
Like the last trump.

Beatr. Some tedious guest is coming.

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

(Exeunt Olivia and Mar.)

Beatr. Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest ;
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now :
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturb'd. 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 LUCRE-
TIA and BERNARDO.

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

Lucr. (in a hurried and confused manner.)
I think he sleeps ;
Yet, wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile,
He is a wicked and a 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 !

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

Lucr. (*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.

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

Lucr. (*aside*) O, terror ! O, despair !

(*To Bernardo.*)

Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to
Your father's chamber. (*Exeunt Sav. and Bern.*)

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatr. '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.

Lucr. Oh, agony of fear !
Would that he yet might live ! Even now I heard
The Legate's followers whisper, as they pass'd,
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 discover'd !

Beatr. Mother,
What is done wisely, is done well. Be bold

As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child
 To fear that others know what thou hast done,
 Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
 Write on unsteady eyes and alter'd cheeks
 All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
 And fear no other witness but thy fear.
 For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
 Should rise in accusation, we can blind
 Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
 Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
 As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
 And what may follow now regards not me.
 I am as universal as the light ;
 Free as the earth-surrounding air ; as firm
 As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
 Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock
 But shakes it not. *(A cry within and tumult.)*
 Murder ! Murder ! Murder !

Enter BERNARDO and SAVELLA.

Sav. (to his followers)

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

Beatr. What now ?

Ber. I know not what to say : my father's dead !

Beatr. How ? dead ? he only sleeps : you mistake,
 brother.

His sleep is very calm, very like death ;
 'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
 He is not dead ?

Ber. Dead ! murder'd !

Lucr. (with extreme agitation) Oh, no, no,
 He is not murder'd, though he may be dead ;
 I have alone the keys of those apartments.

Sav. Ha ! Is it so ?

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

(Exeunt Lucr. and Beatr.)

Sav. Can you suspect who may have murder'd him ?

Ber. I know not what to think.

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

Ber. 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.

Sav. '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 heap'd
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 Ber.)*

Enter Guards, bringing in MARZIO.

Guard. We have one.

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

Sav. What does he confess ?

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

Sav. 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.

Know’st thou this writing, Lady ?

Beatr. No.

Sav. Nor thou ?

Lucr. (*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 gulph of obscure hatred.

Sav. Is it so ?

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

Beatr. Not hate, ’twas more than hate :
This is most true, yet wherefore question me ?

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

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

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

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

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

Sav. You own
That you desired his death ?

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

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

Beatr. And yet if you arrest me,
 You are the judge and executioner
 Of that which is the life of life : the breath
 Of accusation kills an innocent name,
 And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
 Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
 That I am guilty of foul parricide ;
 Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
 That other hands have sent my father's soul
 To ask the mercy he denied to me.
 Now leave us free : stain not a noble house
 With vague surmises of rejected crime ;
 Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
 No heavier sum ; let them have been enough ;
 Leave us the wreck we have.

Sav. I dare not, Lady.

I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome :
 There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

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

Beatr. Why not to Rome, dear mother ? There as
 here

Our innocence is as an armed heel
 To trample accusation. God is there
 As here, and with his shadow ever clothes
 The innocent, the injured, and the weak ;
 And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady, lean
 On me ; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
 As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
 And have all such examinations made
 Upon the spot, as may be necessary
 'To the full understanding of this matter,
 We shall be ready. Mother, will you come ?

Lucr. Ha ! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
 Self-accusation from our agony !
 Will Giacomo be there ? Orsino ? Marzio ?

All present ; all confronted ; all demanding
 Each from the other's countenance the thing
 Which is in every heart ! O, misery !
 (*She faints, and is borne out.*)

Sav. She faints: an ill appearance this.

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

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An apartment in ORSINO'S Palace. Enter ORSINO and
 GIACOMO.

Giac. 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 shewn
 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.

Ors. It has turn'd out unluckily, in truth.

Giac. To violate the sacred doors of sleep ;
 To cheat kind nature of the placid death
 Which she prepares for over-wearied age ;
 To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul,
 Which might have quench'd in reconciling prayers
 A life of burning crimes—

Ors. You cannot say
 I urged you to the deed.

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

Ors. 'Tis thus
 Men cast the blame of their unprosperous 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 ?

Giac. 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.

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

Giac. 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 minister'd 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 gulph ? Thou art no liar ? No,
Thou art a lie ! Traitor, and murderer !
Coward and slave ! But, no, defend thyself ; (*Drawing.*)
Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
Disdains to brand thee with.

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

Giac. O, generous friend! How canst thou pardon me?

Would that my life could purchase thine!

Ors. That wish

Now comes a day too late. Haste; fare thee well!

Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor?

(Exit Giacomo.)

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

(A shout is heard.)

Is that my name I hear proclaim'd abroad?
But I will pass, wrapt in a vile disguise;
Rags on my back, and a false innocence
Upon my face, thro' the misdeeming crowd
Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then
For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life, fashion'd on old desires,
To change the honours of abandon'd Rome.
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unalter'd. 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.

1st 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.

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

2nd Judge. Away with him!

1st Judge. Dare you, with lips yet white from the
 rack's kiss,

Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner,
 That you would bandy lover's talk with it
 Till it wind out your life and soul? Away!

Mar. Spare me! O spare! I will confess.

1st Judge. Then speak.

Mar. I strangled him in his sleep.

1st Judge. Who urged you to it?

Mar. 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 murder'd him.
Now let me die.

1st Judge. This sounds as bad as truth. Guards,
there,
Lead forth the prisoners !

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, guarded.

Look upon this man ;
When did you see him last ?

Beatr. We never saw him.

Mar. You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

Beatr. I know thee ! How ? where ? when ?

Mar. You know 'twas I

Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold,
And bade me thrive : how I have thriven, you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.

*(Beatrice advances towards him ; he covers his face,
and shrinks back.)*

O, dart

The terrible resentment of those 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.

Beatr. Poor wretch, I pity thee : yet stay awhile.

Cam. Guards, lead him not away.

Beatr. Cardinal Camillo,
You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom : can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this ?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragg'd
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 damn'd. Speak now
 The thing you surely know, which is, that you
 If your fine frame was stretch'd upon that wheel,
 And you were told : " Confess that you did poison
 Your little nephew ; that fair blue-eyed child
 Who was the loadstar 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 for your tormentors, like that slave,
 The refuge of dishonourable death.
 I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
 My innocence.

Cam. (*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.

Cam. 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
 Enjoin'd 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.

Beatr. What evidence? This man's?

Judge. Even so.

Beatr. (*To Marzio.*) Come near. And who art thou
 thus chosen forth

Out of the multitude of living men
 To kill the innocent?

Mar. I am Marzio,
 Thy father's vassal.

Beatr. Fix thine eyes on mine;
 Answer to what I ask. (*Turning to the Judges.*)

I prithee mark

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

(*To Marzio.*) What! wilt thou say
 That I did murder my own father?

Mar. Oh!
 Spare me! My brain swims around—I cannot speak—
 It was the 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!

Beatr. My Lords, if by my nature I have been
 So stern, as to have plann'd 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 unsheathed amid a world of foes,
 For my own death? That with such horrible need

For deepest silence, I should have neglected
 So trivial a precaution, as the making
 His tomb the keeper of a secret written
 On a thief's memory? What is his poor life?
 What are a thousand lives? A parricide
 Had trampled them like dust; and see, he lives!
(Turning to MARZIO.)

And thou—

Mar. 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.

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

Beatr. Oh, thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
 Of life and death, pause ere thou answer'st me;
 So may'st 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 order'd, that a father
 First turned the moments of awakening life
 To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
 Stabb'd 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
 Arm'd 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, shew justice upon earth:
 Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.

If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
 Over the trampled laws of God and man,
 Rush not before thy Judge, and say, "My Maker,
 "I have done this and more; for there was one
 "Who was most pure and innocent on earth;
 "And because she endured what never any
 "Guilty or innocent, endured before:
 "Because her wrongs could not be told, not thought;
 "Because thy hand at length did rescue her;
 "I with my words kill'd her and all her kin."
 Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay
 The reverence living in the minds of men
 Towards our ancient house and stainless fame!
 Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
 Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,
 Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
 What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood
 All that which shews 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?

Mar. Thou art not!

Judge. What is this?

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

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

Mar. Torture me as ye will:
 A keener pang has wrung a higher truth
 From my last breath. She is most innocent!

Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me,
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin. (*Exit Marzio, guarded.*)

Cam. What say ye now, my Lords?

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

Cam. Yet stain'd with blood.

Judge. (*To Beatrice.*) Know you this paper, Lady?

Beatr. Entrap me not with questions. Who stands
here

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

Enter an Officer.

Officer. Marzio's dead.

Judge. What did he say?

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

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

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

Judge. Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Mean-
while

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

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE III.

The cell of a prison. BEATRICE is discovered asleep on a couch.
 Enter BERNARDO.

Ber. How gently slumber rests upon her face,
 Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent
 Closing in night and dreams, and so prolong'd.
 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 ?

Beatr. (*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.

Ber. Dear, dear sister,
 Would that thy dream were not a dream ! O, God !
 How shall I tell ?

Beatr. What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother ?

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

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

Ber. They have confess'd ; they could endure no more

The tortures—

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

Enter JUDGE with LUCRETIA and GIACOMO, guarded.

Ignoble hearts !

For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust ?
And that eternal honour which should live
Sun-like, above the reek of mortal fame,
Changed to a mockery and a bye-word ? What !
Will you give up these bodies to be dragg'd
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.

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

Lucr. O, speak the truth ! Let us quickly die,
 And after death, God is our judge, not they ;
 He will have mercy on us.

Ber. 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—

Beatr. Tortures ! Turn
 The rack henceforth into a spinning wheel !
 Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
 He lapp'd the blood his master shed—not me !
 My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,
 And of the soul ; ay, of the inmost soul,
 Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
 To see, in this ill world where none are true,
 My kindred false to their deserted selves.
 And with considering all the wretched life
 Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,
 And the small justice shewn 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 oppress'd—such pangs compel
 My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me ?

Judge. Art thou not guilty of thy father's death ?

Beatr. 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 call'd 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 confess'd.
 Be it enough. Until their final sentence
 Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,
 Linger not here !

Beatr. O, tear him not away !

Judge. Guards, do your duty.

Ber. (embracing Beatrice.) Oh ! would ye divide
 Body from soul ?

Officer. That is the headman's business.

(Exeunt all but Lucr. Beatr. and Giac.)

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

(Covers his face, and weeps.)

Lucr. 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 !

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

SONG.

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
 When my life is laid asleep ?
 Little cares for a smile or a tear,
 The clay-cold corpse upon the bier !
 Farewell ! 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 could'st mortal be,

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

(The scene closes.)

SCENE IV.

A Hall of the Prison. Enter CAMILLO and BERNARDO.

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

Ber. And yet you left him not ?

Cam. I urged him still ;
 Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
 Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
 And he replied : " Pao'lo Santa Croce
 " Murder'd his mother yester evening,
 " And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
 " That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
 " Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
 " Authority, and power, and hoary hair

“Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
 “You come to ask their pardon ; stay a moment ;
 “Here is their sentence ; never see me more
 “Till, to the letter, it be all fulfill’d.”

Ber. O, God ! not so ! I did believe indeed
 That all you said was but sad preparation
 For happy news. O, there are words and looks
 To bend the sternest purpose ! Once I knew them,
 Now I forget them at my dearest need.
 What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
 His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears ?
 Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
 With my perpetual cries, until in rage
 He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
 Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood
 May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
 And remorse waken mercy ? I will do it !
 O, wait till I return ! *(Rushes out.)*

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

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, guarded.

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

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

Beatr. *(wildly.)* Oh,
 My God ! Can it be possible I have
 To die so suddenly ? So young to go
 Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground ;
 To be nail’d down into a narrow place ;
 To see no more sweet sunshine ; hear no more
 Blithe voice of living thing ; muse not again

Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—
 How fearful ! To be nothing ! Or to be—
 What ? O, where am I ? Let me not go mad !
 Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts ! If there should
 be

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

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

Beatr. '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).*

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

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

Beatr. Yet both will soon be cold.
 O, trample out that thought ! Worse than despair,
 Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope :
 It is the only ill which can find place
 Upon the giddy, sharp, and narrow hour
 Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
 That it should spare the eldest flower of spring :
 Plead with awakening Earthquake, o'er whose couch
 Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free ;
 Now stench and blackness yawns, like death. O, plead
 With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,
 Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man !
 Cruel, cold, formal man ; righteous in words,
 In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die :
 Since such is the reward of innocent lives ;
 Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
 And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
 Smiling and slow, walk thro' a world of tears
 To death as to life's sleep ; 'twere just the grave
 Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,

And wind me in thine all-embracing arms !
 Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
 And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
 Live ye, who live, subject to one another
 As we were once, who now——

BERNARDO *rushes in.*

Ber. Oh, horrible!
 That tears, that looks, that hope pour'd forth in prayer,
 Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
 Should all be vain ! The ministers of death
 Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
 Blood on the face of one—what if 'twere fancy?
 Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
 Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
 As if 'twere only rain. O, life ! O, world !
 Cover me ! ~~Let~~ me be no more ! To see
 That perfect mirror of pure innocence
 Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
 Shiver'd to dust ! To see thee, Beatrice,
 Who made all lovely thou didst look upon—
 Thee, light of life—dead, dark ! while I say, sister,
 To hear I have no sister ; and thou, Mother,
 Whose love was a bond to all our loves—
 Dead ! The sweet bond broken !

