Endymion: A Poetic Romance

by John Keats

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ENDYMION:

A Poetic Romance.

BY JOHN KEATS.

“THE STRETCHED METRE OF AN ANTIQUE SONG.”

LONDON: PRINTED FOR TAYLOR AND HESSEY, 93, FLEET STREET. 1818.

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF THOMAS CHATTERTON.

PREFACE.

Knowing within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good;–it will not: the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

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

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

necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

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

Teignmouth, April 10, 1818.

ERRATUM.

Page 108, line 4 from the bottom, for "her" read "his."

ENDYMION.

BOOK I.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever: Its loveliness increases; it will never Pass into nothingness; but still will keep A bower quiet for us, and a sleep Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing. Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing A flowery band to bind us to the earth, Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth Of noble natures, of the gloomy days, Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways10 Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all, Some shape of beauty moves away the pall From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon, Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon For simple sheep; and such are daffodils With the green world they live in; and clear rills That for themselves a cooling covert make 'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake, Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms: And such too is the grandeur of the dooms20 We have imagined for the mighty dead; All lovely tales that we have heard or read: An endless fountain of immortal drink, Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences For one short hour; no, even as the trees That whisper round a temple become soon Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon, The passion poesy, glories infinite, Haunt us till they become a cheering light30

Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast, That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast, They alway must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I Will trace the story of Endymion. The very music of the name has gone Into my being, and each pleasant scene Is growing fresh before me as the green Of our own vallies: so I will begin Now while I cannot hear the city's din;40 Now while the early budders are just new, And run in mazes of the youngest hue About old forests; while the willow trails Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer My little boat, for many quiet hours, With streams that deepen freshly into bowers. Many and many a verse I hope to write, Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,50 Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas, I must be near the middle of my story. O may no wintry season, bare and hoary, See it half finished: but let Autumn bold, With universal tinge of sober gold, Be all about me when I make an end. And now at once, adventuresome, I send My herald thought into a wilderness: There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress60 My uncertain path with green, that I may speed Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread A mighty forest; for the moist earth fed So plenteously all weed-hidden roots Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits. And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep, Where no man went; and if from shepherd's keep A lamb strayed far a-down those inmost glens, Never again saw he the happy pens70 Whither his brethren, bleating with content, Over the hills at every nightfall went. Among the shepherds, 'twas believed ever, That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever From the white flock, but pass'd unworried By angry wolf, or pard with prying head, Until it came to some unfooted plains Where fed the herds of Pan: ay great his gains Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were many, Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,80 And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly To a wide lawn, whence one could only see Stems thronging all around between the swell

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

Full in the middle of this pleasantness There stood a marble altar, with a tress90 Of flowers budded newly; and the dew Had taken fairy phantasies to strew Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve, And so the dawned light in pomp receive. For 'twas the morn: Apollo's upward fire Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre Of brightness so unsullied, that therein A melancholy spirit well might win Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine Into the winds: rain-scented eglantine100 Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun; The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass; Man's voice was on the mountains; and the mass Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold, To feel this sun-rise and its glories old.

Now while the silent workings of the dawn Were busiest, into that self-same lawn All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped A troop of little children garlanded;110 Who gathering round the altar, seemed to pry Earnestly round as wishing to espy Some folk of holiday: nor had they waited For many moments, ere their ears were sated With a faint breath of music, which ev'n then Fill'd out its voice, and died away again. Within a little space again it gave Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave, To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes breaking Through copse-clad vallies,–ere their death, o'ertaking The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea.121

And now, as deep into the wood as we Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmered light Fair faces and a rush of garments white, Plainer and plainer shewing, till at last Into the widest alley they all past, Making directly for the woodland altar. O kindly muse! let not my weak tongue faulter In telling of this goodly company, Of their old piety, and of their glee:130 But let a portion of ethereal dew Fall on my head, and presently unmew My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring, To stammer where old

Chaucer used to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along, Bearing the burden of a shepherd song; Each having a white wicker over brimm'd With April's tender younglings: next, well trimm'd, A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks As may be read of in Arcadian books;140 Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe, When the great deity, for earth too ripe, Let his divinity o'er-flowing die In music, through the vales of Thessaly: Some idly trailed their sheep-hooks on the ground, And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these, Now coming from beneath the forest trees, A venerable priest full soberly, Begirt with ministring looks: alway his eye150 Stedfast upon the matted turf he kept, And after him his sacred vestments swept. From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white, Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light; And in his left he held a basket full Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull: Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill. His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath, Seem'd like a poll of ivy in the teeth160 Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd, Up-followed by a multitude that rear'd Their voices to the clouds, a fair wrought car, Easily rolling so as scarce to mar The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown: Who stood therein did seem of great renown Among the throng. His youth was fully blown, Shewing like Ganymede to manhood grown;170 And, for those simple times, his garments were A chieftain king's: beneath his breast, half bare, Was hung a silver bugle, and between His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen. A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd, To common lookers on, like one who dream'd Of idleness in groves Elysian: But there were some who feelingly could scan A lurking trouble in his nether lip, And see that oftentimes the reins would slip180 Through his forgotten hands: then would they sigh, And think of yellow leaves, of owlets cry, Of logs piled solemnly.–Ah, well-a-day, Why should our young Endymion pine away!

Soon the assembly, in a circle rang'd, Stood silent round the shrine: each look was

chang'd To sudden veneration: women meek Beckon'd their sons to silence; while each cheek Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear. Endymion too, without a forest peer,190 Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face, Among his brothers of the mountain chase. In midst of all, the venerable priest Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least, And, after lifting up his aged hands, Thus spake he: "Men of Latmos! shepherd bands! Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks: Whether descended from beneath the rocks That overtop your mountains; whether come From vallies where the pipe is never dumb;200 Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge, Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn: Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare The scrip, with needments, for the mountain air; And all ye gentle girls who foster up Udderless lambs, and in a little cup210 Will put choice honey for a favoured youth: Yea, every one attend! for in good truth Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan. Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide plains Speckled with countless fleeces? Have not rains Green'd over April's lap? No howling sad Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had Great bounty from Endymion our lord. The earth is glad: the merry lark has pour'd220 His early song against yon breezy sky, That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire; Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod With wine, in honour of the shepherd-god. Now while the earth was drinking it, and while Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile, And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright 'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light230 Spread greyly eastward, thus a chorus sang:

"O thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness; Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress Their ruffled locks

where meeting hazels darken; And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken The dreary melody of bedded reeds– In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds240 The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth; Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx–do thou now, By thy love's milky brow! By all the trembling mazes that she ran, Hear us, great Pan!

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles, What time thou wanderest at eventide Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side250 Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow girted bees Their golden honeycombs; our village leas Their fairest blossom'd beans and poppied corn; The chuckling linnet its five young unborn, To sing for thee; low creeping strawberries Their summer coolness; pent up butterflies Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh budding year All its completions–be quickly near,260 By every wind that nods the mountain pine, O forester divine!

"Thou, to whom every fawn and satyr flies For willing service; whether to surprise The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit; Or upward ragged precipices flit To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw; Or by mysterious enticement draw Bewildered shepherds to their path again; Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,270 And gather up all fancifullest shells For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells, And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping; Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping, The while they pelt each other on the crown With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown– By all the echoes that about thee ring, Hear us, O satyr king!

"O Hearkener to the loud clapping shears, While ever and anon to his shorn peers280 A ram goes bleating: Winder of the horn, When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn Anger our huntsman: Breather round our farms, To keep off mildews, and all weather harms: Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds, That come a swooning over hollow grounds, And wither drearily on barren moors: Dread

opener of the mysterious doors Leading to universal knowledge–see, Great son of Dryope,290 The many that are come to pay their vows With leaves about their brows!

Be still the unimaginable lodge For solitary thinkings; such as dodge Conception to the very bourne of heaven, Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven, That spreading in this dull and clodded earth Gives it a touch ethereal–a new birth: Be still a symbol of immensity; A firmament reflected in a sea;300 An element filling the space between; An unknown–but no more: we humbly screen With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending, And giving out a shout most heaven rending, Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan, Upon thy Mount Lycean!

Even while they brought the burden to a close, A shout from the whole multitude arose, That lingered in the air like dying rolls Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals310 Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine. Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine, Young companies nimbly began dancing To the swift treble pipe, and humming string. Aye, those fair living forms swam heavenly To tunes forgotten–out of memory: Fair creatures! whose young childrens' children bred Thermopylæ its heroes–not yet dead, But in old marbles ever beautiful. High genitors, unconscious did they cull320 Time's sweet first-fruits–they danc'd to weariness, And then in quiet circles did they press The hillock turf, and caught the latter end Of some strange history, potent to send A young mind from its bodily tenement. Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent On either side; pitying the sad death Of Hyacinthus, when the cruel breath Of Zephyr slew him,–Zephyr penitent, Who now, ere Phœbus mounts the firmament,330 Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain. The archers too, upon a wider plain, Beside the feathery whizzing of the shaft, And the dull twanging bowstring, and the raft Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top, Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope Those who would watch. Perhaps, the trembling knee And frantic gape of lonely Niobe, Poor, lonely Niobe! when her lovely young Were dead and gone, and her caressing tongue340 Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip,

And very, very deadliness did nip Her motherly cheeks. Arous'd from this sad mood By one, who at a distance loud halloo'd, Uplifting his strong bow into the air, Many might after brighter visions stare: After the Argonauts, in blind amaze Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways, Until, from the horizon's vaulted side, There shot a golden splendour far and wide,350 Spangling those million poutings of the brine With quivering ore: 'twas even an awful shine From the exaltation of Apollo's bow; A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe. Who thus were ripe for high contemplating, Might turn their steps towards the sober ring Where sat Endymion and the aged priest 'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks increas'd The silvery setting of their mortal star. There they discours'd upon the fragile bar360 That keeps us from our homes ethereal; And what our duties there: to nightly call Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather; To summon all the downiest clouds together For the sun's purple couch; to emulate In ministring the potent rule of fate With speed of fire-tailed exhalations; To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who cons Sweet poesy by moonlight: besides these, A world of other unguess'd offices.370 Anon they wander'd, by divine converse, Into Elysium; vieing to rehearse Each one his own anticipated bliss. One felt heart-certain that he could not miss His quick gone love, among fair blossom'd boughs, Where every zephyr-sigh pouts, and endows Her lips with music for the welcoming. Another wish'd, mid that eternal spring, To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails, Sweeping, eye-earnestly, through almond vales:380 Who, suddenly, should stoop through the smooth wind, And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind; And, ever after, through those regions be His messenger, his little Mercury, Some were athirst in soul to see again Their fellow huntsmen o'er the wide champaign In times long past; to sit with them, and talk Of all the chances in their earthly walk; Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores Of happiness, to when upon the moors,390 Benighted, close they huddled from the cold, And shar'd their famish'd scrips. Thus all out-told Their fond imaginations,–saving him Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim, Endymion: yet hourly had he striven To hide

the cankering venom, that had riven His fainting recollections. Now indeed His senses had swoon'd off: he did not heed The sudden silence, or the whispers low, Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe,400 Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms, Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms: But in the self-same fixed trance he kept, Like one who on the earth had never slept. Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man, Frozen in that old tale Arabian.

Who whispers him so pantingly and close? Peona, his sweet sister: of all those, His friends, the dearest. Hushing signs she made, And breath'd a sister's sorrow to persuade410 A yielding up, a cradling on her care. Her eloquence did breathe away the curse: She led him, like some midnight spirit nurse Of happy changes in emphatic dreams, Along a path between two little streams,– Guarding his forehead, with her round elbow, From low-grown branches, and his footsteps slow From stumbling over stumps and hillocks small; Until they came to where these streamlets fall, With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush,420 Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush With crystal mocking of the trees and sky. A little shallop, floating there hard by, Pointed its beak over the fringed bank; And soon it lightly dipt, and rose, and sank, And dipt again, with the young couple's weight,– Peona guiding, through the water straight, Towards a bowery island opposite; Which gaining presently, she steered light Into a shady, fresh, and ripply cove,430 Where nested was an arbour, overwove By many a summer's silent fingering; To whose cool bosom she was used to bring Her playmates, with their needle broidery, And minstrel memories of times gone by.

So she was gently glad to see him laid Under her favourite bower's quiet shade, On her own couch, new made of flower leaves, Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves When last the sun his autumn tresses shook,440 And the tann'd harvesters rich armfuls took. Soon was he quieted to slumbrous rest: But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest Peona's busy hand against his lips, And still, a sleeping, held her finger-tips In tender pressure. And as a willow keeps A patient watch over the

stream that creeps Windingly by it, so the quiet maid Held her in peace: so that a whispering blade Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling450 Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard.

O magic sleep! O comfortable bird, That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind Till it is hush'd and smooth! O unconfin'd Restraint! imprisoned liberty! great key To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy, Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves, Echoing grottos, full of tumbling waves And moonlight; aye, to all the mazy world460 Of silvery enchantment!–who, upfurl'd Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour, But renovates and lives?–Thus, in the bower, Endymion was calm'd to life again. Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain, He said: "I feel this thine endearing love All through my bosom: thou art as a dove Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings About me; and the pearliest dew not brings Such morning incense from the fields of May,470 As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray From those kind eyes,–the very home and haunt Of sisterly affection. Can I want Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such tears? Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all fears That, any longer, I will pass my days Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise My voice upon the mountain-heights; once more Make my horn parley from their foreheads hoar: Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall loll480 Around the breathed boar: again I'll poll The fair-grown yew tree, for a chosen bow: And, when the pleasant sun is getting low, Again I'll linger in a sloping mead To hear the speckled thrushes, and see feed Our idle sheep. So be thou cheered sweet, And, if thy lute is here, softly intreat My soul to keep in its resolved course."

Hereat Peona, in their silver source, Shut her pure sorrow drops with glad exclaim,490 And took a lute, from which there pulsing came A lively prelude, fashioning the way In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay More subtle cadenced, more forest wild Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child; And nothing since has floated in the air So mournful strange. Surely some influence rare Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand; For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spann'd

The quick invisible strings, even though she saw500 Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw Before the deep intoxication. But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon Her self-possession–swung the lute aside, And earnestly said: "Brother, 'tis vain to hide That thou dost know of things mysterious, Immortal, starry; such alone could thus Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinn'd in aught Offensive to the heavenly powers? Caught A Paphian dove upon a message sent?510 Thy deathful bow against some deer-herd bent, Sacred to Dian? Haply, thou hast seen Her naked limbs among the alders green; And that, alas! is death. No, I can trace Something more high perplexing in thy face!"

