The Poems of Felicia Hemans

by Felicia Hemans

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POEMS

OF

FELICIA HEMANS

MURRAY AND GIBB, EDINBURGH, PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

Felicia Hemans

THE POEMS OF FELICIA HEMANS.

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1875.

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CHRONOLOGY OF MRS HEMANS' LIFE AND WORKS

1793.

Felicia Dorothea Browne, born at Liverpool, Sept 25.

1800, (æt. 7.)

Removes with family from Liverpool to Gwrych, near Abergele, Denbighshire.—Shortly afterwards composes Lines on her Mother's Birthday.

1804, (11.)

Spends winter in London.—Writes thence letter in rhyme to brother and sister in Wales.

1808, (15.)

Collection of poems printed in 4to.—England and Spain written.—Becomes acquainted with Captain Hemans.

1809, (16.)

Family remove to Bronwylfa in Flintshire.—Pursues her studies in French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.—Acquires the elements of German; and shows a taste for drawing and music.

1812, (19.)

Domestic Affections and other poems published.—Marries Captain Hemans.—Takes up residence at Daventry, Northamptonshire.

1813, (20.)

Son Arthur born.—Returns to Bronwylfa.

1816, (23.)

Publishes Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy; also Modern Greece.

1818, (25.)

Makes Translations from Camoens and others.—Publishes Stanzas on the Death of Princess Charlotte, (Blackwood’s Magazine, April.)

1819, (26.)

Tales and Historic Scenes published.—Gains prize for best poem on the Meeting of Wallace and Bruce.—Captain Hemans takes up residence in Italy.—Family consists of five sons.

1820, (27.)

Publishes poem of Sceptic.—Becomes acquainted with Bishop Heber and his brother Richard.—Corresponds with Mr Gifford.—Contributes papers on Foreign Literature to Edinburgh Magazine.—Publishes Stanzas to the Memory of George the Third.—Visits Wavertree Lodge, near Liverpool, (October.)

1821, (28.)

Poem of Dartmoor obtains prize offered by Royal Society of Literature.—Corresponds with Rev. Mr Milman, and Dr Croly.—Writes Vespers of Palermo.—Extends her German studies. Writes Welsh Melodies.

1822, (29.)

Siege of Valencia, and Songs of the Cid written;—also dramatic fragment of Don Sebastian.

1823, (30.)

Contributes to Thomas Campbell's New Monthly Magazine.—Voice of Spring written, (March.)—Siege of Valencia published, along with Last Constantine and Belshazzar's Feast.—Vespers of Palermo performed at Covent Garden, (Dec. 12.)

1824, (31.)

Composes De Chatillon, revised MS. of which unfortunately lost.—Writes Lays of Many Lands.—Removes with family from Bronwylfa to Rhyllon.

1825, (32.)

Treasures of the Deep, The Hebrew Mother, The Hour of Death, Graves of a Household, The Cross in the Wilderness, and many other of her best lyrics written.

1826, (33.)

The Forest Sanctuary published, together with Lays of Many Lands.—Commences correspondence with Professor Norton of Boston, U.S., who republishes her works there.

1827, (34.)

Mrs Hemans loses her mother (11th January.)—Writes Hymns for Childhood, which are first published in America.—Corresponds with Joanna Baillie, Anne Grant, Mary Mitford, Caroline Bowles, Mary Howitt, and M. J. Jewsbury.—Writes Körner to his Sister, Homes of England, An Hour of Romance, The Palm-Tree, and many

other lyrics.—Health becomes impaired.

1828, (35.)

Publishes with Mr Blackwood Records of Woman, and collected Miscellanies, (May.)—Contributes regularly to Blackwood's Magazine.—Visits Wavertree Lodge early in summer.—Removes to village of Wavertree with family in September.

1829, (36.)

Writes Lady of Provence, To a Wandering Female Singer, The Child's First Grief, The Better Land, and Miscellanies.—Voyages to Scotland, (June,) and visits Mr Henry M'Kenzie, Rev. Mr Alison, Lord Jeffrey, Sir Walter Scott, Captain Hamilton, Captain Basil Hall, and other distinguished literati.—Returns to England, (Sept.)—A Spirit's Return composed.

1830, (37.)

Songs of the Affections published.—Visits the Lakes and Mr Wordsworth.—Domiciles during part of summer at Dove's Nest, near Ambleside.—Revisits Scotland, (Aug.)—Returns by Dublin and Holyhead to Wales.

1831, (38.)

State of health delicate.—Quits England for last time, (April,) and proceeds to Dublin.—Visits the Hermitage, near Kilkenny, and Woodstock.—Returns to Dublin, (Aug.)—Writes various lyrics.

1832, (39.)

Health continues greatly impaired.—Writes Miscellaneous Lyrics, Songs of Spain, and Songs of a Guardian Spirit.

1833, (40.)

Feels recruited during spring.—Writes Songs of Captivity, Songs for Summer Hours, and many of Scenes and Hymns of Life.—Composes Sonnets Devotional and Memorial.—Commences translation of Scenes and Passages from German

Authors, (December.)

1834, (41.)

Hymns for Childhood published (March;) also National Lyrics and Songs for Music.—Paper on Tasso, published in New Monthly Magazine, (May.)—Writes Fragment of Paper on Iphigenia.—Records of Spring 1834 written, (April, May, June.)—Is seized with fever; during convalescence retires into county of Wicklow.—Returns to Dublin in autumn, and has attack of ague.—Composes Records of Autumn 1834.—Writes Despondency and Aspiration, (Oct. and Nov.)—The Huguenot's Farewell and Antique Greek Lament, (Nov.)—Thoughts during Sickness written, (Nov. and Dec.)—Retires during convalescence to Redesdale, a country-seat of the Archbishop of Dublin.

1835, (42.)

Returns to Dublin, (March.)—Debility gradually increases.—Corresponds regarding Sir Robert Peel's appointment of her son Henry.—Dictates Sabbath Sonnet, (April 26.)—Departs this life, (16th May.)—Remains interred in vault beneath St Anne's Church, Dublin.

THE POETICAL WORKS OF MRS HEMANS

JUVENILE POEMS

ON MY MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF EIGHT.

Clad in all their brightest green,

This day the verdant fields are seen;

The tuneful birds begin their lay,

To celebrate thy natal day.

The breeze is still, the sea is calm,

And the whole scene combines to charm;

The flowers revive, this charming May,

Because it is thy natal day.

The sky is blue, the day serene,

And only pleasure now is seen;

The rose, the pink, the tulip gay,

Combine to bless thy natal day.

A PRAYER.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF NINE.

O God! my Father and my Friend,

Ever thy blessings to me send;

Let me have Virtue for my guide,

And Wisdom always at my side.

Thus cheerfully through life I'll go,

Nor ever feel the sting of woe;

Contented with the humblest lot—

Happy, though in the meanest cot.

ADDRESS TO THE DEITY.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN.

The infant muse, Jehovah! would aspire

To swell the adoration of the lyre:

Source of all good! oh, teach my voice to sing
Thee, from whom Nature’s genuine beauties spring;
Thee, God of truth, omnipotent and wise,
Who saidst to Chaos, “let the earth arise.”
O Author of the rich luxuriant year!
Love, Truth, and Mercy in thy works appear:
Within their orbs the planets dost Thou keep,
And e’en hast limited the mighty deep.
Oh! could I number thy inspiring ways,
And wake the voice of animated praise!
Ah, no! the theme shall swell a cherub’s note;
To Thee celestial hymns of rapture float.
’Tis not for me in lowly strains to sing
Thee, God of mercy,—heaven’s immortal King!
Yet to that happiness I’d fain aspire—
Oh! fill my heart with elevated fire:
With angel-songs an artless voice shall blend,
The grateful offering shall to Thee ascend.
Yes! Thou wilt breathe a spirit o’er my lyre,
And “fill my beating heart with sacred fire!”
And when to Thee my youth, my life, I’ve given,
Raise me to join Eliza,[1] blest in Heaven.

[1] A sister whom the author had lost.

SHAKSPEARE.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN.

[One of her earliest tastes was a passion for Shakspeare, which she read, as her choicest recreation, at six years old; and in later days she would often refer to the hours of romance she had passed in a secret haunt of her own—a seat amongst the branches of an old apple-tree—where, revelling in the treasures of the cherished volume, she would become completely absorbed in the imaginative world it revealed to her. The following lines, written at eleven years old, may be adduced as a proof of her juvenile enthusiasm.—Memoir of Mrs Hemans by her Sister, p. 6, 7.]

I love to rove o’er history’s page,
Recall the hero and the sage;
Revive the actions of the dead,
And memory of ages fled:
Yet it yields me greater pleasure,
To read the poet’s pleasing measure.
Led by Shakspeare, bard inspired,
The bosom’s energies are fired;
We learn to shed the generous tear,
O’er poor Ophelia’s sacred bier;
To love the merry moonlit scene,
With fairy elves in valleys green;
Or, borne on fancy’s heavenly wings,
To listen while sweet Ariel sings.
How sweet the “native woodnotes wild”
Of him, the Muse’s favourite child!

Of him whose magic lays impart

Each various feeling to the heart!

TO MY BROTHER AND SISTER IN THE COUNTRY.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN.

[At about the age of eleven, she passed a winter in London with her father and mother; and a similar sojourn was repeated in the following year, after which she never visited the metropolis. The contrast between the confinement of a town life, and the happy freedom of her own mountain home, was even then so distasteful to her, that the indulgences of plays and sights soon ceased to be cared for, and she longed to rejoin her younger brother and sister in their favourite rural haunts and amusements—the nuttery wood, the beloved apple-tree, the old arbour, with its swing, the post-office tree, in whose trunk a daily interchange of family letters was established, the pool where fairy ships were launched (generally painted and decorated by herself,) and, dearer still, the fresh free ramble on the seashore, or the mountain expedition to the Signal Station, or the Roman Encampment. In one of her letters, the pleasure with which she looked forward to her return home was thus expressed in rhyme.—Mem. p. 8, 9.]

Happy soon we’ll meet again,

Free from sorrow, care, and pain;

Soon again we’ll rise with dawn,

To roam the verdant dewy lawn;

Soon the budding leaves we’ll hail,

Or wander through the well-known vale;

Or weave the smiling wreath of flowers;

And sport away the light-wing’d hours.

Soon we'll run the agile race;
Soon, dear playmates, we'll embrace;—
Through the wheat-field or the grove,
We'll hand in hand delighted rove;
Or, beneath some spreading oak,
Ponder the instructive book;
Or view the ships that swiftly glide,
Floating on the peaceful tide;
Or raise again the caroll'd lay;
Or join again in mirthful play;
Or listen to the humming bees,
As their murmurs swell the breeze;
Or seek the primrose where it springs;
Or chase the fly with painted wings;
Or talk beneath the arbour's shade;
Or mark the tender shooting blade:
Or stray beside the babbling stream,
When Luna sheds her placid beam;
Or gaze upon the glassy sea——
Happy, happy shall we be!

SONNET TO MY MOTHER.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF TWELVE.

To thee, maternal guardian of my youth,
I pour the genuine numbers free from art—

The lays inspired by gratitude and truth;
For thou wilt prize the effusion of the heart.
Oh! be it mine, with sweet and pious care,
To calm thy bosom in the hour of grief;
With soothing tenderness to chase the tear,
With fond endearments to impart relief:
Be mine thy warm affection to repay
With duteous love in thy declining hours;
My filial hand shall strew unfading flowers,
Perennial roses, to adorn thy way:
Still may thy grateful children round thee smile—
Their pleasing care affliction shall beguile.

SONNET.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF THIRTEEN.

’Tis sweet to think the spirits of the blest
May hover round the virtuous man’s repose;
And oft in visions animate his breast,
And scenes of bright beatitude disclose.
The ministers of Heaven, with pure control,
May bid his sorrow and emotion cease,
Inspire the pious fervour of his soul,
And whisper to his bosom hallow’d peace.
Ah, tender thought! that oft with sweet relief
May charm the bosom of a weeping friend,

Beguile with magic power the tear of grief,
And pensive pleasure with devotion blend;
While oft he fancies music, sweetly faint,
The airy lay of some departed saint.

RURAL WALKS.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF THIRTEEN.

Oh! may I ever pass my happy hours
In Cambrian valleys and romantic bowers;
For every spot in sylvan beauty drest,
And every landscape, charms my youthful breast.
And much I love to hail the vernal morn,
When flowers of spring the mossy seat adorn;
And sometimes through the lonely wood I stray,
To cull the tender rosebuds in my way;
And seek in every wild secluded dell,
The weeping cowslip and the azure bell;
With all the blossoms, fairer in the dew,
To form the gay festoon of varied hue.
And oft I seek the cultivated green,
The fertile meadow, and the village scene;
Where rosy children sport around the cot,
Or gather woodbine from the garden spot.
And there I wander by the cheerful rill,
That murmurs near the osiers and the mill;

To view the smiling peasants turn the hay,
And listen to their pleasing festive lay.
I love to loiter in the spreading grove,
Or in the mountain scenery to rove;
Where summits rise in awful grace around,
With hoary moss and tufted verdure crown'd;
Where cliffs in solemn majesty are piled,
"And frown upon the vale" with grandeur wild:
And there I view the mouldering tower sublime,
Array'd in all the blending shades of Time.
The airy upland and the woodland green,
The valley, and romantic mountain scene;
The lowly hermitage, or fair domain,
The dell retired, or willow-shaded lane;
"And every spot in sylvan beauty drest,
And every landscape, charms my youthful breast."

SONNET.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF THIRTEEN.

[In 1808, a collection of her poems, which had long been regarded amongst her friends with a degree of admiration perhaps more partial than judicious, was submitted to the world, in the form (certainly an ill-advised one) of a quarto volume. Its appearance drew down the animadversions of some self-constituted arbiter of public taste,[2] and the young poetess was thus early initiated into the pains and perils attendant upon the career of an author;—though it may here be observed, that,

as far as criticism was concerned, this was at once the first and last time she was destined to meet with any thing like harshness or mortification. Though this unexpected severity was felt bitterly for a few days, her buoyant spirit soon rose above it, and her effusions continued to be poured forth as spontaneously as the song of the skylark.]

I love to hail the mild and balmy hour

When evening spreads around her twilight veil.

When dews descend on every languid flower,

And sweet and tranquil is the summer gale.

Then let me wander by the peaceful tide,

While o’er the wave the breezes lightly play;

To hear the waters murmur as they glide,

To mark the fading smile of closing day.

There let me linger, blest in visions dear,

Till the soft moonbeams tremble on the seas;

While melting sounds decay on fancy’s ear,

Of airy music floating on the breeze.

For still when evening sheds the genial dews,

That pensive hour is sacred to the muse.

[2] The criticism referred to, and which, considering the circumstances under which the volume appeared, was certainly somewhat ungenerous, and quite uncalled for, ran as follows:

—“We hear that these poems are the ‘genuine productions of a young lady, written between the ages of eight and thirteen years,’ and we do not feel inclined to question the intelligence; but although the fact may insure them an indulgent reception from

all those who have ‘children dear,’ yet, when a little girl publishes a large quarto, we are disposed to examine before we admit her claims to public attention. Many of Miss Browne’s compositions are extremely jejune. However, though Miss Browne’s poems contain some erroneous and some pitiable lines, we must praise the ‘Reflections in a ruined Castle,’ and the poetic strain in which they are delivered. The lines to ‘Patriotism’ contain good thoughts and forcible images; and if the youthful author were to content herself for some years with reading instead of writing, we should open any future work from her pen with an expectation of pleasure, founded on our recollection of this publication; though we must, at the same time, observe, that premature talents are not always to be considered as signs of future excellence. The honeysuckle attains maturity before the oak.”—Monthly Review, 1809.

ENGLAND AND SPAIN; OR, VALOUR AND PATRIOTISM.

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF FOURTEEN.

——“His sword the brave man draws,

And asks no omen but his country’s cause.”—Pope.

[New sources of inspiration were now opening to her view. Birthday addresses, songs by the seashore, and invocations to fairies, were henceforth to be diversified with warlike themes; and trumpets and banners now floated through the dreams in which birds and flowers had once reigned paramount. Her two elder brothers had entered the army at an early age, and were both serving in the 23d Royal Welsh Fusiliers. One of them was now engaged in the Spanish campaign under Sir John Moore; and a vivid imagination and enthusiastic affections being alike enlisted in the cause, her young mind was filled with glorious visions of British valour and Spanish patriotism. In her ardent view, the days of chivalry seemed to be restored, and the very names which were of daily occurrence in the despatches, were involuntarily associated with the deeds of Roland and his Paladins, or of her own

especial hero, “The Cid Ruy Diaz,” the Campeador. Under the inspiration of these feelings, she composed a poem entitled “England and Spain,” which was published and afterwards translated into Spanish. This cannot but be considered as a very remarkable production for a girl of fourteen; lofty sentiments, correctness of language, and historical knowledge, being all strikingly displayed in it.—Memoir, p. 10, 11.]

Too long have Tyranny and Power combined
To sway, with iron sceptre, o’er mankind;
Long has Oppression worn th’ imperial robe,
And Rapine’s sword has wasted half the globe!
O’er Europe’s cultured realms, and climes afar,
Triumphant Gaul has pour’d the tide of war:
To her fair Austria veil’d the standard bright;
Ausonia’s lovely plains have own’d her might;
While Prussia’s eagle, never taught to yield,
Forsook her towering height on Jena’s field!
O gallant Frederic! could thy parted shade
Have seen thy country vanquish’d and betray’d,
How had thy soul indignant mourn’d her shame,
Her sullied trophies, and her tarnish’d fame!
When Valour wept lamented Brunswick’s doom,
And nursed with tears the laurels on his tomb;
When Prussia, drooping o’er her hero’s grave,
Invoked his spirit to descend and save;
Then set her glories—then expired her sun,

And fraud achieved e’en more than conquest won!
O’er peaceful realms, that smiled with plenty gay,
Has desolation spread her ample sway;
Thy blast, O Ruin! on tremendous wings,
Has proudly swept o’er empires, nations, kings.
Thus the wild hurricane’s impetuous force
With dark destruction marks its whelming course,
Despoils the woodland’s pomp, the blooming plain,
Death on its pinion, vengeance in its train!
—Rise, Freedom, rise! and, breaking from thy trance,
Wave the dread banner, seize the glittering lance!
With arm of might assert thy sacred cause,
And call thy champions to defend thy laws!
How long shall tyrant power her throne maintain?
How long shall despots and usurpers reign?
Is honour’s lofty soul for ever fled!
Is virtue lost? is martial ardour dead?
Is there no heart where worth and valour dwell,
No patriot Wallace, no undaunted Tell?
Yes, Freedom! yes! thy sons, a noble band,
Around thy banner, firm, exulting stand;
Once more, ’tis thine, invincible to wield
The beamy spear and adamantine shield!
Again thy cheek with proud resentment glows,

Again thy lion-glance appals thy foes;
Thy kindling eye-beam darts unconquer’d fires,
Thy look sublime the warrior’s heart inspires;
And, while to guard thy standard and thy right,
Castilians rush, intrepid, to the fight,
Lo! Britain’s generous host their aid supply,
Resolved for thee to triumph or to die;
And Glory smiles to see Iberia’s name
Enroll’d with Albion’s in the book of fame!
Illustrious names! still, still united beam,
Be still the hero’s boast, the poet’s theme:
So, when two radiant gems together shine,
And in one wreath their lucid light combine;
Each, as it sparkles with transcendant rays,
Adds to the lustre of its kindred blaze.
Descend, O Genius! from thy orb descend!
Thy glowing thought, thy kindling spirit lend!
As Memnon’s harp (so ancient fables say)
With sweet vibration meets the morning ray,
So let the chords thy heavenly presence own,
And swell a louder note, a nobler tone;
Call from the sun, her burning throne on high,
The seraph Ecstasy, with lightning eye;
Steal from the source of day empyreal fire,

And breathe the soul of rapture o’er the lyre!
Hail, Albion! hail, thou land of freedom’s birth!
Pride of the main, and Phœnix of the earth!
Thou second Rome, where mercy, justice, dwell,
Whose sons in wisdom as in arms excel!
Thine are the dauntless bands, like Spartans brave,
Bold in the field, triumphant on the wave;
In classic elegance and arts divine,
To rival Athens’ fairest palm is thine;
For taste and fancy from Hymettus fly,
And richer bloom beneath thy varying sky,
Where Science mounts in radiant car sublime
To other worlds beyond the sphere of time!
Hail, Albion, hail! to thee has fate denied
Peruvian mines and rich Hindostan’s pride,
The gems that Ormuz and Golconda boast,
And all the wealth of Montezuma’s coast:
For thee no Parian marbles brightly shine,
No glowing suns mature the blushing vine;
No light Arabian gales their wings expand,
To waft Sabæan incense o’er the land;
No graceful cedars crown thy lofty hills,
No trickling myrrh for thee its balm distils;
Not from thy trees the lucid amber flows,

And far from thee the scented cassia blows:
Yet fearless Commerce, pillar of thy throne,
Makes all the wealth of foreign climes thy own;
From Lapland's shore to Afric's fervid reign,
She bids thy ensigns float above the main;
Unfurls her streamers to the favouring gale,
And shows to other worlds her daring sail:
Then wafts their gold, their varied stores to thee,
Queen of the trident! empress of the sea!
For this thy noble sons have spread alarms,
And bade the zones resound with Britain's arms!
Calpè's proud rock, and Syria's palmy shore,
Have heard and trembled at their battle's roar;
The sacred waves of fertilising Nile
Have seen the triumphs of the conquering isle;
For this, for this, the Samiel-blast of war
Has roll'd o'er Vincent's cape and Trafalgar!
Victorious Rodney spread thy thunder's sound,
And Nelson fell, with fame immortal crown'd—
Blest if their perils and their blood could gain,
To grace thy hand, the sceptre of the main!
The milder emblems of the virtues calm—
The poet's verdant bay, the sage's palm—
These in thy laurel's blooming foliage twine,

And round thy brows a deathless wreath combine:
Not Mincio’s banks, nor Meles’ classic tide,
Are hallow’d more than Avon’s haunted side;
Nor is thy Thames a less inspiring theme
Than pure Ilissus, or than Tiber’s stream.
Bright in the annals of th’ impartial page,
Britannia’s heroes live from age to age!
From ancient days, when dwelt her savage race,
Her painted natives, foremost in the chase,
Free from all cares for luxury or gain,
Lords of the wood and monarchs of the plain;
To these Augustan days, when social arts
Refine and meliorate her manly hearts;
From doubtful Arthur—hero of romance,
King of the circled board, the spear, the lance—
To those whose recent trophies grace her shield,
The gallant victors of Vimeira’s field;
Still have her warriors borne th’ unfading crown
And made the British flag the ensign of renown.
Spirit of Alfred! patriot soul sublime!
Thou morning-star of error’s darkest time!
Prince of the Lion-heart! whose arm in fight,
On Syria’s plains repell’d Saladin’s might!
Edward! for bright heroic deeds revered,

By Cressy’s fame to Britain still endear’d!
Triumphant Henry! thou, whose valour proud,
The lofty plume of crested Gallia bow’d!
Look down, look down, exalted shades! and view
Your Albion still to freedom’s banner true!
Behold the land, ennobled by your fame,
Supreme in glory, and of spotless name:
And, as the pyramid indignant rears
Its awful head, and mocks the waste of years;
See her secure in pride of virtue tower,
While prostrate nations kiss the rod of power!
Lo! where her pennons, waving high, aspire,
Bold Victory hovers near, “with eyes of fire!”
While Lusitania hails, with just applause,
The brave defenders of her injured cause;
Bids the full song, the note of triumph rise,
And swells th’ exulting pæan to the skies!
And they, who late with anguish, hard to tell,
Breathed to their cherish’d realms a sad farewell!
Who, as the vessel bore them o’er the tide,
Still fondly linger’d on its deck, and sigh’d;
Gazed on the shore, till tears obscured their sight,
And the blue distance melted into light—
The Royal exiles, forced by Gallia’s hate

To fly for refuge in a foreign state—
They, soon returning o’er the western main,
Ere long may view their clime beloved again:
And as the blazing pillar led the host
Of faithful Israel o’er the desert coast,
So may Britannia guide the noble band
O’er the wild ocean to their native land.
O glorious isle!—O sovereign of the waves!
Thine are the sons who “never will be slaves!”
See them once more, with ardent hearts advance,
And rend the laurels of insulting France;
To brave Castile their potent aid supply,
And wave, O Freedom! wave thy sword on high!
Is there no bard of heavenly power possess’d
To thrill, to rouse, to animate the breast?
Like Shakspeare o’er the secret mind to sway,
And call each wayward passion to obey?
Is there no bard, imbued with hallow’d fire,
To wake the chords of Ossian’s magic lyre;
Whose numbers breathing all his flame divine,
The patriot’s name to ages might consign?
Rise, Inspiration! rise! be this thy theme,
And mount, like Uriel, on the golden beam!
Oh, could my muse on seraph pinion spring,

And sweep with rapture’s hand the trembling string!
Could she the bosom energies control,
And pour impassion’d fervour o’er the soul!
Oh, could she strike the harp to Milton given,
Brought by a cherub from th’ empyrean heaven!
Ah, fruitless wish! ah, prayer preferr’d in vain,
For her—the humblest of the woodland train;
Yet shall her feeble voice essay to raise
The hymn of liberty, the song of praise!
Iberian bands! whose noble ardour glows
To pour confusion on oppressive foes;
Intrepid spirits, hail! ’tis yours to feel
The hero’s fire, the freeman’s godlike zeal!
Not to secure dominion’s boundless reign,
Ye wave the flag of conquest o’er the slain;
No cruel rapine leads you to the war,
Nor mad ambition, whirl’d in crimson car.
No, brave Castilians! yours a nobler end,
Your land, your laws, your monarch to defend!
For these, for these, your valiant legions rear
The floating standard, and the lofty spear!
The fearless lover wields the conquering sword,
Fired by the image of the maid adored!
His best-beloved, his fondest ties, to aid,

The father’s hand unsheaths the glittering blade!
For each, for all, for ev’ry sacred right,
The daring patriot mingles in the fight!
And e’en if love or friendship fail to warm,
His country’s name alone can nerve his dauntless arm!
He bleeds! he falls! his deathbed is the field!
His dirge the trumpet, and his bier the shield!
His closing eyes the beam of valour speak,
The flush of ardour lingers on his cheek;
Serene he lifts to heaven those closing eyes,
Then for his country breathes a prayer—and dies!
Oh! ever hallow’d be his verdant grave—
There let the laurel spread, the cypress wave!
Thou, lovely Spring! bestow, to grace his tomb,
Thy sweetest fragrance, and thy earliest bloom;
There let the tears of heaven descend in balm,
There let the poet consecrate his palm!
Let honour, pity, bless the holy ground,
And shades of sainted heroes watch around!
’Twas thus, while Glory rung his thrilling knell,
Thy chief, O Thebes! at Mantinea fell;
Smiled undismay’d within the arms of death,
While Victory, weeping nigh, received his breath!
O thou, the sovereign of the noble soul!