Enter CAMILLO and Guards.

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

Beatr. Farewell, my tender brother. Think
 Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now :
 And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee

Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child,
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us ; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapt in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstain'd. And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamp'd 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 mayst thou die as I do, fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell ! farewell ! farewell !

Ber. I cannot say, farewell !

Cam. O, Lady Beatrice !

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

THE END.

JULIAN AND MADDALO:

A CONVERSATION.

[WRITTEN IN 1818, AND FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE POSTHUMOUS POEMS OF SHELLEY, IN 1824.]*

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
The goats with the green leaves of budding Spring,
Are saturated not—nor Love with tears.—VIRGIL'S GALLUS.

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 em-

* The text is here given from Shelley's own manuscript, as sent to Leigh Hunt in 1819 for publication by Ollier, but withheld at the time. The text in the *Posthumous Poems*, and in all later editions of Shelley founded on it, is very corrupt and defective.—ED.

ployed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys 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 concentered 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 is a sort of intoxication ; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much ; and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

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 pious 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.



JULIAN AND MADDALO:

A CONVERSATION.

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, heap'd from ever-shifting sand,
Matted 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 unrepair'd, 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 remember'd 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,
Stripp'd to their depths by the awakening north ;
And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth
Harmonising with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts ærial merriment.
So, as we rode, we talk'd ; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, linger'd not,
But flew from brain to brain,—such glee was ours,
Charged with light memories of remember'd 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 pleasing ; such as once, so poets tell,
The devils held within the dales 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,
Tho' 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 aery Alps, towards the north, appear'd,
Thro' mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark rear'd
Between the east and west ; and half the sky
Was roof'd with clouds of rich emblazonry,
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 funereal bark
 I lean'd, 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 look'd, 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, deform'd and dreary pile ;
 And on the top an open tower, where hung
 A bell, which in the radiance sway'd and swung,
 We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue :
 The broad sun sunk behind it, and it toll'd
 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 look'd on him,
 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 look'd grey ; 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
 Convey'd me to my lodgings by the way.

The following morn was rainy, cold, and dim :
 Ere Maddalo arose I call'd on him,
 And whilst I waited, with his child I play'd ;
 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 seem'd 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 enter'd. Salutations past :
 " The words 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,
 (Though I may never own such leaden laws)
 Which break a teachless nature to the yoke :
 Mine is another faith."—Thus much I spoke,
 And, noting he replied not, added—" See
 This lovely child ; blithe, 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, 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 rejoin'd, " 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 conquer'd, 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 judgment 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 answer'd 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 bow'd
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 scorn'd, what wonder if they die
Some living death? This is not destiny,
But man's own wilful ill."—

As thus I spoke,

Servants announced the gondola, and we
Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
Sail'd to the island where the madhouse stands.
We disembark'd. The clap of tortured hands,
Fierce yells, and howlings, and lamentings keen,
And laughter where complaint had merrier been,
Moans, shrieks, and curses, and blaspheming prayers *
Accosted us. We climb'd the oozy stairs

* This line is restored from Shelley's manuscript sent to Leigh Hunt. It first appeared in Mr. Forman's edition.—ED.

Into an old courtyard. I heard on high,
 Then, fragments of most touching melody,
 But, looking up saw not the singer there.—
 Thro' the black bars in the tempestuous air
 I saw, like weeds on a wreck'd palace growing,
 Long tangled locks flung wildly forth and flowing,
 Of those who on a sudden were beguiled
 Into strange silence, and look'd 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 seem'd hurt,
 Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,
 To hear but of the oppression of the strong,
 Or those absurd deceits (I think with you
 In some respects, you know) which carry thro'
 The excellent impostors of this earth
 When they outface detection. He had worth,
 Poor fellow ! but a humourist in his way.”—

—“Alas, what drove him mad !”

“I cannot say :
 A lady came with him from France, and when
 She left him and return'd, he wander'd then
 About yon lonely isles of desart 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 adorn'd 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—
 And those are his sweet strains which charm the weight
 From madmen's chains, and make this hell appear
 A heaven of sacred silence, hush'd 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,
 Fall'n 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 never communes with himself again,
 And sees nor hears not any."

Having said
 These words, we call'd 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 ooze and wind
 Rush'd thro' an open casement, and did sway
 His hair, and starr'd 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 press'd against a folded leaf
 In hue too beautiful for health, and grief

Smiled in their motions as they lay apart—
 As one who wrought 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-compassion ;—then his speech
 Was lost in grief, and then his words came each
 Unmodulated, cold, expressionless ;
 But that from one jarr'd accent you might guess
 It was despair made them so uniform :
 And all the while the loud and gusty storm
 Hiss'd thro' 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
 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 alter'd 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 cover'd 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 strew'd sweet flowers upon the way
 Where, wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain,
 My shadow, which will leave me not again.
 If I have err'd, there was no joy in error,
 But pain, and insult, and unrest, and terror ;
 I have not, as some do, bought penitence
 With pleasure, and a dark yet sweet offence ;
 For then if love, and tenderness, and truth
 Had overlived Hope's momentary youth,
 My creed should have redeem'd me from repenting ;
 But loathed scorn and outrage unrelenting
 Met love excited by far other seeming
 Until the end was gain'd :—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 weigh'd
 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 ye !

Love sometimes leads astray to misery.
Yet think not, tho' 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 !
Till 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 vanquish, 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-ball,
 To greet the ghastly 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 art gone—
 Thy work is finish'd ; I am left alone.

* * * *

“ Nay, was it I who woo'd thee to this breast,
 Which like a serpent thou evenomest
 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, tho' it wound not—then, with prostrate head,
 Sinks in the dust, and writhes 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 suppress'd and hideous thought,
 Which flits athwart our musings, but can find
 No rest within a pure and gentle mind—
 Thou sealed'st them with many a bare broad word,
 And sear'dst my memory o'er them,—for I heard
 And can forget not—they were minister'd,
 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.

“ It were

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 pitied all things, and could moan
 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 look'dst so and so,
 And didst speak thus and thus. I live to shew
 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, tho
 true,

(For indeed nature nor in form nor hue
 Bestow'd 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
 Is dim to see that character'd in vain,
 On this unfeeling leaf, which burns the brain
 And eats into it, blotting all things fair,
 And wise and good, which time had written there.

“ Those who inflict must suffer, for they see
 The work of their own hearts, and this must be
 Our chastisement or recompense.—O, child !
 I would that thine were like to be more mild
 For both our wretched sakes,—for thine the most,
 Who feel'st already all that thou hast lost,
 Without the power to wish it thine again.
 And, as slow years pass, a funereal train,
 Each with the ghost of some lost hope or friend
 Following it like its shadow, wilt thou bend
 No thought on my dead memory ?

* * * *

“ Alas, love !

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 overcome, leant 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 mutter'd some familiar name, and we
 Wept without shame in his society.
 I think I never was impress'd so much;
 The man who were not, must have lack'd a touch
 Of human nature.—Then we linger'd not,
 Although our argument was quite forgot ;
 But, calling the attendants, went to dine
 At Maddalo's :—yet neither cheer nor wine
 Could give us spirits, for we talk'd of him,
 And nothing else, till daylight 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 vow'd deeply which he dream'd not of ;
 For whose sake he, it seem'd, had fix'd a blot
 Of falsehood on his mind, which flourish'd not
 But in the light of all-beholding truth ;
 And having stamp'd this canker on his youth,
 She had abandon'd him :—and how much more
 Might be his woe, we guess'd 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 seem'd yet unworn ;
 For the wild language of his grief was high—
 Such as in measure were call'd poetry.

And I remember one remark, which then
Maddalo 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 form'd 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 recal
Regrets for the green country:—I might sit
In Maddalo's great palace, and his wit
And subtle talk would cheer the winter night,
And make me know myself:—and the fire light
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
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
 Accomplish'd not ;—such dreams of baseless good
 Oft come and go, in crowds and solitude,
 And leave no trace !—but what I now design'd
 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 return'd; the name
 Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same;
 But Maddalo 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 transcendant worth,—
 Like one of Shakespeare's women. Kindly she,
 And with a manner beyond courtesy,
 Received her father's friend; and, when I ask'd
 Of the lorn 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
 Look'd meek; perhaps remorse had brought her low.
 Her coming made him better; and they stay'd
 Together at my father's,—for I play'd
 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 remember’d tears.
Ask me no more; but let the silent years
Be closed and cered over their memory,
As yon mute marble where their corpses lie.”
I urged and question’d still: she told me how
All happen’d—but the cold world shall not know.

ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS;

OR,

SWELLFOOT the TYRANT.

A Tragedy.

IN TWO ACTS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL DORIC.

~~~~~  
——— "Choose Reform or civil-war,  
When thro' thy streets, instead of hare with dogs,  
A CONSORT-QUEEN shall hunt a KING with hogs,  
Riding on the IONIAN MINOTAUR."  
~~~~~

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1820.



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 dullness, apparently before the duties on the importation of *Attic salt* had been repealed by the Bœotarchs. The tenderness with which he treats the Pigs proves him to have been a *sus Bœotia*; possibly *Epicuri de grege porcus*; 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 Œdipus,) 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 Angaria*” and “*Charité*,” the Translator might be tempted to give them to the reading Public.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TYRANT SWELLFOOT, King of Thebes.		The GADFLY.	
IONA TAURINA, his Queen.		The LEECH.	
MAMMON, Arch-Priest of Fa-		The RAT.	
mine.		The MINOTAUR.	
PURGANAX	} Wizards, Minis-	MOSES, the Sow-gelder.	
DAKRY		ters of SWELL-	SOLOMON, the Porkman.
LAOCTONOS		FOOT.	ZEPHANIAH, Pig-Butcher.

CHORUS of the Swinish Multitude.
Guards, Attendants, Priests, &c., &c.



ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS.

A TRAGEDY.

IN TWO ACTS.

SCENE.—THEBES.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A magnificent Temple, built of thigh-bones and death's-heads, and tiled with scalps. Over the Altar the statue of Famine, veiled; a number of boars, sows, and sucking-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
 Bœotian 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 laurell'd Emperors,
 Radical-butchers, Paper-money-millers,
 Bishops and deacons, and the entire army
 Of those fat martyrs to the persecution
 Of stifling turtle-soup, and brandy-devils,
 Offer their secret vows! Thou plenteous Ceres
 Of their Eleusis, hail!

The Swine. Eigh! eigh! eigh! eigh!

Swelf. Ha! what are ye,
 Who, crown'd with leaves devoted to the Furies
 Cling round this sacred shrine?

Swine. Aigh! aigh! aigh!

Swelf. What! ye that are
 The very beasts that offer'd at her altar
 With blood and groans, salt-cake, and fat, and inwards
 Ever propitiate her reluctant will
 When taxes are withheld?

Swine. Ugh! ugh! ugh!

Swelf. What! ye who grub
 With filthy snouts my red potatoes up
 In Allan's rushy bog? who eat the oats
 Up, from my cavalry in the Hebrides?
 Who swill the hog-wash soup my cooks digest
 From bones, and rags, and scraps of shoe-leather,
 Which should be given to cleaner Pigs than you?

* See Universal History for an account of the number of people who died, and the immense consumption of garlick by the wretched Egyptians, who made a sepulchre for the name as well as the bodies of their tyrants.

THE SWINE.—SEMICHORUS I.

The same, alas! the same;
Though only now the name
Of pig remains to me.

SEMICHORUS II.

If 'twere your kingly will
Us wretched swine to kill,
What should we yield to thee?

Swellf. Why, skin and bones, and some few hairs for
mortar.

CHORUS OF SWINE.

I have heard your Laureate sing
That pity was a royal thing ;
Under your mighty ancestors, we pigs
Were bless'd as nightingales on myrtle sprigs,
Or grasshoppers that live on noonday dew,
And sung, old annals tell, as sweetly too,
But now our styes are fallen in, we catch
The murrain and the mange, the scab and itch ;
Sometimes your royal dogs tear down our thatch,
And then we seek the shelter of a ditch ;
Hog-wash or grains, or ruta бага, 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 FIG.