Endymion look'd at her, and press'd her hand, And said, "Art thou so pale, who wast so bland And merry in our meadows? How is this? Tell me thine ailment: tell me all amiss!– Ah! thou hast been unhappy at the change520 Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more strange? Or more complete to overwhelm surmise? Ambition is no sluggard: 'tis no prize, That toiling years would put within my grasp, That I have sigh'd for: with so deadly gasp No man e'er panted for a mortal love. So all have set my heavier grief above These things which happen. Rightly have they done: I, who still saw the horizontal sun Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the world,530 Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd My spear aloft, as signal for the chace– I, who, for very sport of heart, would race With my own steed from Araby; pluck down A vulture from his towery perching; frown A lion into growling, loth retire– To lose, at once, all my toil breeding fire, And sink thus low! but I will ease my breast Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

"This river does not see the naked sky,540 Till it begins to progress silverly Around the western border of the wood, Whence, from a certain spot, its winding flood Seems at the distance like a crescent moon: And in that nook, the very pride of June, Had I been used to pass my weary eves; The rather for the sun unwilling leaves So dear a picture of his sovereign power, And I could witness his most kingly hour, When he doth lighten up the golden reins,550 And paces leisurely down amber

plains His snorting four. Now when his chariot last Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast, There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed Of sacred ditamy, and poppies red: At which I wondered greatly, knowing well That but one night had wrought this flowery spell; And, sitting down close by, began to muse What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I, Morpheus, In passing here, his owlet pinions shook;560 Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth, Had dipt his rod in it: such garland wealth Came not by common growth. Thus on I thought, Until my head was dizzy and distraught. Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul; And shaping visions all about my sight Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light; The which became more strange, and strange, and dim, And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim:571 And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell The enchantment that afterwards befel? Yet it was but a dream: yet such a dream That never tongue, although it overteem With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring, Could figure out and to conception bring All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay Watching the zenith, where the milky way Among the stars in virgin splendour pours;580 And travelling my eye, until the doors Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight, I became loth and fearful to alight From such high soaring by a downward glance: So kept me stedfast in that airy trance, Spreading imaginary pinions wide. When, presently, the stars began to glide, And faint away, before my eager view: At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue, And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge;590 And lo! from opening clouds, I saw emerge The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er A shell for Neptune's goblet: she did soar So passionately bright, my dazzled soul Commingling with her argent spheres did roll Through clear and cloudy, even when she went At last into a dark and vapoury tent– Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train Of planets all were in the blue again. To commune with those orbs, once more I rais'd600 My sight right upward: but it was quite dazed By a bright something, sailing down apace, Making me quickly veil my eyes and face: Again I look'd, and, O ye deities, Who from Olympus watch our

destinies! Whence that completed form of all completeness? Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness? Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O where Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair? Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun;610 Not–thy soft hand, fair sister! let me shun Such follying before thee–yet she had, Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad; And they were simply gordian'd up and braided, Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded, Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orbed brow; The which were blended in, I know not how, With such a paradise of lips and eyes, Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest sighs, That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings620 And plays about its fancy, till the stings Of human neighbourhood envenom all. Unto what awful power shall I call? To what high fane?–Ah! see her hovering feet, More bluely vein'd, more soft, more whitely sweet Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion; 'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,630 Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed, Handfuls of daisies."–"Endymion, how strange! Dream within dream!"–"She took an airy range, And then, towards me, like a very maid, Came blushing, waning, willing, and afraid, And press'd me by the hand: Ah! 'twas too much; Methought I fainted at the charmed touch, Yet held my recollection, even as one Who dives three fathoms where the waters run Gurgling in beds of coral: for anon,640 I felt upmounted in that region Where falling stars dart their artillery forth, And eagles struggle with the buffeting north That balances the heavy meteor-stone;– Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone, But lapp'd and lull'd along the dangerous sky. Soon, as it seem'd, we left our journeying high, And straightway into frightful eddies swoop'd; Such as ay muster where grey time has scoop'd Huge dens and caverns in a mountain's side:650 There hollow sounds arous'd me, and I sigh'd To faint once more by looking on my bliss– I was distracted; madly did I kiss The wooing arms which held me, and did give My eyes at once to death: but 'twas to live, To take in draughts of life from the gold fount Of kind and passionate looks; to count, and

count The moments, by some greedy help that seem'd A second self, that each might be redeem'd And plunder'd of its load of blessedness.660 Ah, desperate mortal! I ev'n dar'd to press Her very cheek against my crowned lip, And, at that moment, felt my body dip Into a warmer air: a moment more, Our feet were soft in flowers. There was store Of newest joys upon that alp. Sometimes A scent of violets, and blossoming limes, Loiter'd around us; then of honey cells, Made delicate from all white-flower bells; And once, above the edges of our nest,670 An arch face peep'd,–an Oread as I guess'd.

"Why did I dream that sleep o'er-power'd me In midst of all this heaven? Why not see, Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark, And stare them from me? But no, like a spark That needs must die, although its little beam Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream Fell into nothing–into stupid sleep. And so it was, until a gentle creep, A careful moving caught my waking ears,680 And up I started: Ah! my sighs, my tears, My clenched hands;–for lo! the poppies hung Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung A heavy ditty, and the sullen day Had chidden herald Hesperus away, With leaden looks: the solitary breeze Bluster'd, and slept, and its wild self did teaze With wayward melancholy; and I thought, Mark me, Peona! that sometimes it brought Faint fare-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled adieus!–690 Away I wander'd–all the pleasant hues Of heaven and earth had faded: deepest shades Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills Seem'd sooty, and o'er-spread with upturn'd gills Of dying fish; the vermeil rose had blown In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and stirr'd In little journeys, I beheld in it700 A disguis'd demon, missioned to knit My soul with under darkness; to entice My stumblings down some monstrous precipice: Therefore I eager followed, and did curse The disappointment. Time, that aged nurse, Rock'd me to patience. Now, thank gentle heaven! These things, with all their comfortings, are given To my down-sunken hours, and with thee, Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea Of

weary life."710 Thus ended he, and both Sat silent: for the maid was very loth To answer; feeling well that breathed words Would all be lost, unheard, and vain as swords Against the enchased crocodile, or leaps Of grasshoppers against the sun. She weeps, And wonders; struggles to devise some blame; To put on such a look as would say, Shame On this poor weakness! but, for all her strife, She could as soon have crush'd away the life720 From a sick dove. At length, to break the pause, She said with trembling chance: "Is this the cause? This all? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas! That one who through this middle earth should pass Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave His name upon the harp-string, should achieve No higher bard than simple maidenhood, Singing alone, and fearfully,–how the blood Left his young cheek; and how he used to stray He knew not where; and how he would say, nay,730 If any said 'twas love: and yet 'twas love; What could it be but love? How a ring-dove Let fall a sprig of yew tree in his path; And how he died: and then, that love doth scathe, The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses; And then the ballad of his sad life closes With sighs, and an alas!–Endymion! Be rather in the trumpet's mouth,–anon Among the winds at large–that all may hearken! Although, before the crystal heavens darken,740 I watch and dote upon the silver lakes Pictur'd in western cloudiness, that takes The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold sands, Islands, and creeks, and amber-fretted strands With horses prancing o'er them, palaces And towers of amethyst,–would I so tease My pleasant days, because I could not mount Into those regions? The Morphean fount Of that fine element that visions, dreams, And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams750 Into its airy channels with so subtle, So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle, Circled a million times within the space Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace, A tinting of its quality: how light Must dreams themselves be; seeing they're more slight Than the mere nothing that engenders them! Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick? Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick760 For nothing but a dream?" Hereat the youth Look'd up: a conflicting of shame and ruth Was in

his plaited brow: yet, his eyelids Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids A little breeze to creep between the fans Of careless butterflies: amid his pains He seem'd to taste a drop of manna-dew, Full palatable; and a colour grew Upon his cheek, while thus he lifeful spake.

"Peona! ever have I long'd to slake My thirst for the world's praises: nothing base, No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd– Though now 'tis tatter'd; leaving my bark bar'd And sullenly drifting: yet my higher hope Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope, To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks. Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks Our ready minds to fellowship divine, A fellowship with essence; till we shine, Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold The clear religion of heaven! Fold A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness, And soothe thy lips: hist, when the airy stress Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds, And with a sympathetic touch unbinds Eolian magic from their lucid wombs: Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs; Old ditties sigh above their father's grave; Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave Round every spot were trod Apollo's foot; Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit, Where long ago a giant battle was; And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass In every place where infant Orpheus slept. Feel we these things?–that moment have we stept Into a sort of oneness, and our state Is like a floating spirit's. But there are Richer entanglements, enthralments far More self-destroying, leading, by degrees, To the chief intensity: the crown of these Is made of love and friendship, and sits high Upon the forehead of humanity. All its more ponderous and bulky worth Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth A steady splendour; but at the tip-top, There hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop Of light, and that is love: its influence, Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense, At which we start and fret; till in the end, Melting into its radiance, we blend, Mingle, and so become a part of it,– Nor with aught else can our souls interknit So wingedly: when we combine therewith, Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith, And we are nurtured like a

pelican brood. Aye, so delicious is the unsating food, That men, who might have tower'd in the van Of all the congregated world, to fan And winnow from the coming step of time820 All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime Left by men-slugs and human serpentry, Have been content to let occasion die, Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium. And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb, Than speak against this ardent listlessness: For I have ever thought that it might bless The world with benefits unknowingly; As does the nightingale, upperched high, And cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves–830 She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood. Just so may love, although 'tis understood The mere commingling of passionate breath, Produce more than our searching witnesseth: What I know not: but who, of men, can tell That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would swell To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail, The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale, The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,840 The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones, Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet, If human souls did never kiss and greet?

"Now, if this earthly love has power to make Men's being mortal, immortal; to shake Ambition from their memories, and brim Their measure of content; what merest whim, Seems all this poor endeavour after fame, To one, who keeps within his stedfast aim A love immortal, an immortal too.850 Look not so wilder'd; for these things are true, And never can be born of atomies That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies, Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I'm sure, My restless spirit never could endure To brood so long upon one luxury, Unless it did, though fearfully, espy A hope beyond the shadow of a dream. My sayings will the less obscured seem, When I have told thee how my waking sight860 Has made me scruple whether that same night Was pass'd in dreaming. Hearken, sweet Peona! Beyond the matron-temple of Latona, Which we should see but for these darkening boughs, Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart, And meet so nearly, that with wings outraught, And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide Past

them, but he must brush on every side. Some moulder'd steps lead into this cool cell,870 Far as the slabbed margin of a well, Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky. Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks set Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet Edges them round, and they have golden pits: 'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and slits In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my seat, When all above was faint with mid-day heat. And there in strife no burning thoughts to heed,880 I'd bubble up the water through a reed; So reaching back to boy-hood: make me ships Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips, With leaves stuck in them; and the Neptune be Of their petty ocean. Oftener, heavily, When love-lorn hours had left me less a child, I sat contemplating the figures wild Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror through. Upon a day, while thus I watch'd, by flew A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver;890 So plainly character'd, no breeze would shiver The happy chance: so happy, I was fain To follow it upon the open plain, And, therefore, was just going; when, behold! A wonder, fair as any I have told– The same bright face I tasted in my sleep, Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap Through the cool depth.–It moved as if to flee– I started up, when lo! refreshfully, There came upon my face, in plenteous showers,900 Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers, Wrapping all objects from my smothered sight, Bathing my spirit in a new delight. Aye, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss Alone preserved me from the drear abyss Of death, for the fair form had gone again. Pleasure is oft a visitant; but pain Clings cruelly to us, like the gnawing sloth On the deer's tender haunches: late, and loth, 'Tis scar'd away by slow returning pleasure.910 How sickening, how dark the dreadful leisure Of weary days, made deeper exquisite, By a fore-knowledge of unslumbrous night! Like sorrow came upon me, heavier still, Than when I wander'd from the poppy hill: And a whole age of lingering moments crept Sluggishly by, ere more contentment swept Away at once the deadly yellow spleen. Yes, thrice have I this fair enchantment seen; Once more been tortured with renewed life.920 When last the

wintry gusts gave over strife With the conquering sun of spring, and left the skies Warm and serene, but yet with moistened eyes In pity of the shatter'd infant buds,– That time thou didst adorn, with amber studs, My hunting cap, because I laugh'd and smil'd, Chatted with thee, and many days exil'd All torment from my breast;–'twas even then, Straying about, yet, coop'd up in the den Of helpless discontent,–hurling my lance930 From place to place, and following at chance, At last, by hap, through some young trees it struck, And, plashing among bedded pebbles, stuck In the middle of a brook,–whose silver ramble Down twenty little falls, through reeds and bramble, Tracing along, it brought me to a cave, Whence it ran brightly forth, and white did lave The nether sides of mossy stones and rock,– 'Mong which it gurgled blythe adieus, to mock Its own sweet grief at parting. Overhead,940 Hung a lush scene of drooping weeds, and spread Thick, as to curtain up some wood-nymph's home. "Ah! impious mortal, whither do I roam?" Said I, low voic'd: "Ah, whither! 'Tis the grot Of Proserpine, when Hell, obscure and hot, Doth her resign; and where her tender hands She dabbles, on the cool and sluicy sands: Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits, And babbles thorough silence, till her wits Are gone in tender madness, and anon,950 Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone Of sadness. O that she would take my vows, And breathe them sighingly among the boughs, To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head, Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed, And weave them dyingly–send honey-whispers Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers May sigh my love unto her pitying! O charitable echo! hear, and sing This ditty to her!–tell her"–so I stay'd960 My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid, Stood stupefied with my own empty folly, And blushing for the freaks of melancholy. Salt tears were coming, when I heard my name Most fondly lipp'd, and then these accents came: "Endymion! the cave is secreter Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling cloys And trembles through my labyrinthine hair."970 At that oppress'd I hurried in.–Ah! where Are those swift moments? Whither are

they fled? I'll smile no more, Peona; nor will wed Sorrow the way to death; but patiently Bear up against it: so farewel, sad sigh; And come instead demurest meditation, To occupy me wholly, and to fashion My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink. No more will I count over, link by link, My chain of grief: no longer strive to find980 A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind Blustering about my ears: aye, thou shalt see, Dearest of sisters, what my life shall be; What a calm round of hours shall make my days. There is a paly flame of hope that plays Where'er I look: but yet, I'll say 'tis naught– And here I bid it die. Have not I caught, Already, a more healthy countenance? By this the sun is setting; we may chance Meet some of our near-dwellers with my car."990

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

ENDYMION.

BOOK II.