Thou source of energies beyond control!
Queen of the lofty thought, the generous deed,
Whose sons unconquer’d fight, undaunted bleed,—
Inspiring Liberty! thy worshipp’d name
The warm enthusiast kindles to a flame;
Thy charms inspire him to achievements high,
Thy look of heaven, thy voice of harmony.
More blest with thee to tread perennial snows,
Where ne’er a flower expands, a zephyr blows;
Where Winter, binding nature in his chain,
In frost-work palace holds perpetual reign;
Than, far from thee, with frolic step to rove
The green savannas and the spicy grove;
Scent the rich balm of India’s perfumed gales,
In citron-woods and aromatic vales:
For oh! fair Liberty, when thou art near,
Elysium blossoms in the desert drear!
Where’er thy smile its magic power bestows,
There arts and taste expand, there fancy glows;
The sacred lyre its wild enchantment gives,
And every chord to swelling transport lives;
There ardent Genius bids the pencil trace
The soul of beauty, and the lines of grace;
With bold Promethean hand, the canvass warms,

And calls from stone expression’s breathing forms.
Thus, where the fruitful Nile o’erflows its bound,
Its genial waves diffuse abundance round,
Bid Ceres laugh o’er waste and sterile sands,
And rich profusion clothe deserted lands.
Immortal Freedom! daughter of the skies!
To thee shall Britain’s grateful incense rise.
Ne’er, goddess! ne’er forsake thy favourite isle,
Still be thy Albion brighten’d with thy smile!
Long had thy spirit slept in dead repose,
While proudly triumph’d thine insulting foes;
Yet, though a cloud may veil Apollo’s light,
Soon, with celestial beam, he breaks to sight:
Once more we see thy kindling soul return,
Thy vestal-flame with added radiance burn;
Lo! in Iberian hearts thine ardour lives,
Lo! in Iberian hearts thy spark revives!
Proceed, proceed, ye firm undaunted band!
Still sure to conquer, if combined ye stand.
Though myriads flashing in the eye of day
Stream’d o’er the smiling land in long array,
Though tyrant Asia pour’d unnumber’d foes,
Triumphant still the arm of Greece arose;—
For every state in sacred union stood,

Strong to repel invasion’s whelming flood;
Each heart was glowing in the general cause,
Each hand prepared to guard their hallow’d laws;
Athenian valour join’d Laconia’s might,
And but contended to be first in fight;
From rank to rank the warm contagion ran,
And Hope and Freedom led the flaming van.
Then Persia’s monarch mourn’d his glories lost,
As wild confusion wing’d his flying host;
Then Attic bards the hymn of victory sung,
The Grecian harp to notes exulting rung!
Then Sculpture bade the Parian stone record
The high achievements of the conquering sword.
Thus, brave Castilians! thus may bright renown
And fair success your valiant efforts crown!
Genius of chivalry! whose early days
Tradition still recounts in artless lays;
Whose faded splendours fancy oft recalls—
The floating banners and the lofty halls,
The gallant feats thy festivals display’d,
The tilt, the tournament, the long crusade;
Whose ancient pride Romance delights to hail,
In fabling numbers, or heroic tale:
Those times are fled, when stern thy castles frown’d,

Their stately towers with feudal grandeur crown’d;
Those times are fled, when fair Iberia’s clime
Beheld thy Gothic reign, thy pomp sublime;
And all thy glories, all thy deeds of yore,
Live but in legends wild, and poet’s lore.
Lo! where thy silent harp neglected lies,
Light o’er its chords the murmuring zephyr sighs;
Thy solemn courts, where once the minstrel sung,
The choral voice of mirth and music rung;
Now, with the ivy clad, forsaken, lone,
Hear but the breeze and echo to its moan:
Thy lonely towers deserted fall away,
Thy broken shield is mouldering in decay.
Yet, though thy transient pageantries are gone,
Like fairy visions, bright, yet swiftly flown;
Genius of chivalry! thy noble train,
Thy firm, exalted virtues yet remain!
Fair truth, array’d in robes of spotless white,
Her eye a sunbeam, and her zone of light;
Warm emulation, with aspiring aim,
Still darting forward to the wreath of fame;
And purest love, that waves his torch divine,
At awful honour’s consecrated shrine;
Ardour, with eagle-wing and fiery glance;

And generous courage, resting on his lance;
And loyalty, by perils unsubdued;
Untainted faith, unshaken fortitude;
And patriot energy, with heart of flame—
These, in Iberia's sons are yet the same!
These from remotest days their souls have fired,
"Nerved every arm," and every breast inspired!
When Moorish bands their suffering land possess'd,
And fierce oppression rear'd her giant crest,
The wealthy caliphs on Cordova's throne
In eastern gems and purple splendour shone;
Theirs was the proud magnificence that vied
With stately Bagdat's oriental pride;
Theirs were the courts in regal pomp array'd,
Where arts and luxury their charms display'd;
'Twas theirs to rear the Zehrar's costly towers,
Its fairy-palace and enchanted bowers;
There all Arabian fiction e'er could tell
Of potent genii or of wizard spell—
All that a poet's dream could picture bright,
One sweet Elysium, charm'd the wondering sight!
Too fair, too rich, for work of mortal hand,
It seem'd an Eden from Armida's wand!
Yet vain their pride, their wealth, and radiant state,

When freedom waved on high the sword of fate!
When brave Ramiro bade the despots fear,
Stem retribution frowning on his spear;
And fierce Almanzor, after many a fight,
O’erwhelm’d with shame, confess’d the Christian’s might.
In later times the gallant Cid arose,
Burning with zeal against his country’s foes;
His victor-arm Alphonso’s throne maintain’d,
His laureate brows the wreath of conquest gain’d!
And still his deeds Castilian bards rehearse,
Inspiring theme of patriotic verse!
High in the temple of recording fame,
Iberia points to great Gonsalvo’s name!
Victorious chief! whose valour still defied
The arms of Gaul, and bow’d her crested pride;
With splendid trophies graced his sovereign’s throne,
And bade Granada’s realms his prowess own.
Nor were his deeds thy only boast, O Spain!
In mighty Ferdinand’s illustrious reign;
’Twas then thy glorious Pilot spread the sail,
Unfurl’d his flag before the eastern gale;
Bold, sanguine, fearless, ventured to explore
Seas unexplored, and worlds unknown before.
Fair science guided o’er the liquid realm,

Sweet hope, exulting, steer’d the daring helm;
While on the mast, with ardour-flashing eye,
Courageous enterprise still hover’d nigh:
The hoary genius of th’ Atlantic main
Saw man invade his wide majestic reign—
His empire, yet by mortal unsubdued,
The throne, the world of awful solitude.
And e’en when shipwreck seem’d to rear his form,
And dark destruction menaced in the storm;
In every shape when giant-peril rose,
To daunt his spirit and his course oppose;
O’er ev’ry heart when terror sway’d alone,
And hope forsook each bosom but his own:
Moved by no dangers, by no fears repell’d,
His glorious track the gallant sailor held;
Attentive still to mark the sea-birds lave,
Or high in air their snowy pinions wave.
Thus princely Jason, launching from the steep,
With dauntless prow explored th’ untravell’d deep;
Thus, at the helm, Ulysses’ watchful sight
View’d ev’ry star and planetary light.
Sublime Columbus! when, at length descried,
The long-sought land arose above the tide,
How every heart with exultation glow’d,

How from each eye the tear of transport flow’d!
Not wilder joy the sons of Israel knew
When Canaan’s fertile plains appear’d in view.
Then rose the choral anthem on the breeze,
Then martial music floated o’er the seas;
Their waving streamers to the sun display’d,
In all the pride of warlike pomp array’d.
Advancing nearer still, the ardent band
Hail’d the glad shore, and bless’d the stranger land;
Admired its palmy groves and prospects fair,
With rapture breathed its pure ambrosial air:
Then crowded round its free and simple race,
Amazement pictured wild on every face;
Who deem’d that beings of celestial birth,
Sprung from the sun, descended to the earth.
Then first another world, another sky,
Beheld Iberia’s banner blaze on high!
Still prouder glories beam on history’s page,
Imperial Charles! to mark thy prosperous age
Those golden days of arts and fancy bright,
When Science pour’d her mild, refulgent light;
When Painting bade the glowing canvass breathe
Creative Sculpture claim’d the living wreath;
When roved the Muses in Ausonian bowers,

Weaving immortal crowns of fairest flowers;
When angel-truth dispersed, with beam divine,
The clouds that veil'd religion's hallow'd shrine
Those golden days beheld Iberia tower
High on the pyramid of fame and power;
Vain all the efforts of her numerous foes,
Her might, superior still, triumphant rose.
Thus on proud Lebanon's exalted brow,
The cedar, frowning o'er the plains below,
Though storms assail, its regal pomp to rend,
Majestic, still aspires, disdaining e'er to bend!
When Gallia pour'd to Pavia's trophied plain,
Her youthful knights, a bold, impetuous train;
When, after many a toil and danger past,
The fatal morn of conflict rose at last;
That morning saw her glittering host combine,
And form in close array the threat'ning line;
Fire in each eye, and force in ev'ry arm,
With hope exulting, and with ardour warm;
Saw to the gale their streaming ensigns play,
Their armour flashing to the beam of day;
Their gen'rous chargers panting, spurn the ground,
Roused by the trumpet's animating sound;
And heard in air their warlike music float,

The martial pipe, the drum’s inspiring note!
Pale set the sun—the shades of evening fell,
The mournful night-wind rung their funeral knell;
And the same day beheld their warriors dead,
Their sovereign captive, and their glories fled!
Fled, like the lightning’s evanescent fire,
Bright, blazing, dreadful—only to expire!
Then, then, while prostrate Gaul confess’d her might,
Iberia’s planet shed meridian light!
Nor less, on famed St Quintin’s deathful day,
Castilian spirit bore the prize away—
Laurels that still their verdure shall retain,
And trophies beaming high in glory’s fane!
And lo! her heroes, warm with kindred flame,
Still proudly emulate their fathers’ fame;
Still with the soul of patriot-valour glow,
Still rush impetuous to repel the foe;
Wave the bright falchion, lift the beamy spear,
And bid oppressive Gallia learn to fear!
Be theirs, be theirs unfading honour’s crown,
The living amaranths of bright renown!
Be theirs th’ inspiring tribute of applause,
Due to the champions of their country’s cause!
Be theirs the purest bliss that virtue loves,

The joy when conscience whispers and approves!
When every heart is fired, each pulse beats high,
To fight, to bleed, to fall, for liberty;
When every hand is dauntless and prepared
The sacred charter of mankind to guard;
When Britain’s valiant sons their aid unite,
Fervent and glowing still for freedom’s right,
Bid ancient enmities for ever cease,
And ancient wrongs forgotten sleep in peace.
When, firmly leagued, they join the patriot band,
Can venal slaves their conquering arms withstand?
Can fame refuse their gallant deeds to bless?
Can victory fail to crown them with success?
Look down, O Heaven! the righteous cause maintain,
Defend the injured, and avenge the slain!
Despot of France! destroyer of mankind!
What spectre-cares must haunt thy sleepless mind!
Oh! if at midnight round thy regal bed,
When soothing visions fly thine aching head;
When sleep denies thy anxious cares to calm,
And lull thy senses in his opiate balm;
Invoked by guilt, if airy phantoms rise,
And murder’d victims bleed before thine eyes;
Loud let them thunder in thy troubled ear,

“Tyrant! the hour, th’ avenging hour is near!”
It is, it is! thy star withdraws its ray—
Soon will its parting lustre fade away;
Soon will Cimmerian shades obscure its light,
And veil thy splendours in eternal night!
Oh! when accusing conscience wakes thy soul
With awful terrors and with dread control,
Bids threat’ning forms, appalling, round thee stand,
And summons all her visionary band;
Calls up the parted shadows of the dead,
And whispers, peace and happiness are fled;
E’en at the time of silence and of rest,
Paints the dire poniard menacing thy breast;
Is then thy cheek with guilt and horror pale?
Then dost thou tremble, does thy spirit fail?
And wouldst thou yet by added crimes provoke
The bolt of heaven to launch the fatal stroke?
Bereave a nation of its rights revered,
Of all to morals sacred and endear’d?
And shall they tamely liberty resign,
The soul of life, the source of bliss divine?
Canst thou, supreme destroyer! hope to bind,
In chains of adamant, the noble mind?
Go, bid the rolling orbs thy mandate hear—

Go, stay the lightning in its wing’d career!
No, tyrant! no! thy utmost force is vain
The patriot-arm of freedom to restrain.
Then bid thy subject-bands in armour shine,
Then bid thy legions all their power combine!
Yet couldst thou summon myriads at command,
Did boundless realms obey thy sceptred hand,
E’en then her soul thy lawless might would spurn,
E’en then, with kindling fire, with indignation burn!
Ye sons of Albion! first in danger’s field,
The sword of Britain and of truth to wield!
Still prompt the injured to defend and save,
Appal the despot, and assist the brave;
Who now intrepid lift the generous blade,
The cause of Justice and Castile to aid!
Ye sons of Albion! by your country’s name,
Her crown of glory, her unsullied fame;
Oh! by the shades of Cressy’s martial dead,
By warrior-bands at Agincourt who bled;
By honours gain’d on Blenheim’s fatal plain,
By those in Victory’s arms at Minden slain;
By the bright laurels Wolfe immortal won,
Undaunted spirit! valour’s favourite son!
By Albion’s thousand, thousand deeds sublime,

Renown’d from zone to zone, from clime to clime;
Ye British heroes! may your trophies raise
A deathless monument to future days!
Oh! may your courage still triumphant rise,
Exalt the “lion banner” to the skies!
Transcend the fairest names in history’s page,
The brightest actions of a former age;
The reign of Freedom let your arms restore,
And bid oppression fall—to rise no more!
Then soon returning to your native isle,
May love and beauty hail you with their smile;
For you may conquest weave th’ undying wreath,
And fame and glory’s voice the song of rapture breathe!
Ah! when shall mad ambition cease to rage?
Ah! when shall war his demon-wrath assuage?
When, when, supplanting discord’s iron reign,
Shall mercy wave her olive-wand again?
Not till the despot’s dread career is closed,
And might restrain’d and tyranny deposed!
Return, sweet Peace, ethereal form benign!
Fair blue-eyed seraph! balmy power divine!
Descend once more! thy hallow’d blessings bring,
Wave thy bright locks, and spread thy downy wing!
Luxuriant plenty, laughing in thy train,

Shall crown with glowing stores the desert-plain:
Young smiling Hope, attendant on thy way,
Shall gild thy path with mild celestial ray.
Descend once more, thou daughter of the sky!
Cheer every heart, and brighten every eye;
Justice, thy harbinger, before thee send,
Thy myrtle-sceptre o’er the globe extend:
Thy cherub-look again shall soothe mankind,
Thy cherub-hand the wounds of discord bind;
Thy smile of heaven shall every muse inspire,
To thee the bard shall strike the silver lyre.
Descend once more! to bid the world rejoice—
Let nations hail thee with exulting voice,
Around thy shrine with purest incense throng,
Weave the fresh palm, and swell the choral song!
Then shall the shepherd’s flute, the woodland reed,
The martial clarion and the drum succeed;
Again shall bloom Arcadia’s fairest flowers,
And music warble in Idalian bowers.
Where war and carnage blew the blast of death,
The gale shall whisper with Favonian breath;
And golden Ceres bless the festive swain,
Where the wild combat redden’d o’er the plain.
These are thy blessings, fair benignant maid!

Return, return, in vest of light array’d!
Let angel-forms and floating sylphids bear
Thy car of sapphire through the realms of air:
With accents milder than Æolian lays,
When o’er the harp the fanning zephyr plays,
Be thine to charm the raging world to rest,
Diffusing round the heaven that glows within thy breast!
O Thou! whose fiat lulls the storm asleep!
Thou, at whose nod subsides the rolling deep!
Whose awful word restrains the whirlwind’s force,
And stays the thunder in its vengeful course;
Fountain of life! Omnipotent Supreme!
Robed in perfection! crown’d with glory’s beam!
Oh! send on earth thy consecrated dove,
To bear the sacred olive from above;
Restore again the blest, the halcyon time,
The festal harmony of nature’s prime!
Bid truth and justice once again appear,
And spread their sunshine o’er this mundane sphere;
Bright in their path, let wreaths unfading bloom,
Transcendant light their hallow’d fane illume;
Bid war and anarchy for ever cease,
And kindred seraphs rear the shrine of Peace;
Brothers once more, let men her empire own,

And realms and monarchs bend before the throne,

While circling rays of angel-mercy shed

Eternal haloes round her sainted head!

THE DOMESTIC AFFECTIONS, AND OTHER POEMS.

[In 1812, another and much smaller volume, entitled The Domestic Affections, and other Poems, was given to the world—the last that was to appear with the name of Felicia Browne; for, in the summer of the same year, its author exchanged that appellation for the one under which she has become so much more generally known. Captain Hemans had returned to Wales in the preceding year, when the acquaintance was renewed which had begun so long before at Gwrych; and as the sentiments then mutually awakened continued unaltered, no further opposition was made to a union, on which (however little in accordance with the dictates of worldly prudence) the happiness of both parties seemed so entirely to depend.—Memoir, p. 24.]

THE SILVER LOCKS.

ADDRESSED TO AN AGED FRIEND.

Though youth may boast the curls that flow

In sunny waves of auburn glow;

As graceful on thy hoary head

Has Time the robe of honour spread,

And there, oh! softly, softly shed

His wreath of snow!

As frost-work on the trees display’d

When weeping Flora leaves the shade,

E’en more than Flora, charms the sight;

E’en so thy locks of purest white
Survive, in age’s frost-work bright,
Youth’s vernal rose decay’d!
To grace the nymph whose tresses play
Light on the sportive breeze of May,
Let other bards the garland twine,
Where sweets of every hue combine;
Those locks revered, that silvery shine,
Invite my lay!
Less white the summer-cloud sublime,
Less white the winter’s fringing rime;
Nor do Belinda’s lovelier seem
(A Poet’s blest immortal theme)
Than thine, which wear the moonlight beam
Of reverend Time!
Long may the graceful honours smile,
Like moss on some declining pile;
O much revered! may filial care
Around thee, duteous, long repair,
Thy joys with tender bliss to share,
Thy pains beguile!
Long, long, ye snowy ringlets, wave!
Long, long, your much-loved beauty save!
May bliss your latest evening crown,

Disarm life’s winter of its frown,
And soft, ye hoary hairs, go down
In gladness to the grave!
And as the parting beams of day
On mountain-snows reflected play,
And tints of roseate lustre shed;
Thus, on the snow that crowns thy head,
May joy, with evening planet, shed
His mildest ray!
August 18, 1809.

TO MY MOTHER.

If e’er from human bliss or woe
I feel the sympathetic glow;
If e’er my heart has learn’d to know
The generous wish or prayer;
Who sow’d the germ with tender hand?
Who mark’d its infant leaves expand?—
My mother’s fostering care.
And if one flower of charms refined
May grace the garden of my mind,
’Twas she who nursed it there:
She loved to cherish and adorn
Each blossom of the soil;
To banish every weed and thorn

That oft opposed her toil!
And oh! if e’er I sigh’d to claim
The palm, the living palm of fame,
The glowing wreath of praise;
If e’er I wish’d the glittering stores
That Fortune on her favourite pours;
’Twas but that wealth and fame, if mine,
Round thee with streaming rays might shine,
And gild thy sun-bright days!
Yet not that splendour, pomp, and power
Might then irradiate every hour;
For these, my mother! well I know,
On thee no raptures could bestow;—
But could thy bounty, warm and kind,
Be, like thy wishes, unconfined,
And fall as manna from the skies,
And bid a train of blessings rise,
Diffusing joy and peace;
The tear-drop, grateful, pure, and bright,
For thee would beam with softer light
Than all the diamond’s crystal rays,
Than all the emerald’s lucid blaze;
And joys of heaven would thrill thy heart
To bid one bosom-grief depart,

One tear, one sorrow cease!
Then, oh! may Heaven, that loves to bless,
Bestow the power to cheer distress;
Make thee its minister below,
To light the cloudy path of woe;
To visit the deserted cell,
Where indigence is doom’d to dwell;
To raise, when drooping to the earth,
The blossoms of neglected worth;
And round, with liberal hand, dispense
The sunshine of beneficence!
But ah! if Fate should still deny
Delights like these, too rich and high;
If grief and pain thy steps assail,
In life’s remote and wintry vale;
Then, as the wild Æolian lyre
Complains with soft entrancing number,
When the lone storm awakes the wire,
And bids enchantment cease to slumber;
So filial love, with soothing voice,
E’en then shall teach thee to rejoice;
E’en then shall sweeter, milder sound,
When sorrow’s tempest raves around;
While dark misfortune’s gales destroy,

The frail mimosa-buds of hope and joy!

TO MY YOUNGER BROTHER,

ON HIS RETURN FROM SPAIN, AFTER THE FATAL RETREAT UNDER SIR JOHN MOORE, AND THE BATTLE OF CORUNNA.

Though dark are the prospects and heavy the hours,

Though life is a desert, and cheerless the way;

Yet still shall affection adorn it with flowers,

Whose fragrance shall never decay!

And lo! to embrace thee, my Brother! she flies,

With artless delight, that no words can bespeak;

With a sunbeam of transport illuming her eyes,

With a smile and a glow on her cheek!

From the trophies of war, from the spear and the shield,

From scenes of destruction, from perils unblest;

Oh! welcome again, to the grove and the field,

To the vale of retirement and rest.

Then warble, sweet muse! with the lyre and the voice,

Oh! gay be the measure and sportive the strain;

For light is my heart, and my spirits rejoice

To meet thee, my Brother! again.

When the heroes of Albion, still valiant and true,

Were bleeding, were falling, with victory crown’d,

How often would fancy present to my view

The horrors that waited thee round!

How constant, how fervent, how pure was my prayer,
That Heaven would protect thee from danger and harm;
That angels of mercy would shield thee with care,
In the heat of the combat’s alarm!
How sad and how often descended the tear,
(Ah, long shall remembrance the image retain!)
How mournful the sigh, when I trembled with fear
I might never behold thee again!
But the prayer was accepted, the sorrow is o’er,
And the tear-drop is fled, like the dew on the rose;
Thy dangers, our tears, have endear’d thee the more,
And my bosom with tenderness glows.
And oh! when the dreams, the enchantments of youth,
Bright and transient, have fled like the rainbow away;
My affection for thee, still unfading in truth,
Shall never, oh! never decay!
No time can impair it, no change can destroy,
Whate’er be the lot I am destined to share;
It will smile in the sunshine of hope and of joy,
And beam through the cloud of despair!

TO MY ELDEST BROTHER.

(WITH THE BRITISH ARMY IN PORTUGAL.)

How many a day, in various hues array’d,
Bright with gay sunshine, or eclipsed with shade,

How many an hour, on silent wing is past,
O my loved Brother! since we saw thee last!
Since then has childhood ripen’d into youth,
And fancy’s dreams have fled from sober truth;
Her splendid fabrics melting into air,
As sage experience waved the wand of care!
Yet still thine absence wakes the tender sigh,
And the tear trembles in affection’s eye!
When shall we meet again?—with glowing ray
Heart-soothing hope illumes some future day;
Checks the sad thought, beguiles the starting tear,
And sings benignly still—that day is near!
She, with bright eye, and soul-bewitching voice,
Wins us to smile, inspires us to rejoice;
Tells that the hour approaches, to restore
Our cherish’d wanderer to his home once more;
Where sacred ties his manly worth endear,
To faith still true, affection still sincere!
Then the past woes, the future’s dubious lot,
In that blest meeting shall be all forgot!
And joy’s full radiance gild that sun-bright hour,
Though all around th’ impending storm should lower.
Now distant far, amidst the intrepid host,
Albion’s firm sons, on Lusitania’s coast,

(That gallant band, in countless dangers tried,
Where glory’s pole-star beams their constant guide,)
Say, do thy thoughts, my Brother, fondly stray
To Cambria’s vales and mountains far away?
Does fancy oft in busy day-dreams roam,
And paint the greeting that awaits at home?
Does memory’s pencil oft, in mellowing hue,
Dear social scenes, departed joys renew;
In softer tints delighting to retrace
Each tender image and each well-known face?
Yes, wanderer! yes! thy spirit flies to those
Whose love, unalter’d, warm and faithful glows.
Oh! could that love, through life’s eventful hours,
Illume thy scenes and strew thy path with flowers!
Perennial joy should harmonise thy breast,
No struggle rend thee, and no cares molest!
But though our tenderness can but bestow
The wish, the hope, the prayer, averting woe,
Still shall it live, with pure, unclouded flame,
In storms, in sunshine, far and near—the same!
Still dwell enthroned within th’ unvarying heart,
And, firm and vital, but with life depart!
Bronwylfa, Feb. 8, 1811.

LINES

WRITTEN IN THE MEMOIRS OF ELIZABETH SMITH.

O thou! whose pure, exalted mind,
Lives in this record, fair and bright;
O thou! whose blameless life combined
Soft female charms, and grace refined,
With science and with light!
Celestial maid! whose spirit soar’d
Beyond this vale of tears—
Whose clear, enlighten’d eye explored
The lore of years!
Daughter of Heaven! if here, e’en here,
The wing of towering thought was thine;
If, on this dim and mundane sphere,
Fair truth illumed thy bright career,
With morning-star divine;
How must thy bless’d ethereal soul
Now kindle in her noontide ray,
And hail, unfetter’d by control,
The Fount of Day!
E’en now, perhaps, thy seraph eyes,
Undimm’d by doubt, nor veil’d by fear,
Behold a chain of wonders rise—
Gaze on the noon-beam of the skies,

Transcendant, pure, and clear!
E’en now, the fair, the good, the true,
From mortal sight conceal’d,
Bless in one blaze thy raptured view,
In light reveal’d!
If here the lore of distant time,
And learning’s flowers, were all thine own;
How must thy mind ascend sublime,
Matured in heaven’s empyreal clime,
To light’s unclouded throne!
Perhaps e’en now thy kindling glance
Each orb of living fire explores,
Darts o’er creation’s wide expanse,
Admires—adores!
Oh! if that lightning-eye surveys
This dark and sublunary plain;
How must the wreath of human praise
Fade, wither, vanish, in thy gaze,
So dim, so pale, so vain!
How, like a faint and shadowy dream,
Must quiver learning’s brightest ray;
While on thine eyes, with lucid stream,
The sun of glory pours his beam,
Perfection’s day!

[The reader may contrast these early lines of Mrs Hemans with the maturer ones on the same subject by Professor Wilson.—Poems, vol. ii. p. 140-9.]

THE RUIN AND ITS FLOWERS.

Sweets of the wild! that breathe and bloom
On this lone tower, this ivied wall,
Lend to the gale a rich perfume,
And grace the ruin in its fall.
Though doom'd, remote from careless eye,
To smile, to flourish, and to die
In solitude sublime,
Oh! ever may the spring renew,
Your balmy scent and glowing hue,
To deck the robe of time!
Breathe, fragrance! breathe! enrich the air,
Though wasted on its wing unknown!
Blow, flowerets! blow! though vainly fair,
Neglected and alone!
These flowers that long withstood the blast,
These mossy towers, are mouldering fast,
While Flora's children stay—
To mantle o'er the lonely pile,
To gild Destruction with a smile,
And beautify Decay!
Sweets of the wild! uncultured blowing,

Neglected in luxuriance glowing;
From the dark ruins frowning near,
Your charms in brighter tints appear,
And richer blush assume;
You smile with softer beauty crown’d,
Whilst all is desolate around,
Like sunshine on a tomb!
Thou hoary pile, majestic still,
Memento of departed fame!
While roving o’er the moss-clad hill,
I ponder on thine ancient name!
Here Grandeur, Beauty, Valour sleep,
That here, so oft, have shone supreme;
While Glory, Honour, Fancy, weep
That vanish’d is the golden dream!
Where are the banners, waving proud,
To kiss the summer-gale of even—
All purple as the morning-cloud,
All streaming to the winds of heaven?
Where is the harp, by rapture strung
To melting song or martial story?
Where are the lays the minstrel sung
To loveliness or glory?
Lorn Echo of these mouldering walls,

To thee no festal measure calls;
No music through the desert halls,
Awakes thee to rejoice!
How still thy sleep! as death profound—
As if, within this lonely round,
A step—a note—a whisper'd sound
Had ne'er aroused thy voice!
Thou hear'st the zephyr murmuring, dying,
Thou hear'st the foliage waving, sighing;
But ne'er again shall harp or song,
These dark deserted courts along,
Disturb thy calm repose.
The harp is broke, the song is fled,
The voice is hush'd, the bard is dead;
And never shall thy tones repeat
Or lofty strain or carol sweet
With plaintive close!
Proud Castle! though the days are flown
When once thy towers in glory shone;
When music through thy turrets rung,
When banners o'er thy ramparts hung,
Though 'midst thine arches, frowning lone,
Stern Desolation rear his throne;
And Silence, deep and awful, reign

Where echo’d once the choral strain;
Yet oft, dark ruin! lingering here,
The Muse will hail thee with a tear;
Here when the moonlight, quivering, beams,
And through the fringing ivy streams,
And softens every shade sublime,
And mellows every tint of Time—
Oh! here shall Contemplation love,
Unseen and undisturb’d, to rove;
And bending o’er some mossy tomb,
Where Valour sleeps or Beauties bloom,
Shall weep for Glory’s transient day
And Grandeur’s evanescent ray;
And listening to the swelling blast,
Shall wake the Spirit of the Past—
Call up the forms of ages fled,
Of warriors and of minstrels dead,
Who sought the field, who struck the lyre,
With all Ambition’s kindling fire!
Nor wilt thou, Spring! refuse to breathe
Soft odours on this desert air;
Refuse to twine thine earliest wreath,
And fringe these towers with garlands fair!
Sweets of the wild, oh! ever bloom

Unheeded on this ivied wall!

Lend to the gale a rich perfume,

And grace the ruin in its fall!

Thus round Misfortune’s holy head,

Would Pity wreaths of honour spread;

Like you, thus blooming on this lonely pile,

She seeks Despair, with heart-reviving smile!

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Fair Gratitude! in strain sublime,

Swell high to heaven thy tuneful zeal;

And, hailing this auspicious time,

Kneel, Adoration! kneel!

CHORUS.

For lo! the day, th’ immortal day,

When Mercy’s full, benignant ray

Chased every gathering cloud away,

And pour’d the noon of light!

Rapture! be kindling, mounting, glowing,

While from thine eye the tear is flowing,

Pure, warm, and bright!

’Twas on this day—oh, love divine!—

The Orient Star’s effulgence rose;

Then waked the Morn, whose eye benign

Shall never, never close!

CHORUS.

Messiah! be thy name adored,

Eternal, high, redeeming Lord!

By grateful worlds be anthems pour’d—

Emanuel! Prince of Peace!

This day, from heaven’s empyreal dwelling,

Harp, lyre, and voice, in concert swelling,

Bade discord cease!

Wake the loud pæan, tune the voice,

Children of heaven and sons of earth!

Seraphs and men! exult, rejoice,

To bless the Saviour’s birth!

CHORUS.

Devotion! light thy purest fire!

Transport! on cherub wing aspire!

Praise! wake to Him thy golden lyre,

Strike every thrilling chord!

While, at the Ark of Mercy kneeling,

We own thy grace, reviving, healing,

Redeemer! Lord!

THE DOMESTIC AFFECTIONS.

Whence are those tranquil joys in mercy given,

To light the wilderness with beams of heaven?

To soothe our cares, and through the cloud diffuse

Their temper’d sunshine and celestial hues?
Those pure delights, ordain’d on life to throw
Gleams of the bliss ethereal natures know?
Say, do they grace Ambition’s regal throne,
When kneeling myriads call the world his own?
Or dwell with Luxury, in th’ enchanted bowers
Where taste and wealth exert creative powers?
Favour’d of heaven! O Genius! are they thine,
When round thy brow the wreaths of glory shine;
While rapture gazes on thy radiant way,
Midst the bright realms of clear and mental day?
No! sacred joys! ’tis yours to dwell enshrined,
Most fondly cherish’d, in the purest mind;
To twine with flowers those loved, endearing ties,
On earth so sweet—so perfect in the skies!
Nursed in the lap of solitude and shade,
The violet smiles, embosom’d in the glade
There sheds her spirit on the lonely gale,
Gem of seclusion! treasure of the vale!
Thus, far retired from life’s tumultuous road,
Domestic Bliss has fixed her calm abode
Where hallow’d Innocence and sweet Repose
May strew her shadowy path with many a rose.
As, when dread thunder shakes the troubled sky,

The cherub, Infancy, can close its eye,
And sweetly smile, unconscious of a tear,
While viewless angels wave their pinions near;
Thus, while around the storms of Discord roll,
Borne on resistless wing from pole to pole,
While War's red lightnings desolate the ball,
And thrones and empires in destruction fall;
Then calm as evening on the silvery wave,
When the wind slumbers in the ocean cave,
She dwells unruffled, in her bower of rest,
Her empire Home!—her throne, Affection's breast!
For her, sweet Nature wears her loveliest blooms,
And softer sunshine every scene illumes.
When Spring awakes the spirit of the breeze,
Whose light wing undulates the sleeping seas;
When Summer, waving her creative wand,
Bids verdure smile, and glowing life expand;
Or Autumn's pencil sheds, with magic trace,
O'er fading lowliness, a moonlight grace;
Oh! still for her, through Nature's boundless reign,
No charm is lost, no beauty blooms in vain;
While mental peace, o'er every prospect bright,
Throws mellowing tints and harmonising light!
Lo! borne on clouds, in rushing might sublime,

Stern Winter, bursting from the polar clime,
Triumphant waves his signal-torch on high,
The blood-red meteor of the northern sky!
And high through darkness rears his giant-form,
His throne the billow, and his flag the storm!
Yet then, when bloom and sunshine are no more,
And the wild surges foam along the shore,
Domestic Bliss, thy heaven is still serene,
Thy star unclouded, and thy myrtle green!
Thy fane of rest no raging storms invade—
Sweet peace is thine, the seraph of the shade!
Clear through the day, her light around thee glows,
And gilds the midnight of thy deep repose!
—Hail, sacred Home! where soft Affection’s hand
With flowers of Eden twines her magic band!
Where pure and bright the social ardours rise,
Concentring all their holiest energies!—
When wasting toil has dimm’d the vital flame,
And every power deserts the sinking frame,
Exhausted nature still from sleep implores
The charm that lulls, the manna that restores!
Thus, when oppress’d with rude, tumultuous cares,
To thee, sweet Home! the fainting mind repairs;
Still to thy breast, a wearied pilgrim, flies,

Her ark of refuge from uncertain skies!
Bower of repose! when, torn from all we love,
Through toil we struggle, or through distance rove;
To thee we turn, still faithful, from afar—
Thee, our bright vista! thee, our magnet-star!
And from the martial field, the troubled sea,
Unfetter’d thought still roves to bliss and thee!
When ocean-sounds in awful slumber die,
No wave to murmur, and no gale to sigh;
Wide o’er the world when Peace and Midnight reign,
And the moon trembles on the sleeping main;
At that still hour, the sailor wakes to keep,
Midst the dead calm, the vigil of the deep!
No gleaming shores his dim horizon bound,
All heaven—and sea—and solitude—around!
Then, from the lonely deck, the silent helm,
From the wide grandeur of the shadowy realm,
Still homeward borne, his fancy unconfined,
Leaving the worlds of ocean far behind,
Wings like a meteor-flash her swift career,
To the loved scenes, so distant, and so dear!
Lo! the rude whirlwind rushes from its cave,
And Danger frowns—the monarch of the wave!
Lo! rocks and storms the striving bark repel,

And Death and Shipwreck ride the foaming swell!
Child of the ocean! is thy bier the surge,
Thy grave the billow, and the wind thy dirge?
Yes! thy long toil, thy weary conflict o’er,
No storm shall wake, no perils rouse thee more!
Yet, in that solemn hour, that awful strife,
The struggling agony for death or life,
E’en then thy mind, embittering every pain,
Retraced the image so beloved—in vain!
Still to sweet Home thy last regrets were true,
Life’s parting sigh—the murmur of adieu!
Can war’s dread scenes the hallow’d ties efface,
Each tender thought, each fond remembrance chase?
Can fields of carnage, days of toil, destroy
The loved impression of domestic joy?
Ye daylight dreams! that cheer the soldier’s breast,
In hostile climes, with spells benign and blest,
Soothe his brave heart, and shed your glowing ray
O’er the long march through Desolation’s way;
Oh! still ye bear him from th’ ensanguined plain,
Armour’s bright flash, and Victory’s choral strain,
To that loved Home where pure affection glows,
That shrine of bliss! asylum of repose!
When all is hush’d—the rage of combat past,

And no dread war-note swells the moaning blast;
When the warm throb of many a heart is o’er,
And many an eye is closed to wake no more;
Lull’d by the night-wind, pillow’d on the ground,
(The dewy deathbed of his comrades, round!)
While o’er the slain the tears of midnight weep,
Faint with fatigue, he sinks in slumbers deep!
E’en then, soft visions, hovering round, portray
The cherish’d forms that o’er his bosom sway;
He sees fond transport light each beaming face,
Meets the warm tear-drop and the long embrace!
While the sweet welcome vibrates through his heart,
“Hail, weary soldier!—never more to part!”
And lo! at last, released from every toil,
He comes!—the wanderer views his native soil!
Then the bright raptures words can never speak
Flash in his eye and mantle o’er his cheek!
Then Love and Friendship, whose unceasing prayer
Implored for him each guardian-spirit’s care;
Who, for his fate, through sorrow’s lingering year,
Had proved each thrilling pulse of hope and fear;
In that blest moment, all the past forget—
Hours of suspense and vigils of regret!
And oh! for him, the child of rude alarms,

Rear’d by stern danger in the school of arms!
How sweet to change the war-song’s pealing note
For woodland-sounds in summer air that float!
Through vales of peace, o’er mountain wilds to roam,
And breathe his native gales, that whisper—‘Home!’
Hail, sweet endearments of domestic ties,
Charms of existence! angel sympathies!
Though Pleasure smile, a soft Circassian queen!
And guide her votaries through a fairy scene,
Where sylphid forms beguile their vernal hours
With mirth and music in Arcadian bowers;
Though gazing nations hail the fiery car
That bears the Son of Conquest from afar,
While Fame’s loud pæan bids his heart rejoice,
And every life-pulse vibrates to her voice;—
Yet from your source alone, in mazes bright,
Flows the full current of serene delight!
On Freedom’s wing, that every wild explores,
Through realms of space, th’ aspiring eagle soars!
Darts o’er the clouds, exulting to admire,
Meridian glory—on her throne of fire!
Bird of the Sun! his keen unwearied gaze
Hails the full noon, and triumphs in the blaze;
But soon, descending from his height sublime.