I suck, but no milk will come from the dug.

SECOND FIG.

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,
Drown'd in the Gadarean 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 brawn out of our gristles,
In policy—ask else your royal Solons—
You ought to give us hog-wash and clean straw.
And styes well thatch'd; besides it is the law!
Swellf. This is sedition and rank blasphemy!
Ho! there, my guards!

Enter a GUARD.

Guard. Your sacred Majesty.
Swellf. 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.

Swellf. 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,
Moral restraint I see has no effect,
Nor prostitution, nor our own example,
Starvation, typhus-fever, war, nor prison—
This was the art which the arch-priest of Famine

Hinted at in his charge to the Theban clergy—
Cut close and deep, good Moses.

Moses. Let your Majesty
Keep the boars quiet, else—

Swellf. Zephaniah, cut
That fat hog's throat ; the brute seems overfed ;
Seditious hunks ! to whine for want of grains.

Zeph. Your sacred Majesty, he has the dropsy ;—
We shall find pints of hydatids in's liver.
He has not half an inch of wholesome fat
Upon his carious ribs—

Swellf. 'Tis all the same ;—
He'll serve instead of riot-money, when
Our murmuring troops bivouaque in Thebes' streets ;
And January winds, after a day
Of butchering, will make them relish carrion.
Now, Solomon, I'll sell you in a lump
The whole kit of them.

Sol. Why, your Majesty,
I could not give——

Swellf. Kill them out of the way ;
That shall be price enough, and let me hear
Their everlasting grunts and whines no more !

(Exeunt, driving in the swine.)

Enter MAMMON, the Arch-Priest ; *and* PURGANAX, Chief
of the Council of Wizards.

Pur. The future looks as black as death, a cloud,
Dark as the frown of Hell, hangs over it.
The troops grow mutinous—the revenue fails—
There's something rotten in us—for the level
Of the State slopes, its very bases topple,
The boldest turn their backs upon themselves.

Mam. Why, what's the matter, my dear fellow, now ?
Do the troops mutiny ?—decimate some regiments ;

Does money fail?—come to my mint—coin paper,
Till gold be at a discount, and, ashamed
To show his bilious face, go purge himself,
In emulation of her vestal whiteness.

Pur. Oh, would that this were all! The oracle !!

Mam. Why it was I who spoke that oracle,
And whether I was dead-drunk or inspired,
I cannot well remember; nor, in truth,
The oracle itself!

Pur. The words went thus :—
“Bœotia, choose reform or civil war!
When through the streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A Consort Queen shall hunt a King with hogs,
Riding on the Ionian Minotaur.”

Mam. 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——

Pur. You arch-priests
Believe in nothing; if you were to dream
Of a particular number in the lottery,
You would not buy the ticket?

Mam. 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——

Purg. 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 LEECH, a GADFLY, and a RAT.
 The gadfly was the same which Juno sent
 To agitate Io,* and which Ezekiel † mentions
 That the Lord whistled for out of the mountains
 Of utmost Ethiopia, to torment
 Mesopotamian Babylon. The beast
 Has a loud trumpet like the Scarabee,
 His crooked tail is barb'd 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,

* The *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus.

† "And the Lord whistled for the gadfly out of Æthiopia, and for the bee of Egypt," &c.—*Ezekiel*.

Trailing a blistering slime, and this foul beast
 Has track'd Iona from the Theban limits,
 From isle to isle, from city unto city,
 Urging her flight from the far Chersonese
 To fabulous Solyma, and the Ætnean Isle,
 Ortygia, Melite, and Calypso's Rock,
 And the swart tribes of Garamant and Fez,
 Æolia and Elysium, and thy shores,
 Parthenope, which now, alas! are free!
 And through the fortunate Saturnian land,
 Into the darkness of the West.

Mam. But if

This Gadfly should drive Iona hither?

Purg. Gods! what an *if!* but there is my grey RAT;
 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—

Mam. My dear friend, where are your wits! as if
 She does not always toast a piece of cheese,
 And bait the trap? and rats, when lean enough
 To crawl though *such* chinks—

Purg. But my LEECH—a leech

Fit to suck blood, with lubricous round rings,
 Capaciously expatiative, which make
 His little body like a red balloon,
 As full of blood as that of hydrogene,
 Suck'd from men's hearts; insatiably he sucks
 And clings, and pulls—a horse-leech, whose deep maw
 The plethoric King Swellfoot could not fill,
 And who, till full, will cling for ever.

Mam. This

For Queen Iona might suffice, and less;
 But 'tis the swinish multitude I fear,
 And in that fear I have—

Purg. Done what?

Mam. Disinherited

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 entail'd my estate, call'd the Fool's Paradise,
 And funds in fairy-money, bonds, and bills,
 Upon my accomplish'd daughter Banknotina,
 And married her to the gallows.*

Purg. A good match!

Mam. A high connexion, Purganax. The bridegroom
 Is of a very ancient family,
 Of Hounslow 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 grandchildren, 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.

(A most tremendous humming is heard.)

Purg. Ha ! what do I hear?

Enter the GADFLY.

Mam. Your Gadfly, as it seems, is tired of gadding.

* “ If one should marry a gallows, and beget young gibbets,
 I never saw one so prone.”—*Cymbeline*.

Gadfly. Hum! hum! hum!
 From the lakes of the Alps, and the cold grey 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 ha! and a hum!
 I come! I come!
 All inn-doors and windows
 Were open to me:
 I saw all that sin does,
 Which lamps hardly see
 That burn in the night by the curtain'd bed,—
 The impudent lamps! for they blush'd not red,
 Dinging and singing,
 From slumber I rung her,
 Loud as the clank 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, abandon'd of pity,
 A ship without needle or star;—
 Homeless she pass'd, 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 quirking.

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 humm'd her and drumm'd her
 From place to place, till at last I have dumb'd her,
 Hum! hum! hum!

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 slyly seize and
 Let blood from her weasand,—
 Creeping through crevice, and chink, and cranny,
 With my snakey tail, and my sides so scranny.

Purg. Aroint ye! thou unprofitable worm!
(to the LEECH.)

And thou, dull beetle, get thee back to hell!
(to the GADFLY.)

To sting the ghosts of Babylonian kings,
 And the ox-headed Io—

Swine (within). Ugh, ugh, ugh!
 Hail! Iona the divine,
 We will be no longer swine,
 But bulls with horns and dewlaps.

Rat. For,
 You know, my lord, the Minotaur—

Purg. (fiercely). Be silent! get to hell! or I will call
 The cat out of the kitchen

Well, Lord Mammon,
 This is a pretty business. (Exit the RAT.)

Mam. I will go
 And spell some scheme to make it ugly then. (Exit.)

Enter SWELLFOOT.

Swellfoot. She is return'd! 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 Swell-*
foot!")

Swellf.

Hark!

How the swine cry Iona Taurina;
 I suffer the real presence; Purganax,
 Off with her head!

Purg.

But I must first impanel

A jury of the pigs.

Swellf.

Pack them then.

Purg. Or fattening some few in two separate styes,
 And giving them clean straw, tying some bits
 Of ribbon round their legs—giving their sows
 Some tawdry lace, and bits of lustre glass,
 And their young boars white and red rags, and tails
 Of cows, and jay feathers, and sticking cauliflowers
 Between the ears of the old ones; and, when
 They are persuaded, that by the inherent virtue
 Of these things, they are all imperial pigs,
 Good Lord! they'd rip each other's bellies up,
 Not to say help us in destroying *her*.

Swellf. This plan might be tried too;—where's General
 Laoctonos?

Enter LAOCTONOS and DAKRY.

It is my royal pleasure

That you, Lord General, bring the head and body,
If separate, it would please me better, hither
Of Queen Iona.

Laoc. That pleasure I well knew,
And made a charge with those battalions bold,
Call'd, from their dress and grin, the royal apes,
Upon the swine, who in a hollow square
Enclosed her, and received the first attack
Like so many rhinoceroses, and then
Retreating in good order, with bare tusks
And wrinkled snouts presented to the foe,
Bore her in triumph to the public stye.
What is still worse, some sows upon the ground
Have given the ape-guards apples, nuts, and gin,
And they all whisk their tails aloft, and cry,
“Long live Iona! down with Swellfoot!”

Purg. Hark!

The Swine (without). Long live Iona! down with
Swellfoot!

Dakry. I
Went to the garret of the swineherd's tower
Which overlooks the stye, and made a long
Harangue (all words) to the assembled swine,
Of delicacy, mercy, judgment, law,
Morals, and precedents, and purity,
Adultery, destitution, and divorce,
Piety, faith, and state necessity,
And how I loved the Queen!—and then I wept
With the pathos of my own eloquence,
And every tear turn'd to a millstone, which
Brain'd many a gaping pig, and there was made
A slough of blood and brains upon the place,
Greased with the pounded bacon; round and round
The millstones roll'd, ploughing the pavement up,

And hurling sucking pigs into the air,
With dust and stones.—

Enter MAMMON.

Mam. I wonder that grey wizards
Like you should be so beardless 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 skulk'd in ovation through
The streets of Thebes, 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 distill'd,
Is mingled with the vomit of the Leech,
In due proportion, and black ratsbane, which
That very Rat, who, like the Pontic tyrant,
Nurtures himself on poison, dare not touch ;—
All is seal'd up with the broad seal of Fraud,
Who is the Devil's Lord High Chancellor,
And over it the Primate of all Hell
Murmur'd this pious baptism :—“ Be thou call'd
The GREEN BAG ; and this power and grace be thine :
That thy contents, on whomsoever pour'd,
Turn innocence to guilt, and gentlest 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 call'd tyrant, beast, fool, glutton, 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——

Purg. There !

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.

Mam. 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 noonday 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 o' 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.

Dakry (to Swellfoot.) I, as the keeper of your sacred
 conscience,
 Humbly remind your Majesty that the care
 Of your high office, as man-milliner
 To red Bellona, should not be deferr'd.

Purg. 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.

Purg. Grant me your patience, Gentlemen and Boars,
 Ye, by whose patience under public burthens
 The glorious constitution of these styes
 Subsists, and shall subsist. The lean-pig rates
 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 Bœotia 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 is—you know—
 That is—it is a state-necessity—
 Temporary, of course. Those impious pigs,
 Who, by frequent squeaks, have dared to impugn
 The settled Swellfoot system, or to make
 Irreverent mockery of the genuflexions
 Inculcated by the arch-priest, have been whipt
 Into a loyal and an orthodox whine.
 Things being in this happy state, the Queen
 Iona——

A loud cry from the Pigs. She is innocent ! most
 innocent !

Purg. 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-pig faction
 Seeks to obtain that hog-wash, which has been
 Your immemorial right, and which I will
 Maintain you in to the last drop of—

A Boar (interrupting him). What
 Does any one accuse her of?

Purg. Why, no one
 Makes *any* positive accusation ;—but
 There were hints dropt, and so the privy wizards
 Conceived that it became them to advise
 His Majesty to investigate their truth ;—
 Not for his own sake ; he could be content
 To let his wife play any pranks she pleased,
 If by that sufferance, *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—

[*A pause.*]

First Boar. Well, go on ; we long
 To hear what she can possibly have done.

Purg. Why, it is hinted, that a certain bull—
 Thus much is *known* :—the milk-white bulls that feed
 Beside Clitumnus and the crystal lakes
 Of the Cisalpine mountains, in fresh dews
 Of lotos-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 enamour'd 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 !

Purg. 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—

Purg. Honourable swine,
In piggish 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 divining BAG
(Which is not green, but only bacon colour)
Is fill'd with liquor, which if 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.

[*Shewing the Bag.*]

I know that she is innocent; I wish
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.

Purg.

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,
Unravell'd on the blast from a white mountain;
Or like a meteor, or a war-steed's mane,
Or waterfall from a dizzy precipice
Scatter'd upon the wind.

First Boar. Or a cow's tail,—

Second Boar. Or *anything*, as the learned Boar observed.

Purg. 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
Dews 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 Stye 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!

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—

Purg. [*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 assign'd
to swine ;

Squabbling makes pig-herds hungry, and they dine
On bacon, and whip sucking-pigs the more.

CHORUS.

Hog-wash has been ta'en away :
If the Bull-Queen is divested,
We shall be in every way
Hunted, stript, exposed, molested ;
Let us do whate'er we may
That she shall not be arrested.

QUEEN, we entrench you with walls of brawn,
And palisades of tusks, sharp as a bayonet :
Place your most sacred person here. We pawn
Our lives that none a finger dare to lay on it.