O sovereign power of love! O grief! O balm! All records, saving thine, come cool, and calm, And shadowy, through the mist of passed years: For others, good or bad, hatred and tears Have become indolent; but touching thine, One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine, One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days. The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their blaze, Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades, Struggling, and blood, and shrieks–all dimly fades10 Into some backward corner of the brain; Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet. Hence, pageant history! hence, gilded cheat! Swart planet in the universe of deeds! Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds Along the pebbled shore of memory! Many old rotten-timber'd boats there be Upon thy vaporous bosom, magnified To goodly vessels; many a sail of pride,20 And golden keel'd, is left unlaunch'd and dry. But wherefore this? What care, though owl did fly About

the great Athenian admiral's mast? What care, though striding Alexander past The Indus with his Macedonian numbers? Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers The glutted Cyclops, what care?–Juliet leaning Amid her window-flowers,–sighing,–weaning Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow, Doth more avail than these: the silver flow30 Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen, Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den, Are things to brood on with more ardency Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully Must such conviction come upon his head, Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread, Without one muse's smile, or kind behest, The path of love and poesy. But rest, In chaffing restlessness, is yet more drear Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear40 Love's standard on the battlements of song. So once more days and nights aid me along, Like legion'd soldiers. Brain-sick shepherd prince, What promise hast thou faithful guarded since The day of sacrifice? Or, have new sorrows Come with the constant dawn upon thy morrows? Alas! 'tis his old grief. For many days, Has he been wandering in uncertain ways: Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks;50 Counting his woe-worn minutes, by the strokes Of the lone woodcutter; and listening still, Hour after hour, to each lush-leav'd rill. Now he is sitting by a shady spring, And elbow-deep with feverous fingering Stems the upbursting cold: a wild rose tree Pavilions him in bloom, and he doth see A bud which snares his fancy: lo! but now He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water: how! It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight;60 And, in the middle, there is softly pight A golden butterfly; upon whose wings There must be surely character'd strange things, For with wide eye he wonders, and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft, Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands: Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands His limbs are loos'd, and eager, on he hies Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies. It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was;70 And like a new-born spirit did he pass Through the green evening quiet in the sun, O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun, Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight dreams The summer time away. One track unseams A wooded cleft,

and, far away, the blue Of ocean fades upon him; then, anew, He sinks adown a solitary glen, Where there was never sound of mortal men, Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences80 Melting to silence, when upon the breeze Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet, To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet Went swift beneath the merry-winged guide, Until it reached a splashing fountain's side That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever pour'd Unto the temperate air: then high it soar'd, And, downward, suddenly began to dip, As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip The crystal spout-head: so it did, with touch90 Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch Even with mealy gold the waters clear. But, at that very touch, to disappear So fairy-quick, was strange! Bewildered, Endymion sought around, and shook each bed Of covert flowers in vain; and then he flung Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue, What whisperer disturb'd his gloomy rest? It was a nymph uprisen to the breast In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood100 'Mong lilies, like the youngest of the brood. To him her dripping hand she softly kist, And anxiously began to plait and twist Her ringlets round her fingers, saying: "Youth! Too long, alas, hast thou starv'd on the ruth, The bitterness of love: too long indeed, Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer All the bright riches of my crystal coffer To Amphitrite; all my clear-eyed fish,110 Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish, Vermilion-tail'd, or finn'd with silvery gauze; Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws A virgin light to the deep; my grotto-sands Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands By my diligent springs; my level lilies, shells, My charming rod, my potent river spells; Yes, every thing, even to the pearly cup Meander gave me,–for I bubbled up To fainting creatures in a desert wild.120 But woe is me, I am but as a child To gladden thee; and all I dare to say, Is, that I pity thee; that on this day I've been thy guide; that thou must wander far In other regions, past the scanty bar To mortal steps, before thou cans't be ta'en From every wasting sigh, from every pain, Into the gentle bosom of thy love. Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above: But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewel!130 I have a ditty

for my hollow cell."

Hereat, she vanished from Endymion's gaze, Who brooded o'er the water in amaze: The dashing fount pour'd on, and where its pool Lay, half asleep, in grass and rushes cool, Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still, And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer, Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down;140 And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps, Thus breath'd he to himself: "Whoso encamps To take a fancied city of delight, O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his, After long toil and travelling, to miss The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile: Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil; Another city doth he set about, Free from the smallest pebble-head of doubt150 That he will seize on trickling honey-combs: Alas, he finds them dry; and then he foams, And onward to another city speeds. But this is human life: the war, the deeds, The disappointment, the anxiety, Imagination's struggles, far and nigh, All human; bearing in themselves this good, That they are still the air, the subtle food, To make us feel existence, and to shew How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow,160 Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me, There is no depth to strike in: I can see Nought earthly worth my compassing; so stand Upon a misty, jutting head of land– Alone? No, no; and by the Orphean lute, When mad Eurydice is listening to't; I'd rather stand upon this misty peak, With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek, But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love, Than be–I care not what. O meekest dove170 Of heaven! O Cynthia, ten-times bright and fair! From thy blue throne, now filling all the air, Glance but one little beam of temper'd light Into my bosom, that the dreadful might And tyranny of love be somewhat scar'd! Yet do not so, sweet queen; one torment spar'd, Would give a pang to jealous misery, Worse than the torment's self: but rather tie Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout180 Of Cupids shun thee, too divine art thou, Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow Not to have dipp'd in love's most gentle stream. O be

propitious, nor severely deem My madness impious; for, by all the stars That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars That kept my spirit in are burst–that I Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky! How beautiful thou art! The world how deep! How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep190 Around their axle! Then these gleaming reins, How lithe! When this thy chariot attains Its airy goal, haply some bower veils Those twilight eyes?–Those eyes!–my spirit fails– Dear goddess, help! or the wide-gaping air Will gulph me–help!"–At this with madden'd stare, And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood; Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood, Or blind Orion hungry for the morn. And, but from the deep cavern there was borne200 A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone; Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion'd moan Had more been heard. Thus swell'd it forth: "Descend, Young mountaineer! descend where alleys bend Into the sparry hollows of the world! Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl'd As from thy threshold; day by day hast been A little lower than the chilly sheen Of icy pinnacles, and dipp'dst thine arms Into the deadening ether that still charms210 Their marble being: now, as deep profound As those are high, descend! He ne'er is crown'd With immortality, who fears to follow Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow, The silent mysteries of earth, descend!"

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

'Twas far too strange, and wonderful for sadness; Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite221 To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light, The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly, But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy; A dusky empire and its diadems; One faint eternal eventide of gems. Aye, millions sparkled on a vein of gold, Along whose track the prince quick footsteps told, With all its lines abrupt and angular: Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star,230 Through a vast antre; then the metal woof, Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous roof Curves hugely:

now, far in the deep abyss, It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss Fancy into belief: anon it leads Through winding passages, where sameness breeds Vexing conceptions of some sudden change; Whether to silver grots, or giant range Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge240 Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath Towers like an ocean-cliff, and whence he seeth A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb His bosom grew, when first he, far away, Descried an orbed diamond, set to fray Old darkness from his throne: 'twas like the sun Uprisen o'er chaos: and with such a stun Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it, He saw not fiercer wonders–past the wit250 Of any spirit to tell, but one of those Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close, Will be its high remembrancers: who they? The mighty ones who have made eternal day For Greece and England. While astonishment With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went Into a marble gallery, passing through A mimic temple, so complete and true In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd To search it inwards; whence far off appear'd,260 Through a long pillar'd vista, a fair shrine, And, just beyond, on light tiptoe divine, A quiver'd Dian. Stepping awfully, The youth approach'd; oft turning his veil'd eye Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old. And when, more near against the marble cold He had touch'd his forehead, he began to thread All courts and passages, where silence dead Rous'd by his whispering footsteps murmured faint: And long he travers'd to and fro, to acquaint270 Himself with every mystery, and awe; Till, weary, he sat down before the maw Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim To wild uncertainty and shadows grim. There, when new wonders ceas'd to float before, And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore The journey homeward to habitual self! A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf, Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar, Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,280 Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowningly doth sing In lone Endymion's ear, now he has caught The goal of consciousness? Ah, 'tis the thought, The deadly feel of solitude: for lo!

He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pil'd, The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west, Like herded elephants; nor felt, nor prest290 Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air; But far from such companionship to wear An unknown time, surcharg'd with grief, away, Was now his lot. And must he patient stay, Tracing fantastic figures with his spear? "No!" exclaimed he, "why should I tarry here?" No! loudly echoed times innumerable. At which he straightway started, and 'gan tell His paces back into the temple's chief; Warming and growing strong in the belief300 Of help from Dian: so that when again He caught her airy form, thus did he plain, Moving more near the while. "O Haunter chaste Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste, Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen Art thou now forested? O woodland Queen, What smoothest air thy smoother forehead woos? Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos Of thy disparted nymphs? Through what dark tree Glimmers thy crescent? Wheresoe'er it be,310 'Tis in the breath of heaven: thou dost taste Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste Thy loveliness in dismal elements; But, finding in our green earth sweet contents, There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee It feels Elysian, how rich to me, An exil'd mortal, sounds its pleasant name! Within my breast there lives a choking flame– O let me cool it among the zephyr-boughs! A homeward fever parches up my tongue–320 O let me slake it at the running springs! Upon my car a noisy nothing rings– O let me once more hear the linnet's note! Before mine eyes thick films and shadows float– O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light! Dost thou now lave thy feet and ankles white? O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice! Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-juice? O think how this dry palate would rejoice! If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice,330 O think how I should love a bed of flowers!– Young goddess! let me see my native bowers! Deliver me from this rapacious deep!"

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap His destiny, alert he stood: but when Obstinate silence came heavily again, Feeling about for its old couch of space And

airy cradle, lowly bow'd his face Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill. But 'twas not long; for, sweeter than the rill340 To its old channel, or a swollen tide To margin sallows, were the leaves he spied, And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle crowns Up heaping through the slab: refreshment drowns Itself, and strives its own delights to hide– Nor in one spot alone; the floral pride In a long whispering birth enchanted grew Before his footsteps; as when heav'd anew Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore, Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam, all hoar, Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.351

Increasing still in heart, and pleasant sense, Upon his fairy journey on he hastes; So anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes One moment with his hand among the sweets: Onward he goes–he stops–his bosom beats As plainly in his ear, as the faint charm Of which the throbs were born. This still alarm, This sleepy music, forc'd him walk tiptoe: For it came more softly than the east could blow360 Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles; Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles Of thron'd Apollo, could breathe back the lyre To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

O did he ever live, that lonely man, Who lov'd–and music slew not? 'Tis the pest Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest; That things of delicate and tenderest worth Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth, By one consuming flame: it doth immerse370 And suffocate true blessings in a curse. Half-happy, by comparison of bliss, Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear; First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear, Vanish'd in elemental passion.

And down some swart abysm he had gone, Had not a heavenly guide benignant led To where thick myrtle branches, 'gainst his head Brushing, awakened: then the sounds again380 Went noiseless as a passing noontide rain Over a bower, where little space he stood; For as the sunset peeps into a wood So saw he panting light, and towards it went Through winding alleys; and lo, wonderment! Upon soft verdure saw, one here, one there, Cupids a slumbering on their pinions fair.

After a thousand mazes overgone, At last, with sudden step, he came upon A chamber, myrtle wall'd, embowered high,390 Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy, And more of beautiful and strange beside: For on a silken couch of rosy pride, In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth Of fondest beauty; fonder, in fair sooth, Than sighs could fathom, or contentment reach: And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach, Or ripe October's faded marigolds, Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds– Not hiding up an Apollonian curve400 Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light; But rather, giving them to the filled sight Officiously. Sideway his face repos'd On one white arm, and tenderly unclos'd, By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth To slumbery pout; just as the morning south Disparts a dew-lipp'd rose. Above his head, Four lily stalks did their white honours wed To make a coronal; and round him grew410 All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue, Together intertwin'd and trammel'd fresh: The vine of glossy sprout; the ivy mesh, Shading its Ethiop berries; and woodbine, Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine; Convolvulus in streaked vases flush; The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush; And virgin's bower, trailing airily; With others of the sisterhood. Hard by, Stood serene Cupids watching silently.420 One, kneeling to a lyre, touch'd the strings, Muffling to death the pathos with his wings; And, ever and anon, uprose to look At the youth's slumber; while another took A willow-bough, distilling odorous dew, And shook it on his hair; another flew In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise Rain'd violets upon his sleeping eyes.

At these enchantments, and yet many more, The breathless Latmian wonder'd o'er and o'er;430 Until, impatient in embarrassment, He forthright pass'd, and lightly treading went To that same feather'd lyrist, who straightway, Smiling, thus whisper'd: "Though from upper day Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer! For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour, When some ethereal and high-favouring donor Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense; As now 'tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence440 Was I in no wise startled. So

recline Upon these living flowers. Here is wine, Alive with sparkles–never, I aver, Since Ariadne was a vintager, So cool a purple: taste these juicy pears, Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears Were high about Pomona: here is cream, Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam; Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd For the boy Jupiter: and here, undimm'd450 By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums Ready to melt between an infant's gums: And here is manna pick'd from Syrian trees, In starlight, by the three Hesperides. Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know Of all these things around us." He did so, Still brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre; And thus: "I need not any hearing tire By telling how the sea-born goddess pin'd For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind460 Him all in all unto her doting self. Who would not be so prison'd? but, fond elf, He was content to let her amorous plea Faint through his careless arms; content to see An unseiz'd heaven dying at his feet; Content, O fool! to make a cold retreat, When on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn, Lay sorrowing; when every tear was born Of diverse passion; when her lips and eyes Were clos'd in sullen moisture, and quick sighs470 Came vex'd and pettish through her nostrils small. Hush! no exclaim–yet, justly mightst thou call Curses upon his head.–I was half glad, But my poor mistress went distract and mad, When the boar tusk'd him: so away she flew To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings drew Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer's beard; Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear'd Each summer time to life. Lo! this is he, That same Adonis, safe in the privacy480 Of this still region all his winter-sleep. Aye, sleep; for when our love-sick queen did weep Over his waned corse, the tremulous shower Heal'd up the wound, and, with a balmy power, Medicined death to a lengthened drowsiness: The which she fills with visions, and doth dress In all this quiet luxury; and hath set Us young immortals, without any let, To watch his slumber through. 'Tis well nigh pass'd, Even to a moment's filling up, and fast490 She scuds with summer breezes, to pant through The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew Embower'd sports in Cytherea's isle. Look! how those winged listeners all this while

Stand anxious: see! behold!"–This clamant word Broke through the careful silence; for they heard A rustling noise of leaves, and out there flutter'd Pigeons and doves: Adonis something mutter'd, The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh Lay dormant, mov'd convuls'd and gradually500 Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum Of sudden voices, echoing, "Come! come! Arise! awake! Clear summer has forth walk'd Unto the clover-sward, and she has talk'd Full soothingly to every nested finch: Rise, Cupids! or we'll give the blue-bell pinch To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life begin!" At this, from every side they hurried in, Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists, And doubling over head their little fists510 In backward yawns. But all were soon alive: For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, dive In nectar'd clouds and curls through water fair, So from the arbour roof down swell'd an air Odorous and enlivening; making all To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call For their sweet queen: when lo! the wreathed green Disparted, and far upward could be seen Blue heaven, and a silver car, air-borne, Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn, Spun off a drizzling dew,–which falling chill521 On soft Adonis' shoulders, made him still Nestle and turn uneasily about. Soon were the white doves plain, with necks stretch'd out, And silken traces lighten'd in descent; And soon, returning from love's banishment, Queen Venus leaning downward open arm'd: Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm'd A tumult to his heart, and a new life Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife,530 But for her comforting! unhappy sight, But meeting her blue orbs! Who, who can write Of these first minutes? The unchariest muse To embracements warm as theirs makes coy excuse.