Day’s burning fount, and light’s empyreal clime,
Once more he speeds to joys more calmly blest,
Midst the dear inmates of his lonely nest!
Thus Genius, mounting on his bright career
Through the wide regions of the mental sphere,
And proudly waving in his gifted hand,
O’er Fancy’s worlds, Invention’s plastic wand,
Fearless and firm, with lightning-eye surveys
The clearest heaven of intellectual rays!
Yet, on his course though loftiest hopes attend,
And kindling raptures aid him to ascend,
(While in his mind, with high-born grandeur fraught,
Dilate the noblest energies of thought;)
Still, from the bliss, ethereal and refined,
Which crowns the soarings of triumphant mind,
At length he flies, to that serene retreat,
Where calm and pure the mild affections meet;
Embosom’d there, to feel and to impart
The softer pleasures of the social heart!
Ah! weep for those, deserted and forlorn,
From every tie by fate relentless torn;
See, on the barren coast, the lonely isle,
Mark’d with no step, uncheer’d by human smile,
Heart-sick and faint the ship-wreck’d wanderer stand,

Raise the dim eye, and lift the suppliant hand!
Explore with fruitless gaze the billowy main,
And weep—and pray—and linger—but in vain!
Thence, roving wild through many a depth of shade,
Where voice ne’er echo’d, footstep never stray’d,
He fondly seeks, o’er cliffs and deserts rude,
Haunts of mankind midst realms of solitude!
And pauses oft, and sadly hears alone
The wood’s deep sigh, the surge’s distant moan!
All else is hush’d! so silent, so profound,
As if some viewless power, presiding round,
With mystic spell, unbroken by a breath,
Had spread for ages the repose of death!
Ah! still the wanderer, by the boundless deep,
Lives but to watch—and watches but to weep!
He sees no sail in faint perspective rise,
His the dread loneliness of sea and skies!
Far from his cherish’d friends, his native shore,
Banish’d from being—to return no more;
There must he die!—within that circling wave,
That lonely isle—his prison and his grave!
Lo! through the waste, the wilderness of snows,
With fainting step, Siberia’s exile goes!
Homeless and sad, o’er many a polar wild,

Where beam, or flower, or verdure never smiled;
Where frost and silence hold their despot-reign,
And bind existence in eternal chain!
Child of the desert! pilgrim of the gloom!
Dark is the path which leads thee to the tomb!
While on thy faded cheek the arctic air
Congeals the bitter tear-drop of despair!
Yet not that fate condemns thy closing day
In that stern clime to shed its parting ray;
Not that fair nature’s loveliness and light
No more shall beam enchantment on thy sight;
Ah! not for this—far, far beyond relief,
Deep in thy bosom dwells the hopeless grief;
But that no friend of kindred heart is there,
Thy woes to mitigate, thy toils to share;
That no mild soother fondly shall assuage
The stormy trials of thy lingering age;
No smile of tenderness, with angel power,
Lull the dread pangs of dissolution’s hour;
For this alone, despair, a withering guest,
Sits on thy brow, and cankers in thy breast!
Yes! there, e’en there, in that tremendous clime,
Where desert grandeur frowns in pomp sublime;
Where winter triumphs, through the polar night,

In all his wild magnificence of might;
E’en there, affection’s hallow’d spell might pour
The light of heaven around th’ inclement shore!
And, like the vales with gloom and sunshine graced,
That smile, by circling Pyrenees embraced,
Teach the pure heart with vital fires to glow,
E’en ’midst the world of solitude and snow!
The halcyon’s charm, thus dreaming fictions feign,
With mystic power could tranquillise the main;
Bid the loud wind, the mountain billow sleep,
And peace and silence brood upon the deep!
And thus, Affection, can thy voice compose
The stormy tide of passions and of woes;
Bid every throb of wild emotion cease,
And lull misfortune in the arms of peace!
Oh! mark yon drooping form, of aged mien,
Wan, yet resign’d, and hopeless, yet serene!
Long ere victorious time had sought to chase
The bloom, the smile, that once illumed his face,
That faded eye was dimm’d with many a care,
Those waving locks were silver’d by despair!
Yet filial love can pour the sovereign balm,
Assuage his pangs, his wounded spirit calm!
He, a sad emigrant! condemn’d to roam

In life’s pale autumn from his ruin’d home,
Has borne the shock of Peril’s darkest wave,
Where joy—and hope—and fortune—found a grave!
’Twas his to see Destruction’s fiercest band
Rush, like a Typhon, on his native land,
And roll triumphant on their blasted way,
In fire and blood, the deluge of dismay!
Unequal combat raged on many a plain,
And patriot-valour waved the sword in vain!
Ah! gallant exile! nobly, long, he bled,
Long braved the tempest gathering o’er his head!
Till all was lost! and horror’s darken’d eye
Roused the stern spirit of despair to die!
Ah! gallant exile! in the storm that roll’d
Far o’er his country, rushing uncontroll’d,
The flowers that graced his path with loveliest bloom,
Torn by the blast, were scatter’d on the tomb!
When carnage burst, exulting in the strife,
The bosom ties that bound his soul to life,
Yet one was spared! and she, whose filial smile
Can soothe his wanderings and his tears beguile,
E’en then could temper, with divine relief,
The wild delirium of unbounded grief;
And, whispering peace, conceal with duteous art

Her own deep sorrows in her inmost heart!
And now, though time, subduing every trace,
Has mellow'd all, he never can erase;
Oft will the wanderer's tears in silence flow,
Still sadly faithful to remember'd woe!
Then she, who feels a father's pang alone,
(Still fondly struggling to suppress her own,)
With anxious tenderness is ever nigh,
To chase the image that awakes the sigh!
Her angel-voice his fainting soul can raise
To brighter visions of celestial days!
And speak of realms, where Virtue's wing shall soar
On eagle-plume—to wonder and adore;
And friends, divided here, shall meet at last,
Unite their kindred souls—and smile on all the past!
Yes! we may hope that nature's deathless ties,
Renew'd, refined, shall triumph in the skies!
Heart-soothing thought! whose loved, consoling powers
With seraph-dreams can gild reflection's hours,
Oh! still be near, and brightening through the gloom,
Beam and ascend! the day-star of the tomb!
And smile for those, in sternest ordeals proved,
Those lonely hearts, bereft of all they loved.
Lo! by the couch where pain and chill disease

In every vein the ebbing life-blood freeze;
Where youth is taught, by stealing, slow decay,
Life’s closing lesson—in its dawning day;
Where beauty’s rose is withering ere its prime,
Unchanged by sorrow and unsoil’d by time;
There, bending still, with fix’d and sleepless eye,
There, from her child, the mother learns to die;
Explores, with fearful gaze, each mournful trace
Of lingering sickness in the faded face;
Through the sad night, when every hope is fled,
Keeps her lone vigil by the sufferer’s bed;
And starts each morn, as deeper marks declare
The spoiler’s hand—the blight of death is there!
He comes! now feebly in the exhausted frame,
Slow, languid, quivering, burns the vital flame;
From the glazed eye-ball sheds its parting ray—
Dim, transient spark, that fluttering fades away!
Faint beats the hovering pulse, the trembling heart;
Yet fond existence lingers ere she part!
’Tis past! the struggle and the pang are o’er,
And life shall throb with agony no more;
While o’er the wasted form, the features pale,
Death’s awful shadows throw their silvery veil.
Departed spirit! on this earthly sphere

Though poignant suffering mark’d thy short career,
Still could maternal love beguile thy woes,
And hush thy sighs—an angel of repose!
But who may charm her sleepless pang to rest,
Or draw the thorn that rankles in her breast?
And, while she bends in silence o’er thy bier,
Assuage the grief, too heart-sick for a tear?
Visions of hope in loveliest hues array’d,
Fair scenes of bliss by fancy’s hand portray’d!
And were ye doom’d with false, illusive smile,
With flattering promise, to enchant awhile?
And are ye vanish’d, never to return,
Set in the darkness of the mouldering urn?
Will no bright hour departed joys restore?
Shall the sad parent meet her child no more?
Behold no more the soul-illumined face,
The expressive smile, the animated grace!
Must the fair blossom, wither’d in the tomb,
Revive no more in loveliness and bloom?
Descend, blest faith! dispel the hopeless care,
And chase the gathering phantoms of despair;
Tell that the flower, transplanted in its morn,
Enjoys bright Eden, freed from every thorn;
Expands to milder suns, and softer dews,

The full perfection of immortal hues;
Tell, that when mounting to her native skies,
By death released, the parent spirit flies;
There shall the child, in anguish mourn’d so long,
With rapture hail her midst the cherub throng,
And guide her pinion on exulting flight,
Through glory’s boundless realms, and worlds of living light.
Ye gentle spirits of departed friends!
If e’er on earth your buoyant wing descends;
If, with benignant care, ye linger near,
To guard the objects in existence dear;
If, hovering o’er, ethereal band! ye view
The tender sorrows, to your memory true;
Oh! in the musing hour, at midnight deep,
While for your loss affection wakes to weep;
While every sound in hallow’d stillness lies,
But the low murmur of her plaintive sighs;
Oh! then, amidst that holy calm be near,
Breathe your light whisper softly in her ear;
With secret spells her wounded mind compose,
And chase the faithful tear—for you that flows:
Be near—when moonlight spreads the charm you loved
O’er scenes where once your earthly footstep roved.
Then, while she wanders o’er the sparkling dew,

Through glens and wood-paths, once endear’d by you,
And fondly lingers in your favourite bowers,
And pauses oft, recalling former hours;
Then wave your pinion o’er each well-known vale,
Float in the moonbeam, sigh upon the gale;
Bid your wild symphonies remotely swell,
Borne by the summer-wind from grot and dell;
And touch your viewless harps, and soothe her soul
With soft enchantments and divine control!
Be near, sweet guardians! watch her sacred rest,
When Slumber folds her in his magic vest;
Around her, smiling, let your forms arise,
Return’d in dreams, to bless her mental eyes;
Efface the memory of your last farewell—
Of glowing joys, of radiant prospects tell;
The sweet communion of the past renew,
Reviving former scenes, array’d in softer hue.
Be near when death, in virtue’s brightest hour,
Calls up each pang, and summons all his power;
Oh! then, transcending Fancy’s loveliest dream,
Then let your forms unveil’d around her beam;
Then waft the vision of unclouded light,
A burst of glory, on her closing sight;
Wake from the harp of heaven th’ immortal strain,

To hush the final agonies of pain;
With rapture’s flame the parting soul illume,
And smile triumphant through the shadowy gloom!
Oh! still be near, when, darting into day,
Th’ exulting spirit leaves her bonds of clay;
Be yours to guide her fluttering wings on high
O’er many a world, ascending to the sky;
There let your presence, once her earthly joy,
Though dimm’d with tears and clouded with alloy,
Now form her bliss on that celestial shore
Where death shall sever kindred hearts no more.
Yes! in the noon of that Elysian clime,
Beyond the sphere of anguish, death, or time;
Where mind’s bright eye, with renovated fire,
Shall beam on glories never to expire;
Oh! there th’ illumined soul may fondly trust,
More pure, more perfect, rising from the dust,
Those mild affections, whose consoling light
Sheds the soft moonbeam on terrestrial night,
Sublimed, ennobled, shall for ever glow,
Exalting rapture—not assuaging woe!

TO MR EDWARDS, THE HARPER OF CONWAY.

[Some of the happiest days the young poetess ever passed were during occasional visits to some friends at Conway, where the charms of the scenery, combining all

that is most beautiful in wood, water, and ruin, are sufficient to inspire the most prosaic temperament with a certain degree of enthusiasm; and it may therefore well be supposed how fervently a soul constituted like hers would worship Nature at so fitting a shrine. With that happy versatility which was at all times a leading characteristic of her mind, she would now enter with child-like playfulness into the enjoyments of a mountain scramble, or a pic-nic water party, the gayest of the merry band, of whom some are now, like herself, laid low, some far away in foreign lands, some changed by sorrow, and all by time; and then, in graver mood, dream away hours of pensive contemplation amidst the gray ruins of that noblest of Welsh castles, standing, as it then did, in solitary grandeur, unapproached by bridge or causeway, flinging its broad shadow across the tributary waves which washed its regal walls. These lovely scenes never ceased to retain their hold over the imagination of her whose youthful muse had so often celebrated their praises. Her peculiar admiration of Mrs Joanna Baillie's play of Ethwald was always pleasingly associated with the recollection of her having first read it amidst the ruins of Conway Castle. At Conway, too, she first made acquaintance with the lively and graphic Chronicles of the chivalrous Froissart, whose inspiring pages never lost their place in her favour. Her own little poem, "The Ruin and its Flowers," which will be found amongst the earlier pieces in the present collection, was written on an excursion to the old fortress of Dyganwy, the remains of which are situated on a bold promontory near the entrance of the river Conway; and whose ivied walls, now fast mouldering into oblivion, once bore their part bravely in the defence of Wales; and are further endeared to the lovers of song and tradition as having echoed the complaints of the captive Elphin, and resounded to the harp of Taliesin. A scarcely degenerate representative of that gifted bard[3] had, at the time now alluded to, his appropriate dwelling-place at Conway; but his strains have long been silenced, and there now remain few, indeed, on whom the Druidical mantle has fallen so worthily. In the days when his playing was heard by one so fitted to enjoy its originality and

beauty,

“The minstrel was infirm and old;”

but his inspiration had not yet forsaken him; and the following lines (written in 1811) will give an idea of the magic power he still knew how to exercise over the feelings of his auditors.]

Minstrel! whose gifted hand can bring

Life, rapture, soul, from every string;

And wake, like bards of former time,

The spirit of the harp sublime;—

Oh! still prolong the varying strain!

Oh! touch th’ enchanted chords again!

Thine is the charm, suspending care,

The heavenly swell, the dying close,

The cadence melting into air,

That lulls each passion to repose;

While transport, lost in silence near,

Breathes all her language in a tear.

Exult, O Cambria!—now no more

With sighs thy slaughter’d bards deplore:

What though Plinlimmon’s misty brow

And Mona’s woods be silent now,

Yet can thy Conway boast a strain

Unrivall’d in thy proudest reign.

For Genius, with divine control,

Wakes the bold chord neglected long,
And pours Expression’s glowing soul
O’er the wild Harp, renown’d in song;
And Inspiration, hovering round,
Swells the full energies of sound.
Now Grandeur, pealing in the tone,
Could rouse the warrior’s kindling fire,
And now, ’tis like the breeze’s moan,
That murmurs o’er th’ Eolian lyre:
As if some sylph, with viewless wing,
Were sighing o’er the magic string.
Long, long, fair Conway! boast the skill
That soothes, inspires, commands, at will!
And oh! while rapture hails the lay,
Far distant be the closing day,
When Genius, Taste, again shall weep,
And Cambria’s Harp lie hush’d in sleep!

[3] Mr Edwards, the Harper of Conway, as he was generally called, had been blind from his birth, and was endowed with that extraordinary musical genius by which persons suffering under such a visitation are not unfrequently indemnified. From the respectability of his circumstances, he was not called upon to exercise his talents with any view to remuneration. He played to delight himself and others; and the innocent complacency with which he enjoyed the ecstasies called forth by his skill, and the degree of appreciation with which he regarded himself, as in a manner consecrated, by being made the depositary of a direct gift from Heaven, were as far

as possible removed from any of the common modifications of vanity or self-conceit.

EPITAPH ON MR W——,

A CELEBRATED MINERALOGIST.[4]

Stop, passenger! a wondrous tale to list—
Here lies a famous Mineralogist.
Famous indeed! such traces of his power,
He’s left from Penmaenbach to Penmaenmawr,
Such caves, and chasms, and fissures in the rocks,
His works resemble those of earthquake shocks;
And future ages very much may wonder
What mighty giant rent the hills asunder,
Or whether Lucifer himself had ne’er
Gone with his crew to play at foot-ball there.
His fossils, flints, and spars, of every hue,
With him, good reader, here lie buried too—
Sweet specimens! which, toiling to obtain,
He split huge cliffs, like so much wood, in twain.
We knew, so great the fuss he made about them,
Alive or dead, he ne’er would rest without them;
So, to secure soft slumber to his bones,
We paved his grave with all his favourite stones.
His much-loved hammer’s resting by his side;
Each hand contains a shell-fish petrified:

His mouth a piece of pudding-stone incloses,

And at his feet a lump of coal reposes:

Sure he was born beneath some lucky planet!—

His very coffin-plate is made of granite.

Weep not, good reader! he is truly blest

Amidst chalcedony and quartz to rest:

Weep not for him! but envied be his doom,

Whose tomb, though small, for all he loved had room:

And, O ye rocks!—schist, gneiss, whate'er ye be,

Ye varied strata!—names too hard for me—

Sing, "Oh, be joyful!" for your direst foe

By death's fell hammer is at length laid low.

Ne'er on your spoils again shall W—— riot.

Clear up your cloudy brows, and rest in quiet—

He sleeps—no longer planning hostile actions,

As cold as any of his petrifactions;

Enshrined in specimens of every hue,

Too tranquil e'en to dream, ye rocks, of you.

[4] "Whilst on the subject of Conway, it may not be amiss to introduce two little pieces of a very different character from the foregoing, [Lines to Mr. Edward the Harper,] which were written at the same place, three or four years afterwards, and will serve as a proof of that versatility of talent before alluded to. As may easily be supposed, they were never intended for publication, but were merely a jeu d'esprit of the moment, in good-humoured raillery of the indefatigable zeal and perseverance of one of the party in his geological researches."—Memoir, p. 20.

EPITAPH

ON THE HAMMER OF THE AFORESAID MINERALOGIST.

Here in the dust, its strange adventures o’er,
A hammer rests, that ne’er knew rest before.
Released from toil, it slumbers by the side
Of one who oft its temper sorely tried;
No day e’er pass’d, but in some desperate strife
He risk’d the faithful hammer’s limbs and life:
Now laying siege to some old limestone wall,
Some rock now battering, proof to cannon-ball
Now scaling heights like Alps or Pyrenees,
Perhaps a flint, perhaps a slate to seize;
But, if a piece of copper met his eyes,
He’d mount a precipice that touch’d the skies,
And bring down lumps so precious, and so many,
I’m sure they almost would have made—a penny!
Think, when such deeds as these were daily done,
What fearful risks this hammer must have run.
And, to say truth, its praise deserves to shine
In lays more lofty and more famed than mine:
Oh! that in strains which ne’er should be forgot,
Its deeds were blazon’d forth by Walter Scott!
Then should its name with his be closely link’d,
And live till every mineral were extinct.

Rise, epic bards! be yours the ample field—

Bid W——’s hammer match Achilles’ shield:

As for my muse, the chaos of her brain,

I search for specimens of wit in vain;

Then let me cease ignoble rhymes to stammer,

And seek some theme less arduous than the hammer;

Remembering well, “what perils do environ”

Woman or “man that meddles with cold iron.”

PROLOGUE TO THE POOR GENTLEMAN,

AS INTENDED TO BE PERFORMED BY THE OFFICERS OF THE 34TH REGIMENT AT CLONMEL.[5]

Enter Captain George Browne, in the character of Corporal Foss.

To-night, kind friends, at your tribunal here,

Stands “The Poor Gentleman,” with many a fear;

Since well he knows, whoe’er may judge his cause,

That Poverty’s no title to applause.

Genius or Wit, pray, who’ll admire or quote,

If all their drapery be a threadbare coat?

Who, in a world where all is bought and sold,

Minds a man’s worth—except his worth in gold?

Who’ll greet poor Merit if she lacks a dinner!

Hence, starving saint, but welcome, wealthy sinner!

Away with Poverty! let none receive her,

She bears contagion as a plague or fever;

“Bony, and gaunt, and grim”—like jaundiced eyes,
Discolouring all within her sphere that lies.
“Poor Gentleman!” and by poor soldiers, too!
Oh, matchless impudence! without a sous!
In scenes, in actors poor, and what far worse is,
With heads, perhaps, as empty as their purses,
How shall they dare at such a bar appear?
What are their tactics and manœuvres here?
While thoughts like these come rushing o’er our mind,
Oh! may we still indulgence hope to find!
Brave sons of Erin! whose distinguish’d name
Shines with such brilliance in the page of Fame,
And you, fair daughters of the Emerald Isle!
View our weak efforts with approving smile!
School’d in rough camps, and still disdaining art,
Ill can the soldier act a borrow’d part;
The march, the skirmish, in this warlike age,
Are his rehearsals, and the field his stage;
His theatre is found in every land,
Where wave the ensigns of a hostile band:
Place him in danger’s front—he recks not where—
Be your own Wellington his prompter there,
And on that stage he trusts, with fearful mien,
He’ll act his part in glory’s tragic scene.

Yet here, though friends are gaily marshall’d round,
And from bright eyes alone he dreads a wound,
Here, though in ambush no sharpshooter’s wile
Aims at his breast, save hid in beauty’s smile;
Though all unused to pause, to doubt, to fear,
Yet his heart sinks, his courage fails him here.
No scenic pomp to him its aid supplies,
No stage effect of glittering pageantries:
No, to your kindness he must look alone
To realise the hope he dares not own;
And trusts, since here he meets no cynic eye,
His wish to please may claim indemnity.
And why despair, indulgence when we crave
From Erin’s sons, the generous and the brave?
Theirs the high spirit, and the liberal thought,
Kind, warm, sincere, with native candour fraught;
Still has the stranger, in their social isle,
Met the frank welcome and the cordial smile,
And well their hearts can share, though unexpress’d,
Each thought, each feeling, of the soldier’s breast.

[5] These verses were written about the same time as the preceding humorous epitaphs.

[As, in the present collected edition of the writings of Mrs Hemans, chronological arrangement has been for the first time strictly attended to, a selection from her

Juvenile compositions has been given, chiefly as a matter of curiosity—for her real career as an authoress cannot be said to have commenced before the publication of the section which immediately follows.

In a very general point of view, the intellectual history of Mrs Hemans' mind may be divided into two distinct and separate eras—the first of which may be termed the classical, and comprehends the productions of her pen, from "The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy," and "Modern Greece," down to the "Historical Scenes," and the "Translations from Camoens;" and the last, the romantic, which commences with "The Forest Sanctuary," and includes "The Records of Woman," together with nearly all her later efforts. In regard to excellence, there can be little doubt that the last section as far transcends the first as that does the merely Juvenile Poems now given, and which certainly appear to us to exhibit occasional scintillations of the brightness which followed. Even after the early poetical attempts of Cowley and Pope, of Chatterton, Kirke White, and Byron, these immature outpourings of sentiment and description may be read with an interest which diminishes not by comparison.]

THE RESTORATION OF THE WORKS OF ART TO ITALY.

["The French, who in every invasion have been the scourge of Italy, and have rivalled or rather surpassed the rapacity of the Goths and Vandals, laid their sacrilegious hands on the unparalleled collection of the Vatican, tore its masterpieces from their pedestals, and, dragging them from their temples of marble, transported them to Paris, and consigned them to the dull sullen halls, or rather stables, of the Louvre.... But the joy of discovery was short, and the triumph of taste transitory."—Eustace's Classical Tour through Italy, vol. ii. p. 60.]

"Italia, Italia! O tu cui die la sorte

Dono infelice di bellezza, ond' hai

Funesta dote d’infiniti guai,

Che’n fronte scritte per gran doglia porte;

Deh, fossi tu men bella, o almen piu forte.”

Filicaja.

Land of departed fame! whose classic plains

Have proudly echo’d to immortal strains;

Whose hallow’d soil hath given the great and brave,

Day-stars of life, a birth-place and a grave;

Home of the Arts! where glory’s faded smile

Sheds lingering light o’er many a mouldering pile;

Proud wreck of vanish’d power, of splendour fled,

Majestic temple of the mighty dead!

Whose grandeur, yet contending with decay,

Gleams through the twilight of thy glorious day;

Though dimm’d thy brightness, riveted thy chain,

Yet, fallen Italy! rejoice again!

Lost, lovely realm! once more ’tis thine to gaze

On the rich relics of sublimer days.

Awake, ye Muses of Etrurian shades,

Or sacred Tivoli’s romantic glades;

Wake, ye that slumber in the bowery gloom

Where the wild ivy shadows Virgil’s tomb;

Or ye, whose voice, by Sorga’s lonely wave,

Swell’d the deep echoes of the fountain’s cave,

Or thrill’d the soul in Tasso’s numbers high—
Those magic strains of love and chivalry!
If yet by classic streams ye fondly rove,
Haunting the myrtle vale, the laurel grove,
Oh! rouse once more the daring soul of song,
Seize with bold hand the harp, forgot so long,
And hail, with wonted pride, those works revered,
Hallow’d by time, by absence more endear’d.
And breathe to Those the strain, whose warrior-might
Each danger stemm’d, prevail’d in every fight—
Souls of unyielding power, to storms inured,
Sublimed by peril, and by toil matured.
Sing of that Leader, whose ascendant mind
Could rouse the slumbering spirit of mankind;
Whose banners track’d the vanquish’d Eagle’s flight
O’er many a plain, and dark sierra’s height;
Who bade once more the wild heroic lay
Record the deeds of Roncesvalles’ day;
Who, through each mountain-pass of rock and snow,
An Alpine huntsman, chased the fear-struck foe;
Waved his proud standard to the balmy gales,
Rich Languedoc! that fan thy glowing vales,
And ’midst those scenes renew’d th’ achievements high
Bequeath’d to fame by England’s ancestry.

Yet, when the storm seem’d hush’d, the conflict past,
One strife remain’d—the mightest and the last!
Nerved for the struggle, in that fateful hour
Untamed Ambition summon’d all his power:
Vengeance and Pride, to frenzy roused, were there,
And the stern might of resolute Despair.
Isle of the free! ’twas then thy champions stood,
Breasting unmoved the combat’s wildest flood;
Sunbeam of battle! then thy spirit shone,
Glow’d in each breast, and sunk with life alone.
O hearts devoted! whose illustrious doom
Gave there at once your triumph and your tomb,
Ye firm and faithful, in the ordeal tried
Of that dread strife, by Freedom sanctified;
Shrined, not entomb’d, ye rest in sacred earth,
Hallow’d by deeds of more than mortal worth.
What though to mark where sleeps heroic dust,
No sculptured trophy rise, or breathing bust,
Yours, on the scene where valour’s race was run,
A prouder sepulchre—the field ye won!
There every mead, each cabin’s lowly name,
Shall live a watchword blended with your fame;
And well may flowers suffice those graves to crown
That ask no urn to blazon their renown!

There shall the bard in future ages tread,
And bless each wreath that blossoms o’er the dead;
Revere each tree whose sheltering branches wave
O’er the low mounds, the altars of the brave!
Pause o’er each warrior’s grass-grown bed, and hear
In every breeze some name to glory dear;
And as the shades of twilight close around,
With martial pageants people all the ground.
Thither unborn descendants of the slain
Still throng as pilgrims to the holy fane,
While as they trace each spot, whose records tell
Where fought their fathers, and prevail’d, and fell,
Warm in their souls shall loftiest feelings glow,
Claiming proud kindred with the dust below!
And many an age shall see the brave repair
To learn the Hero’s bright devotion there.
And well, Ausonia! may that field of fame,
From thee one song of echoing triumph claim.
Land of the lyre! ’twas there th’ avenging sword
Won the bright treasures to thy fanes restored;
Those precious trophies o’er thy realms that throw
A veil of radiance, hiding half thy woe,
And bid the stranger for awhile forget
How deep thy fall, and deem thee glorious yet.

Yes, fair creations! to perfection wrought,
Embodied visions of ascending thought!
Forms of sublimity! by Genius traced
In tints that vindicate adoring taste!
Whose bright originals, to earth unknown,
Live in the spheres encircling glory's throne;
Models of art, to deathless fame consign'd,
Stamp'd with the high-born majesty of mind;
Yes, matchless works! your presence shall restore
One beam of splendour to your native shore,
And her sad scenes of lost renown illume,
As the bright sunset gilds some hero's tomb.
Oh! ne'er, in other climes, though many an eye
Dwelt on your charms, in beaming ecstasy—
Ne'er was it yours to bid the soul expand
With thoughts so mighty, dreams so boldly grand,
As in that realm, where each faint breeze's moan
Seems a low dirge for glorious ages gone;
Where midst the ruin'd shrines of many a vale,
E'en Desolation tells a haughty tale,
And scarce a fountain flows, a rock ascends,
But its proud name with song eternal blends!
Yes! in those scenes where every ancient stream
Bids memory kindle o'er some lofty theme;

Where every marble deeds of fame records,
Each ruin tells of Earth’s departed lords;
And the deep tones of inspiration swell
From each wild olive-wood, and Alpine dell;
Where heroes slumber on their battle plains,
Midst prostrate altars and deserted fanes,
And Fancy communes, in each lonely spot,
With shades of those who ne’er shall be forgot;
There was your home, and there your power imprest,
With tenfold awe, the pilgrim’s glowing breast;
And, as the wind’s deep thrills and mystic sighs
Wake the wild harp to loftiest harmonies,
Thus at your influence, starting from repose,
Thought Feeling, Fancy, into grandeur rose.
Fair Florence! queen of Arno’s lovely vale!
Justice and Truth indignant heard thy tale,
And sternly smiled, in retribution’s hour,
To wrest thy treasures from the Spoiler’s power.
Too long the spirits of thy noble dead
Mourn’d o’er the domes they rear’d in ages fled.
Those classic scenes their pride so richly graced,
Temples of genius, palaces of taste,
Too long, with sad and desolated mien,
Reveal’d where Conquest’s lawless track had been;

Reft of each form with brighter light imbued,
Lonely they frown’d, a desert solitude.
Florence! th’ Oppressor’s noon of pride is o’er,
Rise in thy pomp again, and weep no more!
As one who, starting at the dawn of day
From dark illusions, phantoms of dismay,
With transport heighten’d by those ills of night,
Hails the rich glories of expanding light;
E’en thus, awakening from thy dream of woe,
While heaven’s own hues in radiance round thee glow,
With warmer ecstasy ’tis thine to trace
Each tint of beauty, and each line of grace;
More bright, more prized, more precious, since deplored
As loved lost relics, ne’er to be restored—
Thy grief as hopeless as the tear-drop shed
By fond affection bending o’er the dead.
Athens of Italy! once more are thine
Those matchless gems of Art’s exhaustless mine.
For thee bright Genius darts his living beam,
Warm o’er thy shrines the tints of Glory stream,
And forms august as natives of the sky
Rise round each fane in faultless majesty—
So chastely perfect, so serenely grand,
They seem creations of no mortal hand.