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

Fulfill'd by circumvolving destiny ;
 Which says : "Thebes, choose *reform* or *civil war*,
 When through your streets instead of hare with dogs,
 A CONSORT QUEEN shall hunt a KING with Hogs,
 Riding upon the IONIAN MINOTAUR."

Enter IONA TAURINA.

Iona Taurina (coming forward). Gentlemen swine,
 and gentle lady-pigs,
 The tender heart of every boar acquits
 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 hoggish arms ;
 Nor has the expectation been deceived
 Of finding shelter there. Yet know, great boars,
 (For such who ever 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,*
 Deck'd with rare gems, and beauty rarer still,
 Walk'd from Killarney to the Giant's Causeway,
 Through rebels, smugglers, troops of yeomanry,
 White boys and orange boys and constables,
 Tithe-proctors, and excise people, uninjured !
 Thus I !—
 Lord PURGANAX, I do commit myself

* Rich and rare were the gems she wore.

See Moore's Irish Melodies.

Into your custody, and am prepared
To stand the test, whatever it may be!

Purg. 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,
They do not smoke you first.

Purg. At the approaching feast
Of Famine, let the expiation 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 party-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. A flourish of trumpets. Enter MAMMON as Arch-priest, SWELLFOOT, DAKRY, PURGANAX, LAOCTONOS, 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 call'd thee
City-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, &c., 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, follow them licking up the wash.]

Mam. I fear your sacred Majesty has lost
The appetite which you were used to have.
Allow me now to recommend this dish—
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 maintain'd 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.

Purg. (*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!

Laoc. Claret, somehow,
Puts me in mind of blood, and blood of claret!

Swellf. Laoctonos is fishing for a compliment,
But 'tis his due. Yes, you have drunk more wine,
And shed more blood than any man in Thebes.

[*To PURGANAX.*

For God's sake stop the grunting of those pigs!

Purg. 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 skulls 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!

Mam. I hear a crackling of the giant bones
Of the dread image, and in the black pits

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!

Swellf. 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.

Mam. The BAG
 Is here.

Purg. I have rehearsed the entire scene,
 With an ox bladder and some ditch-water,
 On Lady P.—it cannot fail. *(Taking up the bag.)*

Your Majesty *(to 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 fix'd, 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 im-
 patient—

To undergo the test.

*(A graceful figure in a semi-transparent veil passes un-
 noticed 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 become 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 lead them not upon the paths of blood.

The earth did never mean her foison
 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 th' appointed stewards, to fill
 The lap of Pain, and Toil, and Age!—
 Remit, O Queen! thy accustom'd 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, MAMMON, DAKRY, LAOCTONOS, and SWELLFOOT, have surrounded IONA TAURINA, who, with her hands folded on her breast, and her eyes lifted to Heaven, stands, as with saint-like resignation, to wait 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 expression 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 tremendous sound, the Pigs begin scrambling for the loaves,

and are tripped up by the skulls ; all those who eat the loaves 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.

Mino. 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 Theban, that is to say—
My name's JOHN BULL. I am a famous hunter,
And can leap any gate in all Bœotia,
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 TAURINA.

(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 nimbly on his back.)

Ho! ho! 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 whipper-in ! my loyal pigs,
Now let your noses be as keen as beagles,
Your steps as swift as greyhounds, and your cries
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, furze, 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.

TO MARY,

(ON HER OBJECTING 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? Prithee, 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 display ;

The watery bow burned in the evening flame,
 But the shower fell, the swift Sun went his way—
 And that is dead.— O, let me not believe
 That any thing of mine is fit to live !

IV.

Wordsworth informs us he was nineteen years
 Considering and retouching Peter Bell ;
 Watering his laurels with the killing tears
 Of slow, dull care, so that their roots to hell
 Might pierce, and their wide branches blot the spheres
 Of heaven, with dewy leaves and flowers ; this well
 May be, for Heaven and Earth conspire to foil
 The over-busy gardener's blundering toil.

V.

My Witch indeed is not so sweet a creature
 As Ruth or Lucy, whom his graceful praise
 Clothes for our grandsons—but she matches Peter,
 Though he took nineteen years, and she three days
 In dressing. Light the vest of flowing metre
 She wears ; he, proud as dandy with his stays,
 Has hung upon his wiry limbs a dress
 Like King Lear's "looped and windowed raggedness."

VI.

If you strip Peter, you will see a fellow,
 Scorched by Hell's hyperequatorial climate
 Into a kind of a sulphureous yellow :
 A lean mark, hardly fit to fling a rhyme at ;
 In shape a Scaramouch, in hue Othello,
 If you unveil my Witch, no priest nor primate
 Can shrive you of that sin,—if sin there be
 In love, when it becomes idolatry.



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 adorn'd 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 ne'er beholden
In his wide voyage o'er continents and seas
So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden
In the warm shadow of her loveliness;—
He kiss'd her with his beams, and made all golden
The chamber of grey rock in which she lay—
She, in that dream of joy, dissolved away.

III.

'Tis said, she was first changed into a vapour,
 And then into a cloud, such clouds as flit,
 Like splendour-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 bidden
 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 tempest's cloven roof—her hair
 Dark—the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
 Picturing 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 cameleopard came,
 And then the wise and fearless elephant;
 Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
 Of his own volumes interolved;—all gaunt

And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame.
They drank before her at her sacred fount;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.

VII.

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 sinews 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.

VIII.

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of lilies, and the wood-gods in a crew
Came, blithe, as in the olive copses thick
Cicadæ are, drunk with the noonday dew :
And Driope and Faunus follow'd 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.

IX.

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 pass'd 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.

X.

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 grey locks,
 And quaint Priapus with his company
 All came, much wondering how the enwombed rocks
 Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth ;—
 Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

XI.

The herdsmen and the mountain maidens came,
 And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant—
 Their spirits shook within them, as a flame
 Stirr'd by the air under a cavern gaunt :
 Pigmies, and Polyphemes, by many a name,
 Centaurs, and Satyrs, and such shapes as haunt
 Wet clefts,—and lumps neither alive nor dead,
 Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footed.

XII.

For she was beautiful : her beauty made
 The bright world dim, and every thing beside
 Seem'd like the fleeting image of a shade :
 No thought of living spirit could abide.
 Which to her looks had ever been betray'd,
 On any object in the world so wide,
 On any hope within the circling skies,
 But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

XIII.

Which when the lady knew, she took her spindle
 And twined three threads of fleecy mist, and three

Long lines of light, such as the dawn may kindle
The clouds and waves and mountains with, and she
As many star-beams, ere their lamps could dwindle
In the belated moon, wound skilfully ;
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove—
A shadow for the splendour of her love.

XIV.

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasures—sounds of air,
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
Folded in cells of crystal silence there ;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
Will never die—yet ere we are aware,
The feeling and the sound are fled and gone,
And the regret they leave remains alone.

XV.

And there lay Visions swift, and sweet, and quaint,
Each in its thin sheath like a chrysalis ;
Some eager to burst forth, some weak and faint
With the soft burthen of intensest bliss ;
It is its work to bear to many a saint
Whose heart adores the shrine which holiest is,
Even Love's—and others white, green, grey and black,
And of all shapes—and each was at her beck.

XVI.

And odours in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept,
Clipt in a floating net, a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the moon yet slept ;
As bats at the wired windows of a dairy,
They beat their vans ; and each was an adept,

When loosed and mission'd, making wings of winds,
To stir sweet thoughts or sad in destined minds.

XVII.

And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a night
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.

XVIII.

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.

XIX.

And how all things that seem untameable,
Not to be check'd 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.

XX.

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
To which the enchantment of her father's power

Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
Were heap'd in the recesses of her bower :
Carved lamps and chalices, and phials 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.

XXI.

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.

XXII.

The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads and Naiads with long weedy locks,
Offer'd 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 gnarled heart of stubborn oaks,
So they might live for ever in the light
Of her sweet presence—each a satellite.

XXIII.

“ This may not be,” the wizard maid replied ;
“ The fountains where the Naiades bedew
Their shining hair, at length are drain'd and dried ;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide ;
The boundless ocean, like a drop of dew

Will be consumed—the stubborn centre must
Be scatter'd, like a cloud of summer dust.

XXIV.

“ 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 !”

XXV.

She spoke and wept : the dark and azure well
Sparkled beneath the shower of her bright tears,
And every little circlet where they fell,
Flung to the cavern-roof inconstant spheres
And intertangled lines of light :—a knell
Of sobbing voices came upon her ears
From those departing Forms, o'er the serene
Of the white streams and of the forest green.

XXVI.

All day the wizard lady sat aloof,
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity
Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof ;
Or broidering the pictured poesy
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendour of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven—and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy.

XXVII.

While on her hearth lay blazing many a piece
Of sandal wood, rare gums and cinnamon ;

Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is,
Each flame of it is as a precious stone
Dissolved in ever-moving light, and this
Belongs to each and all who gaze upon.
The Witch beheld it not, for in her hand
She held a woof that dimm'd the burning brand.

XXVIII.

This lady never slept, but lay in trance
All night within the fountain—as in sleep.
Its emerald crags glow'd in her beauty's glance :
Through the green splendour of the water deep
She saw the constellations reel and dance
Like fire-flies—and withal did ever keep
The tenour of her contemplations calm,
With open eyes, closed feet and folded palm.

XXIX.

And when the whirlwinds and the clouds descended
From the white pinnacles of that cold hill,
She pass'd at dewfall to a space extended,
Where in a lawn of flowering asphodel
Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawn'd 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 mimic moon and bearded star,
O'er woods and lawns—the serpent heard it flicker
In sleep, and dreaming still, he crept afar—
And when the windless snow descended thicker
Than autumn leaves, she watch'd 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 ardours in that sphere which are,
 And so she sold it, and Apollo bought,
 And gave it to this daughter : from a car
 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 an horticultural adept,
 Stole a strange seed, and wrapt it up in mould,
 And sow'd 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 tracery ran
 Of light firm texture, ribb'd and branching, o'er
 The solid rind, like a leaf's veined fan,
 Of which Love scoop'd this boat, and with soft motion
 Piloted it round the circumfluous ocean.

XXXIV.

This boat she moor'd upon her fount, and lit
 A living spirit within all its frame,
 Breathing the soul of swiftness into it.
 Couch'd on the fountain like a panther tame,

One of the twain 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 develop'd no defect
 Of either sex, yet all the grace of both,—
 In gentleness and strength its limbs were deck'd ;
 The bosom swell'd lightly with its full youth,
 The countenance was such as might select
 Some artist that his skill should never die,
 Imaging forth such perfect purity.

XXXVII.

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
 Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
 Tipt with the sped of liquid lightnings,
 Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere :
 She led her creature to the boiling springs
 Where the light boat was moor'd,—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 clove those mountains vast
 Around their inland islets, and amid
 The panther-peopled forests, whose shade cast
 Darkness and odours, and a pleasure hid
 In melancholy gloom, the pinnacle pass'd ;
 By many a star-surrounded pyramid
 Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
 And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

XXXIX.

The silver noon into that winding dell,
 With slanted gleam athwart the forest tops,
 Temper'd 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 sever'd mountains lay on high
 Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

XL.

And ever as she went, the Image lay
 With folded wings and unawaken'd 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.

XLI.

And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud
 Upon a stream of wind, the pinnacle 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 polish'd pebbles :—mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

XLII.

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 lamplless way.

XLIII.

And when the wizard lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many-winding vale,
Which to the inmost mountain upward tend—
She call'd "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 unfurl'd its heaven-colour'd 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,
And interwoven with fine feathery snow
And moonlight splendour of intensesst rime,
With which frost paints the pines in winter time.

XLV.

And then it winnow'd the Elysian air
 Which ever hung about that lady bright,
 With its ethereal vans—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 pinnacle, oar'd by those enchanted wings,
 Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

XLVI.

The water flash'd like sunlight, by the prow
 Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to Heaven;
 The still air seem'd as if its waves did flow
 In tempest down the mountains,—loosely driven
 The lady's radiant hair stream'd to and fro:
 Beneath, the billows having vainly striven
 Indignant and impetuous, roar'd 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 sail'd forth under the light
 Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
 His storm-outspeeding wings, th' Hermaphrodite;
 She to the Austral waters took her way,
 Beyond the fabulous Thamondocona.

XLVIII.

Where, like a meadow which no scythe has shaven,
 Which rain could never bend, or whirl-blast shake,
 With the Antarctic constellations graven,
 Canopus and his crew, lay th' 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 thunder'd by.

XLIX.

A haven, beneath whose translucent floor
The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably,
And around which, the solid vapours hoar,
Based on the level waters, to the sky
Lifted their dreadful crags; and like a shore
Of wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemm'd in with rifts and precipices grey,
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay.

L.

And whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the winds' scourge, foam'd like a wounded thing;
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Plough'd up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the roused cormorant in the lightning flash
Look'd like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of inky thunder-smoke—this haven
Was as a gem to copy Heaven engraven.

LI.

On which that lady play'd 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 play'd upon the water; till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.

LII.

And then she call'd 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 intertexture of the atmosphere,
 They pitch'd upon the plain of the calm mere.

LIII.

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.

LIV.

And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
 Upon those wandering isles of æry dew,
 Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not.
 She sate, and heard all that had happen'd 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 laugh'd outright.

LV.

These were tame pleasures.—She would often climb
 The steepest ladder of the crudded 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 laugh'd to hear the fire-balls roar behind.

LVI.

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
Wander'd upon the earth where'er she past,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

LVII.

But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
To guide adown old Nilus, when he threads
Egypt and Æthiopia, from the steep
Of utmost Axumè, until he spreads,
Like a calm flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
His waters on the plain: and crested heads
Of cities and proud temples gleam amid
And many a vapour-belted pyramid.

LVIII.

By Mæris and the Mareotid lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms like bridal chamber floors;
Where naked boys bridling tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghastly 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 Osirian feast.

LIX.

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, 'twas her delight
 To wander in the shadow of the night.

LX.

With motion like the spirit of that wind
 Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
 Pass'd through the peopled haunts of human kind,
 Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet,
 Through fane and palace-court and labyrinth mined
 With many a dark and subterranean street
 Under the Nile; through chambers high and deep
 She pass'd, observing mortals in their sleep.

LXI.

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 linked 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.

LXII.

But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
 Not to be mirror'd in a holy song,
 Distortions foul of supernatural awe.
 And pale imaginings of vision'd wrong,

And all the code of custom's lawless 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."

LXIII.

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 unpiloted 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 weltering of the restless tide.

LXIV.

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 lull'd within their dreamless graves.

LXV.

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.

LXVI.

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 murmur'd on mute lips with tender tone,
 Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

LXVII.

Alas, Aurora! what wouldst thou have given
 For such a charm, when Tithon became grey?
 Or how much, Venus, of thy silver Heaven
 Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina
 Had half (oh! why not all?) the debt forgiven
 Which dear Adonis had been doom'd to pay,
 To any witch who would have taught you it?
 The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

LXVIII.

'Tis said in after times her spirit free
 Knew what love was, and felt itself alone—
 But holy Dian could not chaster be
 Before she stoop'd 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
 Pass'd with an eye serene and heart unladen.

LXIX.

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 thenceforth as if some control

Mightier than life, were in them ; and the grave
Of such, when death oppress'd the weary soul,
Was as a green and over arching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.

LXX.

For on the night that they were buried, she
Restored the embalmers' ruining, 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 sleep 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 make
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 chatterings of the monkey.—Every one
 Of the prone courtiers crawl'd to kiss the feet
 Of their great Emperor when the morning came ;
 And kiss'd—alas, how many kiss the same!

LXXV.

The soldiers dream'd that they were blacksmiths, and
 Walk'd out of quarters in somnambulism,
 Round the red anvils you might see them stand
 Like Cyclopes in Vulcan's sooty abysm,
 Beating their swords to ploughshares;—in a band
 The jailors 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,
Blush'd at the thing which each believed was done
Only in fancy—till the tenth moon shone;

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 play'd 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 slights,
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
Scarcely believe much more than we can see.

EPIPSYCHIDION:

VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE NOBLE
AND UNFORTUNATE LADY,

EMILIA V——,

NOW IMPRISONED IN THE CONVENT OF ——.

~~~~~  
L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nel infinito  
un Mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso  
baratro.—HER OWN WORDS.  
~~~~~

LONDON
C AND J OLLIER VERE STREET BOND STREET
MDCCCXXI.



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 incomprehensible, 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 sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotal 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 following page is almost a literal translation from Dante's famous *Canzone*

Voi, ch' intendendo, il terzo ciel movete, &c.

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.

S.

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.



EPIPSYCHIDION.

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 wither'd memory.

Poor captive bird! who, from thy narrow cage,
Pourest such music, that it might assuage
The rugged hearts of those who prison'd 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 array'd
It over-soar'd this low and worldly shade,
Lie shatter'd; and thy panting, wounded breast
Stains with dear blood its unmaternal nest!

I weep vain tears: blood would less bitter be,
 Yet pour'd forth gladlier, could it profit thee.

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!
 Veil'd 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 unaccustom'd 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. Al! me!
I am not thine: I am a part of *thee*.

Sweet Lamp! my moth-like Muse has burnt its wings,
Or, like a dying swan who soars and sings,
Young Love should teach Time, in his own grey style,
All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile,
A lovely soul form'd to be blest and bless?
A well of seal'd and secret happiness,
Whose waters like blithe 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 who love has taught to play
Make music on, to soothe the roughest day
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 ethereally 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 stops
 Of planetary music heard in trance.
 In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
 The sun-beams 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 Omnipresence,
 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 prolong'd, and ending never,
 Till they are lost, and in that Beauty furl'd
 Which penetrates and clasps 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 disentwined,
 The sweetest 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 indued
 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 averr'd:
 The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
 In love and worship, blends itself with God,

Spouse ! Sister ! Angel ! Pilot of the Fate
 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 worshipp'd 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 form'd, 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 wreck'd,
 I never was attach'd 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
 By the broad highway of the world, and so,
 With one chain'd 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 phantasy,
 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 baser from the nobler ; the impure
 And frail, from what is clear and must endure.
 If you divide suffering and dross, 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 gain'd. of sorrow spared:

This truth is that deep well, whence sages draw
 The unenvied light of hope ; the eternal law
 By which those live, to whom this world of life
 Is as a garden ravaged, and whose strife
 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 vision'd 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 floor
 Paved her light steps ;—on an imagined shore,
 Under the grey beak 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,
 And from the fountains, and the odours deep
 Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
 Of the sweet kisses which had lull'd them there,
 Breathed but of *her* to the enamour'd 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 shatter'd 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 sandall'd with plumes of fire,
 And towards the loadstar of my one desire,
 I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight
 Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
 When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
 A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
 As if it were a lamp of earthly flame.—
 But Sine, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
 Past, like a God throned on a winged planet,
 Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
 Into the dreary cone of our life's shade ;
 And as a man with mighty loss dismay'd,
 I would have follow'd, though the grave between
 Yawn'd like a gulf whose spectres are unseen :
 When a voice said :—" O Thou of hearts the weakest,
 The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest,"
 Then I—" where ?" the world's echo answer'd "where !"

And in that silence, and in my despair,
 I question'd every tongueless wind that flew
 Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
 Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul ;
 And murmur'd 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 veil'd Divinity,
 The world I say of thoughts that worshipp'd her :
 And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
 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 bewilder'd by new forms, I past
 Seeking among those untaught foresters
 If I could find one form resembling hers,
 In which she might have mask'd herself from me.
 There,—One, whose voice was venom'd melody
 Sate by a well, under blue night-shade bowers ;
 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 grey
 O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
 With ruins 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 honey'd words betray :
 And One was true—oh ! why not true to me ?
 Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
 I turn'd 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 noon-day dawn, there shone again
 Deliverance. One stood on my path who seem'd
 As like the glorious shape which I had dream'd,
 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 transform'd, 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
 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 frown'd on me ;
 And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed :
 Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead :—
 For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
 Unmindful each of their accustom'd strife,
 Mask'd like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
 The wandering hopes of one abandon'd 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 quench'd, what frost
 Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast
 The moving billows of my being fell
 Into a death of ice, immoveable ;—
 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 staunchless tears. Weep not for me !

At length, into the obscure Forest came
 The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.
 Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
 Flash'd from her motion splendour like the Morn's,
 And from her presence life was radiated
 Through the grey earth and branches bare and dead ;
 So that her way was paved, and roof'd above
 With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love ;
 And music from her respiration 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 froze* 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 call'd my Spirit, and the dreaming clay
 Was lifted by the thing that dream'd 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 veil'd from me
 So many years—that it was Emily.

Twin Spheres of light who rule this passive Earth,
 This world of love, this *me* ; 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 lull its storms, each in the craggy grave

* The original reads "froze."

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 disdainng even a borrow'd might ;
 Thou, not eclipsing a remoter 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 frail Universe
 Towards thine own ; till, wreck'd 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 worshipp'd by those sisters wild
 Call'd Hope and Fear—upon the heart are piled
 Their offerings,—of this sacrifice divine
 A World shall be the altar.

Lady mine,
 Scorn not these flowers of thought, the fading birth
 Which from its heart of hearts that plant puts forth

Whose fruit made perfect by thy sunny eyes,
Will be as of the trees of Paradise.

The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me.
To whatsoever of dull mortality
Is mine, remain a vestal sister still ;
To the intense, the deep, the imperishable,
Not mine but me, henceforth be thou united
Even as a bride, delighting and delighted.
Thine hour is come :—the destined Star has risen
Which shall descend upon a vacant prison.
The walls are high, the gates are strong, thick set
The sentinels—but true love never yet
Was thus constrain'd : it overleaps all fence :
Like lightning, with invisible violence
Piercing its continents ; like Heaven's free breath,
Which he who grasps can hold not ; liker Death,
Who rides upon a thought, and makes his way
Through temple, tower, and palace, and the array
Of arms : more strength has Love than he or they ;
For it can burst his charnel, and make free
The limbs in chains, the heart in agony,
The soul in dust and chaos.

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbour now,
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow ;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,
No keel has ever plough'd that path before ;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles ;
The treacherous Ocean has forsworn its wiles ;
The merry mariners are bold and free :
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me ?
Our bark is as an albatross, whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple East ;

And we between her wings will sit, while Night
And Day, and Storm, and Calm, pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless Sea,
Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remain'd a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited ; innocent and bold.
The blue Ægean 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 noon-day 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 clear tranquillity ;
 Bright as that wandering Eden Lucifer,
 Wash'd by the soft blue Oceans of young air.
 It is a favour'd 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 winged storms, chaunting 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
 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 grey 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, ere crime
 Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
 Rear'd 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 erased, and in the place of it
 The ivy and the wild-vine interknit
 The volumes of their many-twining stems ;
 Parasite flowers illumine with dewy gems
 The lampless halls, and when they fade, the sky
 Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
 With Moon-light patches, or star atoms keen,
 Or fragments of the day's intense serene ;—
 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 one another's arms, and dream
 Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
 Read in their smiles, and call reality.

This isle and house are mine, and I have vow'd
 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 future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave, and make the present last
In thoughts and joys which sleep, but cannot die,
Folded within their own eternity.
Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury, to waste
The scene it would adorn, and therefore still,
Nature, with all her children, haunts the hill.
The ring-dove, in the embowering ivy, yet
Keeps up her love-lament, and the owls flit
Round the evening tower, and the young stars glance
Between the quick bats in their twilight dance ;
The spotted deer bask in the fresh moon-light
Before our gate, and the slow, silent night
Is measured by the pants of their calm sleep.
Be this our home in life, and when years heap
Their wither'd hours, like leaves, on our decay,
Let us become the over-hanging day,
The living soul of this Elysian isle,
Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile
We two will rise, and sit, and walk together,
Under the roof of blue Ionian weather,
And wander in the meadows, or ascend
The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
With lightest winds, to touch their paramour ;
Or linger, where the pebble-paven shore,
Under the quick, faint kisses of the sea
Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy,—
Possessing and possess'd by all that is
Within that calm circumference of bliss,
And by each other, till to love and live
Be one :—or, at the noontide hour, arrive
Where some old cavern hoar seems yet to keep
The moonlight of the expired night asleep,
Through which the awaken'd day can never peep ;

A veil for our seclusion, close as Night's,
 Where secure sleep may kill thine innocent lights ;
 Sleep, the fresh dew of languid love, the rain
 Whose drops quench kisses till they burn again.
 And we will talk, until thought's melody
 Become too sweet for utterance, and it die
 In words, to live again in looks, which dart
 With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
 Harmonizing silence without a sound.
 Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
 And our veins beat together ; and our lips,
 With other eloquence than words, eclipse
 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 unconsumable :
 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 wills, one will 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 blest :
And leave the troop which errs, and which reproves,
And come and be my guest,—for I am Love's.

HELLAS

A LYRICAL DRAMA

BY

PERCY B. SHELLEY

ΜΑΝΤΙΣ ΕΙΜ' ΕΞΟΔΩΝ 'ΑΓΩΝΩΝ
(ŒDIP. COLON.

LONDON
CHARLES AND JAMES OLLIER VERE STREET
BOND STREET
MDCCCXXII



P R E F A C E.

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

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

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

as a portion of the cause of civilization and social improvement.

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

The only *goat-song* which I have yet attempted has, I confess, in spite of the unfavourable nature of the subject, received a greater and a more valuable portion of applause than I expected or than it deserved.