O it has ruffled every spirit there, Saving love's self, who stands superb to share The general gladness: awfully he stands; A sovereign quell is in his waving hands; No sight can bear the lightning of his bow; His quiver is mysterious, none can know540 What themselves think of it; from forth his eyes There darts strange light of varied hues and dyes: A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who Look full upon it feel anon the blue Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls. Endymion feels it, and

no more controls The burning prayer within him; so, bent low, He had begun a plaining of his woe. But Venus, bending forward, said: "My child, Favour this gentle youth; his days are wild550 With love–he–but alas! too well I see Thou know'st the deepness of his misery. Ah, smile not so, my son: I tell thee true, That when through heavy hours I used to rue The endless sleep of this new-born Adon', This stranger ay I pitied. For upon A dreary morning once I fled away Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray For this my love: for vexing Mars had teaz'd Me even to tears: thence, when a little eas'd,560 Down-looking, vacant, through a hazy wood, I saw this youth as he despairing stood: Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the wind; Those same full fringed lids a constant blind Over his sullen eyes: I saw him throw Himself on wither'd leaves, even as though Death had come sudden; for no jot he mov'd, Yet mutter'd wildly. I could hear he lov'd Some fair immortal, and that his embrace Had zoned her through the night. There is no trace570 Of this in heaven: I have mark'd each cheek, And find it is the vainest thing to seek; And that of all things 'tis kept secretest. Endymion! one day thou wilt be blest: So still obey the guiding hand that fends Thee safely through these wonders for sweet ends. 'Tis a concealment needful in extreme; And if I guess'd not so, the sunny beam Thou shouldst mount up to with me. Now adieu! Here must we leave thee."–At these words up flew580 The impatient doves, up rose the floating car, Up went the hum celestial. High afar The Latmian saw them minish into nought; And, when all were clear vanish'd, still he caught A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow. When all was darkened, with Etnean throe The earth clos'd–gave a solitary moan– And left him once again in twilight lone.

He did not rave, he did not stare aghast, For all those visions were o'ergone, and past,590 And he in loneliness: he felt assur'd Of happy times, when all he had endur'd Would seem a feather to the mighty prize. So, with unusual gladness, on he hies Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore, Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquois floor, Black polish'd porticos of awful shade, And, at the last, a diamond

balustrade, Leading afar past wild magnificence, Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and thence600 Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar, Streams subterranean tease their granite beds; Then heighten'd just above the silvery heads Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash The waters with his spear; but at the splash, Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to enclose His diamond path with fretwork, streaming round Alive, and dazzling cool, and with a sound,610 Haply, like dolphin tumults, when sweet shells Welcome the float of Thetis. Long he dwells On this delight; for, every minute's space, The streams with changed magic interlace: Sometimes like delicatest lattices, Cover'd with crystal vines; then weeping trees, Moving about as in a gentle wind, Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin'd, Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies, Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries620 Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair. Swifter than lightning went these wonders rare; And then the water, into stubborn streams Collecting, mimick'd the wrought oaken beams, Pillars, and frieze, and high fantastic roof, Of those dusk places in times far aloof Cathedrals call'd. He bade a loth farewel To these founts Protean, passing gulph, and dell, And torrent, and ten thousand jutting shapes, Half seen through deepest gloom, and griesly gapes,630 Blackening on every side, and overhead A vaulted dome like Heaven's, far bespread With starlight gems: aye, all so huge and strange, The solitary felt a hurried change Working within him into something dreary,– Vex'd like a morning eagle, lost, and weary, And purblind amid foggy, midnight wolds. But he revives at once: for who beholds New sudden things, nor casts his mental slough? Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,640 Came mother Cybele! alone–alone– In sombre chariot; dark foldings thrown About her majesty, and front death-pale, With turrets crown'd. Four maned lions hale The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed maws, Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away In another gloomy arch.650

Wherefore delay, Young traveller, in such a mournful place? Art thou wayworn, or canst not further trace The diamond path? And does it indeed end Abrupt in middle air? Yet earthward bend Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne Call ardently! He was indeed wayworn; Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost; To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost Towards him a large eagle, 'twixt whose wings,660 Without one impious word, himself he flings, Committed to the darkness and the gloom: Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom, Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell Through unknown things; till exhaled asphodel, And rose, with spicy fannings interbreath'd, Came swelling forth where little caves were wreath'd So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd Large honey-combs of green, and freshly teem'd With airs delicious. In the greenest nook670 The eagle landed him, and farewel took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown With golden moss. His every sense had grown Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head Flew a delight half-graspable; his tread Was Hesperean; to his capable ears Silence was music from the holy spheres; A dewy luxury was in his eyes; The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs And stirr'd them faintly. Verdant cave and cell680 He wander'd through, oft wondering at such swell Of sudden exaltation: but, "Alas! Said he, "will all this gush of feeling pass Away in solitude? And must they wane, Like melodies upon a sandy plain, Without an echo? Then shall I be left So sad, so melancholy, so bereft! Yet still I feel immortal! O my love, My breath of life, where art thou? High above, Dancing before the morning gates of heaven?690 Or keeping watch among those starry seven, Old Atlas' children? Art a maid of the waters, One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters? Or art, impossible! a nymph of Dian's, Weaving a coronal of tender scions For very idleness? Where'er thou art, Methinks it now is at my will to start Into thine arms; to scare Aurora's train, And snatch thee from the morning; o'er the main To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off700 From thy sea-foamy cradle; or to doff Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee mid fresh leaves. No, no, too eagerly my soul

deceives Its powerless self: I know this cannot be. O let me then by some sweet dreaming flee To her entrancements: hither sleep awhile! Hither most gentle sleep! and soothing foil For some few hours the coming solitude."

Thus spake he, and that moment felt endued With power to dream deliciously; so wound710 Through a dim passage, searching till he found The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where He threw himself, and just into the air Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss! A naked waist: "Fair Cupid, whence is this?" A well-known voice sigh'd, "Sweetest, here am I!" At which soft ravishment, with doating cry They trembled to each other.–Helicon! O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon! That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er720 These sorry pages; then the verse would soar And sing above this gentle pair, like lark Over his nested young: but all is dark Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll Is folded by the Muses; the bright roll Is in Apollo's hand: our dazed eyes Have seen a new tinge in the western skies: The world has done its duty. Yet, oh yet,730 Although the sun of poesy is set, These lovers did embrace, and we must weep That there is no old power left to steep A quill immortal in their joyous tears. Long time in silence did their anxious fears Question that thus it was; long time they lay Fondling and kissing every doubt away; Long time ere soft caressing sobs began To mellow into words, and then there ran Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet lips.740 "O known Unknown! from whom my being sips Such darling essence, wherefore may I not Be ever in these arms? in this sweet spot Pillow my chin for ever? ever press These toying hands and kiss their smooth excess? Why not for ever and for ever feel That breath about my eyes? Ah, thou wilt steal Away from me again, indeed, indeed– Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed My lonely madness. Speak, my kindest fair!750 Is–is it to be so? No! Who will dare To pluck thee from me? And, of thine own will, Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. Still Let me entwine thee surer, surer–now How can we part? Elysium! who art thou? Who, that thou canst not be for ever here, Or

lift me with thee to some starry sphere? Enchantress! tell me by this soft embrace, By the most soft completion of thy face, Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes,760 And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties– These tenderest, and by the nectar-wine, The passion"—"O lov'd Ida the divine! Endymion! dearest! Ah, unhappy me! His soul will 'scape us–O felicity! How he does love me! His poor temples beat To the very tune of love–how sweet, sweet, sweet. Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die; Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by In tranced dulness; speak, and let that spell770 Affright this lethargy! I cannot quell Its heavy pressure, and will press at least My lips to thine, that they may richly feast Until we taste the life of love again. What! dost thou move? dost kiss? O bliss! O pain! I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive; And so long absence from thee doth bereave My soul of any rest: yet must I hence: Yet, can I not to starry eminence Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own780 Myself to thee. Ah, dearest, do not groan Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy, And I must blush in heaven. O that I Had done it already; that the dreadful smiles At my lost brightness, my impassion'd wiles, Had waned from Olympus' solemn height, And from all serious Gods; that our delight Was quite forgotten, save of us alone! And wherefore so ashamed? 'Tis but to atone For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes:790 Yet must I be a coward!–Honour rushes Too palpable before me–the sad look Of Jove–Minerva's start–no bosom shook With awe of purity–no Cupid pinion In reverence veiled–my crystalline dominion Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity! But what is this to love? O I could fly With thee into the ken of heavenly powers, So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours, Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once800 That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce– Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown– O I do think that I have been alone In chastity: yes, Pallas has been sighing, While every eye saw me my hair uptying With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love, I was as vague as solitary dove, Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft kiss– Aye, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss, An immortality of passion's thine:810 Ere long I will exalt thee

to the shine Of heaven ambrosial; and we will shade Ourselves whole summers by a river glade; And I will tell thee stories of the sky, And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy. My happy love will overwing all bounds! O let me melt into thee; let the sounds Of our close voices marry at their birth; Let us entwine hoveringly–O dearth Of human words! roughness of mortal speech!820 Lispings empyrean will I sometime teach Thine honied tongue–lute-breathings, which I gasp To have thee understand, now while I clasp Thee thus, and weep for fondness–I am pain'd, Endymion: woe! woe! is grief contain'd In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?"– Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife Melted into a languor. He return'd Entranced vows and tears. Ye who have yearn'd830 With too much passion, will here stay and pity, For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told By a cavern wind unto a forest old; And then the forest told it in a dream To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam A poet caught as he was journeying To Phœbus' shrine; and in it he did fling His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space, And after, straight in that inspired place840 He sang the story up into the air, Giving it universal freedom. There Has it been ever sounding for those ears Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend cheers Yon centinel stars; and he who listens to it Must surely be self-doomed or he will rue it: For quenchless burnings come upon the heart, Made fiercer by a fear lest any part Should be engulphed in the eddying wind. As much as here is penn'd doth always find850 A resting place, thus much comes clear and plain; Anon the strange voice is upon the wane– And 'tis but echo'd from departing sound, That the fair visitant at last unwound Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.– Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.– Endymion awoke, that grief of hers Sweet paining on his ear: he sickly guess'd How lone he was once more, and sadly press'd860 His empty arms together, hung his head, And most forlorn upon that widow'd bed Sat silently. Love's madness he had known: Often with more than tortured lion's groan Moanings had burst from him; but now that rage Had pass'd

away: no longer did he wage A rough-voic'd war against the dooming stars. No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars: The lyre of his soul Eolian tun'd Forgot all violence, and but commun'd870 With melancholy thought: O he had swoon'd Drunken from pleasure's nipple; and his love Henceforth was dove-like.–Loth was he to move From the imprinted couch, and when he did, 'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid In muffling hands. So temper'd, out he stray'd Half seeing visions that might have dismay'd Alecto's serpents; ravishments more keen Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean Over eclipsing eyes: and at the last880 It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast, O'er studded with a thousand, thousand pearls, And crimson mouthed shells with stubborn curls, Of every shape and size, even to the bulk In which whales arbour close, to brood and sulk Against an endless storm. Moreover too, Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue, Ready to snort their streams. In this cool wonder Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder On all his life: his youth, up to the day890 When 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands gay, He stept upon his shepherd throne: the look Of his white palace in wild forest nook, And all the revels he had lorded there: Each tender maiden whom he once thought fair, With every friend and fellow-woodlander– Pass'd like a dream before him. Then the spur Of the old bards to mighty deeds: his plans To nurse the golden age 'mong shepherd clans: That wondrous night: the great Pan-festival:900 His sister's sorrow; and his wanderings all, Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd: Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd High with excessive love. "And now," thought he, "How long must I remain in jeopardy Of blank amazements that amaze no more? Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core All other depths are shallow: essences, Once spiritual, are like muddy lees, Meant but to fertilize my earthly root,910 And make my branches lift a golden fruit Into the bloom of heaven: other light, Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark, Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark! My silent thoughts are echoing from these shells; Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells Of noises far away?–list!"–Hereupon He

kept an anxious ear. The humming tone Came louder, and behold, there as he lay,920 On either side outgush'd, with misty spray, A copious spring; and both together dash'd Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks, and lash'd Among the conchs and shells of the lofty grot, Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a noise As of some breathless racers whose hopes poize Upon the last few steps, and with spent force Along the ground they took a winding course. Endymion follow'd–for it seem'd that one930 Ever pursued, the other strove to shun– Follow'd their languid mazes, till well nigh He had left thinking of the mystery,– And was now rapt in tender hoverings Over the vanish'd bliss. Ah! what is it sings His dream away? What melodies are these? They sound as through the whispering of trees, Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear!

"O Arethusa, peerless nymph! why fear Such tenderness as mine? Great Dian, why,940 Why didst thou hear her prayer? O that I Were rippling round her dainty fairness now, Circling about her waist, and striving how To entice her to a dive! then stealing in Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin. O that her shining hair was in the sun, And I distilling from it thence to run In amorous rillets down her shrinking form! To linger on her lily shoulders, warm Between her kissing breasts, and every charm950 Touch raptur'd!–See how painfully I flow: Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe. Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead, A happy wooer, to the flowery mead Where all that beauty snar'd me."–"Cruel god, Desist! or my offended mistress' nod Will stagnate all thy fountains:–tease me not With syren words–Ah, have I really got Such power to madden thee? And is it true– Away, away, or I shall dearly rue960 My very thoughts: in mercy then away, Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane."– "O, Oread-Queen! would that thou hadst a pain Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn And be a criminal."–"Alas, I burn, I shudder–gentle river, get thee hence. Alpheus! thou enchanter! every sense Of mine was once made perfect in these woods. Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent floods,970 Ripe fruits, and lonely couch,

contentment gave; But ever since I heedlessly did lave In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow Grew strong within me: wherefore serve me so, And call it love? Alas, 'twas cruelty. Not once more did I close my happy eyes Amid the thrush's song. Away! Avaunt! O 'twas a cruel thing."–"Now thou dost taunt So softly, Arethusa, that I think If thou wast playing on my shady brink,980 Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent maid! Stifle thine heart no more:–nor be afraid Of angry powers: there are deities Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful sighs 'Tis almost death to hear: O let me pour A dewy balm upon them!–fear no more, Sweet Arethusa! Dian's self must feel Sometimes these very pangs. Dear maiden, steal Blushing into my soul, and let us fly These dreary caverns for the open sky.990 I will delight thee all my winding course, From the green sea up to my hidden source About Arcadian forests; and will shew The channels where my coolest waters flow Through mossy rocks; where, 'mid exuberant green, I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen Than Saturn in his exile; where I brim Round flowery islands, and take thence a skim Of mealy sweets, which myriads of bees Buzz from their honied wings: and thou shouldst please Thyself to choose the richest, where we might1001 Be incense-pillow'd every summer night. Doff all sad fears, thou white deliciousness, And let us be thus comforted; unless Thou couldst rejoice to see my hopeless stream Hurry distracted from Sol's temperate beam, And pour to death along some hungry sands."– "What can I do, Alpheus? Dian stands Severe before me: persecuting fate! Unhappy Arethusa! thou wast late1010 A huntress free in"–At this, sudden fell Those two sad streams adown a fearful dell. The Latmian listen'd, but he heard no more, Save echo, faint repeating o'er and o'er The name of Arethusa. On the verge Of that dark gulph he wept, and said: "I urge Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage, By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage, If thou art powerful, these lovers pains; And make them happy in some happy plains.1020

He turn'd–there was a whelming sound–he stept, There was a cooler light; and so he kept Towards it by a sandy path, and lo! More suddenly than doth a moment go, The

visions of the earth were gone and fled– He saw the giant sea above his head.

ENDYMION.

BOOK III.