Ye at whose voice fair Art, with eagle glance,
Burst in full splendour from her deathlike trance—
Whose rallying call bade slumbering nations wake,
And daring Intellect his bondage break—
Beneath whose eye the lords of song arose,
And snatch’d the Tuscan lyre from long repose,
And bade its pealing energies resound
With power electric through the realms around;
O high in thought, magnificent in soul!
Born to inspire, enlighten, and control;
Cosmo, Lorenzo! view your reign once more,
The shrine where nations mingle to adore!
Again th’ enthusiast there, with ardent gaze,
Shall hail the mighty of departed days:
Those sovereign spirits, whose commanding mind
Seems in the marble’s breathing mould enshrined;
Still with ascendant power the world to awe,
Still the deep homage of the heart to draw;
To breathe some spell of holiness around,
Bid all the scene be consecrated ground,
And from the stone, by Inspiration wrought,
Dart the pure lightnings of exalted thought.
There thou, fair offspring of immortal Mind!
Love’s radiant goddess, idol of mankind!

Once the bright object of Devotion’s vow,
Shalt claim from taste a kindred worship now.
Oh! who can tell what beams of heavenly light
Flash’d o’er the sculptor’s intellectual sight,
How many a glimpse, reveal’d to him alone,
Made brighter beings, nobler worlds, his own;
Ere, like some vision sent the earth to bless,
Burst into life thy pomp of loveliness!
Young Genius there, while dwells his kindling eye
On forms instinct with bright divinity,
While new-born powers, dilating in his heart,
Embrace the full magnificence of Art;
From scenes by Raphael’s gifted hand array’d,
From dreams of heaven by Angelo portray’d;
From each fair work of Grecian skill sublime,
Seal’d with perfection, “sanctified by time;”
Shall catch a kindred glow, and proudly feel
His spirit burn with emulative zeal:
Buoyant with loftier hopes, his soul shall rise,
Imbued at once with nobler energies;
O’er life’s dim scenes on rapid pinions soar,
And worlds of visionary grace explore,
Till his bold hand give glory’s daydream birth,
And with new wonders charm admiring earth.

Venice exult! and o’er thy moonlight seas
Swell with gay strains each Adriatic breeze!
What though long fled those years of martial fame
That shed romantic lustre o’er thy name;
Though to the winds thy streamers idly play,
And the wild waves another Queen obey;
Though quench’d the spirit of thine ancient race,
And power and freedom scarce have left a trace;
Yet still shall Art her splendours round thee cast,
And gild the wreck of years for ever past.
Again thy fanes may boast a Titian’s dyes,
Whose clear soft brilliance emulates thy skies,
And scenes that glow in colouring’s richest bloom
With life’s warm flush Palladian halls illume.
From thy rich dome again th’ unrivall’d steed
Starts to existence, rushes into speed,
Still for Lysippus claims the wreath of fame,
Panting with ardour, vivified with flame.
Proud Racers of the Sun! to fancy’s thought
Burning with spirit, from his essence caught,
No mortal birth ye seem—but form’d to bear
Heaven’s car of triumph through the realms of air;
To range uncurb’d the pathless fields of space,
The winds your rivals in the glorious race;

Traverse empyreal spheres with buoyant feet,
Free as the zephyr, as the shot-star fleet;
And waft through worlds unknown the vital ray,
The flame that wakes creations into day.
Creatures of fire and ether! wing’d with light,
To track the regions of the Infinite!
From purer elements whose life was drawn,
Sprung from the sunbeam, offspring of the dawn
What years, on years in silence gliding by,
Have spared those forms of perfect symmetry!
Moulded by Art to dignify alone
Her own bright deity’s resplendent throne,
Since first her skill their fiery grace bestow’d
Meet for such lofty fate, such high abode,
How many a race, whose tales of glory seem
An echo’s voice—the music of a dream,
Whose records feebly from oblivion save
A few bright traces of the wise and brave;
How many a state, whose pillar’d strength sublime
Defied the storms of war, the waves of time,
Towering o’er earth majestic and alone,
Fortress of power—has flourish’d and is gone!
And they, from clime to clime by conquest borne,
Each fleeting triumph destined to adorn,

They, that of powers and kingdoms lost and won
Have seen the noontide and the setting sun,
Consummate still in every grace remain,
As o’er their heads had ages roll’d in vain!
Ages, victorious in their ceaseless flight
O’er countless monuments of earthly might!
While she, from fair Byzantium’s lost domain,
Who bore those treasures to her ocean-reign.
’Midst the blue deep, who rear’d her island throne,
And called th’ infinitude of waves her own;
Venice the proud, the Regent of the sea,
Welcomes in chains the trophies of the Free!
And thou, whose Eagle towering plume unfurl’d
Once cast its shadow o’er a vassal world,
Eternal city! round whose Curule throne
The lords of nations knelt in ages flown;
Thou, whose Augustan years have left to time
Immortal records of their glorious prime;
When deathless bards, thine olive-shades among,
Swell’d the high raptures of heroic song;
Fair, fallen Empress! raise thy languid head
From the cold altars of th’ illustrious dead,
And once again with fond delight survey
The proud memorials of thy noblest day.

Lo! where thy sons, O Rome! a godlike train,
In imaged majesty return again!
Bards, chieftains, monarchs, tower with mien august
O’er scenes that shrine their venerable dust.
Those forms, those features, luminous with soul,
Still o’er thy children seem to claim control;
With awful grace arrest the pilgrim’s glance,
Bind his rapt soul in elevating trance,
And bid the past, to fancy’s ardent eyes,
From time’s dim sepulchre in glory rise.
Souls of the lofty! whose undying names
Rouse the young bosom still to noblest aims;
Oh! with your images could fate restore
Your own high spirit to your sons once more;
Patriots and Heroes! could those flames return
That bade your hearts with freedom’s ardours burn;
Then from the sacred ashes of the first,
Might a new Rome in phœnix grandeur burst!
With one bright glance dispel th’ horizon’s gloom,
With one loud call wake empire from the tomb;
Bind round her brows her own triumphal crown,
Lift her dread ægis with majestic frown,
Unchain her eagle’s wing, and guide his flight
To bathe his plumage in the fount of light!

Vain dream! Degraded Rome! thy noon is o’er;
Once lost, thy spirit shall revive no more.
It sleeps with those, the sons of other days,
Who fix’d on thee the world’s adoring gaze;
Those, blest to live, while yet thy star was high,
More blest, ere darkness quench’d its beam, to die!
Yet, though thy faithless tutelary powers
Have fled thy shrines, left desolate thy towers,
Still, still to thee shall nations bend their way,
Revered in ruin, sovereign in decay!
Oh! what can realms in fame’s full zenith boast
To match the relics of thy splendour lost!
By Tiber’s waves, on each illustrious hill,
Genius and Taste shall love to wander still;
For there has Art survived an empire’s doom,
And rear’d her throne o’er Latium’s trophied tomb:
She from the dust recalls the brave and free,
Peopling each scene with beings worthy thee!
Oh! ne’er again may War, with lightning-stroke,
Rend its last honours from the shatter’d oak!
Long be those works, revered by ages, thine,
To lend one triumph to thy dim decline.
Bright with stern beauty, breathing wrathful fire.
In all the grandeur of celestial ire,

Once more thine own, th’ immortal Archer’s form
Sheds radiance round, with more than Being warm!
Oh! who could view, nor deem that perfect frame
A living temple of ethereal flame?
Lord of the daystar! how may words portray
Of thy chaste glory one reflected ray?
Whate’er the soul could dream, the hand could trace,
Of regal dignity and heavenly grace;
Each purer effluence of the fair and bright,
Whose fitful gleams have broke on mortal sight
Each bold idea, borrow’d from the sky,
To vest th’ embodied form of Deity;
All, all in thee, ennobled and refined,
Breathe and enchant, transcendently combined!
Son of Elysium! years and ages gone
Have bow’d in speechless homage at thy throne,
And days unborn, and nations yet to be,
Shall gaze, absorb’d in ecstasy, on thee!
And thou, triumphant wreck,[6] e’en yet sublime,
Disputed trophy, claimed by Art and time:
Hail to that scene again, where Genius caught
From thee its fervours of diviner thought!
Where He, th’ inspired One, whose gigantic mind
Lived in some sphere to him alone assign’d;

Who from the past, the future, and th’ unseen
Could call up forms of more than earthly mien:
Unrivall’d Angelo on thee would gaze,
Till his full soul imbibed perfection’s blaze!
And who but he, that Prince of Art, might dare
Thy sovereign greatness view without despair?
Emblem of Rome! from power’s meridian hurl’d,
Yet claiming still the homage of the world.
What hadst thou been, ere barbarous hands defaced
The work of wonder, idolised by taste?
Oh! worthy still of some divine abode,
Mould of a Conqueror! ruin of a God![7]
Still, like some broken gem, whose quenchless beam
From each bright fragment pours its vital stream,
’Tis thine, by fate unconquer’d, to dispense
From every part some ray of excellence!
E’en yet, inform’d with essence from on high,
Thine is no trace of frail mortality!
Within that frame a purer being glows,
Through viewless veins a brighter current flows;
Fill’d with immortal life each muscle swells,
In every line supernal grandeur dwells,
Consummate work! the noblest and the last
Of Grecian Freedom, ere her reign was past:[8]

Nurse of the mighty, she, while lingering still,
Her mantle flow’d o’er many a classic hill,
Ere yet her voice its parting accents breathed,
A hero’s image to the world bequeathed;
Enshrined in thee th’ imperishable ray
Of high-soul’d Genius, foster’d by her sway,
And bade thee teach, to ages yet unborn,
What lofty dreams were hers—who never shall return!
And mark yon group, transfix’d with many a throe,
Seal’d with the image of eternal woe:
With fearful truth, terrific power, exprest,
Thy pangs, Laocoon, agonise the breast,
And the stern combat picture to mankind
Of suffering nature and enduring mind.
Oh, mighty conflict! though his pains intense
Distend each nerve, and dart through every sense;
Though fix’d on him, his children’s suppliant eyes
Implore the aid avenging fate denies;
Though with the giant-snake in fruitless strife,
Heaves every muscle with convulsive life,
And in each limb existence writhes, enroll’d
Midst the dread circles of the venom’d fold;
Yet the strong spirit lives—and not a cry
Shall own the might of Nature’s agony!

That furrow'd brow unconquer'd soul reveals,
That patient eye to angry Heaven appeals,
That struggling bosom concentrates its breath,
Nor yields one moan to torture or to death![9]
Sublimest triumph of intrepid Art!
With speechless horror to congeal the heart,
To freeze each pulse, and dart through every vein
Cold thrills of fear, keen sympathies of pain;
Yet teach the spirit how its lofty power
May brave the pangs of fate's severest hour.
Turn from such conflicts, and enraptured gaze
On scenes where painting all her skill displays:
Landscapes, by colouring dress'd in richer dyes,
More mellow'd sunshine, more unclouded skies,
Or dreams of bliss to dying martyrs given,
Descending seraphs robed in beams of heaven.
Oh! sovereign Masters of the Pencil's might,
Its depths of shadow and its blaze of light;
Ye, whose bold thought, disdaining every bound,
Explored the worlds above, below, around,
Children of Italy! who stand alone
And unapproach'd, midst regions all your own;
What scenes, what beings bless'd your favour'd sight,
Severely grand, unutterably bright!

Triumphant spirits! your exulting eye
Could meet the noontide of eternity,
And gaze untired, undaunted, uncontroll’d,
On all that Fancy trembles to behold.
Bright on your view such forms their splendour shed
As burst on prophet-bards in ages fled:
Forms that to trace no hand but yours might dare,
Darkly sublime, or exquisitely fair;
These o’er the walls your magic skill array’d,
Glow in rich sunshine, gleam through melting shade,
Float in light grace, in awful greatness tower,
And breathe and move, the records of your power.
Inspired of heaven! what heighten’d pomp ye cast
O’er all the deathless trophies of the past!
Round many a marble fane and classic dome,
Asserting still the majesty of Rome—
Round many a work that bids the world believe
What Grecian Art could image and achieve,
Again, creative minds, your visions throw
Life’s chasten’d warmth and Beauty’s mellowest glow.
And when the Morn’s bright beams and mantling dyes
Pour the rich lustre of Ausonian skies,
Or evening suns illume with purple smile
The Parian altar and the pillar’d aisle,

Then, as the full or soften’d radiance falls
On angel-groups that hover o’er the walls,
Well may those temples, where your hand has shed
Light o’er the tomb, existence round the dead,
Seem like some world, so perfect and so fair,
That nought of earth should find admittance there,
Some sphere, where beings, to mankind unknown,
Dwell in the brightness of their pomp alone!
Hence, ye vain fictions! fancy’s erring theme!
Gods of illusion! phantoms of a dream!
Frail, powerless idols of departed time,
Fables of song, delusive, though sublime!
To loftier tasks has Roman Art assign’d
Her matchless pencil, and her mighty mind!
From brighter streams her vast ideas flow’d,
With purer fire her ardent spirit glow’d.
To her ’twas given in fancy to explore
The land of miracles, the holiest shore;
That realm where first the Light of Life was sent,
The loved, the punish’d, of th’ Omnipotent!
O’er Judah’s hills her thoughts inspired would stray,
Through Jordan’s valleys trace their lonely way;
By Siloa’s brook, or Almotana’s deep,[10]
Chain’d in dead silence, and unbroken sleep;

Scenes, whose cleft rocks and blasted deserts tell
Where pass’d th’ Eternal, where his anger fell!
Where oft his voice the words of fate reveal’d,
Swell’d in the whirlwind, in the thunder peal’d,
Or, heard by prophets in some palmy vale,
“Breathed still small” whispers on the midnight gale.
There dwelt her spirit—there her hand portray’d,
Midst the lone wilderness or cedar-shade,
Ethereal forms with awful missions fraught,
Or patriarch-seers absorb’d in sacred thought,
Bards, in high converse with the world of rest,
Saints of the earth, and spirits of the blest.
But chief to Him, the Conqueror of the grave,
Who lived to guide us, and who died to save;
Him, at whose glance the powers of evil fled,
And soul return’d to animate the dead;
Whom the waves own’d—and sunk beneath his eye,
Awed by one accent of Divinity;
To Him she gave her meditative hours,
Hallow’d her thoughts, and sanctified her powers.
O’er her bright scenes sublime repose she threw,
As all around the Godhead’s presence knew,
And robed the Holy One’s benignant mien
In beaming mercy, majesty serene.

Oh! mark where Raphael’s pure and perfect line

Portrays that form ineffably divine!

Where with transcendant skill his hand has shed

Diffusive sunbeams round the Saviour’s head;[11]

Each heaven-illumined lineament imbued

With all the fulness of beatitude,

And traced the sainted group, whose mortal sight

Sinks overpower’d by that excess of light!

Gaze on that scene, and own the might of Art,

By truth inspired, to elevate the heart!

To bid the soul exultingly possess,

Of all her powers, a heighten’d consciousness;

And, strong in hope, anticipate the day,

The last of life, the first of freedom’s ray;

To realise, in some unclouded sphere,

Those pictured glories feebly imaged here!

Dim, cold reflections from her native sky,

Faint effluence of “the Dayspring from on high!”

[This poem is thus alluded to by Lord Byron, in one of his published letters to Mr Murray, dated from Diodati, Sept. 30th, 1818:—“Italy or Dalmatia and another summer may, or may not, set me off again.... I shall take Felicia Hemans’s Restoration, &c., with me—it is a good poem—very.”]

[6] The Belvidere Torso, the favourite study of Michael Angelo, and of many other distinguished artists.

[7] “Quoique cette statue d’Hercule ait été maltraitée et mutilée d’une manière

étrange, se trouvant sans tête, sans bras, et sans jambes, elle est cependant encore un chef-d'œuvre aux yeux des connoisseurs; et ceux qui savent percer dans les mystères de l'art, se la représentent dans toute sa beauté. L'Artiste, en voulant représenter Hercule, a formé un corps idéal audessus de la nature * * * Cet Hercule paroît donc ici tel qu'il put être lorsque, purifié par le feu des foiblesses de l'humanité, il obtint l'immortalité et prit place auprès des Dieux. Il est représenté sans aucun besoin de nourriture et de réparation de forces. Les veines y sont tout invisibles."—Winckelmann, Histoire de l'Art chez les Anciens, torn. ii. p. 248.

[8] "Le Torso d'Hercule paroît un des derniers ouvrages parfaits que l'art ait produit en Grèce, avant la perte de sa libérté. Car après que la Grèce fut réduite en province Romaine, l'histoire ne fait mention d'aucun artiste célèbre de cette nation, jusqu'aux temps du Triumvirat Romain."—Winckelmann, ibid. tom. ii. p. 250.

[9] "It is not, in the same manner, in the agonised limbs, or in the convulsed muscles of the Laocoon, that the secret grace of its composition resides; it is in the majestic air of the head, which has not yielded to suffering, and in the deep serenity of the forehead, which seems to be still superior to all its afflictions, and significant of a mind that cannot be subdued."—Alison's Essays, vol. ii. p. 400.

"Laocoon nous offre le spectacle de la nature humaine dans la plus grande douleur dont elle soit susceptible, sous l'image d'un homme qui tâche de rassembler contre elle toute la force de l'esprit. Tandis que l'excès de la souffrance enfle les muscles, et tire violemment les nerfs, le courage se montre sur le front gonflé: la poitrine s'élève avec peine par la nécessité de la respiration, qui est également contrainte par le silence que la force de l'âme impose à la douleur qu'elle voudrait étouffer * * * * Son air est plaintif, et non criard."—-Winckelmann, Histoire de l'Art chez les Anciens, tom. ii. p. 214.

[10] Almotana. The name given by the Arabs to the Dead Sea.

[11] The Transfiguration, thought to be so perfect a specimen of art, that, in honour

of Raphael, it was carried before his body to the grave.

MODERN GREECE.

“O Greece! thou sapient nurse of finer arts,
Which to bright Science blooming Fancy bore,
Be this thy praise, that thou, and thou alone,
In these hast led the way, in these excell’d,
Crown’d with the laurel of assenting Time.”
Thomson’s Liberty.

I.

Oh! who hath trod thy consecrated clime,
Fair land of Phidias! theme of lofty strains!
And traced each scene that, midst the wrecks of time,
The print of Glory’s parting step retains;
Nor for awhile, in high-wrought dreams, forgot,
Musing on years gone by in brightness there,
The hopes, the fears, the sorrows of his lot,
The hues his fate hath worn, or yet may wear;
As when, from mountain-heights, his ardent eye
Of sea and heaven hath track’d the blue infinity?

II.

Is there who views with cold unalter’d mien,
His frozen heart with proud indifference fraught,

Each sacred haunt, each unforgotten scene,
Where Freedom triumph’d, or where Wisdom taught?
Souls that too deeply feel! oh, envy not
The sullen calm your fate hath never known:
Through the dull twilight of that wintery lot
Genius ne’er pierced, nor Fancy’s sunbeam shone,
Nor those high thoughts that, hailing Glory’s trace,
Glow with the generous flames of every age and race.

III.

But blest the wanderer whose enthusiast mind
Each muse of ancient days hath deep imbued
With lofty lore, and all his thoughts refined
In the calm school of silent solitude;
Pour’d on his ear, midst groves and glens retired,
The mighty strains of each illustrious clime,
All that hath lived, while empires have expired,
To float for ever on the winds of time;
And on his soul indelibly portray’d
Fair visionary forms, to fill each classic shade.

IV.

Is not this mind, to meaner thoughts unknown,
A sanctuary of beauty and of light?
There he may dwell in regions all his own,

A world of dreams, where all is pure and bright.
For him the scenes of old renown possess
Romantic charms, all veil’d from other eyes;
There every form of nature’s loveliness
Wakes in his breast a thousand sympathies;
As music’s voice, in some lone mountain dell,
From rocks and caves around calls forth each echo’s swell.

V.

For him Italia’s brilliant skies illume
The bard’s lone haunts, the warrior’s combat-plains,
And the wild rose yet lives to breath and bloom
Round Doric Pæstum’s solitary fanes.[12]
But most, fair Greece! on thy majestic shore
He feels the fervours of his spirit rise;
Thou birth-place of the Muse! whose voice of yore
Breathed in thy groves immortal harmonies;
And lingers still around the well-known coast,
Murmuring a wild farewell to fame and freedom lost.

VI.

By seas that flow in brightness as they lave
Thy rocks, th’ enthusiast rapt in thought may stray,
While roves his eye o’er that deserted wave,
Once the proud scene of battle’s dread array.

—O ye blue waters! ye, of old that bore
The free, the conquering, hymn'd by choral strains,
How sleep ye now around the silent shore,
The lonely realm of ruins and of chains!
How are the mighty vanish'd in their pride!
E'en as their barks have left no traces on your tide.

VII.

Hush'd are the Pæans whose exulting tone
Swell'd o'er that tide[13]—the sons of battle sleep—
The wind's wild sigh, the halcyon's voice alone
Blend with the plaintive murmur of the deep.
Yet when those waves have caught the splendid hues
Of morn's rich firmament, serenely bright,
Or setting suns the lovely shore suffuse
With all their purple mellowness of light,
Oh! who could view the scene, so calmly fair,
Nor dream that peace, and joy, and liberty were there?

VIII.

Where soft the sunbeams play, the zephyrs blow,
'Tis hard to deem that misery can be nigh;
Where the clear heavens in blue transparence glow,
Life should be calm and cloudless as the sky;
—Yet o'er the low, dark dwellings of the dead,

Verdure and flowers in summer-bloom may smile,
And ivy-boughs their graceful drapery spread
In green luxuriance o’er the ruin’d pile;
And mantling woodbine veil the wither’d tree;—
And thus it is, fair land! forsaken Greece, with thee.

IX.

For all the loveliness, and light, and bloom
That yet are thine, surviving many a storm,
Are but as heaven’s warm radiance on the tomb,
The rose’s blush that masks the canker-worm.
And thou art desolate—thy morn hath pass’d!
So dazzling in the splendour of its sway,
That the dark shades the night hath o’er thee cast
Throw tenfold gloom around thy deep decay.
Once proud in freedom, still in ruin fair,
Thy fate hath been unmatch’d—in glory and despair.

X.

For thee, lost land! the hero’s blood hath flow’d,
The high in soul have brightly lived and died;
For thee the light of soaring genius glow’d
O’er the fair arts it form’d and glorified.
Thine were the minds whose energies sublime
So distanced ages in their lightning-race,

The task they left the sons of later time
Was but to follow their illumined trace.
—Now, bow’d to earth, thy children, to be free,
Must break each link that binds their filial hearts to thee.

XI.

Lo! to the scenes of fiction’s wildest tales,
Her own bright East, thy son, Morea! flies,[14]
To seek repose midst rich, romantic vales,
Whose incense mounts to Asia’s vivid skies.
There shall he rest?—Alas! his hopes in vain
Guide to the sun-clad regions of the palm:
Peace dwells not now on oriental plain,
Though earth is fruitfulness, and air is balm;
And the sad wanderer finds but lawless foes,
Where patriarchs reign’d of old in pastoral repose.

XII.

Where Syria’s mountains rise, or Yemen’s groves,
Or Tigris rolls his genii-haunted wave,
Life to his eye, as wearily it roves,
Wears but two forms—the tyrant and the slave!
There the fierce Arab leads his daring horde
Where sweeps the sand-storm o’er the burning wild;
There stern Oppression waves the wasting sword

O’er plains that smile as ancient Eden smiled;
And the vale’s bosom, and the desert’s gloom,
Yield to the injured there no shelter save the tomb.

XIII.

But thou, fair world! whose fresh unsullied charms
Welcomed Columbus from the western wave,
Wilt thou receive the wanderer to thine arms,[15]
The lost descendant of the immortal brave?
Amidst the wild magnificence of shades
That o’er thy floods their twilight-grandeur cast,
In the green depth of thine untrodden glades
Shall he not rear his bower of peace at last?
Yes! thou hast many a lone, majestic scene,
Shrined in primeval woods, where despot ne’er hath been.

XIV.

There by some lake, whose blue expansive breast
Bright from afar, an inland ocean, gleams,
Girt with vast solitudes, profusely dress’d
In tints like those that float o’er poet’s dreams;
Or where some flood from pine-clad mountain pours
Its might of waters, glittering in their foam,
Midst the rich verdure of its wooded shores,
The exiled Greek hath fix’d his sylvan home:

So deeply lone, that round the wild retreat

Scarce have the paths been trod by Indian huntsman’s feet.

XV.

The forests are around him in their pride,

The green savannas, and the mighty waves;

And isles of flowers, bright-floating o’er the tide,[16]

That images the fairy worlds it laves,

And stillness, and luxuriance. O’er his head

The ancient cedars wave their peopled bowers,

On high the palms their graceful foliage spread,

Cinctured with roses the magnolia towers;

And from those green arcades a thousand tones

Wake with each breeze, whose voice through Nature’s temple moans.

XVI.

And there, no traces left by brighter days

For glory lost may wake a sigh of grief;

Some grassy mound, perchance, may meet his gaze,

The lone memorial of an Indian chief.

There man not yet hath mark’d the boundless plain

With marble records of his fame and power;

The forest is his everlasting fane,

The palm his monument, the rock his tower:

Th’ eternal torrent and the giant tree

Remind him but that they, like him, are wildly free.

XVII.

But doth the exile’s heart serenely there
In sunshine dwell?—Ah! when was exile blest?
When did bright scenes, clear heavens, or summer air,
Chase from his soul the fever of unrest?
—There is a heart-sick weariness of mood,
That like slow poison wastes the vital glow,
And shrines itself in mental solitude,
An uncomplaining and a nameless woe.
That coldly smiles midst pleasure’s brightest ray,
As the chill glacier’s peak reflects the flush of day.

XVIII.

Such grief is theirs, who, fix’d on foreign shore,
Sigh for the spirit of their native gales,
As pines the seaman, midst the ocean’s roar,
For the green earth, with all its woods and vales.
Thus feels thy child, whose memory dwells with thee,
Loved Greece! all sunk and blighted as thou art
Though thought and step in western wilds be free,
Yet thine are still the daydreams of his heart:
The deserts spread between, the billows foam,
Thou, distant and in chains, are yet his spirit’s home.

XIX.

In vain for him the gay liannes entwine,
Or the green fire-fly sparkles through the brakes,
Or summer-winds waft odours from the pine,
As eve's last blush is dying on the lakes.
Through thy fair vales his fancy roves the while,
Or breathes the freshness of Cithæron's height,
Or dreams how softly Athens' towers would smile,
Or Sunium's ruins, in the fading light;
On Corinth's cliff what sunset hues may sleep,
Or, at that placid hour, how calm th' Ægean deep!

XX.

What scenes, what sunbeams, are to him like thine?
(The all of thine no tyrant could destroy!)
E'en to the stranger's roving eye, they shine
Soft as a vision of remember'd joy.
And he who comes, the pilgrim of a day,
A passing wanderer o'er each Attic hill,
Sighs as his footsteps turn from thy decay,
To laughing climes, where all is splendour still;
And views with fond regret thy lessening shore,
As he would watch a star that sets to rise no more.

XXI.

Realm of sad beauty! thou art as a shrine
That Fancy visits with Devotion’s zeal,
To catch high thoughts and impulses divine,
And all the glow of soul enthusiasts feel
Amidst the tombs of heroes—for the brave
Whose dust, so many an age, hath been thy soil,
Foremost in honour’s phalanx, died to save
The land redeem’d and hallow’d by their toil;
And there is language in thy lightest gale,
That o’er the plains they won seems murmuring yet their tale.

XXII.

And he, whose heart is weary of the strife
Of meaner spirits, and whose mental gaze
Would shun the dull cold littleness of life,
Awhile to dwell amidst sublimer days,
Must turn to thee, whose every valley teems
With proud remembrances that cannot die.
Thy glens are peopled with inspiring dreams,
Thy winds, the voice of oracles gone by;
And midst thy laurel shades the wanderer hears
The sound of mighty names, the hymns of vanish’d years.

XXIII.

Through that deep solitude be his to stray,

By Faun and Oread loved in ages past,
Where clear Peneus winds his rapid way
Though the cleft heights, in antique grandeur vast.
Romantic Tempe! thou art yet the same—
Wild, as when sung by bards of elder time:[17]
Years, that have changed thy river's classic name,[18]
Have left thee still in savage pomp sublime;
And from thine Alpine clefts and marble caves,
In living lustre still break forth the fountain waves.

XXIV.

Beneath thy mountain battlements and towers,
Where the rich arbute's coral berries glow,[19]
Or midst th' exuberance of thy forest bowers,
Casting deep shadows o'er the current's flow,
Oft shall the pilgrim pause, in lone recess,
As rock and stream some glancing light have caught,
And gaze, till Nature's mighty forms impress
His soul with deep sublimity of thought;
And linger oft, recalling many a tale,
That breeze, and wave, and wood seem whispering through thy dale.

XXV.

He, thought-entranced, may wander where of old
From Delphi's chasm the mystic vapour rose,

And trembling nations heard their doom foretold
By the dread spirit throned midst rocks and snows.
Though its rich fanes be blended with the dust,
And silence now the hallow'd haunt possess,
Still is the scene of ancient rites august,
Magnificent in mountain loneliness;
Still inspiration hovel's o'er the ground,
Where Greece her councils held,[20] her Pythian victors crown'd.

XXVI.

Or let his steps the rude gray cliffs explore
Of that wild pass, once dyed with Spartan blood,
When by the waves that break on Œta's shore,
The few, the fearless, the devoted, stood!
Or rove where, shadowing Mantinea's plain,
Bloom the wild laurels o'er the warlike dead,[21]
Or lone Platæa's ruins yet remain
To mark the battle-field of ages fled:
Still o'er such scenes presides a sacred power,
Though Fiction's gods have fled from fountain, grot, and bower.

XXVII.

Oh! still unblamed may fancy fondly deem
That, lingering yet, benignant genii dwell
Where mortal worth has hallow'd grove or stream,

To sway the heart with some ennobling spell;
For mightiest minds have felt their blest control
In the wood's murmur, in the zephyr's sigh,
And these are dreams that lend a voice and soul,
And a high power, to Nature's majesty!
And who can rove o'er Grecian shores, nor feel,
Soft o'er his inmost heart, their secret magic steal?

XXVIII.

Yet many a sad reality is there,
That Fancy's bright illusions cannot veil.
Pure laughs the light, and balmy breathes the air,
But Slavery's mien will tell its bitter tale;
And there, not Peace, but Desolation, throws
Delusive quiet o'er full many a scene—
Deep as the brooding torpor of repose
That follows where the earthquake's track hath been;
Or solemn calm on Ocean's breast that lies,
When sinks the storm, and death has hush'd the seamen's cries.