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

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

what is worse, might have arrived at such a stagnant and miserable state of social 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 accord-

ing 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 civilization.

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 ?

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 is 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 pinned 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.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY
PRINCE ALEXANDER MAVROCORDATO
LATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE
HOSPODAR OF WALLACHIA
THE DRAMA OF HELLAS IS INSCRIBED
AS AN IMPERFECT TOKEN OF THE ADMIRATION,
SYMPATHY, AND FRIENDSHIP OF THE AUTHOR.

PISA, *November 1st.* 1821.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MAHMUD.
HASSAN.

DAOOD.
AHASUERUS, a Jew

CHORUS of Greek Captive Women.

Messengers, Slaves, and Attendants.

SCENE—Constantinople. TIME—Sunset.



HELLAS

A LYRICAL DRAMA.

SCENE, a Terrace on the Seraglio. MAHMUD, sleeping; an Indian Slave sitting beside his couch.

CHORUS OF GREEK CAPTIVE WOMEN,

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

INDIAN.

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

HELLAS.

CHORUS.

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

INDIAN.

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

CHORUS.

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

SEMICHORUS I.

Life may change, but it may fly not.
 Hope may vanish, but can die not ;
 Truth be veil'd, but still it burneth;
 Love repulsed,—but it returneth!

SEMICHORUS II.

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

SEMICHORUS I.

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

CHORUS.

In the great morning of the world,
 The spirit of God with might unfurl'd
 The flag of Freedom over Chaos,
 And all its banded anarchs fled,
 Like vultures frighted from Imaus,
 Before an earthquake's tread.—
 So from Time's tempestuous dawn
 Freedom's splendour burst and shone:—
 Thermopylæ and Marathon
 Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted
 The springing fire. The winged glory
 On Philippi half-alighted,
 Like an eagle on a promontory.
 Its unwearied wings could fan
 The quenchless ashes of Milan.
 From age to age, from man to man,
 It lived; and lit from land to land
 Florence, Albion, Switzerland.
 Then night fell; and, as from night,
 Re-assuming fiery flight,

From the West swift Freedom came.
 Against the course of Heaven and doom,
 A second sun array'd 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 quench'd 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 airy hanging
 In the mountain-cedar's hair,
 And her brood expect the clanging
 Of her wings through the wild air,
 Sick with famine:—Freedom so
 To what of Greece remaineth now
 Returns; her hoary ruins glow
 Like Orient mountains lost in day;
 Beneath the safety of her wings
 Her renovated nurselings play,
 And in the naked lightnings
 Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
 Let Freedom leave—where'er she flies,
 A Desert, or a Paradise:
 Let the beautiful and the brave
 Share her glory, or a grave.

SEMICHORUS I.

With the gifts of gladness
 Greece did thy cradle strew;

SEMICHORUS II.

With the tears of sadness
 Greece did thy shroud bedew!

SEMICHORUS I.

With an orphan's affection
She follow'd thy bier through Time ;

SEMICHORUS II.

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

SEMICHORUS I.

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

SEMICHORUS II.

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

SEMICHORUS I.

If Annihilation—

SEMICHORUS II.

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

INDIAN.

His brow grows darker—Breathe not—move not!
He starts—he shudders. Ye, that love not,
With your panting loud and fast
Have awaken'd him at last.

Mahmud (starting from his sleep). Man the Seraglio
guard! make fast the gate.

What! from a cannonade of three short hours?
'Tis false! that breach towards the Bosphorus
Cannot be practicable yet,—who stirs?
Stand to the match ; that when the foe prevails
One spark may mix in reconciling ruin

The conqueror and the conquer'd! Heave the tower
 Into the gap—wrench off the roof.

Enter HASSAN.

Ha! what!

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

Has. Your Sublime Highness
 Is strangely moved.

Mah. 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 whelm'd 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.

Has. 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
 Mock'd with the curse of immortality.
 Some feign that he is Enoch : others dream
 He was præ-adamite, and has survived
 Cycles of generation and of ruin.
 The sage, in truth, by dreadful abstinence,
 And conquering penance of the mutinous flesh,
 Deep contemplation and unwearied study,
 In years outstretch'd beyond the date of man,
 May have attain'd to sovereignty and science
 Over those strong and secret things and thoughts
 Which others fear and know not.

Mah.

I would talk

With this old Jew.

Has.

Thy will is even now

Made known to him where he dwells in a sea-cavern
 'Mid the Demonesi, less accessible
 Than thou or God ! He who would question him
 Must sail alone at 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-pasturing isle,
 Green Erebinthus, quench the fiery shadow
 Of his gilt prow within the sapphire water,
 Then must the lonely helmsman cry aloud
 Ahasuerus ! and the caverns round
 Will answer Ahasuerus ! If his prayer
 Be granted, a faint meteor will arise
 Lighting him over Marmora, and a wind
 Will rush out of the sighing pine-forest,
 And with the wind a storm of harmony
 Unutterably sweet, and pilot him
 Through the soft twilight to the Bosphorus :

Thence at the hour and place and circumstance
 Fit for the matter of their conference
 The Jew appears. Few dare, and few who dare
 Win the desired communion . . . but that shout
 Bodes— *(a shout within.)*

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

Has. That shout again.

Mah. This Jew whom thou hast summon'd—

Has. Will be here—

Mah. 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 hurrying to and fro,
 Clothe their unceasing flight
 In the brief dust and light
 Gather'd around their chariots as they go ;
 New shapes they still may weave,
 New gods, new laws, receive,
 Bright or dim are they, as the robes they last
 On Death's bare ribs had cast.

A power from the unknown God,
 A Promethean conqueror, came ;
 Like a triumphal path he trod
 The thorns of death and shame.
 A mortal shape to him
 Was like the vapour dim
 Which the orient planet animates with light ;
 Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
 Like bloodhounds mild and tame,
 Nor prey'd, until their Lord had taken flight ;
 The moon of Mahomet
 Arose, and it shall set :
 While blazon'd as on heaven's immortal noon
 The cross leads generations on.

 Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
 From one whose dreams are Paradise
 Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
 And day peers forth with her blank eyes ;
 So fleet, so faint, so fair,
 The Powers of earth and air
 Fled from the folding star of Bethlehem :
 Apollo, Pan, and Love,
 And even Olympian Jove,
 Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them ;
 Our hills and seas and streams,
 Dispeopled of their dreams,
 Their waters turn'd to blood, their dew to tears,
 Wail'd for the golden years.

Enter MAHMUD, HASSAN, DAOOD, and others.

Mah. More gold? Our ancestors bought gold with
 victory,

And shall I sell it for defeat?

Dao. The Janizars
 Clamour for pay.

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

Dao. It has been sown,
 And yet the harvest to the sicklemen
 Is as a grain to each.

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

[*Exit* DAOOD.]

O! miserable dawn, after a night
 More glorious than the day which it usurp'd!
 O, faith in God! O, power on earth! O, word
 Of the great prophet, whose o'ershadowing wings
 Darken'd 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 roll'd in triumph
 From Caucasus to White Ceraunia!
 Ruin above, and anarchy below;
 Terror without, and treachery within;
 The Chalice of destruction full, and all
 Thirsting to drink; and who among us dares
 To dash it from his lips? and where is Hope?

Has. The lamp of our dominion still rides high ;
One God is God—Mahomet is his prophet.
Four hundred thousand Moslems from the limits
Of utmost Asia, irresistibly
Throng, like full clouds at the Sairocco's cry ;
But not like them to weep their strength in tears :
They bear destroying lightning, and their step
Wakes earthquake to consume and overwhelm,
And reign in ruin. Phrygian Olympus,
Tmolus, and Latmos, and Mycale, roughen
With horrent arms ; and lofty ships even now,
Like vapours anchor'd to a mountain's edge,
Freighted with fire and whirlwind, wait at Scala
The convoy of the ever-veering wind.
Samos is drunk with blood ;—the Greek has paid
Brief victory with swift loss and long despair.
The false Moldavian serfs fled fast and far,
When the fierce shout of Allah-illa-Allah !
Rose like the war-cry of the northern wind
Which kills the sluggish clouds, and leaves a flock
Of wild swans struggling with the naked storm.
So were the lost Greeks on the Danube's day !
If night is mute, yet the returning sun
Kindles the voices of the morning birds ;
Nor at thy bidding less exultingly
Than birds rejoicing in the golden day,
The Anarchies of Africa unleash
Their tempest-winged cities of the sea,
To speak in thunder to the rebel world.
Like sulphurous clouds, half-shatter'd by the storm,
They sweep the pale Ægean, while the Queen
Of Ocean, bound upon her island-throne,
Far in the West sits mourning that her sons
Who frown on Freedom spare a smile for thee :
Russia still hovers, as an eagle might

Within a cloud, near which a kite and crane
 Hang tangled in inextricable fight,
 To stoop upon the victor ;—for she fears
 The name of Freedom, even as she hates thine.
 But recreant Austria loves thee as the Grave
 Loves pestilence, and her slow dogs of war,
 Flesh'd 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 ;
 But many-headed Insurrection stands
 Divided in itself, and soon must fall.

Mah. Proud words, when deeds come short, are
 seasonable :

Look, Hassan, on yon crescent moon, emblazon'd
 Upon that shatter'd 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.

Has. Even as that moon
 Renews itself——

Mah. Shall we be not renew'd !
 Far other bark 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 unleash'd, with idiot fear
 Cover in their kingly dens—as I do now.
 What were defeat when victory must appal ?
 Or danger, when security looks pale ?
 How said the messenger—who, from the fort
 Islanded in the Danube, saw the battle
 Of Bucharest ?—that——

Has. 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.

Mah. Ay, the day
 Was ours : but how ?—

Has. The light Wallachians,
 The Arnaut, 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—

Mah. Speak—tremble not—

Has. Islanded

By victor myriads, form'd 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 approach'd ; till, like a field of corn
Under the hook of the swart sickleman,
The band, intrench'd in mounds of Turkish dead,
Grew weak and few.—Then said the Pacha, “ Slaves,
Render yourselves—they have abandon'd 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 bow'd his head, and his heart burst.
A third exclaim'd : “ There is a refuge, tyrant,
Where thou darest not pursue, and canst not harm,
Should'st 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 hyænas 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 burn'd within the dying man
 Unquenchable disdain of death, and faith
 Creating what it feign'd ;—I cannot tell—
 But he cried, “ Phantoms of the free, we come !
 Armies of the eternal, ye who strike
 To dust the citadels of sanguine kings,
 And shake the souls throned on their stony hearts,
 And thaw their frostwork diadems like dew ;—
 O ye who float around this clime, and weave
 The garment of the glory which it wears ;
 Whose fame, though earth betray the dust it clasp'd,
 Lies sepulchred in monumental thought ;—
 Progenitors of all that yet is great,
 Ascribe to your bright senate, O accept
 In your high ministrations, us, your sons—
 Us first, and the more glorious yet to come !
 And ye, weak conquerors ! giants who look pale
 When the crush'd 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 toul with death ;
 Heaven's light is quench'd 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 mountaint.
 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 poison'd light—Famine and Pestilence,
 And Panic, shall wage war upon our side !
 Nature from all her boundaries is moved
 Against ye : Time has found ye light as foam.
 The Earth rebels ; and Good and Evil stake
 Their empire o'er the unborn world of men
 On this one cast ;—but, ere the die be thrown,
 The renovated genius of our race,
 Proud umpire of the impious game, descends
 A seraph-winged Victory, bestriding
 The tempest of the Omnipotence of God,
 Which sweeps all things to their appointed doom,
 And you to oblivion !"—More he would have said,
 But—

Mah. Died—as thou shouldst ere thy lips had painted
 Their ruin in the hues of our success.
 A rebel's crime guilt with a rebel's tongue !
 Your heart is Greek, Hassan.

Has. It may be so :
 A spirit not my own wrench'd me within,
 And I have spoken words I fear and hate ;
 Yet would I die for—

Mah. Live ! O live ! outlive
 Me and this sinking empire.—But the fleet—

Has. Alas !

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

Has. Latmos, and Ampelos, and Phanæ, saw
The wreck—

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

Has. My presence bore
A part in that day's shame. The Grecian fleet
Bore down at daybreak from the North, and hung
As multitudinous on the ocean line
As cranes upon the cloudless Thracian wind.
Our squadron, convoying ten thousand men,
Was stretching towards Nauplia when the battle
Was kindled.—

First through the hail of our artillery
The agile Hydriote barks with press of sail
Dash'd :—ship to ship, cannon to cannon, man
To man, were grappled in the embrace of war,
Inextricable but by death or victory.
The tempest of the raging fight convulsed
To its crystalline depths that stainless sea,
And shook Heaven's roof of golden morning clouds
Poised on an hundred azure mountain-isles.
In the brief trances of the artillery
One cry from the destroy'd and the destroyer
Rose, and a cloud of desolation wrapt
The unforeseen event, till the north wind
Sprung from the sea, lifting the heavy veil
Of battle smoke—then victory—victory !
For, as we thought, three frigates from Algiers
Bore down from Naxos to our aid, but soon
The abhorred cross glimmer'd behind, before,

* Qy? Told.