There are who lord it o'er their fellow-men With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen Their baaing vanities, to browse away The comfortable green and juicy hay From human pastures; or, O torturing fact! Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one tinge Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight Able to face an owl's, they still are dight10 By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests, And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts, Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount To their spirit's perch, their being's high account, Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones– Amid the fierce intoxicating tones Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums, And sudden cannon. All! how all this hums, In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone– Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon,20 And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.– Are then regalities all gilded masks? No, there are throned seats unscalable But by a patient wing, a constant spell, Or by ethereal things that, unconfin'd, Can make a ladder of the eternal wind, And poise about in cloudy thunder-tents To watch the abysm-birth of elements. Aye, 'bove the withering of old-lipp'd Fate A thousand Powers keep religious state,30 In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne; And, silent as a consecrated urn, Hold sphery sessions for a season due. Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few! Have bared their operations to this globe– Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe Our piece of heaven–whose benevolence Shakes hand with our own Ceres; every sense Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude, As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud40 'Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear, Eterne Apollo! that thy Sister fair Is of all these the gentlier-mightiest. When thy gold breath is misting in the west, She unobserved

steals unto her throne, And there she sits most meek and most alone; As if she had not pomp subservient; As if thine eye, high Poet! was not bent Towards her with the Muses in thine heart; As if the ministring stars kept not apart,50 Waiting for silver-footed messages. O Moon! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees Feel palpitations when thou lookest in: O Moon! old boughs lisp forth a holier din The while they feel thine airy fellowship. Thou dost bless every where, with silver lip Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine, Couched in thy brightness, dream of fields divine: Innumerable mountains rise, and rise, Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes;60 And yet thy benediction passeth not One obscure hiding-place, one little spot Where pleasure may be sent: the nested wren Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken, And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf Takes glimpses of thee; thou art a relief To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps Within its pearly house.–The mighty deeps, The monstrous sea is thine–the myriad sea! O Moon! far-spooming Ocean bows to thee,70 And Tellus feels his forehead's cumbrous load.

Cynthia! where art thou now? What far abode Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine Such utmost beauty? Alas, thou dost pine For one as sorrowful: thy cheek is pale For one whose cheek is pale: thou dost bewail His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou sigh? Ah! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye, Or what a thing is love! 'Tis She, but lo! How chang'd, how full of ache, how gone in woe!80 She dies at the thinnest cloud; her loveliness Is wan on Neptune's blue: yet there's a stress Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees, Dancing upon the waves, as if to please The curly foam with amorous influence. O, not so idle: for down-glancing thence She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about O'erwhelming water-courses; scaring out The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and fright'ning Their savage eyes with unaccustomed lightning.90 Where will the splendor be content to reach? O love! how potent hast thou been to teach Strange journeyings! Wherever beauty dwells, In gulf or aerie, mountains or deep dells, In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun, Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won. Amid his toil thou gav'st

Leander breath; Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death; Thou madest Pluto bear thin element; And now, O winged Chieftain! them hast sent100 A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world, To find Endymion. On gold sand impearl'd With lily shells, and pebbles milky white, Poor Cynthia greeted him, and sooth'd her light Against his pallid face: he felt the charm To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm Of his heart's blood: 'twas very sweet; he stay'd His wandering steps, and half-entranced laid His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds,110 To taste the gentle moon, and freshening beads, Lashed from the crystal roof by fishes' tails. And so he kept, until the rosy veils Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand Were lifted from the water's breast, and faun'd Into sweet air; and sober'd morning came Meekly through billows:–when like taper-flame Left sudden by a dallying breath of air, He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare Along his fated way.120 Far had he roam'd, With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd Above, around, and at his feet; save things More dead than Morpheus' imaginings: Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large Of gone sea-warriors; brazen beaks and targe; Rudders that for a hundred years had lost The sway of human hand; gold vase emboss'd With long-forgotten story, and wherein No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin130 But those of Saturn's vintage; mouldering scrolls, Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls Who first were on the earth; and sculptures rude In ponderous stone, developing the mood Of ancient Nox;–then skeletons of man, Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan, And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe These secrets struck into him; and unless Dian had chaced away that heaviness,140 He might have died: but now, with cheered feel, He onward kept; wooing these thoughts to steal About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

"What is there in thee, Moon! that thou shouldst move My heart so potently? When yet a child I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd. Thou seem'dst my sister: hand in hand we went From eve to morn across the firmament. No apples would I gather from the tree, Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously:150 No tumbling

water ever spake romance, But when my eyes with thine thereon could dance: No woods were green enough, no bower divine, Until thou liftedst up thine eyelids fine: In sowing time ne'er would I dibble take, Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake; And, in the summer tide of blossoming, No one but thee hath heard me blithly sing And mesh my dewy flowers all the night. No melody was like a passing spright160 If it went not to solemnize thy reign. Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end; And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend With all my ardours: thou wast the deep glen; Thou wast the mountain-top–the sage's pen– The poet's harp–the voice of friends–the sun; Thou wast the river–thou wast glory won; Thou wast my clarion's blast–thou wast my steed– My goblet full of wine–my topmost deed:–170 Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon! O what a wild and harmonized tune My spirit struck from all the beautiful! On some bright essence could I lean, and lull Myself to immortality: I prest Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest. But, gentle Orb! there came a nearer bliss– My strange love came–Felicity's abyss! She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away– Yet not entirely; no, thy starry sway180 Has been an under-passion to this hour. Now I begin to feel thine orby power Is coming fresh upon me: O be kind, Keep back thine influence, and do not blind My sovereign vision.–Dearest love, forgive That I can think away from thee and live!– Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize One thought beyond thine argent luxuries! How far beyond!" At this a surpris'd start Frosted the springing verdure of his heart;190 For as he lifted up his eyes to swear How his own goddess was past all things fair, He saw far in the concave green of the sea An old man sitting calm and peacefully. Upon a weeded rock this old man sat, And his white hair was awful, and a mat Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet; And, ample as the largest winding-sheet, A cloak of blue wrapp'd up his aged bones, O'erwrought with symbols by the deepest groans200 Of ambitious magic: every ocean-form Was woven in with black distinctness; storm, And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar Were emblem'd in the woof; with every shape

That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and cape. The gulphing whale was like a dot in the spell, Yet look upon it, and 'twould size and swell To its huge self; and the minutest fish Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish, And shew his little eye's anatomy.210 Then there was pictur'd the regality Of Neptune; and the sea nymphs round his state, In beauteous vassalage, look up and wait. Beside this old man lay a pearly wand, And in his lap a book, the which he conn'd So stedfastly, that the new denizen Had time to keep him in amazed ken, To mark these shadowings, and stand in awe.

The old man rais'd his hoary head and saw The wilder'd stranger–seeming not to see,220 His features were so lifeless. Suddenly He woke as from a trance; his snow-white brows Went arching up, and like two magic ploughs Furrow'd deep wrinkles in his forehead large, Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge, Till round his wither'd lips had gone a smile. Then up he rose, like one whose tedious toil Had watch'd for years in forlorn hermitage, Who had not from mid-life to utmost age Eas'd in one accent his o'er-burden'd soul,230 Even to the trees. He rose: he grasp'd his stole, With convuls'd clenches waving it abroad, And in a voice of solemn joy, that aw'd Echo into oblivion, he said:–

"Thou art the man! Now shall I lay my head In peace upon my watery pillow: now Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow. O Jove! I shall be young again, be young! O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierc'd and stung With new-born life! What shall I do? Where go,240 When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe?– I'll swim to the syrens, and one moment listen Their melodies, and see their long hair glisten; Anon upon that giant's arm I'll be, That writhes about the roots of Sicily: To northern seas I'll in a twinkling sail, And mount upon the snortings of a whale To some black cloud; thence down I'll madly sweep On forked lightning, to the deepest deep, Where through some sucking pool I will be hurl'd250 With rapture to the other side of the world! O, I am full of gladness! Sisters three, I bow full hearted to your old decree! Yes, every god be thank'd, and power benign, For I no more shall wither,

droop, and pine. Thou art the man!" Endymion started back Dismay'd; and, like a wretch from whom the rack Tortures hot breath, and speech of agony, Mutter'd: "What lonely death am I to die In this cold region? Will he let me freeze,260 And float my brittle limbs o'er polar seas? Or will he touch me with his searing hand, And leave a black memorial on the sand? Or tear me piece-meal with a bony saw, And keep me as a chosen food to draw His magian fish through hated fire and flame? O misery of hell! resistless, tame, Am I to be burnt up? No, I will shout, Until the gods through heaven's blue look out!– O Tartarus! but some few days agone270 Her soft arms were entwining me, and on Her voice I hung like fruit among green leaves: Her lips were all my own, and–ah, ripe sheaves Of happiness! ye on the stubble droop, But never may be garner'd. I must stoop My head, and kiss death's foot. Love! love, farewel! Is there no hope from thee? This horrid spell Would melt at thy sweet breath.–By Dian's hind Feeding from her white fingers, on the wind I see thy streaming hair! and now, by Pan,280 I care not for this old mysterious man!"

He spake, and walking to that aged form, Look'd high defiance. Lo! his heart 'gan warm With pity, for the grey-hair'd creature wept. Had he then wrong'd a heart where sorrow kept? Had he, though blindly contumelious, brought Rheum to kind eyes, a sting to human thought, Convulsion to a mouth of many years? He had in truth; and he was ripe for tears. The penitent shower fell, as down he knelt290 Before that care-worn sage, who trembling felt About his large dark locks, and faultering spake:

"Arise, good youth, for sacred Phœbus' sake! I know thine inmost bosom, and I feel A very brother's yearning for thee steal Into mine own: for why? thou openest The prison gates that have so long opprest My weary watching. Though thou know'st it not, Thou art commission'd to this fated spot For great enfranchisement. O weep no more;300 I am a friend to love, to loves of yore: Aye, hadst thou never lov'd an unknown power, I had been grieving at this joyous hour. But even now most

miserable old, I saw thee, and my blood no longer cold Gave mighty pulses: in this tottering case Grew a new heart, which at this moment plays As dancingly as thine. Be not afraid, For thou shalt hear this secret all display'd, Now as we speed towards our joyous task."310

So saying, this young soul in age's mask Went forward with the Carian side by side: Resuming quickly thus; while ocean's tide Hung swollen at their backs, and jewel'd sands Took silently their foot-prints. "My soul stands Now past the midway from mortality, And so I can prepare without a sigh To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain. I was a fisher once, upon this main,320 And my boat danc'd in every creek and bay; Rough billows were my home by night and day,– The sea-gulls not more constant; for I had No housing from the storm and tempests mad, But hollow rocks,–and they were palaces Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease: Long years of misery have told me so. Aye, thus it was one thousand years ago. One thousand years!–Is it then possible To look so plainly through them? to dispel330 A thousand years with backward glance sublime? To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime From off a crystal pool, to see its deep, And one's own image from the bottom peep? Yes: now I am no longer wretched thrall, My long captivity and moanings all Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum, The which I breathe away, and thronging come Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.

"I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no measures: I was a lonely youth on desert shores.341 My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars, And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry Plaining discrepant between sea and sky. Dolphins were still my playmates; shapes unseen Would let me feel their scales of gold and green, Nor be my desolation; and, full oft, When a dread waterspout had rear'd aloft Its hungry hugeness, seeming ready ripe To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe350 My life away like a vast sponge of fate, Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state, Has dived to its foundations, gulph'd it down, And left me tossing safely. But the crown Of all my life was utmost quietude: More did I love to lie in cavern rude,

Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's voice, And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice! There blush'd no summer eve but I would steer My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear360 The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery steep, Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep: And never was a day of summer shine, But I beheld its birth upon the brine: For I would watch all night to see unfold Heaven's gates, and Æthon snort his morning gold Wide o'er the swelling streams: and constantly At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea, My nets would be spread out, and I at rest. The poor folk of the sea-country I blest370 With daily boon of fish most delicate: They knew not whence this bounty, and elate Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

"Why was I not contented? Wherefore reach At things which, but for thee, O Latmian! Had been my dreary death? Fool! I began To feel distemper'd longings: to desire The utmost privilege that ocean's sire Could grant in benediction: to be free Of all his kingdom. Long in misery380 I wasted, ere in one extremest fit I plung'd for life or death. To interknit One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff Might seem a work of pain; so not enough Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt, And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt Whole days and days in sheer astonishment; Forgetful utterly of self-intent; Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow. Then, like a new fledg'd bird that first doth shew390 His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill, I tried in fear the pinions of my will. 'Twas freedom! and at once I visited The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed. No need to tell thee of them, for I see That thou hast been a witness–it must be– For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth, By the melancholy corners of that mouth. So I will in my story straightway pass To more immediate matter. Woe, alas!400 That love should be my bane! Ah, Scylla fair! Why did poor Glaucus ever–ever dare To sue thee to his heart? Kind stranger-youth! I lov'd her to the very white of truth, And she would not conceive it. Timid thing! She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing, Round every isle, and point, and promontory, From where large Hercules wound up his story Far as Egyptian

Nile. My passion grew The more, the more I saw her dainty hue410 Gleam delicately through the azure clear: Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear; And in that agony, across my grief It flash'd, that Circe might find some relief– Cruel enchantress! So above the water I rear'd my head, and look'd for Phœbus' daughter. Ææa's isle was wondering at the moon:– It seem'd to whirl around me, and a swoon Left me dead-drifting to that fatal power.

"When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower;420 Just when the light of morn, with hum of bees, Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh trees. How sweet, and sweeter! for I heard a lyre, And over it a sighing voice expire. It ceased–I caught light footsteps; and anon The fairest face that morn e'er look'd upon Push'd through a screen of roses. Starry Jove! With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she wove A net whose thraldom was more bliss than all The range of flower'd Elysium. Thus did fall430 The dew of her rich speech: "Ah! Art awake? O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake! I am so oppress'd with joy! Why, I have shed An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold dead; And now I find thee living, I will pour From these devoted eyes their silver store, Until exhausted of the latest drop, So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop Here, that I too may live: but if beyond Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art fond440 Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme; If thou art ripe to taste a long love dream; If smiles, if dimples, tongues for ardour mute, Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit, O let me pluck it for thee." Thus she link'd Her charming syllables, till indistinct Their music came to my o'er-sweeten'd soul; And then she hover'd over me, and stole So near, that if no nearer it had been This furrow'd visage thou hadst never seen.450

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

"Who could resist? Who in this universe? She did so breathe ambrosia; so immerse

My fine existence in a golden clime. She took me like a child of suckling time, And cradled me in roses. Thus condemn'd, The current of my former life was stemm'd,460 And to this arbitrary queen of sense I bow'd a tranced vassal: nor would thence Have mov'd, even though Amphion's harp had woo'd Me back to Scylla o'er the billows rude. For as Apollo each eve doth devise A new appareling for western skies; So every eve, nay every spendthrift hour Shed balmy consciousness within that bower. And I was free of haunts umbrageous; Could wander in the mazy forest-house470 Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antler'd deer, And birds from coverts innermost and drear Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow– To me new born delights! "Now let me borrow, For moments few, a temperament as stern As Pluto's sceptre, that my words not burn These uttering lips, while I in calm speech tell How specious heaven was changed to real hell.