XXIX.

Hast thou beheld some sovereign spirit, hurl'd
By Fate's rude tempest from its radiant sphere,
Doom'd to resign the homage of a world,
For Pity's deepest sigh and saddest tear?

Oh! hast thou watch’d the awful wreck of mind
That weareth still a glory in decay?
Seen all that dazzles and delights mankind—
Thought, science, genius—to the storm a prey;
And o’er the blasted tree, the wither’d ground,
Despair’s wild nightshade spread, and darkly flourish round?

XXX.

So mayst thou gaze, in sad and awe-struck thought,
On the deep fall of that yet lovely clime:
Such there the ruin Time and Fate have wrought,
So changed the bright, the splendid, the sublime.
There the proud monuments of Valour’s name,
The mighty works Ambition piled on high,
The rich remains by Art bequeath’d to Fame—
Grace, beauty, grandeur, strength, and symmetry,
Blend in decay; while all that yet is fair
Seems only spared to tell how much hath perish’d there!

XXXI.

There, while around lie mingling in the dust
The column’s graceful shaft, with weeds o’er grown,
The mouldering torso, the forgotten bust.
The warrior’s urn, the altar’s mossy stone—
Amidst the loneliness of shatter’d fanes,

Still matchless monuments of other years—
O’er cypress groves or solitary plains,
Its eastern form the minaret proudly rears:
As on some captive city’s ruin’d wall
The victor’s banner waves, exulting o’er its fall.

XXXII.

Still, where that column of the mosque aspires,
Landmark of slavery, towering o’er the waste,
There science droops, the Muses hush their lyres
And o’er the blooms of fancy and of taste
Spreads the chill blight;—as in that orient isle
Where the dark upas taints the gale around,[22]
Within its precincts not a flower may smile,
Nor dew nor sunshine fertilise the ground;
Nor wild birds’ music float on zephyr’s breath,
But all is silence round, and solitude, and death.

XXXIII.

Far other influence pour’d the Crescent’s light
O’er conquer’d realms, in ages pass’d away;
Full and alone it beam’d, intensely bright,
While distant climes in midnight darkness lay.
Then rose th’ Alhambra, with its founts and shades,
Fair marble halls, alcoves, and orange bowers:

Its sculptured lions,[23] richly wrought arcades,
Aërial pillars, and enchanted towers;
Light, splendid, wild, as some Arabian tale
Would picture fairy domes that fleet before the gale.

XXXIV.

Then foster'd genius lent each caliph's throne
Lustre barbaric pomp could ne'er attain;
And stars unnumber'd o'er the orient shone,
Bright as that Pleïad, sphered in Mecca's fane.[24]
From Bagdat's palaces the choral strains
Rose and re-echoed to the desert's bound,
And Science, woo'd on Egypt's burning plains,
Rear'd her majestic head with glory crown'd;
And the wild Muses breathed romantic lore
From Syria's palmy groves to Andalusia's shore.

XXXV.

Those years have past in radiance—they have past,
As sinks the daystar in the tropic main;
His parting beams no soft reflection cast,
They burn—are quench'd—and deepest shadows reign.
And Fame and Science have not left a trace
In the vast regions of the Moslem's power,—
Regions, to intellect a desert space,

A wild without a fountain or a flower,
Where towers Oppression midst the deepening glooms,
As dark and lone ascends the cypress midst the tombs.

XXXVI.

Alas for thee, fair Greece! when Asia pour'd
Her fierce fanatics to Byzantium's wall;
When Europe sheath'd, in apathy, her sword,
And heard unmoved the fated city's call.
No bold crusaders ranged their serried line
Of spears and banners round a falling throne;
And thou, O last and noblest Constantine![25]
Didst meet the storm unshrinking and alone.
Oh! blest to die in freedom, though in vain—
Thine empire's proud exchange the grave, and not the chain!

XXXVII.

Hush'd is Byzantium—'tis the dead of night—
The closing night of that imperial race![26]
And all is vigil—but the eye of light
Shall soon unfold, a wilder scene to trace:
There is a murmuring stillness on the train
Thronging the midnight streets, at morn to die;
And to the cross, in fair Sophia's fane,
For the last time is raised Devotion's eye;

And, in his heart while faith’s bright visions rise,
There kneels the high-soul’d prince, the summon’d of the skies.

XXXVIII.

Day breaks in light and glory—’tis the hour
Of conflict and of fate—the war-note calls—
Despair hath lent a stern, delirious power
To the brave few that guard the rampart walls.
Far over Marmora’s waves th’ artillery’s peal
Proclaims an empire’s doom in every note;
Tambour and trumpet swell the clash of steel,
Round spire and dome the clouds of battle float;
From camp and wave rush on the Crescent’s host,
And the Seven Towers[27] are scaled, and all is won and lost.

XXXIX.

Then, Greece! the tempest rose that burst on thee,
Land of the bard, the warrior, and the sage!
Oh! where were then thy sons, the great, the free,
Whose deeds are guiding stars from age to age?
Though firm thy battlements of crags and snows,
And bright the memory of thy days of pride,
In mountain might though Corinth’s fortress rose,
On, unresisted, roll’d th’ invading tide!
Oh! vain the rock, the rampart, and the tower,

If Freedom guard them not with Mind’s unconquer’d power.

XL.

Where were th’ avengers then, whose viewless might
Preserved inviolate their awful fane,[28]
When through the steep defiles, to Delphi’s height,
In martial splendour pour’d the Persian’s train?
Then did those mighty and mysterious Powers,
Arm’d with the elements, to vengeance wake,
Call the dread storms to darken round their towers,
Hurl down the rocks, and bid the thunders break;
Till far around, with deep and fearful clang,
Sounds of unearthly war through wild Parnassus rang.

XLI.

Where was the spirit of the victor-throng
Whose tombs are glorious by Scamander’s tide,
Whose names are bright in everlasting song,
The lords of war, the praised, the deified?
Where he, the hero of a thousand lays,
Who from the dead at Marathon arose[29]
All arm’d; and beaming on the Athenians’ gaze,
A battle-meteor, guided to their foes?
Or they whose forms to Alaric’s awe-struck eye,[30]
Hovering o’er Athens, blazed in airy panoply?

XLII.

Ye slept, O heroes! chief ones of the earth![31]
High demigods of ancient days! ye slept:
There lived no spark of your ascendant worth
When o’er your land the victor Moslem swept.
No patriot then the sons of freedom led,
In mountain pass devotedly to die;
The martyr-spirit of resolve was fled,
And the high soul’s unconquer’d buoyancy;
And by your graves, and on your battle-plains,
Warriors! your children knelt to wear the stranger’s chains.

XLIII.

Now have your trophies vanish’d, and your homes
Are moulder’d from the earth, while scarce remain
E’en the faint traces of the ancient tombs
That mark where sleep the slayers or the slain.
Your deeds are with the days of glory flown,
The lyres are hush’d that swell’d your fame afar,
The halls that echo’d to their sounds are gone,
Perish’d the conquering weapons of your war;[32]
And if a mossy stone your names retain,
’Tis but to tell your sons, for them ye died in vain.

XLIV.

Yet, where some lone sepulchral relic stands,
That with those names tradition hallows yet,
Oft shall the wandering son of other lands
Linger in solemn thought and hush’d regret.
And still have legends mark’d the lonely spot
Where low the dust of Agamemnon lies;
And shades of kings and leaders unforgot,
Hovering around, to fancy’s vision rise.
Souls of the heroes! seek your rest again,
Nor mark how changed the realms that saw your glory’s reign.

XLV.

Lo, where th’ Albanian spreads his despot sway
O’er Thessaly’s rich vales and glowing plains,
Whose sons in sullen abjectness obey,
Nor lift the hand indignant at its chains:
Oh! doth the land that gave Achilles birth,
And many a chief of old illustrious line,
Yield not one spirit of unconquer’d worth
To kindle those that now in bondage pine?
No! on its mountain-air is slavery’s breath,
And terror chills the hearts whose utter’d plaints were death.

XLVI.

Yet if thy light, fair Freedom, rested there,

How rich in charms were that romantic clime,
With streams, and woods, and pastoral valleys fair,
And wall’d with mountains, haughtily sublime!
Heights that might well be deem’d the Muses’ reign,
Since, claiming proud alliance with the skies,
They lose in loftier spheres their wild domain—
Meet home for those retired divinities
That love, where nought of earth may e’er intrude,
Brightly to dwell on high, in lonely sanctitude.

XLVII.

There in rude grandeur daringly ascends
Stern Pindus, rearing many a pine-clad height;
He with the clouds his bleak dominion blends,
Frowning o’er vales in woodland verdure bright.
Wild and august in consecrated pride,
There through the deep-blue heaven Olympus towers,
Girdled with mists, light-floating as to hide
The rock-built palace of immortal powers;
Where far on high the sunbeam finds repose,
Amidst th’ eternal pomp of forests and of snows.

XLVIII.

Those savage cliffs and solitudes might seem
The chosen haunts where Freedom’s foot would roam;

She loves to dwell by glen and torrent-stream,
And make the rocky fastnesses her home.
And in the rushing of the mountain flood,
In the wild eagle’s solitary cry,
In sweeping winds that peal through cave and wood,
There is a voice of stern sublimity,
That swells her spirit to a loftier mood
Of solemn joy severe, of power, of fortitude.

XLIX.

But from those hills the radiance of her smile
Hath vanish’d long, her step hath fled afar;
O’er Suli’s frowning rocks she paused a while,[33]
Kindling the watch-fires of the mountain war.
And brightly glow’d her ardent spirit there,
Still brightest midst privation: o’er distress
It cast romantic splendour, and despair
But fann’d that beacon of the wilderness;
And rude ravine, and precipice, and dell
Sent their deep echoes forth, her rallying voice to swell.

L.

Dark children of the hills! ’twas then ye wrought
Deeds of fierce daring, rudely, sternly grand;
As midst your craggy citadels ye fought,

And women mingled with your warrior band.
Then on the cliff the frantic mother stood[34]
High o’er the river’s darkly-rolling wave,
And hurl’d, in dread delirium, to the flood
Her free-born infant, ne’er to be a slave.
For all was lost—all, save the power to die
The wild indignant death of savage liberty.

LI.

Now is that strife a tale of vanish’d days,
With mightier things forgotten soon to lie;
Yet oft hath minstrel sung, in lofty lays,
Deeds less adventurous, energies less high.
And the dread struggle’s fearful memory still
O’er each wild rock a wilder aspect throws;
Sheds darker shadows o’er the frowning hill,
More solemn quiet o’er the glen’s repose;
Lends to the rustling pines a deeper moan,
And the hoarse river’s voice a murmur not its own.

LII.

For stillness now—the stillness of the dead—
Hath wrapt that conflict’s lone and awful scene;
And man’s forsaken homes, in ruin spread,
Tell where the storming of the cliffs hath been.

And there, o’er wastes magnificently rude,
What race may rove, unconscious of the chain?
Those realms have now no desert unsubdued,
Where Freedom’s banner may be rear’d again:
Sunk are the ancient dwellings of her fame,
The children of her sons inherit but their name.

LIII.

Go, seek proud Sparta’s monuments and fanes!
In scatter’d fragments o’er the vale they lie;
Of all they were not e’en enough remains
To lend their fall a mournful majesty.[35]
Birth-place of those whose names we first revered
In song and story—temple of the free!
O thou, the stern, the haughty, and the fear’d,
Are such thy relics, and can this be thee?
Thou shouldst have left a giant wreck behind,
And e’en in ruin claim’d the wonder of mankind.

LIV.

For thine were spirits cast in other mould
Than all beside—and proved by ruder test;
They stood alone—the proud, the firm, the bold,
With the same seal indelibly imprest.
Theirs were no bright varieties of mind,

One image stamp’d the rough, colossal race,
In rugged grandeur frowning o’er mankind,
Stern, and disdainful of each milder grace;
As to the sky some mighty rock may tower,
Whose front can brave the storm, but will not rear the flower.

LV.

Such were thy sons—their life a battle-day!
Their youth one lesson how for thee to die!
Closed is that task, and they have passed away
Like softer beings train’d to aims less high.
Yet bright on earth their fame who proudly fell,
True to their shields, the champions of thy cause,
Whose funeral column bade the stranger tell
How died the brave, obedient to thy laws![36]
O lofty mother of heroic worth,
How couldst thou live to bring a meaner offspring forth?

LVI.

Hadst thou but perish’d with the free, nor known
A second race, when glory’s noon went by,
Then had thy name in single brightness shone
A watchword on the helm of liberty!
Thou shouldst have pass’d with all the light of fame,
And proudly sunk in ruins, not in chains.

But slowly set thy star midst clouds of shame,
And tyrants rose amidst thy falling fanes;
And thou, surrounded by thy warriors' graves,
Hast drain'd the bitter cup once mingled for thy slaves.

LVII.

Now all is o'er—for thee alike are flown
Freedom's bright noon and slavery's twilight cloud;
And in thy fall, as in thy pride, alone,
Deep solitude is round thee as a shroud.
Home of Leonidas! thy halls are low;
From their cold altars have thy Lares fled;
O'er thee, unmark'd, the sunbeams fade or glow,
And wild-flowers wave, unbent by human tread;
And midst thy silence, as the grave's profound,
A voice, a step, would seem as some unearthly sound.

LVIII.

Taÿgetus still lifts his awful brow
High o'er the mouldering city of the dead,
Sternly sublime; while o'er his robe of snow
Heaven's floating tints their warm suffusions spread.
And yet his rippling wave Eurotas leads
By tombs and ruins o'er the silent plain;
While, whispering there, his own wild graceful reeds

Rise as of old, when hail’d by classic strain;
There the rose-laurels still in beauty wave,[37]
And a frail shrub survives to bloom o’er Sparta’s grave.

LIX.

Oh, thus it is with man! A tree, a flower,
While nations perish, still renews its race,
And o’er the fallen records of his power
Spreads in wild pomp, or smiles in fairy grace.
The laurel shoots when those have pass’d away,
Once rivals for its crown, the brave, the free;
The rose is flourishing o’er beauty’s clay,
The myrtle blows when love hath ceased to be;
Green waves the bay when song and bard are fled,
And all that round us blooms is blooming o’er the dead.

LX.

And still the olive spreads its foliage round
Morea’s fallen sanctuaries and towers.
Once its green boughs Minerva’s votaries crown’d,
Deem’d a meet offering for celestial powers.
The suppliant’s hand its holy branches bore;[38]
They waved around the Olympic victor’s head;
And, sanctified by many a rite of yore,
Its leaves the Spartan’s honour’d bier o’erspread.

Those rites have vanish’d—but o’er vale and hill
Its fruitful groves arise, revered and hallow’d still.[39]

LXI.

Where now thy shrines, Eleusis! where thy fane
Of fearful visions, mysteries wild and high?
The pomp of rites, the sacrificial train,
The long procession’s awful pageantry?
Quench’d is the torch of Ceres[40]—all around
Decay hath spread the stillness of her reign;
There never more shall choral hymns resound
O’er the hush’d earth and solitary main,
Whose wave from Salamis deserted flows,
To bathe a silent shore of desolate repose.

LXII.

And oh, ye secret and terrific powers!
Dark oracles! in depth of groves that dwelt,
How are they sunk, the altars of your bowers,
Where Superstition trembled as she knelt!
Ye, the unknown, the viewless ones! that made
The elements your voice, the wind and wave;
Spirits! whose influence darken’d many a shade,
Mysterious visitants of fount and cave!
How long your power the awe-struck nations sway’d,

How long earth dreamt of you, and shudderingly obey'd!

LXIII.

And say, what marvel, in those early days,
While yet the light of heaven-born truth was not,
If man around him cast a fearful gaze,
Peopling with shadowy powers each dell and grot?
Awful is nature in her savage forms,
Her solemn voice commanding in its might,
And mystery then was in the rush of storms,
The gloom of woods, the majesty of night;
And mortals heard Fate's language in the blast,
And rear'd your forest-shrines, ye phantoms of the past!

LXIV.

Then through the foliage not a breeze might sigh
But with prophetic sound—a waving tree,
A meteor flashing o'er the summer sky,
A bird's wild flight reveal'd the things to be.
All spoke of unseen natures, and convey'd
Their inspiration; still they hover'd round,
Hallow'd the temple, whisper'd through the shade,
Pervaded loneliness, gave soul to sound;
Of them the fount, the forest, murmur'd still,
Their voice was in the stream, their footstep on the hill.

LXV.

Now is the train of Superstition flown!
Unearthly beings walk on earth no more;
The deep wind swells with no portentous tone,
The rustling wood breathes no fatidic lore.
Fled are the phantoms of Livadia’s cave,
There dwell no shadows, but of crag and steep;
Fount of Oblivion! in thy gushing wave,[41]
That murmurs nigh, those powers of terror sleep.
Oh that such dreams alone had fled that clime!
But Greece is changed in all that could be changed by time!

LXVI.

Her skies are those whence many a mighty bard
Caught inspiration, glorious as their beams;
Her hills the same that heroes died to guard,
Her vales, that foster’d Art’s divinest dreams!
But that bright spirit o’er the land that shone,
And all around pervading influence pour’d,
That lent the harp of Æschylus its tone,
And proudly hallow’d Lacedæmon’s sword,
And guided Phidias o’er the yielding stone,
With them its ardours lived—with them its light is flown.

LXVII.

Thebes, Corinth, Argos!—ye renown'd of old,
Where are your chiefs of high romantic name?
How soon the tale of ages may be told!
A page, a verse, records the fall of fame,
The work of centuries. We gaze on you,
O cities! once the glorious and the free,
The lofty tales that charm'd our youth renew,
And wondering ask, if these their scenes could be?
Search for the classic fane, the regal tomb,
And find the mosque alone—a record of their doom!

LXVIII.

How oft hath war his host of spoilers pour'd,
Fair Elis! o'er thy consecrated vales?[42]
There have the sunbeams glanced on spear and sword,
And banners floated on the balmy gales.
Once didst thou smile, secure in sanctitude,
As some enchanted isle mid stormy seas;
On thee no hostile footstep might intrude,
And pastoral sounds alone were on thy breeze.
Forsaken home of peace! that spell is broke:
Thou too hast heard the storm, and bow'd beneath the yoke.

LXIX.

And through Arcadia's wild and lone retreats

Far other sounds have echo’d than the strain
Of faun and dryad, from their woodland seats,
Or ancient reed of peaceful mountain-swain!
There, though at times Alpheus yet surveys,
On his green banks renew’d, the classic dance,
And nymph-like forms, and wild melodious lays,
Revive the sylvan scenes of old romance;
Yet brooding fear and dark suspicion dwell
Midst Pan’s deserted haunts, by fountain, cave, and dell.

LXX.

But thou, fair Attica! whose rocky bound
All art and nature’s richest gifts enshrined,
Thou little sphere, whose soul-illumined round
Concentrated each sunbeam of the mind;
Who, as the summit of some Alpine height
Glows earliest, latest, with the blush of day,
Didst first imbibe the splendours of the light,[43]
And smile the longest in its lingering ray;
Oh! let us gaze on thee, and fondly deem
The past awhile restored, the present but a dream.

LXXI.

Let Fancy’s vivid hues awhile prevail—
Wake at her call—be all thou wert once more!

Hark! hymns of triumph swell on every gale—
Lo! bright processions move along thy shore;
Again thy temples, midst the olive-shade,
Lovely in chaste simplicity arise;
And graceful monuments, in grove and glade,
Catch the warm tints of thy resplendent skies;
And sculptured forms, of high and heavenly mien,
In their calm beauty smile around the sun-bright scene.

LXXII.

Again renew’d by Thought’s creative spells,
In all her pomp thy city, Theseus! towers:
Within, around, the light of glory dwells
On art’s fair fabrics, wisdom’s holy bowers.
There marble fanes in finish’d grace ascend,
The pencil’s world of life and beauty glows;
Shrines, pillars, porticoes, in grandeur blend,
Rich with the trophies of barbaric foes;
And groves of platane wave in verdant pride,
The sage’s blest retreats, by calm Ilissus’ tide.

LXXIII.

Bright as that fairy vision of the wave,
Raised by the magic of Morgana’s wand,[44]
On summer seas that undulating lave

Romantic Sicily’s Arcadian strand;
That pictured scene of airy colonnades,
Light palaces, in shadowy glory drest,
Enchanted groves, and temples, and arcades,
Gleaming and floating on the ocean’s breast;
Athens! thus fair the dream of thee appears,
As Fancy’s eye pervades the veiling cloud of years.

LXXIV.

Still be that cloud withdrawn—oh! mark on high,
Crowning yon hill, with temples richly graced,
That fane, august in perfect symmetry,
The purest model of Athenian taste.
Fair Parthenon! thy Doric pillars rise
In simple dignity, thy marble’s hue
Unsullied shines, relieved by brilliant skies,
That round thee spread their deep ethereal blue;
And art o’er all thy light proportions throws
The harmony of grace, the beauty of repose.

LXXV.

And lovely o’er thee sleeps the sunny glow,
When morn and eve in tranquil splendour reign,
And on thy sculptures, as they smile, bestow
Hues that the pencil emulates in vain.

Then the fair forms by Phidias wrought, unfold
Each latent grace, developing in light;
Catch, from soft clouds of purple and of gold,
Each tint that passes, tremulously bright;
And seem indeed whate'er devotion deems,
While so suffused with heaven, so mingling with its beams.

LXXVI.

But oh! what words the vision may portray,
The form of sanctitude that guards thy shrine?
There stands thy goddess, robed in war's array,
Supremely glorious, awfully divine!
With spear and helm she stands, and flowing vest,
And sculptured ægis, to perfection wrought;
And on each heavenly lineament imprest,
Calmly sublime, the majesty of thought—
The pure intelligence, the chaste repose—
All that a poet's dream around Minerva throws.

LXXVII.

Bright age of Pericles! let fancy still
Through time's deep shadows all thy splendour trace,
And in each work of art's consummate skill
Hail the free spirit of thy lofty race:
That spirit, roused by every proud reward

That hope could picture, glory could bestow,
Foster’d by all the sculptor and the bard
Could give of immortality below.
Thus were thy heroes form’d, and o’er their name,
Thus did thy genius shed imperishable fame.

LXXVIII.

Mark in the throng’d Ceramicus, the train
Of mourners weeping o’er the martyr’d brave:
Proud be the tears devoted to the slain,
Holy the amaranth strew’d upon their grave![45]
And hark! unrivall’d eloquence proclaims
Their deeds, their trophies, with triumphant voice!
Hark! Pericles records their honour’d names![46]
Sons of the fallen, in their lot rejoice:
What hath life brighter than so bright a doom?
What power hath fate to soil the garlands of the tomb?

LXXIX.

Praise to the valiant dead! for them doth art
Exhaust her skill, their triumphs bodying forth;
Theirs are enshrinèd names, and every heart
Shall bear the blazon’d impress of their worth.
Bright on the dreams of youth their fame shall rise,
Their fields of fight shall epic song record;

And, when the voice of battle rends the skies,
Their name shall be their country's rallying word!
While fane and column rise august to tell
How Athens honours those for her who proudly fell.

LXXX.

City of Theseus! bursting on the mind,
Thus dost thou rise, in all thy glory fled!
Thus guarded by the mighty of mankind,
Thus hallow'd by the memory of the dead:
Alone in beauty and renown—a scene
Whose tints are drawn from freedom's loveliest ray.
'Tis but a vision now—yet thou hast been
More than the brightest vision might portray;
And every stone, with but a vestige fraught
Of thee, hath latent power to wake some lofty thought.

LXXXI.

Fall'n are thy fabrics, that so oft have rung
To choral melodies and tragic lore;
Now is the lyre of Sophocles unstrung,
The song that hail'd Harmodius peals no more.
Thy proud Piræus is a desert strand,
Thy stately shrines are mouldering on their hill,
Closed are the triumphs of the sculptor's hand,

The magic voice of eloquence is still;

Minerva's veil is rent[47]—her image gone;

Silent the sage's bower—the warrior's tomb o'erthrown.

LXXXII.

Yet in decay thine exquisite remains

Wondering we view, and silently revere,

As traces left on earth's forsaken plains

By vanish'd beings of a nobler sphere!

Not all the old magnificence of Rome,

All that dominion there hath left to time—

Proud Coliseum, or commanding dome,

Triumphal arch, or obelisk sublime,

Can bid such reverence o'er the spirit steal,

As aught by thee imprest with beauty's plastic seal.

LXXXIII.

Though still the empress of the sunburnt waste,

Palmyra rises, desolately grand—

Though with rich gold[48] and massy sculpture graced,

Commanding still, Persepolis may stand

In haughty solitude—though sacred Nile

The first-born temples of the world surveys,

And many an awful and stupendous pile

Thebes of the hundred gates e'en yet displays;

City of Pericles! oh who, like thee,
Can teach how fair the works of mortal hand may be?

LXXXIV.

Thou led’st the way to that illumined sphere
Where sovereign beauty dwells; and thence didst bear,
Oh, still triumphant in that high career!
Bright archetypes of all the grand and fair.
And still to thee th’ enlighten’d mind hath flown
As to her country,—thou hast been to earth
A cynosure,—and, e’en from victory’s throne,
Imperial Rome gave homage to thy worth;
And nations, rising to their fame afar,
Still to thy model turn, as seamen to their star.

LXXXV.

Glory to those whose relics thus arrest
The gaze of ages! Glory to the free!
For they, they only, could have thus imprest
Their mighty image on the years to be!
Empires and cities in oblivion lie,
Grandeur may vanish, conquest be forgot,—
To leave on earth renown that cannot die,
Of high-soul’d genius is th’ unrivall’d lot.
Honour to thee, O Athens! thou hast shown

What mortals may attain, and seized the palm alone.

LXXXVI.

Oh! live there those who view with scornful eyes
All that attests the brightness of thy prime?
Yes; they who dwell beneath thy lovely skies,
And breathe th’ inspiring ether of thy clime!
Their path is o’er the mightiest of the dead,
Their homes are midst the works of noblest arts;
Yet all around their gaze, beneath their tread,
Not one proud thrill of loftier thought imparts.
Such are the conquerors of Minerva’s land,
Where Genius first reveal’d the triumphs of his hand!

LXXXVII.

For them in vain the glowing light may smile
O’er the pale marble, colouring’s warmth to shed,
And in chaste beauty many a sculptured pile
Still o’er the dust of heroes lift its head.
No patriot feeling binds them to the soil,
Whose tombs and shrines their fathers have not rear’d;
Their glance is cold indifference, and their toil
But to destroy what ages have revered—
As if exulting sternly to erase
Whate’er might prove that land had nursed a nobler race.

LXXXVIII.

And who may grieve that, rescued from their hands,
Spoilers of excellence and foes to art,
Thy relics, Athens! borne to other lands,
Claim homage still to thee from every heart
Though now no more th’ exploring stranger’s sight,
Fix’d in deep reverence on Minerva’s fane,
Shall hail, beneath their native heaven of light,
All that remain’d of forms adored in vain;
A few short years—and, vanish’d from the scene,
To blend with classic dust their proudest lot had been.

LXXXIX.

Fair Parthenon! yet still must Fancy weep
For thee, thou work of nobler spirits flown.
Bright, as of old, the sunbeams o’er thee sleep
In all their beauty still—and thine is gone!
Empires have sunk since thou wert first revered,
And varying rights have sanctified thy shrine.
The dust is round thee of the race that rear’d
Thy walls; and thou—their fate must soon be thine!
But when shall earth again exult to see
Visions divine like theirs renew’d in aught like thee?

XC.

Lone are thy pillars now—each passing gale
Sighs o’er them as a spirit’s voice, which moan’d
That loneliness, and told the plaintive tale
Of the bright synod once above them throned.
Mourn, graceful ruin! on thy sacred hill,
Thy gods, thy rites, a kindred fate have shared:
Yet art thou honour’d in each fragment still
That wasting years and barbarous hands had spared;
Each hallow’d stone, from rapine’s fury borne,
Shall wake bright dreams of thee in ages yet unborn.

XCI.

Yes! in those fragments, though by time defaced
And rude insensate conquerors, yet remains
All that may charm th’ enlighten’d eye of taste,
On shores where still inspiring freedom reigns.
As vital fragrance breathes from every part
Of the crush’d myrtle, or the bruisèd rose,
E’en thus th’ essential energy of art
There in each wreck imperishably glows![49]
The soul of Athens lives in every line,
Pervading brightly still the ruins of her shrine.

XCII.

Mark on the storied frieze the graceful train,

The holy festival’s triumphal throng,
In fair procession to Minerva’s fane,
With many a sacred symbol, move along.
There every shade of bright existence trace,
The fire of youth, the dignity of age;
The matron’s calm austerity of grace,
The ardent warrior, the benignant sage;
The nymph’s light symmetry, the chief’s proud mien—
Each ray of beauty caught and mingled in the scene.

XCIII.

Art unobtrusive there ennobles form,[50]
Each pure chaste outline exquisitely flows;
There e’en the steed, withhold expression warm,[51]
Is clothed with majesty, with being glows.
One mighty mind hath harmonised the whole;
Those varied groups the same bright impress bear;
One beam and essence of exalting soul
Lives in the grand, the delicate, the fair;
And well that pageant of the glorious dead
Blends us with nobler days, and loftier spirits fled.

XCIV.

O conquering Genius! that couldst thus detain
The subtle graces, fading as they rise,

Eternalise expression’s fleeting reign,
Arrest warm life in all its energies,
And fix them on the stone—thy glorious lot
Might wake ambition’s envy, and create
Powers half divine: while nations are forgot,
A thought, a dream of thine hath vanquish’d fate!
And when thy hand first gave its wonders birth,
The realms that hail them now scarce claim’d a name on earth.

XCV.

Wert thou some spirit of a purer sphere
But once beheld, and never to return?
No—we may hail again thy bright career,
Again on earth a kindred fire shall burn!
Though thy least relics, e’en in ruin, bear
A stamp of heaven, that ne’er hath been renew’d—
A light inherent—let not man despair:
Still be hope ardent, patience unsubdued;
For still is nature fair, and thought divine,
And art hath won a world in models pure as thine.[52]

XCVI.

Gaze on yon forms, corroded and defaced—
Yet there the germ of future glory lies!
Their virtual grandeur could not be erased;

It clothes them still, though veil’d from common eyes.
They once were gods and heroes[53]—and beheld
As the blest guardians of their native scene;
And hearts of warriors, sages, bards, have swell’d
With awe that own’d their sovereignty of mien.
Ages have vanish’d since those hearts were cold,
And still those shatter’d forms retain their godlike mould.

XCVII.

Midst their bright kindred, from their marble throne
They have look’d down on thousand storms of time;
Surviving power, and fame, and freedom flown,
They still remain’d, still tranquilly sublime!
Till mortal hands the heavenly conclave marr’d.
The Olympian groups have sunk, and are forgot—
Not e’en their dust could weeping Athens guard;
But these were destined to a nobler lot!
And they have borne, to light another land,
The quenchless ray that soon shall gloriously expand.

XCVIII.

Phidias! supreme in thought! what hand but thine,
In human works thus blending earth and heaven,
O’er nature’s truth had spread that grace divine,
To mortal form immortal grandeur given?

What soul but thine, infusing all its power
In these last monuments of matchless days,
Could from their ruins bid young Genius tower,
And Hope aspire to more exalted praise;
And guide deep Thought to that secluded height
Where excellence is throned in purity of light?

XCIX.

And who can tell how pure, how bright a flame,
Caught from these models, may illume the west?
What British Angelo may rise to fame,[54]
On the free isle what beams of art may rest?
Deem not, O England! that by climes confined,
Genius and taste diffuse a partial ray;[55]
Deem not the eternal energies of mind
Sway’d by that sun whose doom is but decay!
Shall thought be foster’d but by skies serene?
No! thou hast power to be what Athens e’er hath been.