Among, around us ; and that fatal sign
 Dried with its beams the strength in Moslem hearts,
 As the sun drinks the dew.—What more ? We fled !
 Our noonday path over the sanguine foam
 Was beacon'd,—and the glare struck the sun pale
 By our consuming transports : the fierce light
 Made all the shadows of our sails blood-red,
 And every countenance blank. Some ships lay feeding
 The 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 perish'd !
 We met the vultures legion'd 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 perch'd
 Each on the weltering carcase that we loved,
 Like its ill angel or its damned soul,
 Riding upon the bosom of the sea.
 We saw the dog fish hastening to their feast.
 Joy waked the voiceless people of the sea,
 And ravening 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—

Mah.

Cease !

Enter a Messenger.

Mes. Your Sublime Highness,
 That Christian hound, the Muscovite Ambassador
 Has left the city.—If the rebel fleet
 Had anchor'd in the port, had victory
 Crown'd 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.—

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

Has. Fear not the Russian :
The tiger leagues not with the stag at bay
Against the hunter.—Cunning, base, and cruel,
He crouches, watching till the spoil be won,
And must be paid for his reserve in blood.
After the war is fought, yield the sleek Russian
That which thou canst not keep, his deserved portion
Of blood, which shall not flow through streets and fields,
Rivers and seas, like that which we may win,
But stagnate in the veins of Christian slaves !

Enter Second Messenger.

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

Holds Attica with seven thousand rebels,
 And has beat back the pacha of Negropont :
 The aged Ali sits in Yanina
 A crownless metaphor of empire :
 His name, that shadow of his wither'd might,
 Holds our besieging army like a spell
 In prey to famine, pest, and mutiny ;
 He, bastion'd in his citadel, looks forth
 Joyless upon the sapphire lake that mirrors
 The ruins of the city where he reign'd
 Childless and sceptreless. The Greek has reap'd
 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.

Mah.

What more ?

Third Mes.

The Christian tribes

Of Lebanon and the Syrian wilderness
 Are in revolt ;—Damascus, Hems, Aleppo,
 Tremble ;—the Arab menaces Medina,
 The Ethiop has intrench'd himself in Sennaar,
 And keeps the Egyptian rebel well employ'd,
 Who denies homage, claims investiture
 As price of tardy aid. Persia demands
 The cities on the Tigris, and the Georgians
 Refuse their living tribute. Crete and Cyprus,
 Like mountain-twins that from each other's veins
 Catch the volcano-fire and earthquake spasm,
 Shake in the general fever. Through the city,
 Like birds before a storm, the Santons shriek,
 And prophesyings horrible and new
 Are heard among the crowd : that sea of men
 Sleeps on the wrecks it made, breathless and still.

A Dervise, learned in the Koran, preaches
 That it is written how the sins of Islam
 Must raise up a destroyer even now.
 The Greeks expect a Saviour from the west,
 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 blazon'd broadly on the noonday sky :
 One saw a red cross stamp'd upon the sun ;
 It has rain'd blood ; and monstrous births declare
 The secret wrath of Nature and her Lord.
 The army encamp'd upon the Cydaris,
 Was roused last night by the alarm of battle,
 And saw two hosts conflicting in the air,
 The shadows doubtless of the unborn time
 Cast on the mirror of the night. While yet
 The fight hung balanced, there arose a storm
 Which swept the phantoms from among the stars.
 At the third watch, the spirit of the plague
 Was heard abroad flapping among the tents ;
 Those who relieved watch found the sentinels dead.
 The last news from the camp is that a thousand
 Have sicken'd, and—

Enter a fourth Messenger.

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

Fourth Mes. One comes
 Fainting with toil, cover'd with foam and blood,
 He stood, he says, upon Clelonites'
 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 unveil'd or hid
 Her boundless light, he saw two adverse fleets

Stalk through the night in the horizon's glimmer,
 Mingling fierce thunders and sulphureous gleams,
 And smoke which strangled every infant wind
 That soothed the silver clouds through the deep air.
 At length the battle slept, but the Sirocco
 Awoke, and drove his flock of thunder-clouds
 Over the sea-horizon, blotting out
 All objects—save that in the faint moon-glimpse
 He saw, or dream'd he saw, the Turkish admiral
 And two the loftiest of our ships of war,
 With the bright image of that Queen of Heaven,
 Who hid, perhaps, her face for grief, reversed ;
 And the abhorred cross—

Enter an Attendant.

Atten. Your Sublime Highness,
 The Jew, who—

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

SEMICHORUS I.

Would I were the winged cloud
 Of a tempest swift and loud !
 I would scorn
 The smile of morn,
 And the wave where the moon rise is born !
 I would leave
 The spirits of eve

A shroud for the corpse of the day to weave
 From other threads than mine !
 Bask in the blue noon divine
 Who would, not I.

SEMICHORUS II.

Whither to fly ?

SEMICHORUS I.

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

SEMICHORUS II.

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

CHORUS.

O Slavery ! thou frost of the world's prime,
 Killing its flowers and leaving its thorns bare !
 Thy touch has stamp'd these limbs with crime,
 These brows thy branding garland bear,
 But the free heart, the impassive soul
 Scorn thy control !

HELLAS.

SEMICHORUS I.

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

SEMICHORUS II.

Go

Where Thermæ and Asopus swallow'd
 Persia, as the sand does foam.
 Deluge upon deluge follow'd,
 Discord, Macedon, and Rome :
 And lastly thou !

SEMICHORUS I.

Temples and towers,
 Citadels and marts, and they
 Who live and die there, have been ours,
 And may be thine, and must decay ;
 But Greece and her foundations are
 Built below the tide of war,
 Based on the crystalline sea
 Of thought and its eternity ;
 Her citizens, imperial spirits,
 Rule the present from the past ;
 On all this world of men inherits
 Their seal is set.

SEMICHORUS II.

Hear ye the blast

Whose Orphic thunder thrilling calls
 From ruin her Titanian walls ?
 Whose spirit shakes the sapless bones
 Of Slavery ? Argos, Corinth, Crete
 Hear, and from their mountain thrones

The dæmons and the nymphs repeat
The harmony.

SEMICHORUS L.

I hear ! I hear !

SEMICHORUS II.

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

SEMICHORUS I.

I hear ! I hear !

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

I hear ! I hear !

The crash as of an empire falling,
The shrieks as of a people calling
Mercy ! mercy !— How they thrill !
Then a shout of "kill ! kill ! kill !" [!]
And then a small still voice, thus—

SEMICHORUS II.

For
Revenge, and Wrong, bring forth their kind,
The foul cubs like their parents are,
Their den is in 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.

Enter MAHMUD and AHASUERUS.

Mah. Thou art a man, thou sayest, even as we—

Ahas. No more !

Mah. But raised above thy fellow-men
 By thought, as I by power.

Ahas. Thou sayest so.

Mah. Thou art an adept in the difficult lore
 Of Greek and Frank philosophy ; thou numberest
 The flowers, and thou measurest the stars ;
 Thou severest element from element ;
 Thy spirit is present in the past, and sees
 The birth of this old world through all its cycles
 Of desolation and of loveliness,
 And when man was not, and how man became
 The monarch and the slave of this low sphere,
 And all its narrow circles—it is much—
 I honour thee, and would be what thou art
 Were I not what I am ; but the unborn hour,
 Cradled in fear and hope, conflicting storms,
 Who shall unveil ? Nor thou, nor I, nor any
 Mighty or wise. I apprehend not
 What thou hast taught me, but I now perceive
 That thou art no interpreter of dreams ;
 Thou dost not own that art, device, or God,
 Can make the future present—let it come !
 Moreover thou disdainest us and ours.
 Thou art as God, whom thou contemplatest.
Ahas. Disdain thee ?—not the worm beneath my feet !

The Fathomless has care for meaner things
 Than thou canst dream, and has made pride for those
 Who would be what they may not, or would seem
 That which they are not. Sultan! talk no more
 Of thee and me, the future and the past ;
 But look on that which cannot change—the One,
 The unborn and the undying. Earth and ocean,
 Space, and the isles of life or light that gem
 The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
 This firmament pavilion'd upon chaos,
 With all its cressets of immortal fire,
 Whose outwall, bastioned impregnably
 Against the escape of boldest thoughts, repels them
 As Calpe the Atlantic clouds—this Whole
 Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts, and flowers,
 With all the silent or tempestuous workings
 By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
 Is but a vision ;—all that it inherits
 Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles and dreams ;
 Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
 The future and the past are idle shadows
 Of thought's eternal flight—they have no being :
 Nought is but that which feels itself to be.
Mah. 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.
Ahas. Mistake me not ! All is contain'd in each.
 Dodona's forest to an acorn's cup
 Is that which has been, or will be, to that
 Which is—the absent to the present. Thought
 Alone, and its quick elements, Will, Passion,

Reason, Imagination, cannot die ;
 They are, what that which they regard appears,
 The stuff whence mutability can weave
 All that it hath dominion o'er, worlds, worms,
 Empires, and superstitions. What has thought
 To do with time, or place, or circumstance ?
 Wouldst thou behold the future ?—ask and have !
 Knock and it shall be open'd—look and, lo !
 The coming age is shadow'd on the past
 As on a glass.

Mah. Wild, wilder thoughts convulse
 My spirit—Did not Mahomet the Second
 Win Stamboul ?

Ahas. 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.

Mah. Thy words
 Have power on me ! I see——

Ahas. What hearest thou ?

Mah. A far whisper——
 Terrible silence.

Ahas. What succeeds ?

Mah. The sound
 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 armed hoofs,
 And crash of brazen mail as of the wreck
 Of adamantine mountains—the mad blast
 Of trumpets, and the neigh of raging steeds,
 And shrieks of women whose thrill jars the blood,
 And one sweet laugh, most horrible to hear,

As of a joyous infant waked and playing
 With its dead mother's breast, and now more loud
 The mingled battle-cry,—ha ! hear I not
 Εν τούτῳ νικη—Allah, Illah, Allah !

Ahas. The sulphurous mist is raised—thou seest—
Mah. 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!

Ahas. What thou seest
 Is but the ghost of thy forgotten dream.
 A dream itself, yet less, perhaps, than that
 Thou call'st reality. Thou mayst behold
 How cities on which Empire sleeps enthroned,
 Bow their tower'd crests to mutability.
 Poised by the flood, e'en on the height thou holdest,
 Thou mayst now learn how the full tide of power
 Ebbs to its depths.—Inheritor of glory,
 Conceived in darkness, born in blood, and nourish'd
 With tears and toil, thou seest the mortal throes
 Of that whose birth was but the same. The Past
 Now stands before thee like an Incarnation
 Of the To-come ; yet, wouldst thou commune with
 That portion of thyself which was ere thou
 Didst start for this brief race whose crown is death,
 Dissolve with that strong faith and fervent passion
 Which call'd it from the uncreated deep,

Yon cloud of war, with its tempestuous phantoms
 Of raging death ; and draw with mighty will
 The imperial shade hither. *(Exit Ahasuerus.)*

Mañ.

Approach !

Phan.

I come

Thence whither thou must go ! The grave is fitter
 To take the living than give up the dead ;
 Yet has thy faith prevail'd, and I am here.
 The heavy fragments of the power which fell
 When I arose, like shapeless crags and clouds,
 Hang round my throne on the abyss, and voices
 Of strange lament soothe my supreme repose,
 Wailing for glory never to return.—

A later Empire nods in its decay :

The autumn of a greener faith is come,
 And wolfish change, like winter, howls to strip
 The foliage in which Fame, the eagle, built
 Her airy, while Dominion whelp'd 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 murder'd life,
 The phantoms of the powers who rule thee now—
 Mutinous passions, and conflicting fears,
 And hopes that sate themselves on dust, and die!—
 Stript of their mortal strength, as thou of thine.
 Islam must fall, but we will reign together
 Over its ruins in the world of death :—
 And if the trunk be dry, yet shall the seed
 Unfold itself even in the shape of that
 Which gathers birth in its decay. Woe ! woe !

To the weak people tangled in the grasp
Of its last spasms.

Mah. Spirit, woe to all !
Woe to the wrong'd and the avenger! woe
To the destroyer, woe to the destroy'd!
Woe to the dupe, and woe to the deceiver!
Woe to the oppress'd, 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 ?