"One morn she left me sleeping: half awake480 I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-draughts; But she was gone. Whereat the barbed shafts Of disappointment stuck in me so sore, That out I ran and search'd the forest o'er. Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom Damp awe assail'd me; for there 'gan to boom A sound of moan, an agony of sound, Sepulchral from the distance all around. Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and rumbled490 That fierce complain to silence: while I stumbled Down a precipitous path, as if impell'd. I came to a dark valley.–Groanings swell'd Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew, The nearer I approach'd a flame's gaunt blue, That glar'd before me through a thorny brake. This fire, like the eye of gordian snake, Bewitch'd me towards; and I soon was near A sight too fearful for the feel of fear: In thicket hid I curs'd the haggard scene–500 The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen, Seated upon an uptorn forest root; And all around her shapes, wizard and brute, Laughing, and wailing, groveling, serpenting, Shewing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting! O such deformities! Old Charon's self, Should he give up awhile his penny pelf, And take a dream 'mong rushes Stygian, It could not be so phantasied. Fierce, wan, And

tyrannizing was the lady's look,510 As over them a gnarled staff she shook. Oft-times upon the sudden she laugh'd out, And from a basket emptied to the rout Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd quick And roar'd for more; with many a hungry lick About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow, Anon she took a branch of mistletoe, And emptied on't a black dull-gurgling phial: Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial Was sharpening for their pitiable bones.520 She lifted up the charm: appealing groans From their poor breasts went sueing to her ear In vain; remorseless as an infant's bier She whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil. Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil, Increasing gradual to a tempest rage, Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage; Until their grieved bodies 'gan to bloat And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat: Then was appalling silence: then a sight530 More wildering than all that hoarse affright; For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind writhen, Went through the dismal air like one huge Python Antagonizing Boreas,–and so vanish'd. Yet there was not a breath of wind: she banish'd These phantoms with a nod. Lo! from the dark Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs stark, With dancing and loud revelry,–and went Swifter than centaurs after rapine bent.– Sighing an elephant appear'd and bow'd540 Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud In human accent: "Potent goddess! chief Of pains resistless! make my being brief, Or let me from this heavy prison fly: Or give me to the air, or let me die! I sue not for my happy crown again; I sue not for my phalanx on the plain; I sue not for my lone, my widow'd wife; I sue not for my ruddy drops of life, My children fair, my lovely girls and boys!550 I will forget them; I will pass these joys; Ask nought so heavenward, so too–too high: Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die, Or be deliver'd from this cumbrous flesh, From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh, And merely given to the cold bleak air. Have mercy, Goddess! Circe, feel my prayer!"

That curst magician's name fell icy numb Upon my wild conjecturing: truth had come Naked and sabre-like against my heart.560 I saw a fury whetting a death-dart;

And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright, Fainted away in that dark lair of night. Think, my deliverer, how desolate My waking must have been! disgust, and hate, And terrors manifold divided me A spoil amongst them. I prepar'd to flee Into the dungeon core of that wild wood: I fled three days–when lo! before me stood Glaring the angry witch. O Dis, even now,570 A clammy dew is beading on my brow, At mere remembering her pale laugh, and curse. "Ha! ha! Sir Dainty! there must be a nurse Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express, To cradle thee my sweet, and lull thee: yes, I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch: My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch. So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies Unheard of yet; and it shall still its cries Upon some breast more lily-feminine.580 Oh, no–it shall not pine, and pine, and pine More than one pretty, trifling thousand years; And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears Cut short its immortality. Sea-flirt! Young dove of the waters! truly I'll not hurt One hair of thine: see how I weep and sigh, That our heart-broken parting is so nigh. And must we part? Ah, yes, it must be so. Yet ere thou leavest me in utter woe, Let me sob over thee my last adieus,590 And speak a blessing: Mark me! Thou hast thews Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race: But such a love is mine, that here I chase Eternally away from thee all bloom Of youth, and destine thee towards a tomb. Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast; And there, ere many days be overpast, Disabled age shall seize thee; and even then Thou shalt not go the way of aged men; But live and wither, cripple and still breathe600 Ten hundred years: which gone, I then bequeath Thy fragile bones to unknown burial. Adieu, sweet love, adieu!"–As shot stars fall, She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung And poisoned was my spirit: despair sung A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell. A hand was at my shoulder to compel My sullen steps; another 'fore my eyes Moved on with pointed finger. In this guise Enforced, at the last by ocean's foam610 I found me; by my fresh, my native home. Its tempering coolness, to my life akin, Came salutary as I waded in; And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave Battle to the swollen billow-ridge, and drave Large froth before me, while there yet remain'd

Hale strength, nor from my bones all marrow drain'd.

"Young lover, I must weep–such hellish spite With dry cheek who can tell? While thus my might Proving upon this element, dismay'd,620 Upon a dead thing's face my hand I laid; I look'd–'twas Scylla! Cursed, cursed Circe! O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy? Could not thy harshest vengeance be content, But thou must nip this tender innocent Because I lov'd her?–Cold, O cold indeed Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed The sea-swell took her hair. Dead as she was I clung about her waist, nor ceas'd to pass Fleet as an arrow through unfathom'd brine,630 Until there shone a fabric crystalline, Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl. Headlong I darted; at one eager swirl Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd, and behold! 'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold; And all around–But wherefore this to thee Who in few minutes more thyself shalt see?– I left poor Scylla in a niche and fled. My fever'd parchings up, my scathing dread Met palsy half way: soon these limbs became640 Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame.

"Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space, Without one hope, without one faintest trace Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble Of colour'd phantasy; for I fear 'twould trouble Thy brain to loss of reason: and next tell How a restoring chance came down to quell One half of the witch in me. "On a day, Sitting upon a rock above the spray,650 I saw grow up from the horizon's brink A gallant vessel: soon she seem'd to sink Away from me again, as though her course Had been resum'd in spite of hindering force– So vanish'd: and not long, before arose Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose. Old Eolus would stifle his mad spleen, But could not: therefore all the billows green Toss'd up the silver spume against the clouds. The tempest came: I saw that vessel's shrouds660 In perilous bustle; while upon the deck Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck; The final gulphing; the poor struggling souls: I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls. O they had all been sav'd but crazed eld Annull'd my vigorous cravings: and thus quell'd And curb'd, think on't, O Latmian! did I sit Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had

gone, By one and one, to pale oblivion;670 And I was gazing on the surges prone, With many a scalding tear and many a groan, When at my feet emerg'd an old man's hand, Grasping this scroll, and this same slender wand. I knelt with pain–reached out my hand–had grasp'd These treasures–touch'd the knuckles–they unclasp'd– I caught a finger: but the downward weight O'erpowered me–it sank. Then 'gan abate The storm, and through chill aguish gloom outburst The comfortable sun. I was athirst680 To search the book, and in the warming air Parted its dripping leaves with eager care. Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on My soul page after page, till well-nigh won Into forgetfulness; when, stupefied, I read these words, and read again, and tried My eyes against the heavens, and read again. O what a load of misery and pain Each Atlas-line bore off!–a shine of hope Came gold around me, cheering me to cope690 Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend! For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

"In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch, Doom'd with enfeebled carcase to outstretch His loath'd existence through ten centuries, And then to die alone. Who can devise A total opposition? No one. So One million times ocean must ebb and flow, And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die, These things accomplish'd:–If he utterly700 Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds The meanings of all motions, shapes, and sounds; If he explores all forms and substances Straight homeward to their symbol-essences; He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief, He must pursue this task of joy and grief Most piously;–all lovers tempest-tost, And in the savage overwhelming lost, He shall deposit side by side, until Time's creeping shall the dreary space fulfil:710 Which done, and all these labours ripened, A youth, by heavenly power lov'd and led, Shall stand before him; whom he shall direct How to consummate all. The youth elect Must do the thing, or both will be destroy'd."–

"Then," cried the young Endymion, overjoy'd, "We are twin brothers in this destiny! Say, I intreat thee, what achievement high Is, in this restless world, for me reserv'd. What! if from thee my wandering feet had swerv'd,720 Had we both

perish'd?"–"Look!" the sage replied, "Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the tide, Of divers brilliances? 'tis the edifice I told thee of, where lovely Scylla lies; And where I have enshrined piously All lovers, whom fell storms have doom'd to die Throughout my bondage." Thus discoursing, on They went till unobscur'd the porches shone; Which hurryingly they gain'd, and enter'd straight. Sure never since king Neptune held his state730 Was seen such wonder underneath the stars. Turn to some level plain where haughty Mars Has legion'd all his battle; and behold How every soldier, with firm foot, doth hold His even breast: see, many steeled squares, And rigid ranks of iron–whence who dares One step? Imagine further, line by line, These warrior thousands on the field supine:– So in that crystal place, in silent rows, Poor lovers lay at rest from joys and woes.–740 The stranger from the mountains, breathless, trac'd Such thousands of shut eyes in order plac'd; Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips All ruddy,–for here death no blossom nips. He mark'd their brows and foreheads; saw their hair Put sleekly on one side with nicest care; And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence, Put cross-wise to its heart. "Let us commence, Whisper'd the guide, stuttering with joy, even now."750 He spake, and, trembling like an aspen-bough, Began to tear his scroll in pieces small, Uttering the while some mumblings funeral. He tore it into pieces small as snow That drifts unfeather'd when bleak northerns blow; And having done it, took his dark blue cloak And bound it round Endymion: then struck His wand against the empty air times nine.– "What more there is to do, young man, is thine: But first a little patience; first undo760 This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue. Ah, gentle! 'tis as weak as spider's skein; And shouldst thou break it–What, is it done so clean? A power overshadows thee! Oh, brave! The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave. Here is a shell; 'tis pearly blank to me, Nor mark'd with any sign or charactery– Canst thou read aught? O read for pity's sake! Olympus! we are safe! Now, Carian, break This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal."770

'Twas done: and straight with sudden swell and fall Sweet music breath'd her soul

away, and sigh'd A lullaby to silence.–"Youth! now strew These minced leaves on me, and passing through Those files of dead, scatter the same around, And thou wilt see the issue."–'Mid the sound Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart, Endymion from Glaucus stood apart, And scatter'd in his face some fragments light. How lightning-swift the change! a youthful wight780 Smiling beneath a coral diadem, Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem, Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse, Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force Press'd its cold hand, and wept,–and Scylla sigh'd! Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied– The nymph arose: he left them to their joy, And onward went upon his high employ, Showering those powerful fragments on the dead. And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head,790 As doth a flower at Apollo's touch. Death felt it to his inwards: 'twas too much: Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house. The Latmian persever'd along, and thus All were re-animated. There arose A noise of harmony, pulses and throes Of gladness in the air–while many, who Had died in mutual arms devout and true, Sprang to each other madly; and the rest Felt a high certainty of being blest.800 They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent. Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers, Budded, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full showers Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine. The two deliverers tasted a pure wine Of happiness, from fairy-press ooz'd out. Speechless they eyed each other, and about The fair assembly wander'd to and fro, Distracted with the richest overflow810 Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven. —"Away!" Shouted the new born god; "Follow, and pay Our piety to Neptunus supreme!"– Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream, They led on first, bent to her meek surprise, Though portal columns of a giant size, Into the vaulted, boundless emerald. Joyous all follow'd, as the leader call'd, Down marble steps; pouring as easily820 As hour-glass sand,–and fast, as you might see Swallows obeying the south summer's call, Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far, Ere from among some rocks of glittering

spar, Just within ken, they saw descending thick Another multitude. Whereat more quick Moved either host. On a wide sand they met, And of those numbers every eye was wet; For each their old love found. A murmuring rose,830 Like what was never heard in all the throes Of wind and waters: 'tis past human wit To tell; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host Mov'd on for many a league; and gain'd, and lost Huge sea-marks; vanward swelling in array, And from the rear diminishing away,– Till a faint dawn surpris'd them. Glaucus cried, "Behold! behold, the palace of his pride! God Neptune's palaces!" With noise increas'd,840 They shoulder'd on towards that brightening cast. At every onward step proud domes arose In prospect,–diamond gleams, and golden glows Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling. Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring, Still onward; still the splendour gradual swell'd. Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts Each gazer drank; and deeper drank more near:850 For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere As marble was there lavish, to the vast Of one fair palace, that far far surpass'd, Even for common bulk, those olden three, Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

As large, as bright, as colour'd as the bow Of Iris, when unfading it doth shew Beyond a silvery shower, was the arch Through which this Paphian army took its march, Into the outer courts of Neptune's state:860 Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate, To which the leaders sped; but not half raught Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought, And made those dazzled thousands veil their eyes Like callow eagles at the first sunrise. Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze, And then, behold! large Neptune on his throne Of emerald deep: yet not exalt alone; At his right hand stood winged Love, and on870 His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast Can see all round upon the calmed vast, So wide

was Neptune's hall: and as the blue Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew Their doming curtains, high, magnificent, Aw'd from the throne aloof;–and when storm-rent Disclos'd the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air; But sooth'd as now, flash'd sudden everywhere, Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering880 Death to a human eye: for there did spring From natural west, and east, and south, and north, A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head. Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe Of feather'd Indian darts about, as through The delicatest air: air verily, But for the portraiture of clouds and sky: This palace floor breath-air,–but for the amaze890 Of deep-seen wonders motionless,–and blaze Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes, Globing a golden sphere. They stood in dreams Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang; The Nereids danc'd; the Syrens faintly sang; And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping head. Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed On all the multitude a nectarous dew. The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew900 Fair Scylla and her guides to conference; And when they reach'd the throned eminence She kist the sea-nymph's cheek,–who sat her down A toying with the doves. Then,–"Mighty crown And sceptre of this kingdom!" Venus said, "Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid: Behold!"–Two copious tear-drops instant fell From the God's large eyes; he smil'd delectable, And over Glaucus held his blessing hands.– "Endymion! Ah! still wandering in the bands910 Of love? Now this is cruel. Since the hour I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net? A little patience, youth! 'twill not be long, Or I am skilless quite: an idle tongue, A humid eye, and steps luxurious, Where these are new and strange, are ominous. Aye, I have seen these signs in one of heaven, When others were all blind; and were I given920 To utter secrets, haply I might say Some pleasant words:–but Love will have his day. So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon, Even in the passing of thine honey-moon, Visit my Cytherea: thou wilt find Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind; And pray persuade with thee–Ah, I have done,

All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son!"– Thus the fair goddess: while Endymion Knelt to receive those accents halcyon.930

Meantime a glorious revelry began Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd; And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless, pleach'd New growth about each shell and pendent lyre; The which, in disentangling for their fire, Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture For dainty toying. Cupid, empire-sure, Flutter'd and laugh'd, and oft-times through the throng Made a delighted way. Then dance, and song,940 And garlanding grew wild; and pleasure reign'd. In harmless tendril they each other chain'd, And strove who should be smother'd deepest in Fresh crush of leaves. O 'tis a very sin For one so weak to venture his poor verse In such a place as this. O do not curse, High Muses! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending Of dulcet instruments came charmingly;950 And then a hymn. "King of the stormy sea! Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor Of elements! Eternally before Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock, At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock Its deep foundations, hissing into foam. All mountain-rivers lost, in the wide home Of thy capacious bosom ever flow. Thou frownest, and old Eolus thy foe960 Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team Gulphs in the morning light, and scuds along To bring thee nearer to that golden song Apollo singeth, while his chariot Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not For scenes like this: an empire stern hast thou; And it hath furrow'd that large front: yet now,970 As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit To blend and interknit Subdued majesty with this glad time. O shell-borne King sublime! We lay our hearts before thee evermore– We sing, and we adore!