C.

But thine are treasures oft unprized, unknown,
And cold neglect hath blighted many a mind,
O’er whose young ardours had thy smile but shone,
Their soaring flight had left a world behind!
And many a gifted hand, that might have wrought

To Grecian excellence the breathing stone,

Or each pure grace of Raphael's pencil caught,

Leaving no record of its power, is gone!

While thou hast fondly sought, on distant coast,

Gems far less rich than those, thus precious, and thus lost

CI.

Yet rise, O Land, in all but art alone!

Bid the sole wreath that is not thine be won!

Fame dwells around thee—Genius is thine own;

Call his rich blooms to life—be thou their sun!

So, should dark ages o'er thy glory sweep,

Should thine e'er be as now are Grecian plains,

Nations unborn shall track thine own blue deep

To hail thy shore, to worship thy remains;

Thy mighty monuments with reverence trace,

And cry, "This ancient soil hath nursed a glorious race!"

[12] "The Pæstan rose, from its peculiar fragrance and the singularity of blooming twice a-year, is often mentioned by the classic poets. The wild rose, which now shoots up among the ruins, is of the small single damask kind, with a very high perfume; as a farmer assured me on the spot, it flowers both in spring and autumn."—Swinburne's Travels in the Two Sicilies.

[13] In the naval engagements of the Greeks, "it was usual for the soldiers before the fight to sing a pæan, or hymn, to Mars, and after the fight another to Apollo."—See Potter's Antiquities of Greece, vol. ii. p. 155.

[14] The emigration of the natives of the Morea to different parts of Asia is thus mentioned by Châteaubriand in his Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem—"Parvenu au dernier degré du malheur, le Moraïte s'arrache de son pays, et va chercher en Asie un sort moins rigoureux. Vain espoir! il retrouve des cadis et des pachas jusques dans les sables du Jourdain et dans les déserts de Palmyre."

[15] In the same work, Châteaubriand also relates his having met with several Greek emigrants who had established themselves in the woods of Florida.

[16] "La grâce est toujours unie à la magnificence dans les scènes de la nature: et tandis que le courant du milieu entraine vers la mer les cadavres des pins et des chênes, on voit sur les deux courants latéraux, remonter, le long des rivages des îles flottantes de Pistia et de Nénuphar, dont les roses jaunes s'élèvent comme de petits papillons."—Description of the Banks of the Mississippi, Chateaubriand's Atala.

[17] "Looking generally at the narrowness and abruptness of this mountain-channel, (Tempe,) and contrasting it with the course of the Peneus through the plains of Thessaly, the imagination instantly recurs to the tradition that these plains were once covered with water, for which some convulsion of nature had subsequently opened this narrow passage. The term vale, in our language, is usually employed to describe scenery in which the predominant features are breadth, beauty, and repose. The reader has already perceived that the term is wholly inapplicable to the scenery at this spot, and that the phrase, vale of Tempe, is one that depends on poetic fiction.... The real character of Tempe, though it perhaps be less beautiful, yet possesses more of magnificence than is implied in the epithet given to it.... To those who have visited St Vincent's rocks, below Bristol, I cannot convey a more sufficient idea of Tempe, than by saying that its scenery resembles, though on a much larger scale, that of the former place. The Peneus, indeed, as it flows through the valley, is not greatly wider than the Avon; and the channel between the cliffs is equally contracted in its dimensions: but these cliffs themselves are much loftier and more precipitous,

and project their vast masses of rock with still more extraordinary abruptness over the hollow beneath."—Holland's Travels in Albania, &c.

[18] The modern name of the Peneus is Salympria.

[19] "Towards the lower part of Tempe, these cliffs are peaked in a very singular manner, and form projecting angles on the vast perpendicular faces of rock which they present towards the chasm; where the surface renders it possible, the summits and ledges of the rocks are for the most part covered with small wood, chiefly oak, with the arbutus and other shrubs. On the banks of the river, wherever there is a small interval between the water and the cliffs, it is covered by the rich and widely spreading foliage of the plane, the oak, and other forest trees, which in these situations have attained a remarkable size, and in various places extend their shadow far over the channel of the stream.... The rocks on each side of the vale of Tempe are evidently the same; what may be called, I believe, a coarse bluish-gray marble, with veins and portions of the rock in which the marble is of finer quality."—Holland's Travels in Albania, &c.

[20] The Amphictyonic Council was convened in spring and autumn at Delphi or Thermopylæ, and presided at the Pythian games which were celebrated at Delphi every fifth year.

[21] "This spot, (the field of Mantinea,) on which so many brave men were laid to rest, is now covered with rosemary and laurels."—Pouqueville's Travels in the Morea.

[22] For the accounts of the upas or poison tree of Java, now generally believed to be fabulous, or greatly exaggerated, see the notes to Darwin's Botanic Garden.

[23] "The court most to be admired of the Alhambra is that called the court of the Lions; it is ornamented with sixty elegant pillars of an architecture which bears not the least resemblance to any of the known orders, and might be called the Arabian order.... But its principal ornament, and that from which it took its name, is an

alabaster cup, six feet in diameter, supported by twelve lions, which is said to have been made in imitation of the Brazen Sea of Solomon's temple."—Burgoanne's Travels in Spain.

[24] "Sept des plus fameux parmi les anciens poëtes Arabiques sont désignés par les écrivains orientaux sous le nom de Pleïade Arabique, et leurs ouvrages étaient suspendus autour de la Caaba, ou Mosque de la Mecque."—Sismondi, Littérature du Midi.

[25] "The distress and fall of the last Constantine are more glorious than the long prosperity of the Byzantine Cæsars."—Gibbon's Decline and Fall, &c. vol. xii. p. 226.

[26] See the description of the night previous to the taking of Constantinople by Mahomet II.—Gibbon's Decline and Fall, &c. vol. xii. p. 225.

[27] "This building (the Castle of the Seven Towers) is mentioned as early as the sixth century of the Christian era, as a spot which contributed to the defence of Constantinople; and it was the principal bulwark of the town on the coast of the Propontis, in the last periods of the empire."—Pouqueville's Travels in the Morea.

[28] See the account from Herodotus of the supernatural defence of Delphi.—Mitford's Greece, vol. i. p. 396-7.

[29] "In succeeding ages the Athenians honoured Theseus as a demigod, induced to it as well by other reasons as because, when they were fighting the Medes at Marathon, a considerable part of the army thought they saw the apparition of Theseus completely armed, and bearing down before them upon the barbarians."—Langhorne's Plutarch, Life of Theseus.

[30] "From Thermopylæ to Sparta, the leader of the Goths (Alaric) pursued his victorious march without encountering any mortal antagonist; but one of the advocates of expiring paganism has confidently asserted that the walls of Athens were guarded by the goddess Minerva, with her formidable ægis, and by the angry

phantom of Achilles, and that the conqueror was dismayed by the presence of the hostile deities of Greece."—Gibbon's Decline and Fall, &c. vol. v. p. 183.

[31] "Even all the chief ones of the earth."—Isaiah, xiv.

[32] "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"—Samuel, book ii. chap. i.

[33] For several interesting particulars relative to the Suliote warfare with Ali Pasha, see Holland's Travels in Albania.

[34] "It is related, as an authentic story, that a group of Suliote women assembled on one of the precipices adjoining the modern seraglio, and threw their infants into the chasm below, that they might not become the slaves of the enemy."—Holland's Travels, &c.

[35] The ruins of Sparta, near the modern town of Mistra, are very inconsiderable, and only sufficient to mark the site of the ancient city. The scenery around them is described by travellers as very striking.

[36] The inscription composed by Simonides for the Spartan monument in the pass of Thermopylæ has been thus translated:—"Stranger, go tell the Lacedemonians that we have obeyed their laws, and that we lie here."

[37] "In the Eurotas I observed abundance of those famous reeds which were known in the earliest ages; and all the rivers and marshes of Greece are replete with rose-laurels, while the springs and rivulets are covered with lilies, tuberoses, hyacinths, and narcissus orientalis."—Pouqueville's Travels in the Morea.

[38] It was usual for suppliants to carry an olive branch bound with wool.

[39] The olive, according to Pouqueville, is still regarded with veneration by the people of the Morea.

[40] It was customary at Eleusis, on the fifth day of the festival, for men and women to run about with torches in their hands, and also to dedicate torches to Ceres, and to

contend who should present the largest. This was done in memory of the journey of Ceres in search of Proserpine, during which she was lighted by a torch kindled in the flames of Etna.—Porter's Antiquities of Greece, vol. i. p. 392.

[41] The fountains of Oblivion and Memory, with the Hercynian fountain, are still to be seen amongst the rocks near Livadia, though the situation of the cave of Trophonius, in their vicinity, cannot be exactly ascertained.—See Holland's Travels.

[42] Elis was anciently a sacred territory, its inhabitants being considered as consecrated to the service of Jupiter. All armies marching through it delivered up their weapons, and received them again when they had passed its boundary.

[43] "We are assured by Thucydides that Attica was the province of Greece in which population first became settled, and where the earliest progress was made toward civilisation."—Mitford's Greece, vol. i. p. 35.

[44] Fata Morgana. This remarkable aërial phenomenon, which is thought by the lower order of Sicilians to be the work of a fairy, is thus described by Father Angelucci, whose account is quoted by Swinburne:—

"On the 15th August 1643, I was surprised, as I stood at my window, with a most wonderful spectacle: the sea that washes the Sicilian shore swelled up, and became, for ten miles in length, like a chain of dark mountains, while the waters near our Calabrian coast grew quite smooth, and in an instant appeared like one clear polished mirror. On this glass was depicted, in chiaro-scuro, a string of several thousands of pilasters, all equal in height, distance, and degrees of light and shade. In a moment they bent into arcades, like Roman aqueducts. A long cornice was next formed at the top, and above it rose innumerable castles, all perfectly alike; these again changed into towers, which were shortly after lost in colonnades, then windows, and at last ended in pines, cypresses, and other trees."—Swinburne's Travels in the Two Sicilies.

[45] All sorts of purple and white flowers were supposed by the Greeks to be

acceptable to the dead, and used in adorning tombs; as amaranth, with which the Thessalians decorated the tomb of Achilles.—Potter's Antiquities of Greece, vol. ii. p. 232.

[46] Pericles, on his return to Athens after the reduction of Samos, celebrated in a splendid manner the obsequies of his countrymen who fell in that war, and pronounced himself the funeral oration usual on such occasions. This gained him great applause; and when he came down from the rostrum the women paid their respects to him, and presented him with crowns and chaplets, like a champion just returned victorious from the lists.—Langhorne's Plutarch, Life of Pericles.

[47] The peplus, which is supposed to have been suspended as an awning over the statue of Minerva in the Parthenon, was a principal ornament of the Panathenaic festival; and it was embroidered with various colours, representing the battle of the gods and Titans, and the exploits of Athenian heroes. When the festival was celebrated, the peplus was brought from the Acropolis, and suspended as a sail to the vessel, which on that day was conducted through the Ceramicus and principal streets of Athens, till it had made the circuit of the Acropolis. The peplus was then carried to the Parthenon, and consecrated to Minerva.—See Chandler's Travels, Stuart's Athens, &c.

[48] The gilding amidst the ruins of Persepolis is still, according to Winckelmann, in high preservation.

[49] "In the most broken fragment, the same great principle of life can be proved to exist, as in the most perfect figure," is one of the observations of Mr Haydon on the Elgin Marbles.

[50] "Every thing here breathes life, with a veracity, with an exquisite knowledge of art, but without the least ostentation or parade of it, which is concealed by consummate and masterly skill."—Canova's Letter to the Earl of Elgin.

[51] Mr West, after expressing his admiration of the horse's head in Lord Elgin's

collection of Athenian sculpture, thus proceeds:—"We feel the same, when we view the young equestrian Athenians, and, in observing them, we are insensibly carried on with the impression that they and their horses actually existed, as we see them, at the instant when they were converted into marble."—West's Second Letter to Lord Elgin.

[52] Mr Flaxman thinks that sculpture has very greatly improved within these last twenty years, and that his opinion is not singular—because works of such prime importance as the Elgin Marbles could not remain in any country without a consequent improvement of the public taste, and the talents of the artist.—See the Evidence given in reply to Interrogatories from the Committee on the Elgin Marbles.

[53] The Theseus and Ilissus, which are considered by Sir T. Lawrence, Mr Westmacott, and other distinguished artists, to be of a higher class than the Apollo Belvidere, "because there is in them a union of very grand form, with a more true and natural expression of the effect of action upon the human frame than there is in the Apollo, or any of the other more celebrated statues."—See The Evidence, &c.

[54] "Let us suppose a young man at this time in London, endowed with powers such as enabled Michael Angelo to advance the arts, as he did, by the aid of one mutilated specimen of Grecian excellence in sculpture, to what an eminence might not such a genius carry art, by the opportunity of studying those sculptures, in the aggregate, which adorned the temple of Minerva at Athens?"—West's Second Letter to Lord Elgin.

[55] In allusion to the theories of Du Bos, Winckelmann, Montesquieu, &c., with regard to the inherent obstacles in the climate of England to the progress of genius and the arts.—See Hoare's Epochs of the Arts, p. 84, 85.

EXTRACTS FROM CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS.

Blackwood's Magazine.—"In our reviews of poetical productions, the better efforts

of genius hold out to us a task at once more useful and delightful than those of inferior merit. In the former the beautiful predominate, and expose while they excuse the blemishes. But the public taste would receive no benefit from a detail of mediocrity, relieved only by the censure of faults uncompensated by excellencies. We have great pleasure in calling the attention of our readers to the beautiful poem before us, which we believe to be the work of the same lady who last year put her name to the second edition of another poem on a kindred subject, 'The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy'—namely, Mrs Hemans of North Wales. That the author's fame has not altogether kept pace with her merit, we are inclined to think is a reproach to the public. Poetry is at present experiencing the fickleness of fashion, and may be said to have had its day. Very recently, the reading public, as the phrase is, was immersed in poetry, but seems to have had enough; and, excepting always that portion of it who are found to relish genuine poetry on its own intrinsic account, and will never tire of the exquisite enjoyment which it affords, the said public seldom read poetry at all.

"But so little is that excitement which the bulk of readers covet necessarily connected with poetry, that these readers have tired even of romances in a metrical form, and are regarding all their late rhythmical favourites alike, with that sort of ingratitude with which repletion would lead them to regard a banquet when the dishes are removing from the table. But this is no proof that these great poets have forfeited their title to be admired. They are fixed orbs, which stand just where they did, and shine just as they were wont, although they seem to decline to the world, which revolves the opposite way. But if the world will turn from the poet, whatever be his merit, there is an end of his popularity, inasmuch as the most approved conductor of the latter is the multitude, as essentially as is the air of the sound of his voice. Profit will also fail from the lack of purchasers; and poetry, high as it may intrinsically seem, must fall, commercially speaking, to its ancient proverbially unprofitable level. Yet poetry will still be poetry, however it may cease to pay; and

although the acclaim of multitudes is one thing, and the still small voice of genuine taste and feeling another, the nobler incense of the latter will ever be its reward.

“Our readers will now cease to wonder that an author like the present, who has had no higher aim than to regale the imagination with imagery, warm the heart with sentiment and feeling, and delight the ear with music, without the foreign aid of tale or fable, has hitherto written to a select few, and passed almost unnoticed by the multitude.

“With the exception of Lord Byron, who has made the theme peculiarly his own, no one has more feelingly contrasted ancient with modern Greece.

“The poem on the Restoration of the Louvre Collection, has, of course, more allusions to ancient Rome; and nothing can be more spirited than the passages in which the author invokes for modern Rome the return of her ancient glories. In a cursory but graphic manner, some of the most celebrated of the ancient statues are described. Referring our readers, with great confidence, to the works themselves, our extracts may be limited.”

Edinburgh Monthly Review.—“The grand act of retribution—the restoration of the treasures of the Louvre—occasioned Mrs Hemans’ first publication. ‘Modern Greece’ next appeared, and soared still higher into the regions of beauty and pathos. It is a highly promising symptom, that each new effort of her genius excels its predecessor. The present volume strikingly confirms this observation, and leads us to think that we have yet seen no more than the trials of her strength.”

TRANSLATIONS FROM CAMOENS, AND OTHER POETS.

“Siamo nati veramente in un secolo in cui gl’ingegni e gli studj degli uomini sono rivolti all’ utilità. L’Agricoltura, le Arti, il Commercio acquistano tutto dì novi lumi

dalle ricerche de' Saggi; e il voler farsi un nome tentando di dilettare, quand' altri v'aspira con più giustizia giovando, sembra impresa dura e difficile."—Savioli.

SONNET 70.

"Na metade do ceo subido ardia."

High in the glowing heavens, with cloudless beam,
The sun had reach'd the zenith of his reign,
And for the living fount, the gelid stream,
Each flock forsook the herbage of the plain:
Midst the dark foliage of the forest shade,
The birds had shelter'd from the scorching ray;
Hush'd were their melodies—and grove and glade
Resounded but the shrill cicada's lay:
When, through the grassy vale, a love-lorn swain,
To seek the maid who but despised his pain,
Breathing vain sighs of fruitless passion, roved:
"Why pine for her," the slighted wanderer cried,
"By whom thou art not loved?" and thus replied
An echo's murmuring voice—"Thou art not loved!"

SONNET 282.

FROM PSALM CXXXVII.

"Na ribeira de Euprates assentado."

Wrapt in sad musings, by Euphrates' stream
I sat, retracing days for ever flown,

While rose thine image on the exile’s dream,
O much-loved Salem! and thy glories gone:
When they who caused the ceaseless tears I shed,
Thus to their captive spoke—“Why sleep thy lays?
Sing of thy treasures lost, thy splendour fled,
And all thy triumphs in departed days!
Know’st thou not Harmony’s resistless charm
Can soothe each passion, and each grief disarm?
Sing then, and tears will vanish from thine eye.”
With sighs I answer’d,—“When the cup of woe
Is fill’d, till misery’s bitter draught o’erflow,
The mourner’s cure is not to sing—but die.”

PART OF ECLOGUE 15.

“Se lá no assento da maior alteza.”
If in thy glorious home above
Thou still recallest earthly love,
If yet retain’d a thought may be
Of him whose heart hath bled for thee;
Remember still how deeply shrined
Thine image in his joyless mind:
Each well-known scene, each former care,
Forgotten—thou alone art there!
Remember that thine eye-beam’s light
Hath fled for ever from his sight,

And, with that vanish’d sunshine, lost
Is every hope he cherish’d most.
Think that his life, from thee apart,
Is all but weariness of heart;
Each stream, whose music once was dear,
Now murmurs discord to his ear.
Through thee, the morn, whose cloudless rays
Woke him to joy in other days,
Now, in the light of beauty drest,
Brings but new sorrows to his breast.
Through thee, the heavens are dark to him,
The sun’s meridian blaze is dim;
And harsh were e’en the bird of eve,
But that her song still loves to grieve.
All it hath been, his heart forgets,
So alter’d by its long regrets;
Each wish is changed, each hope is o’er,
And joy’s light spirit wakes no more.

SONNET 271.

“A formosura desta fresca serra.”

This mountain-scene with sylvan grandeur crown’d,
These chestnut-woods, in summer verdure bright;
These founts and rivulets, whose mingling sound
Lulls every bosom to serene delight;

Soft on these hills the sun’s declining ray;
This clime, where all is new; these murmuring seas;
Flocks, to the fold that bend their lingering way;
Light clouds, contending with the genial breeze;
And all that Nature’s lavish hands dispense,
In gay luxuriance, charming every sense,
Ne’er in thy absence can delight my breast:
Nought, without thee, my weary soul beguiles:
And joy may beam; yet, midst her brightest smiles,
A secret grief is mine, that will not rest.

SONNET 186.

“Os olhos onde o casto Amor ardia.”

Those eyes, whence Love diffused his purest light,
Proud in such beaming orbs his reign to show;
That face, with tints of mingling lustre bright,
Where the rose mantled o’er the living snow;
The rich redundance of that golden hair,
Brighter than sunbeams of meridian day;
That form so graceful, and that hand so fair,
Where now those treasures?—mouldering into clay!
Thus, like some blossom prematurely torn,
Hath young Perfection wither’d in its morn,
Touch’d by the hand that gathers but to blight?
Oh, how could Love survive his bitter tears!

Shed, not for her, who mounts to happier spheres,
But for his own sad fate, thus wrapt in starless night!

SONNET 108.

“Brandas aguas do Tejo que passando.”

Fair Tajo! thou whose calmly-flowing tide
Bathes the fresh verdure of these lovely plains,
Enlivening all where’er thy waves may glide,
Flowers, herbage, flocks, and sylvan nymphs and swains.
Sweet stream! I know not when my steps again
Shall tread thy shores; and while to part I mourn,
I have no hope to meliorate my pain,
No dream that whispers—I may yet return!
My frowning destiny, whose watchful care
Forbids me blessings and ordains despair,
Commands me thus to leave thee, and repine
And I must vainly mourn the scenes I fly,
And breathe on other gales my plaintive sigh,
And blend my tears with other waves than thine!

SONNET 23.

TO A LADY WHO DIED AT SEA.

“Chara minha inimiga, em cuja mao.”

Thou to whose power my hopes, my joys I gave,
O fondly loved! my bosom’s dearest care!

Earth, which denied to lend thy form a grave,
Yields not one spell to soothe my deep despair!
Yes! the wild seas entomb those charms divine,
Dark o’er thy head th’ eternal billows roll;
But while one ray of life or thought is mine,
Still shalt thou live, the inmate of my soul.
And if the tones of my uncultured song
Have power the sad remembrance to prolong,
Of love so ardent, and of faith so pure;
Still shall my verse thine epitaph remain,
Still shall thy charms be deathless in my strain,
While Time, and Love, and Memory shall endure.

SONNET 19.

“Alma minha gentil, que te partiste.”

Spirit beloved! whose wing so soon hath flown
The joyless precincts of this earthly sphere,
How is yon Heaven eternally thine own,
Whilst I deplore thy loss, a captive here!
Oh! if allow’d in thy divine abode
Of aught on earth an image to retain,
Remember still the fervent love which glow’d
In my fond bosom, pure from every stain.
And if thou deem’d that all my faithful grief,
Caused by thy loss, and hopeless of relief,

Can merit thee, sweet native of the skies!
Oh! ask of Heaven, which call’d thee soon away,
That I may join thee in those realms of day,
Swiftly as thou hast vanish’d from mine eyes.

“Que estranho caso de amor!”

How strange a fate in love is mine!
How dearly prized the pains I feel!
Pangs, that to rend my soul combine,
With avarice I conceal:
For did the world the tale divine,
My lot would then be deeper woe—
And mine is grief that none must know.
To mortal ears I may not dare
Unfold the cause, the pain I prove;
’Twould plunge in ruin and despair
Or me, or her I love.
My soul delights alone to bear
Her silent, unsuspected woe,
And none shall pity, none shall know.
Thus buried in my bosom’s urn,
Thus in my inmost heart conceal’d,
Let me alone the secret mourn,
In pangs unsoothed and unreveal’d.
For whether happiness or woe,

Or life or death its power bestow,
It is what none on earth must know.

SONNET 58.

“Se as penas com que Amor tao mal me trata.”

Should Love, the tyrant of my suffering heart
Yet long enough protract his votary’s days
To see the lustre from those eyes depart,
The lode-stars[56] now that fascinate my gaze;
To see rude Time the living roses blight
That o’er thy cheek their loveliness unfold,
And, all unpitying, change thy tresses bright
To silvery whiteness, from their native gold;
Oh! then thy heart an equal change will prove,
And mourn the coldness that repell’d my love,
When tears and penitence will all be vain;
And I shall see thee weep for days gone by,
And in thy deep regret and fruitless sigh,
Find amplest vengeance for my former pain.

[56] “Your eyes are lode-stars.”—Shakespeare.

SONNET 178.

“Já cantei, já chorei a dura guerra.”

Oft have I sung and mourn’d the bitter woes
Which love for years hath mingled with my fate,

While he the tale forbade me to disclose,
That taught his votaries their deluded state.
Nymphs! who dispense Castalia’s living stream,
Ye, who from Death oblivion’s mantle steal,
Grant me a strain in powerful tone supreme,
Each grief by love inflicted to reveal:
That those whose ardent hearts adore his sway,
May hear experience breathe a warning lay—
How false his smiles, his promises how vain!
Then, if ye deign this effort to inspire,
When the sad task is o’er, my plaintive lyre,
For ever hush’d, shall slumber in your fane.

SONNET 80.

“Como quando do mar tempestuoso.”

Saved from the perils of the stormy wave,
And faint with toil, the wanderer of the main,
But just escaped from shipwreck’s billowy grave,
Trembles to hear its horrors named again.
How warm his vow, that Ocean’s fairest mien
No more shall lure him from the smiles of home!
Yet soon, forgetting each terrific scene,
Once more he turns, o’er boundless deeps to roam.
Lady! thus I, who vainly oft in flight
Seek refuge from the dangers of thy sight,

Make the firm vow to shim thee and be free:
But my fond heart, devoted to its chain,
Still draws me back where countless perils reign,
And grief and ruin spread their snares for me.

SONNET 239.

FROM PSALM CXXXVII.

“Em Babylonia sobre os rios, quando.”

Beside the streams of Babylon, in tears
Of vain desire, we sat; remembering thee,
O hallow’d Sion! and the vanish’d years,
When Israel’s chosen sons were blest and free:
Our harps, neglected and untuned, we hung
Mute on the willows of the stranger’s land;
When songs, like those that in thy fanes we sung,
Our foes demanded from their captive band.
“How shall our voices, on a foreign shore,”
(We answer’d those whose chains the exile wore,)
“The songs of God, our sacred songs, renew?
If I forget, midst grief and wasting toil,
Thee, O Jerusalem! my native soil!
May my right hand forget its cunning too!”

SONNET 128.

“Huma admiravel herva se conhece.”

There blooms a plant, whose gaze from hour to hour
Still to the sun with fond devotion turns,
Wakes when Creation hails his dawning power,
And most expands when most her idol burns:
But when he seeks the bosom of the deep,
His faithful plant’s reflected charms decay;
Then fade her flowers, her leaves discolour’d weep,
Still fondly pining for the vanish’d ray.
Thou whom I love, the day-star of my sight!
When thy dear presence wakes me to delight,
Joy in my soul unfolds her fairest flower:
But in thy heaven of smiles alone it blooms,
And, of their light deprived, in grief consumes,
Born but to live within thine eye-beam’s power.

“Polomeu apartamento.”

Amidst the bitter tears that fell
In anguish at my last farewell,
Oh! who would dream that joy could dwell,
To make that moment bright?
Yet be my judge, each heart! and say,
Which then could most my bosom sway,
Affliction or delight?
It was when Hope, oppress’d with woes,
Seem’d her dim eyes in death to close,

That rapture’s brightest beam arose
In sorrow’s darkest night.
Thus, if my soul survive that hour,
’Tis that my fate o’ercame the power
Of anguish with delight.
For oh! her love, so long unknown,
She then confess’d was all my own,
And in that parting hour alone
Reveal’d it to my sight.
And now what pangs will rend my soul,
Should fortune still, with stern control,
Forbid me this delight!
I know not if my bliss were vain,
For all the force of parting pain
Forbade suspicious doubts to reign,
When exiled from her sight:
Yet now what double woe for me,
Just at the close of eve, to see
The dayspring of delight!

SONNET 205.

“Quem diz que Amor he falso, o enganoso.”

He who proclaims that Love is light and vain,
Capricious, cruel, false in all his ways,
Ah! sure too well hath merited his pain,

Too justly finds him all he thus portrays:
For Love is pitying, Love is soft and kind.
Believe not him who dares the tale oppose;
Oh! deem him one whom stormy passions blind,
One to whom earth and heaven may well be foes.
If Love bring evils, view them all in me!
Here let the world his utmost rigour see,
His utmost power exerted to annoy:
But all his ire is still the ire of love;
And such delight in all his woes I prove,
I would not change their pangs for aught of other joy.

SONNET 133.

“Doces e claras aguas do Mondego.”

Waves of Mondego! brilliant and serene,
Haunts of my thought, where memory fondly strays,
Where hope allured me with perfidious mien,
Witching my soul, in long-departed days;
Yes, I forsake your banks! but still my heart
Shall bid remembrance all your charms restore,
And, suffering not one image to depart,
Find lengthening distance but endear you more.
Let Fortune’s will, through many a future day,
To distant realms this mortal frame convey,
Sport of each wind, and tost on every wave;

Yet my fond soul, to pensive memory true,
On thought's light pinion still shall fly to you,
And still, bright waters! in your current lave.

SONNET 181.

"Onde acharei lugar taō apartado."

Where shall I find some desert-scene so rude,
Where loneliness so undisturb'd may reign,
That not a step shall ever there intrude
Of roving man, or nature's savage train—
Some tangled thicket, desolate and drear,
Or deep wild forest, silent as the tomb,
Boasting no verdure bright, no fountain clear,
But darkly suited to my spirit's gloom?
That there, midst frowning rocks, alone with grief
Entomb'd in life, and hopeless of relief,
In lonely freedom I may breathe my woes.
For oh! since nought my sorrows can allay,
There shall my sadness cloud no festal day,
And days of gloom shall soothe me to repose.

SONNET 278.

"Eu vivia de lagrimas isento."

Exempt from every grief,'twas mine to live
In dreams so sweet, enchantments so divine,

A thousand joys propitious Love can give
Were scarcely worth one rapturous pain of mine
Bound by soft spells, in dear illusions blest,
I breathed no sigh for fortune or for power;
No care intruding to disturb my breast,
I dwelt entranced in Love's Elysian bower:
But Fate, such transports eager to destroy,
Soon rudely woke me from the dream of joy,
And bade the phantoms of delight begone:
Bade hope and happiness at once depart,
And left but memory to distract my heart,
Retracing every hour of bliss for ever flown.

"Mi nueve y dulce querella."

No searching eye can pierce the veil
That o'er my secret love is thrown;
No outward signs reveal its tale,
But to my bosom known.
Thus, like the spark whose vivid light
In the dark flint is hid from sight,
It dwells within, alone.

METASTASIO.

"Dunque si sfoga in pianto."

In tears, the heart oppress'd with grief

Gives language to its woes;
In tears, its fulness finds relief,
When rapture’s tide o’erflows!
Who, then, unclouded bliss would seek
On this terrestrial sphere;
When e’en Delight can only speak,
Like Sorrow—in a tear?
“Al furor d’avversa Sorte.”
He shall not dread Misfortune’s angry mien,
Nor feebly sink beneath her tempest rude,
Whose soul hath learn’d, through many a trying scene,
To smile at fate, and suffer unsubdued.
In the rough school of billows, clouds, and storms,
Nursed and matured, the pilot learns his art:
Thus Fate’s dread ire, by many a conflict, forms
The lofty spirit and enduring heart!
“Quella onda che ruina.”
The torrent wave, that breaks with force
Impetuous down the Alpine height,
Complains and struggles in its course,
But sparkles, as the diamond bright.
The stream in shadowy valley deep
May slumber in its narrow bed;
But silent, in unbroken sleep,

Its lustre and its life are fled.

“Leggiadra rosa, le cui pure foglie.”

Sweet rose! whose tender foliage to expand
Her fostering dews the Morning lightly shed,
Whilst gales of balmy breath thy blossoms fann’d,
And o’er thy leaves the soft suffusion spread:
That hand, whose care withdrew thee from the ground,
To brighter worlds thy favour’d charms hath borne;
Thy fairest buds, with grace perennial crown’d,
There breathe and bloom, released from every thorn.
Thus, far removed, and now transplanted flower!
Exposed no more to blast or tempest rude,
Shelter’d with tenderest care from frost or shower,
And each rough season’s chill vicissitude,
Now may thy form in bowers of peace assume
Immortal fragrance, and unwithering bloom.