Phan. Ask the cold pale Hour,
Rich in reversion of impending death,
When *he* shall fall upon whose ripe grey hairs
Sit Care, and Sorrow, and Infirmity—
The weight which Crime, whose wings are plumed with
years,
Leaves in his flight from ravaged heart to heart
Over the heads of men, under which burthen
They bow themselves unto the grave : fond wretch!
He leans upon his crutch, and talks of years
To come, and how in hours of youth renew'd
He will renew lost joys, and——

Voice without. Victory! victory!
(*The Phantom vanishes.*)

Mah. What sound of the importunate earth has broken
My mighty trance ?

Voice without. Victory! victory!

Mah. Weak lightning before darkness! poor faint smile
Of dying Islam! voice which art the response
Of hollow weakness! Do I wake and live ?
Were there such things, or may the unquiet brain,
Vex'd by the wise mad talk of the old Jew,
Have shaped itself these shadows of its fear ?

It matters not!—for nought we see or dream,
 Possess, or lose, or grasp at, can be worth
 More than it gives or teaches. Come what may,
 The future must become the past, and I
 As they were to whom once this present hour,
 This gloomy crag of time to which I cling,
 Seem'd an Elysian isle of peace and joy
 Never to be attain'd.—I must rebuke
 This drunkenness of triumph ere it die,
 And, dying, bring despair.—Victory!—poor slaves!
 (*Exit Mahmud.*)

Voice without. Shout in the jubilee of death! The
 Greeks

Are as a brood of lions in the net
 Round which the kingly hunters of the earth
 Stand smiling. Anarchs, ye whose daily food
 Are curses, groans, and gold, the fruit of death
 From Thule to the girdle of the world,
 Come, feast! the board groans with the flesh of men;
 The cup is foaming with a nation's blood—
 Famine and Thirst await! eat, drink, and die!

SEMICHORUS I.

Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,
 Salutes the risen sun, pursues the flying day!
 I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
 Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,
 Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilion'd lay
 In visions of the dawning undelight.
 Who shall impede her flight?
 Who rob her of her prey?

Voice without. Victory! victory! Russia's famished
 eagles

Dare not to prey beneath the crescent's light.
 Impale the remnant of the Greeks! despoil!
 Violate! make their flesh cheaper than dust!

SEMICHORUS II.

Thou voice which art
 The herald of the ill in splendour hid !
 Thou echo of the hollow heart
 Of monarchy, bear me to thine abode
 When desolation flashes o'er a world destroy'd :
 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 brightening
 Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire
 Before their waves expire,
 When heaven and earth are light, and only light
 In the thunder night !
Voice without. Victory ! victory ! Austria, Russia,
 England,
 And that tame serpent, that poor shadow, France,
 Cry peace ; and that means death when monarchs speak.
 Ho, there ! bring torches, sharpen those red stakes,
 These chains are light, fitter for slaves and poisoners
 Than Greeks. Kill ! plunder ! burn ! let none remain.

SEMICHORUS I.

Alas ! for Liberty !
 If numbers, wealth, or unfulfilling years,
 Or fate, can quell the free !
 Alas ! for Virtue, when
 Torments, or contumely, or the sneers
 Of erring judging men,
 Can break the heart where it abides.
 Alas ! if Love, whose smile makes this obscure world
 splendid
 Can change with its false times and tides,

Like hope and terror,—
 Alas for Love !
 And Truth, who wanderest lone and unbefriended,
 If thou canst veil thy lie-consuming mirror
 Before the dazzled eyes of Error,
 Alas for thee ! Image of the Above !

SEMICHORUS II.

Repulse, with plumes from conquest torn,
 Led the ten thousand from the limits of the morn
 Through many an hostile Anarchy !
 At length they wept aloud and cried " the Sea ! the Sea !"
 Through exile, persecution, and despair,
 Rome was, and young Atlantis shall become
 The wonder, or the terror, or the tomb
 Of all whose step wakes Power lull'd in her savage lair :
 But Greece was as a hermit child
 Whose fairest thoughts and limbs were built
 To woman's growth, by dreams so mild,
 She knew not pain or guilt ;
 And now, O Victory, blush ! and Empire tremble !
 When ye desert the free—
 If Greece must be
 A wreck, yet shall its fragments re-assemble,
 And build themselves again impregnably
 In a diviner clime.
 To Amphionic music on some Cape sublime
 Which frowns above the idle foam of Time.

SEMICHORUS I.

Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made ;
 Let the free possess the paradise they claim ;
 Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weigh'd
 With our ruin, our resistance, and our name !

SEMICHORUS II.

Our dead shall be the seed of their decay,
 Our survivors be the shadows of their pride,
 Our adversity a dream to pass away—
 Their dishonour a remembrance to abide !
Voice without. Victory ! victory ! The bought Briton
 sends

The keys of ocean to the Islamite.—
 Now shall the blazon of the cross be veil'd,
 And British skill directing Othman might
 Thunder-strike rebel victory. O keep holy
 This jubilee of unrevenged blood—
 Kill ! crush ! despoil ! Let not a Greek escape !

SEMICHORUS I.

Darkness has dawn'd in the East
 On the noon of time:
 The death-birds descend to their feast,
 From the hungry clime.
 Let Freedom and Peace flee far
 To a sunnier strand,
 And follow Love's folding star
 To the Evening land !

SEMICHORUS II.

The young moon has fed
 Her exhausted horn,
 With the sunset's fire:
 The weak day is dead,
 But the night is not born ;
 And, like loveliness panting with wild desire
 While it trembles with fear and delight,
 Hesperus flies from awakening night,
 And pants in its beauty and speed with light
 Fast flashing, soft, and bright.

Thou beacon of love ! thou lamp of the free !
 Guide us far, far away,
 To climes where now veil'd by the ardour of day
 Thou art hidden
 From waves on which weary noon,
 Faints in her summer swoon,
 Between Kingless continents sinless as Eden,
 Around mountains and islands inviolably
 Prank'd 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 faiths 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 Tempes bloom, there sleep
 Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argos cleaves the main,
 Fraught with a later prize ;
 Another Orpheus sings again,
 And loves, and weeps, and dies.
 A new Ulysses leaves once more
 Calypso for his native shore.

O ! write no more the tale of Troy,
 If earth Death's scroll must be !
 Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
 Which dawns upon the free :
 Although a subtler Sphinx renew
 Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
 And to remoter time
 Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
 The splendour of its prime.
 And leave, if nought so bright may live,
 All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
 Shall burst, ‡ * * * *
 * * * * *
 * * * * *

‡ This hiatus was probably occasioned by the illegibility of the author's handwriting. The missing lines (already in part supplied in the Notes) are thus supplied in Mrs. Shelley's edition (1839) :

“ Shall burst, more bright and good
 Than all who fell, than One who rose,
 Than many unsubdued :”

In a surreptitious collection of Shelley's Works (Lond: John Ascham, 1834), vol. ii. p. 580, the lines are given as follows:—

“ Shall burst, more *wise* and good
 Than all who fell, than one who rose,
 Than many *unwithstood*.”

ED.

Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

O cease ! must hate and death return ?

 Cease ! must men kill and die ?

Cease ! drain not to its dregs the urn

 Of bitter prophecy.

The world is weary of the past,

O might it die or rest at last !

NOTES TO HELLAS.

Vol. II. p. 421. The quenchless ashes of Milan.

MILAN was the centre of the resistance of the Lombard league against the Austrian tyrant. Frederic Barbarossa burnt the city to the ground, but liberty lived in its ashes, and it rose like an exhalation from its ruin. See Sismondi's *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes*, a book which has done much towards awakening the Italians to an imitation of their great ancestors.

P. 426. The Chorus.

The popular notions of Christianity are represented in this chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal. The first stanza contrasts the immortality of the living and thinking beings which inhabit the planets, and, to use a common and inadequate phrase *clothe themselves in matter*—with the transience of the noblest manifestations of the external world.

The concluding verses indicate a progressive state of more or less exalted existence, according to the degree of perfection which every distinct intelligence may have attained. Let it not be supposed that I mean to dogmatize upon a subject, concerning which all men are equally ignorant, or that I think the Gordian knot of the origin of evil can be disentangled by that or any similar assertions. The received hypothesis of a Being resembling men in the moral attributes of his nature, having called us out of non-existence, and after inflicting on us the misery of the commission of error, should superadd that of the punishment and the privations consequent upon it, still would remain inexplicable and incredible. That there is a true

solution of the riddle, and that in our present state 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.

P. 428. No hoary priests after that Patriarch

The Greek Patriarch, after having been compelled to fulminate an anathema against the insurgents, was put to death by the Turks.

Fortunately, the Greeks have been taught that they cannot buy security by degradation, and the Turks, though equally cruel, are less cunning than the smooth-faced tyrants of Europe. As to the anathema, his Holiness might as well have thrown his mitre at Mount Athos for any effect that it produced. The chiefs of the Greeks are almost all men of comprehension and enlightened views on religion and politics.

P. 437. The freedman of a western poet chief

A Greek who had been Lord Byron's servant, commands the insurgents in Attica. This Greek, Lord Byron informs me, though a poet and an enthusiastic patriot, gave him rather the idea of a timid and unenterprising person. It appears that circumstances make men what they are, and that we all contain the germ of a degree of degradation or of greatness, whose connexion with our character is determined by events.

P. 439. The Greeks expect a Saviour from the west.

It is reported that this Messiah had arrived at a seaport near Lacedæmon, in an American brig. The association of names and ideas is irresistibly ludicrous, but the prevalence of such a rumour strongly marks the state of popular enthusiasm in Greece.

The sound

P. 446. As of the assault of an imperial city

For the vision of Mahmud of the taking of Constantinople in 1445, see Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," vol. xii. p. 223.

The manner of the invocation of the spirit of Mahomet the Second, will be censured as over subtle. I could easily have made the Jew a regular conjuror, and the Phantom an ordinary ghost. I have preferred to represent the Jew as disclaiming all pretension, or even belief, in supernatural agency, and as tempting Mahmud to that state of mind in which ideas may be supposed to assume the force of 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 association of another's thoughts.

P. 454. Chorus.

The final Chorus is indistinct and obscure, as the event of the living drama whose arrival it foretells. Prophecies of wars, and rumours of wars, &c., may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age, but to anticipate, however darkly, a period of regeneration and happiness, is a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which bards possess or feign. It will remind the reader "*magno nec*

proximus intervallo" of Isaiah and Virgil, whose ardent spirits, overleaping the actual reign of evil which we endure and bewail, already saw the possible and perhaps approaching state of society in which the "*lion shall lie down with the lamb*," and "*omnis feret omnia tellus*." Let these great names be my authority and my excuse.

P. 455. Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst

Saturn and Love were among the deities of a real or imaginary state of innocence or happiness. *All those who fell*, or the Gods of Greece, Asia, and Egypt; 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 very edifying examples. The horrors of the Mexican, the Peruvian, and the Indian superstitions are well known.



WRITTEN ON HEARING THE NEWS OF THE
DEATH OF NAPOLEON.

WHAT! alive and so bold, oh earth?
Art thou not over bold?
What! leapest thou forth as of old
In the light of thy morning mirth,
The last of the flock of the starry fold?
Ha! leapest thou forth as of old?
Are not the limbs still when the ghost is fled,
And canst thou move, Napoleon being dead?

How! is not thy quick heart cold?
What spark is alive on thy hearth?
How! is not *his* death-knell knoll'd,
And livest *thou* still, Mother Earth?
Thou wert warming thy fingers old
O'er the embers cover'd and cold
Of that most fiery spirit, when it fled—
What, Mother, dost thou laugh now he is dead?

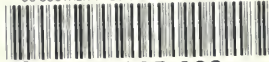
“Who has known me of old,” replied Earth,
“Or who has my story told?
It is thou who art over bold.”
And the lightning of scorn laugh'd forth
As she sung, “To my bosom I fold
All my sons when their knell is knoll'd;
And so with living motion all are fed,
And the quick spring like weeds out of the dead.

“ Still alive and still bold,” shouted Earth,
“ I grow bolder and still more bold.
The dead fill me ten thousand fold
Fuller of speed, and splendour, and mirth,
I was cloudy, and sullen, and cold,
Like a frozen chaos uproll’d,
Till by the spirit of the mighty dead
My heart grew warm. I feed on whom I fed.

“ Ay, alive, and still bold,” mutter’d Earth,
“ Napoleon’s fierce spirit roll’d,
In terror and blood and gold,
A torrent of ruin to death from his birth.
Leave the millions who follow to mould
The metal before it be cold ;
And weave into his shame, which like the dead
Shrouds me, the hopes that from his glory fled.”

END OF VOL II.

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