"Breathe softly, flutes; Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes; Nor be the

trumpet heard! O vain, O vain; Not flowers budding in an April rain,980 Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow,– No, nor the Eolian twang of Love's own bow, Can mingle music fit for the soft ear Of goddess Cytherea! Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes On our souls' sacrifice.

"Bright-winged Child! Who has another care when thou hast smil'd? Unfortunates on earth, we see at last All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast990 Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions. O sweetest essence! sweetest of all minions! God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair, And panting bosoms bare! Dear unseen light in darkness! eclipser Of light in light! delicious poisoner! Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until We fill–we fill! And by thy Mother's lips—" 1000 Was heard no more For clamour, when the golden palace door Opened again, and from without, in shone A new magnificence. On oozy throne Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old, To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold, Before he went into his quiet cave To muse for ever–Then a lucid wave, Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea, Afloat, and pillowing up the majesty Of Doris, and the Egean seer, her spouse–1010 Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs, Theban Amphion leaning on his lute: His fingers went across it–All were mute To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls, And Thetis pearly too.– The palace whirls Around giddy Endymion; seeing he Was there far strayed from mortality. He could not bear it–shut his eyes in vain; Imagination gave a dizzier pain.1020 "O I shall die! sweet Venus, be my stay! Where is my lovely mistress? Well-away! I die–I hear her voice–I feel my wing–" At Neptune's feet he sank. A sudden ring Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife To usher back his spirit into life: But still he slept. At last they interwove Their cradling arms, and purpos'd to convey Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo! while slow carried through the pitying crowd, To his inward senses these words spake aloud;1031 Written in star-light on the dark above: Dearest Endymion! my entire love! How have I dwelt in fear of fate: 'tis done– Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won. Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch Her ready eggs, before

I'll kissing snatch Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!

The youth at once arose: a placid lake Came quiet to his eyes; and forest green,1040 Cooler than all the wonders he had seen, Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering breast. How happy once again in grassy nest!

ENDYMION.

BOOK IV.

Muse of my native land! loftiest Muse! O first-born on the mountains! by the hues Of heaven on the spiritual air begot: Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot, While yet our England was a wolfish den; Before our forests heard the talk of men; Before the first of Druids was a child;– Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude. There came an eastern voice of solemn mood:–10 Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine, Apollo's garland:–yet didst thou divine Such home-bred glory, that they cry'd in vain, "Come hither, Sister of the Island!" Plain Spake fair Ausonia; and once more she spake A higher summons:–still didst thou betake Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won A full accomplishment! The thing is done, Which undone, these our latter days had risen On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st what prison, Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets21 Our spirit's wings: despondency besets Our pillows; and the fresh to-morrow morn Seems to give forth its light in very scorn Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives. Long have I said, how happy he who shrives To thee! But then I thought on poets gone, And could not pray:–nor can I now–so on I move to the end in lowliness of heart.–

"Ah, woe is me! that I should fondly part30 From my dear native land! Ah, foolish maid! Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads bade Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields! To one so friendless the clear freshet yields A bitter coolness; the ripe grape is sour: Yet I would have, great gods! but one short hour Of native air–let

me but die at home."

Endymion to heaven's airy dome Was offering up a hecatomb of vows, When these words reach'd him. Whereupon he bows His head through thorny-green entanglement41 Of underwood, and to the sound is bent, Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn.

"Is no one near to help me? No fair dawn Of life from charitable voice? No sweet saying To set my dull and sadden'd spirit playing? No hand to toy with mine? No lips so sweet That I may worship them? No eyelids meet To twinkle on my bosom? No one dies Before me, till from these enslaving eyes50 Redemption sparkles!–I am sad and lost."

Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been tost Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air, Warm mountaineer! for canst thou only bear A woman's sigh alone and in distress? See not her charms! Is Phœbe passionless? Phœbe is fairer far–O gaze no more:– Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store, Behold her panting in the forest grass! Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass60 For tenderness the arms so idly lain Amongst them? Feelest not a kindred pain, To see such lovely eyes in swimming search After some warm delight, that seems to perch Dovelike in the dim cell lying beyond Their upper lids?–Hist! "O for Hermes' wand, To touch this flower into human shape! That woodland Hyacinthus could escape From his green prison, and here kneeling down70 Call me his queen, his second life's fair crown! Ah me, how I could love!–My soul doth melt For the unhappy youth–Love! I have felt So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender To what my own full thoughts had made too tender, That but for tears my life had fled away!– Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day, And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true, There is no lightning, no authentic dew But in the eye of love: there's not a sound,80 Melodious howsoever, can confound The heavens and earth in one to such a death As doth the voice of love: there's not a breath Will mingle kindly with the meadow air, Till it has panted round, and stolen a

share Of passion from the heart!"– Upon a bough He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now Thirst for another love: O impious, That he can even dream upon it thus!–90 Thought he, "Why am I not as are the dead, Since to a woe like this I have been led Through the dark earth, and through the wondrous sea? Goddess! I love thee not the less: from thee By Juno's smile I turn not–no, no, no– While the great waters are at ebb and flow.– I have a triple soul! O fond pretence– For both, for both my love is so immense, I feel my heart is cut in twain for them."

And so he groan'd, as one by beauty slain.100 The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously. He sprang from his green covert: there she lay, Sweet as a muskrose upon new-made hay; With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries. "Fair damsel, pity me! forgive that I Thus violate thy bower's sanctity! O pardon me, for I am full of grief– Grief born of thee, young angel! fairest thief!110 Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith Thou art my executioner, and I feel Loving and hatred, misery and weal, Will in a few short hours be nothing to me, And all my story that much passion slew me; Do smile upon the evening of my days: And, for my tortur'd brain begins to craze, Be thou my nurse; and let me understand How dying I shall kiss that lily hand.–120 Dost weep for me? Then should I be content. Scowl on, ye fates! until the firmament Outblackens Erebus, and the full-cavern'd earth Crumbles into itself. By the cloud girth Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst To meet oblivion."–As her heart would burst The maiden sobb'd awhile, and then replied: "Why must such desolation betide As that thou speakest of? Are not these green nooks Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks130 Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush, Schooling its half-fledg'd little ones to brush About the dewy forest, whisper tales?– Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails Will slime the rose to night. Though if thou wilt, Methinks 'twould be a guilt–a very guilt– Not to companion thee, and sigh away The light–the dusk–the dark–till break of day!" "Dear lady," said Endymion, "'tis past: I love thee! and my

days can never last.140 That I may pass in patience still speak: Let me have music dying, and I seek No more delight–I bid adieu to all. Didst thou not after other climates call, And murmur about Indian streams?"–Then she, Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree, For pity sang this roundelay—

"O Sorrow, Why dost borrow The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?–150 To give maiden blushes To the white rose bushes? Or is it thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

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

"O Sorrow,160 Why dost borrow The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?– To give at evening pale Unto the nightingale, That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?

"O Sorrow, Why dost borrow Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?– A lover would not tread A cowslip on the head,170 Though he should dance from eve till peep of day– Nor any drooping flower Held sacred for thy bower, Wherever he may sport himself and play.

"To Sorrow, I bade good-morrow, And thought to leave her far away behind; But cheerly, cheerly, She loves me dearly; She is so constant to me, and so kind:180 I would deceive her And so leave her, But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

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

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,190 I sat a weeping: what enamour'd bride, Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds, But hides and shrouds Beneath dark palm trees by a river side? "And as I sat, over the light blue hills There came a noise of revellers: the rills Into the wide stream came of purple hue– 'Twas Bacchus and his crew! The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills From kissing cymbals

made a merry din– 'Twas Bacchus and his kin! Like to a moving vintage down they came, Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame; All madly dancing through the pleasant valley, To scare thee, Melancholy! O then, O then, thou wast a simple name! And I forgot thee, as the berried holly By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June, Tall chesnuts keep away the sun and moon:– I rush'd into the folly!

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

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

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

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

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

"I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown Before the vine-wreath crown!260 I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing To the silver cymbals' ring! I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce Old Tartary the fierce! The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail, And from their treasures scatter pearled hail; Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans, And all his priesthood moans; Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.– Into these regions came I following him,270 Sick hearted, weary–so I took a whim To stray away into these forests drear Alone, without a peer: And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

"Young stranger! I've been a ranger In search of pleasure throughout every clime: Alas, 'tis not for me! Bewitch'd I sure must be, To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.280

"Come then, Sorrow! Sweetest Sorrow! Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast: I thought to leave thee And deceive thee, But now of all the world I love thee best.

"There is not one, No, no, not one But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid; Thou art her mother,290 And her brother, Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade."

O what a sigh she gave in finishing, And look, quite dead to every worldly thing! Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her; And listened to the wind that now did stir About the crisped oaks full drearily, Yet with as sweet a softness as might be Remember'd from its velvet summer song. At last he said: "Poor lady, how thus long300 Have I been able to endure that voice? Fair Melody! kind Syren! I've no choice; I must be thy sad servant evermore: I cannot choose but kneel here and adore. Alas, I must not think–by Phœbe, no! Let me not think, soft Angel! shall it be so? Say, beautifullest, shall I never think? O thou could'st foster me beyond the brink Of recollection! make my watchful care Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see

despair!310 Do gently murder half my soul, and I Shall feel the other half so utterly!– I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth; O let it blush so ever! let it soothe My madness! let it mantle rosy-warm With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm.– This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is; And this is sure thine other softling–this Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near! Wilt fall asleep? O let me sip that tear!320 And whisper one sweet word that I may know This is this world–sweet dewy blossom!"–Woe! Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?– Even these words went echoing dismally Through the wide forest–a most fearful tone, Like one repenting in his latest moan; And while it died away a shade pass'd by, As of a thunder cloud. When arrows fly Through the thick branches, poor ring-doves sleek forth Their timid necks and tremble; so these both330 Leant to each other trembling, and sat so Waiting for some destruction–when lo, Foot-feather'd Mercury appear'd sublime Beyond the tall tree tops; and in less time Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he dropt Towards the ground; but rested not, nor stopt One moment from his home: only the sward He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward Swifter than sight was gone–even before The teeming earth a sudden witness bore340 Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear Above the crystal circlings white and clear; And catch the cheated eye in wild surprise, How they can dive in sight and unseen rise– So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-black, Each with large dark blue wings upon his back. The youth of Caria plac'd the lovely dame On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame The other's fierceness. Through the air they flew, High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew350 Exhal'd to Phœbus' lips, away they are gone, Far from the earth away–unseen, alone, Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free, The buoyant life of song can floating be Above their heads, and follow them untir'd.– Muse of my native land, am I inspir'd? This is the giddy air, and I must spread Wide pinions to keep here; nor do I dread Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance Precipitous: I have beneath my glance360 Those towering horses and their mournful freight. Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await Fearless

for power of thought, without thine aid?– There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade From some approaching wonder, and behold Those winged steeds, with snorting nostrils bold Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire, Dying to embers from their native fire!

There curl'd a purple mist around them; soon, It seem'd as when around the pale new moon370 Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping willow: 'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on pillow. For the first time, since he came nigh dead born From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn Had he left more forlorn; for the first time, He felt aloof the day and morning's prime– Because into his depth Cimmerian There came a dream, shewing how a young man, Ere a lean bat could plump its wintery skin, Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win380 An immortality, and how espouse Jove's daughter, and be reckon'd of his house. Now was he slumbering towards heaven's gate, That he might at the threshold one hour wait To hear the marriage melodies, and then Sink downward to his dusky cave again. His litter of smooth semilucent mist, Diversely ting'd with rose and amethyst, Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought; And scarcely for one moment could be caught390 His sluggish form reposing motionless. Those two on winged steeds, with all the stress Of vision search'd for him, as one would look Athwart the sallows of a river nook To catch a glance at silver throated eels,– Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals His rugged forehead in a mantle pale, With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they foster'd are400 Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop Their full-veined ears, nostrils blood wide, and stop; Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,– And on those pinions, level in mid air, Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair. Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle Upon a calm sea drifting: and meanwhile The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold! he walks On heaven's pavement; brotherly he talks410 To divine powers: from his hand full fain Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain: He tries the

nerve of Phœbus' golden bow, And asketh where the golden apples grow: Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield, And strives in vain to unsettle and wield A Jovian thunderbolt: arch Hebe brings A full-brimm'd goblet, dances lightly, sings And tantalizes long; at last he drinks, And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks,420 Touching with dazzled lips her starlight hand. He blows a bugle,–an ethereal band Are visible above: the Seasons four,– Green-kyrtled Spring, flush Summer, golden store In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar, Join dance with shadowy Hours; while still the blast, In swells unmitigated, still doth last To sway their floating morris. "Whose is this? Whose bugle?" he inquires: they smile–"O Dis! Why is this mortal here? Dost thou not know430 Its mistress' lips? Not thou?–'Tis Dian's: lo! She rises crescented!" He looks, 'tis she, His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea, And air, and pains, and care, and suffering; Good-bye to all but love! Then doth he spring Towards her, and awakes–and, strange, o'erhead, Of those same fragrant exhalations bred, Beheld awake his very dream: the gods Stood smiling; merry Hebe laughs and nods; And Phœbe bends towards him crescented.440 O state perplexing! On the pinion bed, Too well awake, he feels the panting side Of his delicious lady. He who died For soaring too audacious in the sun, Where that same treacherous wax began to run, Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion. His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne, To that fair shadow'd passion puls'd its way– Ah, what perplexity! Ah, well a day! So fond, so beauteous was his bed-fellow,450 He could not help but kiss her: then he grew Awhile forgetful of all beauty save Young Phœbe's, golden hair'd; and so 'gan crave Forgiveness: yet he turn'd once more to look At the sweet sleeper,–all his soul was shook,– She press'd his hand in slumber; so once more He could not help but kiss her and adore. At this the shadow wept, melting away. The Latmian started up: "Bright goddess, stay! Search my most hidden breast! By truth's own tongue, I have no dædale heart: why is it wrung461 To desperation? Is there nought for me, Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?"

These words awoke the stranger of dark tresses: Her dawning love-look rapt

Endymion blesses With 'haviour soft. Sleep yawned from underneath. "Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe This murky phantasm! thou contented seem'st Pillow'd in lovely idleness, nor dream'st What horrors may discomfort thee and me.470 Ah, shouldst thou die from my heart-treachery!– Yet did she merely weep–her gentle soul Hath no revenge in it: as it is whole In tenderness, would I were whole in love! Can I prize thee, fair maid, till price above, Even when I feel as true as innocence? I do, I do.–What is this soul then? Whence Came it? It does not seem my own, and I Have no self-passion or identity. Some fearful end must be: where, where is it?480 By Nemesis, I see my spirit flit Alone about the dark–Forgive me, sweet: Shall we away?" He rous'd the steeds: they beat Their wings chivalrous into the clear air, Leaving old Sleep within his vapoury lair.