“Che speri, instabil Dea, di sassi e spine.”

Fortune! why thus, where’er my footsteps tread,
Obstruct each path with rocks and thorns like these?
Think’st thou that I thy threatening mien shall dread,
Or toil and pant thy waving locks to seize?
Reserve the frown severe, the menace rude,
For vassal-spirits that confess thy sway!
My constant soul should triumph unsubdued,

Were the wide universe destruction’s prey.
Am I to conflicts new, in toils untried?
No! I have long thine utmost power defied,
And drawn fresh energies from every fight.
Thus from rude strokes of hammers and the wheel,
With each successive shock the temper’d steel
More keenly piercing proves, more dazzling bright.
“Parlagli d’un periglio.”
Wouldst thou to Love of danger speak?—
Veil’d are his eyes, to perils blind!
Wouldst thou from Love a reason seek?—
He is a child of wayward mind!
But with a doubt, a jealous fear,
Inspire him once—the task is o’er;
His mind is keen, his sight is clear,
No more an infant, blind no more.
“Sprezza il furor del vento.”
Unbending midst the wintry skies,
Rears the firm oak his vigorous form,
And stem in rugged strength, defies
The rushing of the storm.
Then sever’d from his native shore,
O’er ocean-worlds the sail to bear,
Still with those winds he braved before,

He proudly struggles there.

“Sol può dir che sia contento.”

Oh! those alone whose sever’d hearts

Have mourn’d through lingering years in vain,

Can tell what bliss fond Love imparts,

When Fate unites them once again.

Sweet is the sigh, and blest the tear,

Whose language hails that moment bright,

When past afflictions but endear

The presence of delight!

“Ah! frenate le piante imbelle!”

Ah! cease—those fruitless tears restrain!

I go misfortune to defy,

To smile at fate with proud disdain,

To triumph—not to die!

I with fresh laurels go to crown

My closing days at last,

Securing all the bright renown

Acquired in dangers past.

VINCENZO DA FILICAJA.

“Italia! Italia! O tu cui diè la sorte.”

Italia! O Italia! thou, so graced

With ill-starr’d beauty, which to thee hath been

A dower whose fatal splendour may be traced

In the deep-graven sorrows of thy mien;
Oh that more strength, or fewer charms were thine!
That those might fear thee more, or love thee less,
Who seem to worship at thy radiant shrine,
Then pierce thee with the death-pang's bitterness!
Not then would foreign hosts have drain'd the tide
Of that Eridanus thy blood hath dyed:
Nor from the Alps would legions, still renew'd,
Pour down; nor wouldst thou wield an alien brand,
And fight thy battles with the stranger's hand,
Still, still a slave, victorious or subdued!

PASTORINI.

"Genova mia! se con asciutto ciglio."
If thus thy fallen grandeur I behold,
My native Genoa! with a tearless eye,
Think not thy son's ungrateful heart is cold;
But know—I deem rebellious every sigh!
Thy glorious ruins proudly I survey,
Trophies of firm resolve, of patriot might!
And in each trace of devastation's way,
Thy worth, thy courage, meet my wandering sight.
Triumphs far less than suffering virtue shine!
And on the spoilers high revenge is thine,
While thy strong spirit unsubdued remains.

And lo! fair Liberty rejoicing flies
To kiss each noble relic, while she cries,
“Hail! though in ruins, thou wert ne’er in chains!”

LOPE DE VEGA.

“Estese el cortesano.”

Let the vain courtier waste his days,
Lured by the charms that wealth displays,
The couch of down, the board of costly fare;
Be his to kiss th’ ungrateful hand
That waves the sceptre of command,
And rear full many a palace in the air;
Whilst I enjoy, all unconfined,
The glowing sun, the genial wind,
And tranquil hours, to rustic toil assign’d;
And prize far more, in peace and health,
Contented indigence than joyless wealth.
Not mine in Fortune’s fane to bend,
At Grandeur’s altar to attend,
Reflect his smile, and tremble at his frown;
Nor mine a fond aspiring thought,
A wish, a sigh, a vision, fraught
With Fame’s bright phantom, Glory’s deathless crown!
Nectareous draughts and viands pure
Luxuriant nature will insure;

These the clear fount and fertile field
Still to the wearied shepherd yield;
And when repose and visions reign,
Then we are equals all, the monarch and the swain.

FRANCISCO MANUEL.

ON ASCENDING A HILL LEADING TO A CONVENT.

“No baxes temeroso, o peregrino!”

Pause not with lingering foot, O pilgrim! here,
Pierce the deep shadows of the mountain-side;
Firm be thy step, thy heart unknown to fear—
To brighter worlds this thorny path will guide.
Soon shall thy feet approach the calm abode,
So near the mansions of supreme delight;
Pause not, but tread this consecrated road—
’Tis the dark basis of the heavenly height.
Behold, to cheer thee on the toilsome way,
How many a fountain glitters down the hill!
Pure gales, inviting, softly round thee play,
Bright sunshine guides—and wilt thou linger still?
Oh! enter there, where, freed from human strife,
Hope is reality, and time is life.

DELLA CASA.

VENICE.

“Quest! palazzi, e queste logge or colte.”

These marble domes, by wealth and genius graced,
With sculptured forms, bright hues, and Parian stone,
Were once rude cabins midst a lonely waste,
Wild shores of solitude, and isles unknown.
Pure from each vice, ’twas here a venturous train
Fearless in fragile barks explored the sea;
Not theirs a wish to conquer or to reign,
They sought these island precincts—to be free.
Ne’er in their souls ambition’s flame arose,
No dream of avarice broke their calm repose;
Fraud, more than death, abhorr’d each artless breast:
Oh! now, since fortune gilds their brightening day,
Let not those virtues languish and decay,
O’erwhelm’d by luxury, and by wealth opprest!

IL MARCHESE CORNELIO BENTIVOGLIO.

“L’anima bella, che dal vero Eliso.”

The sainted spirit which, from bliss on high,
Descends like dayspring to my favour’d sight,
Shines in such noontide radiance of the sky,
Scarce do I know that form, intensely bright!
But with the sweetness of her well-known smile,
That smile of peace! she bids my doubts depart,
And takes my hand, and softly speaks the while,

And heaven’s full glory pictures to my heart.
Beams of that heaven in her my eyes behold,
And now, e’en now, in thought my wings unfold,
To soar with her, and mingle with the blest!
But ah! so swift her buoyant pinion flies,
That I, in vain aspiring to the skies,
Fall to my native sphere, by earthly bonds deprest.

QUEVEDO.

ROME BURIED IN HER OWN RUINS.

“Buscas en Roma á Roma, o peregrino!”
Amidst these scenes, O pilgrim! seek’st thou Rome?
Vain is thy search—the pomp of Rome is fled;
Her silent Aventine is glory’s tomb;
Her walls, her shrines, but relics of the dead.
That hill, where Cæsars dwelt in other days,
Forsaken mourns, where once it tower’d sublime;
Each mouldering medal now far less displays
The triumphs won by Latium than by Time.
Tiber alone survives—the passing wave
That bathed her towers now murmurs by her grave,
Wailing with plaintive sound her fallen fanes.
Rome! of thine ancient grandeur all is past,
That seem’d for years eternal framed to last:
Nought but the wave—a fugitive, remains.

EL CONDE JUAN DE TARSIS.

“Tu, que la dulce vida en tiernas anos.”

Thou, who hast fled from life’s enchanted bowers,
In youth’s gay spring, in beauty’s glowing morn,
Leaving thy bright array, thy path of flowers,
For the rude convent-garb and couch of thorn;
Thou that, escaping from a world of cares,
Hast found thy haven in devotion’s fane,
As to the port the fearful bark repairs
To shim the midnight perils of the main—
Now the glad hymn, the strain of rapture pour,
While on thy soul the beams of glory rise!
For if the pilot hail the welcome shore
With shouts of triumph swelling to the skies,
Oh! how shouldst thou the exulting pæan raise,
Now heaven’s bright harbour opens on thy gaze!

TORQUATO TASSO.

“Negli anni acerbi tuoi, purpurea rosa.”

Thou in thy morn wert like a glowing rose
To the mild sunshine only half display’d,
That shunn’d its bashful graces to disclose,
And in its veil of verdure sought a shade:
Or like Aurora did thy charms appear,
(Since mortal form ne’er vied with aught so bright,)

Aurora, smiling from her tranquil sphere,
O’er vale and mountain shedding dew and light.
Now riper years have doom’d no grace to fade;
Nor youthful charms, in all their pride array’d,
Excel, or equal, thy neglected form.
Thus, full expanded, lovelier is the flower,
And the bright day-star, in its noontide hour,
More brilliant shines, in genial radiance warm.

BERNARDO TASSO.

“Quest’ ombra che giammai non vide il sole.”
This green recess, where through the bowery gloom
Ne’er, e’en at noontide hours, the sunbeam play’d,
Where violet-beds in soft luxuriance bloom
Midst the cool freshness of the myrtle shade;
Where through the grass a sparkling fountain steals,
Whose murmuring wave, transparent as it flows,
No more its bed of yellow sand conceals
Than the pure crystal hides the glowing rose;
This bower of peace, thou soother of our care,
God of soft slumbers and of visions fair!
A lowly shepherd consecrates to thee!
Then breathe around some spell of deep repose,
And charm his eyes in balmy dew to close,
Those eyes, fatigued with grief, from tear-drops never free.

PETRARCH.

“Chi vuol veder quantunque può natura.”

Thou that wouldst mark, in form of human birth,
All heaven and nature’s perfect skill combined,
Come gaze on her, the day-star of the earth,
Dazzling, not me alone, but all mankind:
And haste! for Death, who spares the guilty long,
First calls the brightest and the best away;
And to her home, amidst the cherub throng,
The angelic mortal flies, and will not stay!
Haste! and each outward charm, each mental grace,
In one consummate form thine eye shall trace,
Model of loveliness, for earth too fair!
Then thou shalt own how faint my votive lays,
My spirit dazzled by perfection’s blaze:
But if thou still delay, for long regret prepare.

“Se lamentar augelli, o verdi fronde.”

If to the sighing breeze of summer hours
Bend the green leaves; if mourns a plaintive bird;
Or from some fount’s cool margin, fringed with flowers,
The soothing murmur of the wave is heard;
Her whom the heavens reveal, the earth denies,
I see and hear: though dwelling far above,
Her spirit, still responsive to my sighs,

Visits the lone retreat of pensive love.
“Why thus in grief consume each fruitless day,”
(Her gentle accents thus benignly say,)
“While from thine eyes the tear unceasing flows?
Weep not for me, who, hastening on my flight,
Died, to be deathless; and on heavenly light
Whose eyes but open’d, when they seem’d to close!”

VERSI SPAGNUOLI DI PIETRO BEMBO.

“O Muerte! que sueles ser.”
Thou, the stem monarch of dismay,
Whom nature trembles to survey,
O Death! to me, the child of grief,
Thy welcome power would bring relief,
Changing to peaceful slumber many a care.
And though thy stroke may thrill with pain
Each throbbing pulse, each quivering vein;
The pangs that bid existence close,
Ah! sure are far less keen than those
Which cloud its lingering moments with despair.

FRANCESCO LORENZINI.

“O Zefiretto, che movendo vai.”
Sylph of the breeze! whose dewy pinions light
Wave gently round the tree I planted here,

Sacred to her whose soul hath wing’d its flight
To the pure ether of her lofty sphere;
Be it thy care, soft spirit of the gale!
To fan its leaves in summer’s noontide hour;
Be it thy care that wintry tempests fail
To rend its honours from the sylvan bower.
Then shall it spread, and rear th’ aspiring form.
Pride of the wood, secure from every storm,
Graced with her name, a consecrated tree!
So may thy Lord, thy monarch of the wind,
Ne’er with rude chains thy tender pinions bind,
But grant thee still to rove, a wanderer wild and free!

GESNER.

MORNING SONG.

“Willkommen, fruhe morgensonn.”

Hail! morning sun, thus early bright;
Welcome, sweet dawn! thou younger day!
Through the dark woods that fringe the height,
Beams forth, e’en now, thy ray.
Bright on the dew it sparkles clear,
Bright on the water’s glittering fall,
And life, and joy, and health appear,
Sweet Morning! at thy call.
Now thy fresh breezes lightly spring

From beds of fragrance, where they lay,
And roving wild on dewy wing,
Drive slumber far away.
Fantastic dreams, in swift retreat,
Now from each mind withdraw their spell;
While the young loves delighted meet,
On Rosa’s cheek to dwell.
Speed, zephyr! kiss each opening flower,
Its fragrant spirit make thine own;
Then wing thy way to Rosa’s bower,
Ere her light sleep is flown.
There, o’er her downy pillow fly,
Wake the sweet maid to life and day;
Breathe on her balmy lip a sigh,
And o’er her bosom play;
And whisper, when her eyes unveil,
That I, since morning’s earliest call,
Have sigh’d her name to ev’ry gale
By the lone waterfall.

GERMAN SONG.

“Mädchen, lernet Amor kennen.”
Listen, fair maid! my song shall tell
How Love may still be known full well—
His looks the traitor prove.

Dost thou not see that absent smile,
That fiery glance replete with guile?
Oh! doubt not then—'tis Love.
When varying still the sly disguise,
Child of caprice, he laughs and cries,
Or with complaint would move;
To-day is bold, to-morrow shy,
Changing each hour, he knows not why.
Oh! doubt not then—'tis Love.
There's magic in his every wile,
His lips, well practised to beguile,
Breathe roses when they move;
See! now with sudden rage he burns,
Disdains, implores, commands, by turns.
Oh! doubt not then—'tis Love.
He comes, without the bow and dart,
That spare not e'en the purest heart;
His looks the traitor prove;
That glance is fire, that mien is guile,
Deceit is lurking in that smile—
Oh! trust him not—'tis Love!

CHAULIEU.

"Grotte, d'où sort ce clair ruisseau."
Thou grot, whence flows this limpid spring,

Its margin fringed with moss and flowers,
Still bid its voice of murmurs bring
Peace to my musing hours.
Sweet Fontenay! where first for me
The dayspring of existence rose,
Soon shall my dust return to thee,
And midst my sires repose.
Muses! that watch'd my childhood's morn,
Midst these wild haunts, with guardian eye—
Fair trees! that here beheld me born,
Soon shall ye see me die.

GARCILASO DE VEGA.

"Coyed de vuestra alegre primavera."

Enjoy the sweets of life's luxuriant May
Ere envious Age is hastening on his way
With snowy wreaths to crown the beauteous brow;
The rose will fade when storms assail the year,
And Time, who changeth not his swift career,
Constant in this, will change all else below!

LORENZO DE MEDICI.

VIOLETS.

"Non di verdi giardin ornati e colti."

We come not, fair one! to thy hand of snow

From the soft scenes by Culture’s hand array’d;
Not rear’d in bowers where gales of fragrance blow,
But in dark glens, and depths of forest shade!
There once, as Venus wander’d, lost in woe,
To seek Adonis through th’ entangled wood,
Piercing her foot, a thorn that lurk’d below
With print relentless drew celestial blood!
Then our light stems, with snowy blossoms fraught,
Bending to earth, each precious drop we caught,
Imbibing thence our bright purpureal dyes;
We were not foster’d in our shadowy vales
By guided rivulets or summer gales—
Our dew and air have been Love’s balmy tears and sighs!

PINDEMONTE.

ON THE HEBE OF CANOVA.

“Dove per te, celeste ancilla, or vassi?”
Whither, celestial maid, so fast away?
What lures thee from the banquet of the skies?
How canst thou leave thy native realms of day
For this low sphere, this vale of clouds and sighs?
O thou, Canova! soaring high above
Italian art—with Grecian magic vying!
We knew thy marble glow’d with life and love,
But who had seen thee image footsteps flying?

Here to each eye the wind seems gently playing

With the light vest, its wavy folds arraying

In many a line of undulating grace;

While Nature, ne'er her mighty laws suspending,

Stands, before marble thus with motion blending,

One moment lost in thought, its hidden cause to trace.

[A volume of translations published in 1818, might have been called by anticipation, "Lays of many Lands." At the time now alluded to, her inspirations were chiefly derived from classical subjects. The "graceful superstitions" of Greece, and the sublime patriotism of Rome, held an influence over her thoughts which is evinced by many of the works of this period—such as "The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy," "Modern Greece," and several of the poems which formed the volume entitled "Tales and Historic Scenes."

"Apart from all intercourse," says Delta, "with literary society, and acquainted only by name and occasional correspondence with any of the distinguished authors of whom England has to boast, Mrs Hemans, during the progress of her poetical career, had to contend with more and greater obstacles than usually stand in the path of female authorship. To her praise be it spoken, therefore, that it was to her own merit alone, wholly independent of adventitious circumstances, that she was indebted for the extensive share of popularity which her compositions ultimately obtained. From this studious seclusion were given forth the two poems which first permanently elevated her among the writers of her age,—the 'Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy,' and 'Modern Greece.' In these the maturity of her intellect appears; and she makes us feel, that she has marked out a path for herself through the regions of song. The versification is high-toned and musical, in accordance with the sentiment and subject; and in every page we have evidence, not only of taste and genius, but of careful elaboration and research. These efforts were favourably noticed by Lord

Byron; and attracted the admiration of Shelley. Bishop Heber and other judicious and intelligent counsellors cheered her on by their approbation: the reputation which, through years of silent study and exertion, she had, no doubt, sometimes with brightened and sometimes with doubtful hopes, looked forward to as a sufficient great reward, was at length unequivocally and unreluctantly accorded her by the world; and, probably, this was the happiest period of her life. The Translations from Camoens; the prize poem of Wallace, as also that of Dartmoor, the Tales and Historic Scenes, and the Sceptic, may all be referred to this epoch of her literary career."—Biographical Sketch, prefixed, to Poetical Remains, 1836.

In reference to the same period of Mrs Hemans' career, the late acute and accomplished Miss Jewsbury (afterwards Mrs Fletcher) has the following judicious observations:—

"At this stage of transition, her poetry was correct, classical, and highly polished; but it wanted warmth: it partook more of the nature of statuary than of painting. She fettered her mind with facts and authorities, and drew upon her memory when she might have relied upon her imagination. She was diffident of herself, and, to quote her own admission, 'loved to repose under the shadow of mighty names.'"—Athenæum, Feb. 1831.]

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

LINES

WRITTEN IN A HERMITAGE ON THE SEA-SHORE.

O wanderer! would thy heart forget

Each earthly passion and regret,

And would thy wearied spirit rise

To commune with its native skies;

Pause for a while, and deem it sweet
To linger in this calm retreat;
And give thy cares, thy griefs, a short suspense,
Amidst wild scenes of lone magnificence.
Unmix’d with aught of meaner tone,
Here Nature’s voice is heard alone:
When the loud storm, in wrathful hour,
Is rushing on its wing of power,
And spirits of the deep awake,
And surges foam, and billows break,
And rocks and ocean-caves around
Reverberate each awful sound—
That mighty voice, with all its dread control,
To loftiest thought shall wake thy thrilling soul.
But when no more the sea-winds rave,
When peace is brooding on the wave,
And from earth, air, and ocean rise
No sounds but plaintive melodies;
Soothed by their softly mingling swell,
As daylight bids the world farewell,
The rustling wood, the dying breeze,
The faint low rippling of the seas,
A tender calm shall steal upon thy breast,
A gleam reflected from the realms of rest.

Is thine a heart the world hath stung,
Friends have deceived, neglect hath wrung?
Hast thou some grief that none may know,
Some lonely, secret, silent woe?
Or have thy fond affections fled
From earth, to slumber with the dead?—
Oh! pause awhile—the world disown,
And dwell with Nature's self alone!
And though no more she bids arise
Thy soul's departed energies,
And though thy joy of life is o'er,
Beyond her magic to restore;
Yet shall her spells o'er every passion steal,
And soothe the wounded heart they cannot heal.

DIRGE OF A CHILD.

No bitter tears for thee be shed,
Blossom of being! seen and gone!
With flowers alone we strew thy bed,
O blest departed One!
Whose all of life, a rosy ray,
Blush'd into dawn and pass'd away.
Yes! thou art fled, ere guilt had power
To stain thy cherub-soul and form,
Closed is the soft ephemeral flower

That never felt a storm!
The sunbeam’s smile, the zephyr’s breath,
All that it knew from birth to death.
Thou wert so like a form of light,
That heaven benignly call’d thee hence,
Ere yet the world could breathe one blight
O’er thy sweet innocence:
And thou, that brighter home to bless,
Art pass’d, with all thy loveliness!
Oh I hadst thou still on earth remain’d,
Vision of beauty! fair, as brief!
How soon thy brightness had been stain’d
With passion or with grief!
Now not a sullying breath can rise
To dim thy glory in the skies.
We rear no marble o’er thy tomb—
No sculptured image there shall mourn;
Ah! fitter far the vernal bloom
Such dwelling to adorn.
Fragrance, and flowers, and dews, must be
The only emblems meet for thee.
Thy grave shall be a blessed shrine,
Adorn’d with Nature’s brightest wreath;
Each glowing season shall combine

Its incense there to breathe;
And oft, upon the midnight air,
Shall viewless harps be murmuring there.
And oh! sometimes in visions blest,
Sweet spirit! visit our repose;
And bear, from thine own world of rest,
Some balm for human woes!
What form more lovely could be given
Than thine to messenger of heaven?[57]

INVOCATION.

Hush’d is the world in night and sleep—
Earth, sea, and air are still as death;
Too rude to break a calm so deep
Were music’s faintest breath.
Descend, bright visions! from aërial bowers,
Descend to gild your own soft silent hours.
In hope or fear, in toil or pain,
The weary day have mortals pass’d;
Now, dreams of bliss! be yours to reign,
And all your spells around them cast;
Steal from their hearts the pang, their eyes the tear,
And lift the veil that hides a brighter sphere.
Oh, bear your softest balm to those
Who fondly, vainly, mourn the dead!

To them that world of peace disclose
Where the bright soul is fled:
Whore Love, immortal in his native clime,
Shall fear no pang from fate, no blight from time.
Or to his loved, his distant land
On your light wings the exile bear,
To feel once more his heart expand
In his own genial mountain-air;
Hear the wild echoes well-known strains repeat,
And bless each note, as heaven’s own music sweet.
But oh! with fancy’s brightest ray,
Blest dreams! the bard’s repose illume;
Bid forms of heaven around him play,
And bowers of Eden bloom!
And waft his spirit to its native skies
Who finds no charm in life’s realities.
No voice is on the air of night,
Through folded leaves no murmurs creep,
Nor star nor moonbeam’s trembling light
Falls on the placid brow of sleep.
Descend, bright visions! from your airy bower:
Dark, silent, solemn is your favourite hour.
[57] Vide Annotation from Quarterly Review, p. 62.

TO THE MEMORY OF GENERAL SIR E—D P—K—M.[58]

Brave spirit! mourn'd with fond regret,
Lost in life's pride, in valour's noon,
Oh, who could deem thy star should set
So darkly and so soon!
Fatal, though bright, the fire of mind
Which mark'd and closed thy brief career,
And the fair wreath, by Hope entwined,
Lies wither'd on thy bier.
The soldier's death hath been thy doom,
The soldier's tear thy mead shall be;
Yet, son of war! a prouder tomb
Might Fate have rear'd for thee.
Thou shouldst have died, O high-soul'd chief!
In those bright days of glory fled,
When triumph so prevail'd o'er grief
We scarce could mourn the dead.
Noontide of fame! each tear-drop then
Was worthy of a warrior's grave:
When shall affection weep again
So proudly o'er the brave?
There, on the battle-fields of Spain,
Midst Roncesvalles' mountain-scene,
Or on Vitoria's blood-red plain,

Meet had thy deathbed been.

We mourn not that a hero’s life

Thus in its ardent prime should close;

Hadst thou but fallen in nobler strife,

But died midst conquer’d foes!

Yet hast thou still (though victory’s flame

In that last moment cheer’d thee not)

Left Glory’s isle another name,

That ne’er may be forgot:

And many a tale of triumph won

Shall breathe that name in Memory’s ear,

And long may England mourn a son

Without reproach or fear.

[58] Major-general Sir Edward Pakenham, the gallant officer to whose memory these verses are dedicated, fell at the head of the British troops in the unfortunate attack on New Orleans, 8th January 1814. “Six thousand combatants on the British side,” says Mr Alison, “were in the field: a slender force to attack double their number, intrenched to the teeth in works bristling with bayonets and loaded with heavy artillery.”—History of Europe, vol. x. p. 743.

The death of Sir Edward is thus alluded to in the official account of General Keane, communicating the result of the action:—“The advancing columns were discernible from the enemy’s line at more than two hundred yards’ distance, when a destructive fire was instantly opened, not only from all parts of the enemy’s line, but from the battery on the opposite side of the river. The gallant Pakenham, who, during his short but brilliant career, was always foremost in the path of glory and of danger, galloped forward to the front, to animate his men by his presence. He had reached

the crest of the glacis, and was in the act of cheering his troops with his hat off, when he received two balls, one in the knee and another in the body. He fell into the arms of Major Macdougal, his aide-de-camp, and almost instantly expired."—Edinr. An. Regist. 1815, p. 356.

TO THE MEMORY OF SIR H—Y E—LL—S,

WHO FELL IN THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO.

"Happy are they who die in youth, when their renown is around them."—Ossian.

Weep'st thou for him, whose doom was seal'd
On England's proudest battle-field?
For him, the lion-heart, who died
In victory's full resistless tide?
Oh, mourn him not!
By deeds like his that field was won,
And Fate could yield to Valour's son
No brighter lot.
He heard his band's exulting cry,
He saw the vanquish'd eagles fly;
And envied be his death of fame!
It shed a sunbeam o'er his name
That nought shall dim:
No cloud obscured his glory's day,
It saw no twilight of decay.
Weep not for him!
And breathe no dirge's plaintive moan,

A hero claims far loftier tone!
Oh, proudly shall the war-song swell,
Recording how the mighty fell
In that dread hour,
When England, midst the battle-storm—
The avenging angel—rear'd her form
In tenfold power.
Yet, gallant heart! to swell thy praise,
Vain were the minstrel's noblest lays;
Since he, the soldier's guiding star,
The Victor-chief, the lord of war,
Has own'd thy fame:
And oh! like his approving word,
What trophied marble could record
A warrior's name?

GUERILLA SONG.

FOUNDED ON THE STORY RELATED OF THE SPANISH PATRIOT MINA.

Oh! forget not the hour when through forest and vale
We return'd with our chief to his dear native halls;
Through the woody sierra there sigh'd not a gale,
And the moonbeam was bright on his battlement-walls;
And nature lay sleeping in calmness and light,
Round the home of the valiant, that rose on our sight.
We enter'd that home—all was loneliness round,

The stillness, the darkness, the peace of the grave;
Not a voice, not a step, bade its echoes resound:
Ah, such was the welcome that waited the brave!
For the spoilers had pass’d, like the poison-wind’s breath,
And the loved of his bosom lay silent in death.
Oh! forget not that hour—let its image be near,
In the light of our mirth, in the dreams of our rest,
Let its tale awake feelings too deep for a tear,
And rouse into vengeance each arm and each breast,
Till cloudless the dayspring of liberty shine
O’er the plains of the olive and hills of the vine.

THE AGED INDIAN.

Warriors! my noon of life is past,
The brightness of my spirit flown;
I crouch before the wintry blast,
Amidst my tribe I dwell alone;
The heroes of my youth are fled,
They rest among the warlike dead.
Ye slumberers of the narrow cave!
My kindred chiefs in days of yore!
Ye fill an unremember’d grave,
Your fame, your deeds, are known no more.
The records of your wars are gone,
Your names forgot by all but one.

Soon shall that one depart from earth,
To join the brethren of his prime;
Then will the memory of your birth
Sleep with the hidden things of time.
With him, ye sons of former days!
Fades the last glimmering of your praise.
His eyes, that hail'd your spirits' flame,
Still kindling in the combat's shock,
Have seen, since darkness veil'd your fame,
Sons of the desert and the rock!
Another and another race
Rise to the battle and the chase.
Descendants of the mighty dead!
Fearless of heart, and firm of hand!
Oh, let me join their spirits fled—
Oh! send me to their shadowy land.
Age hath not tamed Ontara's heart—
He shrinks not from the friendly dart.
These feet no more can chase the deer,
The glory of this arm is flown;—
Why should the feeble linger here
When all the pride of life is gone?
Warriors! why still the stroke deny?
Think ye Ontara fears to die?

He fear’d not in his flower of days,
When strong to stem the torrent’s force,
When through the desert’s pathless maze
His way was as an eagle’s course!
When war was sunshine to his sight,
And the wild hurricane delight!
Shall, then, the warrior tremble now?
Now when his envied strength is o’er—
Hung on the pine his idle bow,
His pirogue useless on the shore?
When age hath dimm’d his failing eye,
Shall he, the joyless, fear to die?
Sons of the brave! delay no more—
The spirits of my kindred call.
’Tis but one pang, and all is o’er!
Oh, bid the aged cedar fall!
To join the brethren of his prime,
The mighty of departed time.

EVENING AMONGST THE ALPS.

Soft skies of Italy! how richly drest,
Smile these wild scenes in your purpureal glow!
What glorious hues, reflected from the west,
Float o’er the dwellings of eternal snow!
Yon torrent, foaming down the granite steep,

Sparkles all brilliance in the setting beam;
Dark glens beneath in shadowy beauty sleep,
Where pipes the goat-herd by his mountain-stream.
Now from yon peak departs the vivid ray,
That still at eve its lofty temple knows;
From rock and torrent fade the tints away,
And all is wrapt in twilight's deep repose:
While through the pine-wood gleams the vesper star,
And roves the Alpine gale o'er solitudes afar.

DIRGE OF THE HIGHLAND CHIEF IN "WAVERLEY."[59]

Son of the mighty and the free!
High-minded leader of the brave!
Was it for lofty chief like thee
To fill a nameless grave?
Oh! if amidst the valiant slain
The warrior's bier had been thy lot,
E'en though on red Culloden's plain,
We then had mourn'd thee not.
But darkly closed thy dawn of fame,
That dawn whose sunbeam rose so fair;
Vengeance alone may breathe thy name,
The watchword of Despair!
Yet, oh! if gallant spirit's power
Hath e'er ennobled death like thine,

Then glory mark’d thy parting hour,
Last of a mighty line!
O’er thy own towers the sunshine falls,
But cannot chase their silent gloom;
Those beams that gild thy native walls
Are sleeping on thy tomb!
Spring on thy mountains laughs the while,
Thy green woods wave in vernal air,
But the loved scenes may vainly smile:
Not e’en thy dust is there.
On thy blue hills no bugle-sound
Is mingling with the torrent’s roar;
Unmark’d, the wild deer sport around:
Thou lead’st the chase no more!
Thy gates are closed, thy halls are still,
Those halls where peal’d the choral strain;
They hear the wind’s deep murmuring thrill,
And all is hush’d again.
No banner from the lonely tower
Shall wave its blazon’d folds on high;
There the tall grass and summer flower
Unmark’d shall spring and die.
No more thy bard for other ear
Shall wake the harp once loved by thine—

Hush’d be the strain thou canst not hear,

Last of a mighty line!

[59] These very beautiful stanzas first appeared in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1815, (p. 255,) with the following interesting heading.

“A literary friend of ours received these verses with a letter of the following tenor:—

“‘A very ingenious young friend of mine has just sent me the enclosed, on reading Waverley. To you the world gives that charming work; and if in any future edition you should like to insert the Dirge to a Highland Chief, you would do honour to

Your Sincere Admirer.’

“The individual to whom this obliging letter was addressed, having no claim to the honour which is there done him, does not possess the means of publishing the verses in the popular novel alluded to. But that the public may sustain no loss, and that the ingenious author of Waverley may be aware of the honour intended him, our correspondent has ventured to send the verses to our Register.”