The good-night blush of eve was waning slow, And Vesper, risen star, began to throe In the dusk heavens silvery, when they Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy. Nor did speed hinder converse soft and strange–490 Eternal oaths and vows they interchange, In such wise, in such temper, so aloof Up in the winds, beneath a starry roof, So witless of their doom, that verily 'Tis well nigh past man's search their hearts to see; Whether they wept, or laugh'd, or griev'd, or toy'd– Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow cloy'd.

Fell facing their swift flight, from ebon streak, The moon put forth a little diamond peak, No bigger than an unobserved star,500 Or tiny point of fairy scymetar; Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie Her silver sandals, ere deliciously She bow'd into the heavens her timid head. Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled, While to his lady meek the Carian turn'd, To mark if her dark eyes had yet discern'd This beauty in its birth–Despair! despair! He saw her body fading gaunt and spare In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd her wrist; It melted from his grasp: her hand he kiss'd,511 And, horror! kiss'd his own–he was alone. Her steed a little higher soar'd, and then Dropt hawkwise to the earth. There lies a den, Beyond the seeming confines of the space Made for the soul to wander in and trace Its own existence, of

remotest glooms. Dark regions are around it, where the tombs Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce520 One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart: And in these regions many a venom'd dart At random flies; they are the proper home Of every ill: the man is yet to come Who hath not journeyed in this native hell. But few have ever felt how calm and well Sleep may be had in that deep den of all. There anguish does not sting; nor pleasure pall: Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate,530 Yet all is still within and desolate. Beset with plainful gusts, within ye hear No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none Who strive therefore: on the sudden it is won. Just when the sufferer begins to burn, Then it is free to him; and from an urn, Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught– Young Semele such richness never quaft In her maternal longing. Happy gloom!540 Dark Paradise! where pale becomes the bloom Of health by due; where silence dreariest Is most articulate; where hopes infest; Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep. O happy spirit-home! O wondrous soul! Pregnant with such a den to save the whole In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian! For, never since thy griefs and woes began, Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud550 Hath let thee to this Cave of Quietude. Aye, his lull'd soul was there, although upborne With dangerous speed: and so he did not mourn Because he knew not whither he was going. So happy was he, not the aerial blowing Of trumpets at clear parley from the east Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast. They stung the feather'd horse: with fierce alarm He flapp'd towards the sound. Alas, no charm Could lift Endymion's head, or he had view'd560 A skyey mask, a pinion'd multitude,– And silvery was its passing: voices sweet Warbling the while as if to lull and greet The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they, While past the vision went in bright array.

"Who, who from Dian's feast would be away? For all the golden bowers of the day Are empty left? Who, who away would be From Cynthia's wedding and festivity? Not Hesperus: lo! upon his silver wings570 He leans away for highest heaven and

sings, Snapping his lucid fingers merrily!– Ah, Zephyrus! art here, and Flora too! Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew, Young playmates of the rose and daffodil, Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill Your baskets high With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines, Savory, latter-mint, and columbines, Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme;580 Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime, All gather'd in the dewy morning: hie Away! fly, fly!– Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven, Aquarius! to whom king Jove has given Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd wings, Two fan-like fountains,–thine illuminings For Dian play: Dissolve the frozen purity of air; Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare590 Shew cold through watery pinions; make more bright The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night: Haste, haste away!– Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see! And of the Bear has Pollux mastery: A third is in the race! who is the third, Speeding away swift as the eagle bird? The ramping Centaur! The Lion's mane's on end: the Bear how fierce! The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce600 Some enemy: far forth his bow is bent Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent, Pale unrelentor, When he shall hear the wedding lutes a playing.– Andromeda! sweet woman! why delaying So timidly among the stars: come hither! Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither They all are going. Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd, Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.610 Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral: Ye shall for ever live and love, for all Thy tears are flowing.– By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo!–" More Endymion heard not: down his steed him bore, Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill. "Alas!" said he, "were I but always borne Through dangerous winds, had but my footsteps worn A path in hell, for ever would I bless621 Horrors which nourish an uneasiness For my own sullen conquering: to him Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is dim, Sorrow is but a shadow: now I see The grass; I feel the solid ground–Ah, me! It is thy voice–divinest! Where?–who? who Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew? Behold upon this happy earth we are; Let us ay love each other; let us fare630 On

forest-fruits, and never, never go Among the abodes of mortals here below, Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny! Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly, But with thy beauty will I deaden it. Where didst thou melt too? By thee will I sit For ever: let our fate stop here–a kid I on this spot will offer: Pan will bid Us live in peace, in love and peace among His forest wildernesses. I have clung640 To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen Or felt but a great dream! O I have been Presumptuous against love, against the sky, Against all elements, against the tie Of mortals each to each, against the blooms Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory Has my own soul conspired: so my story Will I to children utter, and repent. There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent650 His appetite beyond his natural sphere, But starv'd and died. My sweetest Indian, here, Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast My life from too thin breathing: gone and past Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewel! And air of visions, and the monstrous swell Of visionary seas! No, never more Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast. Adieu, my daintiest Dream! although so vast660 My love is still for thee. The hour may come When we shall meet in pure elysium. On earth I may not love thee; and therefore Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store All through the teeming year: so thou wilt shine On me, and on this damsel fair of mine, And bless our simple lives. My Indian bliss! My river-lily bud! one human kiss! One sigh of real breath–one gentle squeeze, Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees,670 And warm with dew at ooze from living blood! Whither didst melt? Ah, what of that!–all good We'll talk about–no more of dreaming.–Now, Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none; And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through, Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew? O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place; Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace680 Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd: For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find, And by another, in deep dell below, See, through the trees, a little river go All in its mid-day gold and

glimmering. Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring, And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,– Cresses that grow where no man may them see, And sorrel untorn by the dew-claw'd stag: Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag,690 That thou mayst always know whither I roam, When it shall please thee in our quiet home To listen and think of love. Still let me speak; Still let me dive into the joy I seek,– For yet the past doth prison me. The rill, Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn, And thou shall feed them from the squirrel's barn. Its bottom will I strew with amber shells, And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells.700 Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine, And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine. I will entice this crystal rill to trace Love's silver name upon the meadow's face. I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire; And to god Phœbus, for a golden lyre; To Empress Dian, for a hunting spear; To Vesper, for a taper silver-clear, That I may see thy beauty through the night; To Flora, and a nightingale shall light710 Tame on thy finger; to the River-gods, And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress. Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness! Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be 'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to thee: Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek, Trembling or stedfastness to this same voice, And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice:720 And that affectionate light, those diamond things, Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl springs, Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure. Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure? O that I could not doubt?" The mountaineer Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear His briar'd path to some tranquillity. It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye, And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow;730 Answering thus, just as the golden morrow Beam'd upward from the vallies of the east: "O that the flutter of this heart had ceas'd, Or the sweet name of love had pass'd away. Young feathor'd tyrant! by a swift decay Wilt thou devote this body to the earth: And I do think that at my very birth I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly; For at the first, first dawn and

thought of thee, With uplift hands I blest the stars of heaven.740 Art thou not cruel? Ever have I striven To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do! When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew Favour from thee, and so I gave and gave To the void air, bidding them find out love: But when I came to feel how far above All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood, All earthly pleasure, all imagin'd good, Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,– Even then, that moment, at the thought of this,750 Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers, And languish'd there three days. Ye milder powers, Am I not cruelly wrong'd? Believe, believe Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave With my own fancies garlands of sweet life, Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife! I may not be thy love: I am forbidden– Indeed I am–thwarted, affrighted, chidden, By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath. Twice hast thou ask'd whither I went: henceforth760 Ask me no more! I may not utter it, Nor may I be thy love. We might commit Ourselves at once to vengeance; we might die; We might embrace and die: voluptuous thought! Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught In trammels of perverse deliciousness. No, no, that shall not be: thee will I bless, And bid a long adieu." The Carian No word return'd: both lovelorn, silent, wan,770 Into the vallies green together went. Far wandering, they were perforce content To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree; Nor at each other gaz'd, but heavily Por'd on its hazle cirque of shedded leaves.

Endymion! unhappy! it nigh grieves Me to behold thee thus in last extreme: Ensky'd ere this, but truly that I deem Truth the best music in a first-born song. Thy lute-voic'd brother will I sing ere long,780 And thou shall aid–hast thou not aided me? Yes, moonlight Emperor! felicity Has been thy meed for many thousand years; Yet often have I, on the brink of tears, Mourn'd as if yet thou wert a forester;– Forgetting the old tale. He did not stir His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small pulse Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays790 Through the old garden-ground of boyish days. A little onward ran the very stream By which he took his first soft poppy dream; And on the very bark

'gainst which he leant A crescent he had carv'd, and round it spent His skill in little stars. The teeming tree Had swollen and green'd the pious charactery, But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope Up which he had not fear'd the antelope; And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade800 He had not with his tamed leopards play'd; Nor could an arrow light, or javelin, Fly in the air where his had never been– And yet he knew it not. O treachery! Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye With all his sorrowing? He sees her not. But who so stares on him? His sister sure! Peona of the woods!–Can she endure– Impossible–how dearly they embrace!810 His lady smiles; delight is in her face; It is no treachery. "Dear brother mine! Endymion, weep not so! Why shouldst thou pine When all great Latmos so exalt will be? Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly; And speak not one pale word, and sigh no more. Sure I will not believe thou hast such store Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again. Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain,820 Come hand in hand with one so beautiful. Be happy both of you! for I will pull The flowers of autumn for your coronals. Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls; And when he is restor'd, thou, fairest dame, Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame To see ye thus,–not very, very sad? Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad: O feel as if it were a common day; Free-voic'd as one who never was away.830 No tongue shall ask, whence come ye? but ye shall Be gods of your own rest imperial. Not even I, for one whole month, will pry Into the hours that have pass'd us by, Since in my arbour I did sing to thee. O Hermes! on this very night will be A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light; For the soothsayers old saw yesternight Good visions in the air,–whence will befal, As say these sages, health perpetual840 To shepherds and their flocks; and furthermore, In Dian's face they read the gentle lore: Therefore for her these vesper-carols are. Our friends will all be there from nigh and far. Many upon thy death have ditties made; And many, even now, their foreheads shade With cypress, on a day of sacrifice. New singing for our maids shalt thou devise, And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's brows. Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse850 This wayward brother to his rightful joys!

His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poise His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray, To lure–Endymion, dear brother, say What ails thee?" He could bear no more, and so Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow, And twang'd it inwardly, and calmly said: "I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid! My only visitor! not ignorant though, That those deceptions which for pleasure go860 'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be: But there are higher ones I may not see, If impiously an earthly realm I take. Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake Night after night, and day by day, until Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill. Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me More happy than betides mortality. A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave, Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave870 Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell. Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper well; For to thy tongue will I all health confide. And, for my sake, let this young maid abide With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone, Peona, mayst return to me. I own This may sound strangely: but when, dearest girl, Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair! Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share880 This sister's love with me?" Like one resign'd And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown: "Aye, but a buzzing by my ears has flown, Of jubilee to Dian:–truth I heard! Well then, I see there is no little bird, Tender soever, but is Jove's own care. Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware, Behold I find it! so exalted too! So after my own heart! I knew, I knew890 There was a place untenanted in it: In that same void white Chastity shall sit, And monitor me nightly to lone slumber. With sanest lips I vow me to the number Of Dian's sisterhood; and, kind lady, With thy good help, this very night shall see My future days to her fane consecrate."

As feels a dreamer what doth most create His own particular fright, so these three felt: Or like one who, in after ages, knelt900 To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine After a little sleep: or when in mine Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends Who know him not. Each diligently bends Towards common thoughts and things for

very fear; Striving their ghastly malady to cheer, By thinking it a thing of yes and no, That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last Endymion said: "Are not our fates all cast?910 Why stand we here? Adieu, ye tender pair! Adieu!" Whereat those maidens, with wild stare, Walk'd dizzily away. Pained and hot His eyes went after them, until they got Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw, In one swift moment, would what then he saw Engulph for ever. "Stay!" he cried, "ah, stay! Turn, damsels! hist! one word I have to say. Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again. It is a thing I dote on: so I'd fain,920 Peona, ye should hand in hand repair Into those holy groves, that silent are Behind great Dian's temple. I'll be yon, At vesper's earliest twinkle–they are gone– But once, once, once again–" At this he press'd His hands against his face, and then did rest His head upon a mossy hillock green, And so remain'd as he a corpse had been All the long day; save when he scantly lifted His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted930 With the slow move of time,–sluggish and weary Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary, Had reach'd the river's brim. Then up he rose, And, slowly as that very river flows, Walk'd towards the temple grove with this lament: "Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall Before the serene father of them all Bows down his summer head below the west. Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest,940 But at the setting I must bid adieu To her for the last time. Night will strew On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves, And with them shall I die; nor much it grieves To die, when summer dies on the cold sward. Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies, Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses; My kingdom's at its death, and just it is That I should die with it: so in all this950 We miscal grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak, woe, What is there to plain of? By Titan's foe I am but rightly serv'd." So saying, he Tripp'd lightly on, in sort of deathful glee; Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun, As though they jests had been: nor had he done His laugh at nature's holy countenance, Until that grove appear'd, as if perchance, And then his tongue

with sober seemlihed Gave utterance as he entered: "Ha!" I said,960 "King of the butterflies; but by this gloom, And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom, This dusk religion, pomp of solitude, And the Promethean clay by thief endued, By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed Myself to things of light from infancy; And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die, Is sure enough to make a mortal man Grow impious." So he inwardly began970 On things for which no wording can be found; Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd Beyond the reach of music: for the choir Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar Nor muffling thicket interpos'd to dull The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full, Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles. He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles, Wan as primroses gather'd at midnight By chilly finger'd spring. "Unhappy wight!980 Endymion!" said Peona, "we are here! What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier?" Then he embrac'd her, and his lady's hand Press'd, saying: "Sister, I would have command, If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate." At which that dark-eyed stranger stood elate And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love, To Endymion's amaze: "By Cupid's dove, And so thou shalt! and by the lily truth Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth!"990 And as she spake, into her face there came Light, as reflected from a silver flame: Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display Full golden; in her eyes a brighter day Dawn'd blue and full of love. Aye, he beheld Phœbe, his passion! joyous she upheld Her lucid bow, continuing thus: "Drear, drear Has our delaying been; but foolish fear Withheld me first; and then decrees of fate; And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state1000 Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change Be spiritualiz'd. Peona, we shall range These forests, and to thee they safe shall be As was thy cradle; hither shalt thou flee To meet us many a time." Next Cynthia bright Peona kiss'd, and bless'd with fair good night: Her brother kiss'd her too, and knelt adown Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon. She gave her fair hands to him, and behold, Before three swiftest kisses he had told,1010 They vanish'd far away!–Peona went Home through the gloomy wood

in wonderment.

THE END.

T. Miller, Printer, Noble Street, Cheapside.

Transcriber's Notes

Book II, line 795: "crystaline" corrected to "crystalline".

Book III, line 71: "her" corrected to "his".

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ENDYMION: A POETIC ROMANCE ***

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