Notwithstanding the mysticism in the note about the “very ingenious young friend of mine” and “your sincere admirer,” on the one hand; and the disclaimer by “a literary friend of ours,” on the other, there can be little doubt that the Dirge was sent by Mrs Hermans to Sir Walter, then Mr Scott, and by him to the Register—of which he himself wrote that year the historical department.—Vide Lockhart’s Life of Scott, vol. iv. p. 80.

THE CRUSADERS’ WAR-SONG.

Chieftains, lead on! our hearts beat high—

Lead on to Salem’s towers!

Who would not deem it bliss to die,

Slain in a cause like ours?

The brave who sleep in soil of thine,

Die not entomb’d but shrined, O Palestine!

Souls of the slain in holy war!

Look from your sainted rest.

Tell us ye rose in Glory’s car,

To mingle with the blest;

Tell us how short the death-pang’s power,

How bright the joys of your immortal bower.

Strike the loud harp, ye minstrel train!

Pour forth your loftiest lays;

Each heart shall echo to the strain

Breathed in the warrior’s praise.

Bid every string triumphant swell

Th’ inspiring sounds that heroes love so well.

Salem! amidst the fiercest hour,

The wildest rage of fight,

Thy name shall lend our falchions power,

And nerve our hearts with might.

Envied be those for thee that fall,

Who find their graves beneath thy sacred wall.

For them no need that sculptured tomb

Should chronicle their fame,

Or pyramid record their doom,

Or deathless verse their name;

It is enough that dust of thine

Should shroud their forms, O blessed Palestine!

Chieftains, lead on! our hearts beat high

For combat’s glorious hour;

Soon shall the red-cross banner fly

On Salem’s loftiest tower!

We burn to mingle in the strife,

Where but to die insures eternal life.

THE DEATH OF CLANRONALD.

[It was in the battle of Sheriffmoor that young Clanronald fell, leading on the Highlanders of the right wing. His death dispirited the assailants, who began to waver. But Glengarry, chief of a rival branch of the Clan Colla, started from the ranks, and, waving his bonnet round his head, cried out, “To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for mourning!” The Highlanders received a new impulse from his words, and, charging with redoubled fury, bore down all before them.—See the Quarterly Review article of “Culloden Papers.”]

Oh, ne’er be Clanronald the valiant forgot!

Still fearless and first in the combat, he fell;

But we paused not one tear-drop to shed o’er the spot,

We spared not one moment to murmur “Farewell.”

We heard but the battle-word given by the chief,

“To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for grief!”

And wildly, Clanronald! we echo’d the vow,

With the tear on our cheek, and the sword in our hand;

Young son of the brave! we may weep for thee now,
For well has thy death been avenged by thy band,
When they joined in wild chorus the cry of the chief,
“To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for grief!”
Thy dirge in that hour was the bugle’s wild call,
The clash of the claymore, the shout of the brave;
But now thy own bard may lament for thy fall,
And the soft voice of melody sigh o’er thy grave—
While Albyn remembers the words of the chief,
“To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for grief!”
Thou art fallen, O fearless one! flower of thy race!
Descendant of heroes! thy glory is set:
But thy kindred, the sons of the battle and chase,
Have proved that thy spirit is bright in them yet!
Nor vainly have echo’d the words of the chief,
“To-day for revenge, and to-morrow for grief!”

TO THE EYE.

Throne of expression! whence the spirit’s ray
Pours forth so oft the light of mental day,
Where fancy’s fire, affection’s mental beam,
Thought, genius, passion, reign in turn supreme,
And many a feeling, words can ne’er impart,
Finds its own language to pervade the heart:
Thy power, bright orb! what bosom hath not felt,

To thrill, to rouse, to fascinate, to melt!
And, by some spell of undefined control,
With magnet-influence touch the secret soul!
Light of the features! in the morn of youth
Thy glance is nature, and thy language truth;
And ere the world, with all-corrupting sway,
Hath taught e’en thee to flatter and betray,
Th’ ingenuous heart forbids thee to reveal,
Or speak one thought that interest would conceal.
While yet thou seem’st the cloudless mirror given
But to reflect the purity of heaven,
Oh! then how lovely, there unveil’d, to trace
Th’ unsullied brightness of each mental grace!
When Genius lends thee all his living light,
Where the full beams of intellect unite;
When love illumes thee with his varying ray,
Where trembling Hope and tearful Rapture play;
Or Pity’s melting cloud thy beam subdues,
Tempering its lustre with a veil of dews;
Still does thy power, whose all-commanding spell
Can pierce the mazes of the soul so well,
Bid some new feeling to existence start
From its deep slumbers in the inmost heart.
And oh! when thought, in ecstasy sublime,

That soars triumphant o’er the bounds of time,
Fires thy keen glance with inspiration’s blaze,
The light of heaven, the hope of nobler days,
(As glorious dreams, for utterance far too high,
Flash through the mist of dim mortality;)
Who does not own, that through thy lightning-beams
A flame unquenchable, unearthly, streams?
That pure, though captive effluence of the sky,
The vestal-ray, the spark that cannot die!

THE HERO’S DEATH.

Life’s parting beams were in his eye,
Life’s closing accents on his tongue,
When round him, pealing to the sky,
The shout of victory rung!
Then, ere his gallant spirit fled,
A smile so bright illumed his face—
Oh! never, of the light it shed,
Shall memory lose a trace!
His was a death whose rapture high
Transcended all that life could yield;
His warmest prayer was so to die,
On the red battle-field!
And they may feel, who loved him most,
A pride so holy and so pure:

Fate hath no power o’er those who boast

A treasure thus secure!

STANZAS

ON THE DEATH OF THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE.

[“Hélas! nous composions son histoire de tout ce qu’on peut imaginer de plus glorieux.... Le passé et le présent nous garantissoient l’avenir.... Telle étoit l’agréable histoire que nous faisions; et pour achever ces nobles projets, il n’y avoit que la durée de sa vie; dont nous ne croyions pas devoir être en peine, car qui eût pu seulement penser, que les années eussent dû manquer à une jeunesse qui sembloit si vive?”—Bossuet.]

I.

Mark’d ye the mingling of the city’s throng,

Each mien, each glance, with expectation bright?

Prepare the pageant and the choral song,

The pealing chimes, the blaze of festal light!

And hark! what rumour’s gathering sound is nigh?

Is it the voice of joy, that murmur deep?

Away! be hush’d, ye sounds of revelry!

Back to your homes, ye multitudes, to weep!

Weep! for the storm hath o’er us darkly pass’d,

And England’s royal flower is broken by the blast!

II.

Was it a dream? so sudden and so dread

That awful fiat o’er our senses came!

So loved, so blest, is that young spirit fled,
Whose early grandeur promised years of fame?
Oh! when hath life possess’d, or death destroy’d
More lovely hopes, more cloudlessly that smiled?
When hath the spoiler left so dark a void?
For all is lost—the mother and her child!
Our morning-star hath vanish’d, and the tomb
Throws its deep lengthen’d shade o’er distant years to come.

III.

Angel of Death! did no presaging sign
Announce thy coming, and thy way prepare?
No warning voice, no harbinger was thine,
Danger and fear seem’d past—but thou wert there!
Prophetic sounds along the earthquake’s path
Foretell the hour of nature’s awful throes;
And the volcano, ere it burst in wrath,
Sends forth some herald from its dread repose:
But thou, dark Spirit! swift and unforeseen,
Cam’st like the lightning’s flash, when heaven is all serene.

IV.

And she is gone!—the royal and the young,
In soul commanding, and in heart benign!
Who, from a race of kings and heroes sprung,
Glow’d with a spirit lofty as her line.

Now may the voice she loved on earth so well
Breathe forth her name unheeded and in vain;
Nor can those eyes on which her own would dwell
Wake from that breast one sympathy again:
The ardent heart, the towering mind are fled,
Yet shall undying love still linger with the dead.

V.

Oh, many a bright existence we have seen
Quench’d in the glow and fulness of its prime;
And many a cherish’d flower, ere now, hath been
Cropt ere its leaves were breathed upon by time.
We have lost heroes in their noon of pride,
Whose fields of triumph gave them but a bier;
And we have wept when soaring genius died,
Check’d in the glory of his mid career!
But here our hopes were centred—all is o’er:
All thought in this absorb’d,—she was—and is no more!

VI.

We watch’d her childhood from its earliest hour,
From every word and look blest omens caught;
While that young mind developed all its power,
And rose to energies of loftiest thought.
On her was fix’d the patriot’s ardent eye—
One hope still bloom’d, one vista still was fair;

And when the tempest swept the troubled sky,
She was our dayspring—all was cloudless there;
And oh! how lovely broke on England's gaze,
E'en through the mist and storm, the fight of distant days.

VII.

Now hath one moment darken'd future years,
And changed the track of ages yet to be!—
Yet, mortal! midst the bitterness of tears,
Kneel, and adore th' inscrutable decree!
Oh! while the clear perspective smiled in light,
Wisdom should then have temper'd hope's excess;
And, lost One! when we saw thy lot so bright,
We might have trembled at its loveliness.
Joy is no earthly flower—nor framed to bear,
In its exotic bloom, life's cold, ungenial air.

VIII.

All smiled around thee: Youth, and Love, and Praise,
Hearts all devotion and all truth were thine!
On thee was riveted a nation's gaze,
As on some radiant and unsullied shrine.
Heiress of empires! thou art pass'd away
Like some fair vision, that arose to throw
O'er one brief hour of life a fleeting ray,
Then leave the rest to solitude and woe!

Oh! who shall dare to woo such dreams again!
Who hath not wept to know that tears for thee were vain?

IX.

Yet there is one who loved thee—and whose soul
With mild affections nature form'd to melt;
His mind hath bow'd beneath the stern control
Of many a grief—but this shall be unfelt!
Years have gone by—and given his honour'd head
A diadem of snow; his eye is dim;
Around him Heaven a solemn cloud hath spread—
The past, the future, are a dream to him!
Yet, in the darkness of his fate, alone[60]
He dwells on earth, while thou in life's full pride art gone!

X.

The Chastener's hand is on us—we may weep,
But not repine—for many a storm hath pass'd,
And, pillow'd on her own majestic deep,
Hath England slept, unshaken by the blast!
And War hath raged o'er many a distant plain,
Trampling the vine and olive in his path;
While she, that regal daughter of the main,
Smiled in serene defiance of his wrath!
As some proud summit, mingling with the sky,
Hears calmly far below the thunders roll and die.

XI.

Her voice hath been th’ awakener—and her name
The gathering-word of nations. In her might,
And all the awful beauty of her fame,
Apart she dwelt, in solitary light.
High on her cliffs, alone and firm she stood,
Fixing the torch upon her beacon-tower—
That torch whose flame, far streaming o’er the flood,
Hath guided Europe through her darkest hour.
Away, vain dreams of glory!—in the dust
Be humbled, Ocean-queen! and own thy sentence just!

XII.

Hark! ’twas the death-bell’s note! which, full and deep,
Unmix’d with aught of less majestic tone,
While all the murmurs of existence sleep,
Swell’d on the stillness of the air alone!
Silent the throngs that fill the darken’d street,
Silent the slumbering Thames, the lonely mart;
And all is still, where countless thousands meet,
Save the full throbbing of the awe-struck heart!
All deeply, strangely, fearfully serene,
As in each ravaged home th’ avenging one had been.

XIII.

The sun goes down in beauty—his farewell,

Unlike the world he leaves, is calmly bright;
And his last mellow'd rays around us dwell,
Lingering, as if on scenes of young delight.
They smile and fade—but, when the day is o'er,
What slow procession moves with measured tread?—
Lo! those who weep, with her who weeps no more,
A solemn train—the mourners and the dead!
While, throned on high, the moon's untroubled ray
Looks down, as earthly hopes are passing thus away.

XIV.

But other light is in that holy pile,
Where, in the house of silence, kings repose;
There, through the dim arcade and pillar'd aisle,
The funeral torch its deep-red radiance throws.
There pall, and canopy, and sacred strain,
And all around the stamp of woe may bear;
But Grief, to whose full heart those forms are vain,
Grief unexpress'd, unsoothed by them—is there.
No darker hour hath Fate for him who mourns,
Than when the all he loved, as dust, to dust returns.

XV.

We mourn—but not thy fate, departed One!
We pity—but the living, not the dead;
A cloud hangs o'er us[61]—"the bright day is done,"

And with a father’s hopes, a nation’s fled.
And he, the chosen of thy youthful breast,
Whose soul with thine had mingled every thought—
He, with thine early fond affections blest,
Lord of a mind with all things lovely fraught;
What but a desert to his eye, that earth,
Which but retains of thee the memory of thy worth?

XVI.

Oh! there are griefs for nature too intense,
Whose first rude shock but stupifies the soul;
Nor hath the fragile and o’erlabour’d sense
Strength e’en to feel at once their dread control.
But when ’tis past, that still and speechless hour
Of the seal’d bosom and the tearless eye,
Then the roused mind awakes, with tenfold power
To grasp the fulness of its agony!
Its deathlike torpor vanish’d—and its doom,
To cast its own dark hues o’er life and nature’s bloom.

XVII.

And such his lot whom thou hast loved and left,
Spirit! thus early to thy home recall’d!
So sinks the heart, of hope and thee bereft,
A warrior’s heart, which danger ne’er appall’d.
Years may pass on—and, as they roll along,

Mellow those pangs which now his bosom rend;
And he once more, with life’s unheeding throng,
May, though alone in soul, in seeming blend;
Yet still, the guardian-angel of his mind
Shall thy loved image dwell, in Memory’s temple shrined.

XVIII.

Yet must the days be long ere time shall steal
Aught from his grief whose spirit dwells with thee:
Once deeply bruised, the heart at length may heal,
But all it was—oh! never more shall be.
The flower, the leaf, o’erwhelm’d by winter snow,
Shall spring again, when beams and showers return,
The faded cheek again with health may glow,
And the dim eye with life’s warm radiance burn;
But the pure freshness of the mind’s young bloom,
Once lost, revives alone in worlds beyond the tomb.

XIX.

But thou! thine hour of agony is o’er,
And thy brief race in brilliance hath been run;
While Faith, that bids fond nature grieve no more,
Tells that thy crown—though not on earth—is won.
Thou, of the world so early left, hast known
Nought but the bloom and sunshine—and for thee,
Child of propitious stars! for thee alone,

The course of love ran smooth[62] and brightly free.
Not long such bliss to mortal could be given:
It is enough for earth to catch one glimpse of heaven.

XX.

What though, ere yet the noonday of thy fame
Rose in its glory on thine England's eye,
The grave's deep shadows o'er thy prospect came?
Ours is that loss—and thou wert blest to die!
Thou mightst have lived to dark and evil years,
To mourn thy people changed, thy skies o'ercast;
But thy spring morn was all undimm'd by tears,
And thou wert loved and cherish'd to the last!
And thy young name, ne'er breathed in ruder tone,
Thus dying, thou hast left to love and grief alone.

XXI.

Daughter of Kings! from that high sphere look down
Where still, in hope, affection's thoughts may rise;
Where dimly shines to thee that mortal crown
Which earth display'd to claim thee from the skies.
Look down! and if thy spirit yet retain
Memory of aught that once was fondly dear,
Soothe, though unseen, the hearts that mourn in vain,
And in their hours of loneliness—be near!
Blest was thy lot e'en here—and one faint sigh,

Oh! tell those hearts, hath made that blest eternity![63]

[60]

“I saw him last on this terrace proud,

Walking in health and gladness;

Begirt with his court—and in all the crowd

Not a single look of sadness.

“The time since he walk’d in glory thus,

To the grave till I saw him carried,

Was an age of the mightiest change to us,

But to him a night unvaried.

“A daughter beloved—a queen—a son—

And a son’s sole child had perish’d;

And sad was each heart, save the only one

By which they were fondest cherish’d.”

—“The Contrast,” written under Windsor Terrace, 17th Feb. 1820, by Horace Smith, Esq.

[61]

“The bright day is done,

And we are for the dark.”—Shakspeare.

[62]

“The course of true love never did run smooth.”

Shakspeare.

[63] These stanzas were dated, Brownwhylfa, 23d Dec. 1817, and first appeared in Blackwood’s Magazine, vol. iii. April 1818.

EXTRACT FROM QUARTERLY REVIEW.

“The next volume in order consists principally of translations. It will give our readers some idea of Mrs Hemans’ acquaintance with books, to enumerate the authors from whom she has chosen her subjects;—they are Camoens, Metastasio, Filicaja, Pastorini, Lope de Vega, Francisco Manuel, Della Casa, Cornelio Bentivoglio, Quevedo, Juan de Tarsis, Torquato and Bernardo Tasso, Petrarca, Pietro Bembo, Lorenzini, Gesner, Chaulieu, Garcilaso de Vega—names embracing almost every language in which the muse has found a tongue in Europe. Many of these translations are very pretty, but it would be less interesting to select any of them for citation, as our readers might not be possessed of or acquainted with the originals. We will pass on, therefore, to the latter part of the volume, which contains much that is very pleasing and beautiful. The poem which we are about to transcribe is on a subject often treated—and no wonder; it would be hard to find another which embraces so many of the elements of poetic feeling; so soothing a mixture of pleasing melancholy and pensive hope; such an assemblage of the ideas of tender beauty, of artless playfulness, of spotless purity, of transient yet imperishable brightness, of affections wounded, but not in bitterness, of sorrows gently subdued, of eternal and undoubted happiness. We know so little of the heart of man, that when we stand by the grave of him whom we deem most excellent, the thought of death will be mingled with some awe and uncertainty; but the gracious promises of scripture leave no doubt as to the blessedness of departed infants; and when we think what they now are and what they might have been, what they now enjoy and what they might have suffered, what they have now gained and what they might have lost, we may, indeed, yearn to follow them; but we must be selfish indeed to wish them again ‘constrained’ to dwell in these tenements of pain and sorrow. The ‘Dirge of a Child,’ which follows, embodies these thoughts and feelings, but in more beautiful order and language:—

“No bitter tears for thee be shed,” etc.—Vide page 55.

WALLACE’S INVOCATION TO BRUCE.[64]

“Great patriot hero! ill-requited chief!”
The morn rose bright on scenes renown’d,
Wild Caledonia’s classic ground,
Where the bold sons of other days
Won their high fame in Ossian’s lays,
And fell—but not till Carron’s tide
With Roman blood was darkly dyed.
The morn rose bright—and heard the cry
Sent by exulting hosts on high,
And saw the white-cross banner float
(While rung each clansman’s gathering-note)
O’er the dark plumes and serried spears
Of Scotland’s daring mountaineers;
As, all elate with hope, they stood,
To buy their freedom with their blood.
The sunset shone—to guide the flying,
And beam a farewell to the dying!
The summer moon, on Falkirk’s field,
Streams upon eyes in slumber seal’d;
Deep slumber—not to pass away
When breaks another morning’s ray,
Nor vanish when the trumpet’s voice
Bids ardent hearts again rejoice:

What sunbeam’s glow, what clarion’s breath,
May chase the still cold sleep of death?
Shrouded in Scotland’s blood-stain’d plaid,
Low are her mountain-warriors laid;
They fell, on that proud soil whose mould
Was blent with heroes’ dust of old,
And, guarded by the free and brave,
Yielded the Roman—but a grave!
Nobly they fell; yet with them died
The warrior’s hope, the leader’s pride.
Vainly they fell—that martyr host—
All, save the land’s high soul, is lost.
Blest are the slain! they calmly sleep,
Nor hear their bleeding country weep!
The shouts of England’s triumph telling
Reach not their dark and silent dwelling;
And those surviving to bequeath
Their sons the choice of chains or death,
May give the slumberer’s lowly bier
An envying glance—but not a tear.
But thou, the fearless and the free,
Devoted Knight of Ellerslie!
No vassal-spirit, form’d to bow
When storms are gathering, clouds thy brow;

No shade of fear or weak despair
Blends with indignant sorrow there!
The ray which streams on yon red field,
O’er Scotland’s cloven helm and shield,
Glitters not there alone, to shed
Its cloudless beauty o’er the dead;
But where smooth Carron’s rippling wave
Flows near that deathbed of the brave,
Illuming all the midnight scene,
Sleeps brightly on thy lofty mien.
But other beams, O Patriot! shine
In each commanding glance of thine,
And other fight hath fill’d thine eye
With inspiration’s majesty,
Caught from th’ immortal flame divine
Which makes thine inmost heart a shrine!
Thy voice a prophet’s tone hath won,
The grandeur Freedom lends her son;
Thy bearing a resistless power,
The ruling genius of the hour!
And he, yon Chief, with mien of pride,
Whom Carron’s waves from thee divide,
Whose haughty gesture fain would seek
To veil the thoughts that blanch his cheek,

Feels his reluctant mind controll’d
By thine of more heroic mould:
Though struggling all in vain to war
With that high soul’s ascendant star,
He, with a conqueror’s scornful eye,
Would mock the name of Liberty.
Heard ye the Patriot’s awful voice?—
“Proud Victor! in thy fame rejoice!
Hast thou not seen thy brethren slain,
The harvest of the battle-plain,
And bathed thy sword in blood, whose spot
Eternity shall cancel not?
Rejoice!—with sounds of wild lament
O’er her dark heaths and mountains sent,
With dying moan and dirge’s wail,
Thy ravaged country bids thee hail!
Rejoice!—while yet exulting cries
From England’s conquering host arise,
And strains of choral triumph tell
Her Royal Slave hath fought too well!
Oh, dark the clouds of woe that rest
Brooding o’er Scotland’s mountain-crest!
Her shield is cleft, her banner torn,
O’er martyr’d chiefs her daughters mourn,

And not a breeze but wafts the sound
Of wailing through the land around.
Yet deem not thou, till life depart,
High hope shall leave the patriot’s heart;
Or courage to the storm inured,
Or stern resolve by woes matured,
Oppose, to Fate’s severest hour,
Less than unconquerable power!
No! though the orbs of heaven expire,
Thine, Freedom! is a quenchless fire;
And woe to him whose might would dare
The energies of thy despair!
No!—when thy chain, O Bruce! is cast
O’er thy land’s charter’d mountain-blast,
Then in my yielding soul shall die
The glorious faith of Liberty!”
“Wild hopes! o’er dreamer’s mind that rise!”
With haughty laugh the Conqueror cries,
(Yet his dark cheek is flush’d with shame,
And his eye fill’d with troubled flame;)
“Vain, brief illusions! doom’d to fly
England’s red path of victory!
Is not her sword unmatch’d in might?
Her course a torrent in the fight?

The terror of her name gone forth
Wide o’er the regions of the north?
Far hence, midst other heaths and snows,
Must freedom’s footstep now repose.
And thou—in lofty dreams elate,
Enthusiast! strive no more with Fate!
’Tis vain—the land is lost and won:
Sheathed be the sword—its task is done.
Where are the chiefs that stood with thee
First in the battles of the free?
The firm in heart, in spirit high?—
They sought yon fatal field to die.
Each step of Edward’s conquering host
Hath left a grave on Scotland’s coast.”
“Vassal of England, yes! a grave
Where sleep the faithful and the brave;
And who the glory would resign
Of death like theirs, for life like thine?
They slumber—and the stranger’s tread
May spurn thy country’s noble dead;
Yet, on the land they loved so well,
Still shall their burning spirit dwell,
Their deeds shall hallow minstrel’s theme,
Their image rise on warrior’s dream,

Their names be inspiration’s breath,
Kindling high hope and scorn of death,
Till bursts, immortal from the tomb,
The flame that shall avenge their doom!
This is no land for chains—away!
O’er softer climes let tyrants sway.
Think’st thou the mountain and the storm
Their hardy sons for bondage form?
Doth our stern wintry blast instil
Submission to a despot’s will?
No! we were cast in other mould
Than theirs by lawless power controll’d;
The nurture of our bitter sky
Calls forth resisting energy;
And the wild fastnesses are ours,
The rocks with their eternal towers.
The soul to struggle and to dare
Is mingled with our northern air,
And dust beneath our soil is lying
Of those who died for fame undying.
“Tread’st thou that soil! and can it be
No loftier thought is roused in thee?
Doth no high feeling proudly start
From slumber in thine inmost heart?

No secret voice thy bosom thrill,
For thine own Scotland pleading still?
Oh! wake thee yet—indignant, claim
A nobler fate, a purer fame,
And cast to earth thy fetters riven,
And take thine offer'd crown from heaven.
Wake! in that high majestic lot
May the dark past be all forgot;
And Scotland shall forgive the field
Where with her blood thy shame was seal'd.
E'en I—though on that fatal plain
Lies my heart's brother with the slain;
Though, reft of his heroic worth,
My spirit dwells alone on earth;
And when all other grief is past,
Must this be cherish'd to the last—
Will lead thy battles, guard thy throne,
With faith unspotted as his own;
Nor in thy noon of fame recall
Whose was the guilt that wrought his fall."
Still dost thou hear in stern disdain?
Are Freedom's warning accents vain?
No! royal Bruce! within thy breast
Wakes each high thought, too long suppress'd.

And thy heart’s noblest feelings live,
Blent in that suppliant word—“Forgive!”
“Forgive the wrongs to Scotland done!
Wallace! thy fairest palm is won;
And, kindling at my country’s shrine,
My soul hath caught a spark from thine.
Oh! deem not, in the proudest hour
Of triumph and exulting power—
Deem not the light of peace could find
A home within my troubled mind.
Conflicts by mortal eye unseen,
Dark, silent, secret, there have been,
Known but to Him whose glance can trace
Thought to its deepest dwelling-place!
—’Tis past—and on my native shore
I tread, a rebel son no more.
Too blest, if yet my lot may be
In glory’s path to follow thee;
If tears, by late repentance pour’d,
May lave the blood-stains from my sword!”
Far other tears, O Wallace! rise
From the heart’s fountain to thine eyes;
Bright, holy, and uncheck’d they spring,
While thy voice falters, “Hail! my King!

Be every wrong, by memory traced,
In this full tide of joy effaced:
Hail! and rejoice!—thy race shall claim
A heritage of deathless fame,
And Scotland shall arise at length
Majestic in triumphant strength,
An eagle of the rock, that won
A way through tempests to the sun.
Nor scorn the visions, wildly grand,
The prophet-spirit of thy land:
By torrent-wave, in desert vast,
Those visions o’er my thought have pass’d;
Where mountain vapours darkly roll,
That spirit hath possess’d my soul;
And shadowy forms have met mine eye.
The beings of futurity;
And a deep voice of years to be
Hath told that Scotland shall be free!
He comes! exult, thou Sire of Kings!
From thee the chief, th’ avenger springs!
Far o’er the land he comes to save,
His banners in their glory wave,
And Albyn’s thousand harps awake
On hill and heath, by stream and lake,

To swell the strains that far around
Bid the proud name of Bruce resound!
And I—but wherefore now recall
The whisper’d omens of my fall?
They come not in mysterious gloom—
There is no bondage in the tomb!
O’er the soul’s world no tyrant reigns,
And earth alone for man hath chains!
What though I perish ere the hour
When Scotland’s vengeance wakes in power?
If shed for her, my blood shall stain
The field or scaffold not in vain:
Its voice to efforts more sublime
Shall rouse the spirit of her clime;
And in the noontide of her lot,
My country shall forget me not!”
Art thou forgot? and hath thy worth
Without its glory pass’d from earth?
Rest with the brave, whose names belong
To the high sanctity of song!
Charter’d our reverence to control,
And traced in sunbeams on the soul,
Thine, Wallace! while the heart hath still
One pulse a generous thought can thrill—

While youth’s warm tears are yet the meed
Of martyr’s death or hero’s deed,
Shall brightly live from age to age,
Thy country’s proudest heritage!
Midst her green vales thy fame is dwelling,
Thy deeds her mountain winds are telling,
Thy memory speaks in torrent-wave,
Thy step hath hallow’d rock and cave,
And cold the wanderer’s heart must be
That holds no converse there with thee!
Yet, Scotland! to thy champion’s shade
Still are thy grateful rites delay’d;
From lands of old renown, o’erspread
With proud memorials of the dead,
The trophied urn, the breathing bust,
The pillar guarding noble dust,
The shrine where art and genius high
Have labour’d for eternity—
The stranger comes: his eye explores
The wilds of thy majestic shores,
Yet vainly seeks one votive stone
Raised to the hero all thine own.
Land of bright deeds and minstrel-lore!
Withhold that guerdon now no more.

On some bold height of awful form,

Stern eyrie of the cloud and storm,

Sublimely mingling with the skies,

Bid the proud Cenotaph arise:

Not to record the name that thrills

Thy soul, the watchword of thy hills;

Not to assert, with needless claim,

The bright for ever of its fame;

But, in the ages yet untold,

When ours shall be the days of old,

To rouse high hearts, and speak thy pride

In him, for thee who lived and died.

[64] Advertisement by the Author.—"A native of Edinburgh, and member of the Highland Society of London, with a view to give popularity to the project of rearing a suitable national monument to the memory of Wallace, lately offered prizes for the three best poems on the subject of that illustrious patriot inviting Bruce to the Scottish throne. The following poem obtained the first of these prizes. It would have appeared in the same form in which it is now offered to the public, under the direction of its proper editor, the giver of the prize; but his privilege has, with pride as well as pleasure, been yielded to a lady of the author's own country, who solicited permission to avail herself of this opportunity of honouring and further remunerating the genius of the poet; and, at the same time, expressing her admiration of the theme in which she has triumphed.

"It is a noble feature in the character of a generous and enlightened people, that, in England, the memory of the patriots and martyrs of Scotland has long excited an interest not exceeded in strength by that which prevails in the country which boasts

their birth, their deeds, and their sufferings."

["Mrs Hemans was recommended by a zealous friend in Edinburgh to enter the lists as a competitor, which she accordingly did, though without being in the slightest degree sanguine of success; so that the news of the prize having been decreed to her was no less unexpected than gratifying. The number of candidates, for this distinction, was so overwhelming as to cause not a little embarrassment to the judges appointed to decide on their merits. A letter, written at this time, describes them as being reduced to absolute despair by the contemplation of the task which awaited them, having to read over a mass of poetry that would require a month at least to wade through. Some of the contributions were from the strangest aspirants imaginable; and one of them is mentioned as being as long as Paradise Lost. At length, however, the Herculean labour was accomplished; and the honour awarded to Mrs Hemans, on this occasion, seemed an earnest of the warm kindness and encouragement she was ever afterwards to receive at the hands of the Scottish public."—Memoir, p. 31-2.

Although two-thirds of the compositions sent to the arbiters, on the occasion alluded to, are understood to have been mere trash, yet several afterwards came to light, through the press, of very considerable excellence. We would especially mention "Wallace and Bruce, a Vision," published in Constable's Magazine for Dec. 1819; and "Wallace," by James Hogg, subsequently included in the fourth volume of his Collected Works—Edin. 1822, p. 143-160.

"The Vision" is thus prefaced:—"Though far from entering into a hopeless competition with Mrs Hemans, I think the far-famed interview of our patriot heroes ought not to be left entirely to English celebration. Mrs Hemans has adorned the subject with the finest strains of pure poetry. Receive here, as a humble contrast, a simple strain of genuine Scottish feeling, flowing from a mind that owns no other muse but the amor patriæ, and seeks no other praise but what is due to heartfelt

interest in the glory of our ancient kingdom, and no higher name than that of ‘a kindly Scot.’”

The Ettrick Shepherd is equally gallant in his laudations, and forgets his discomfiture in generous acknowledgement of the merits of his rival. “This poem,” (Wallace,) says he, “was hurriedly and reluctantly written, in compliance with the solicitations of a friend who would not be gainsayed, to compete for a prize offered by a gentleman for the best poem on the subject. The prize was finally awarded to Mrs Felicia Hemans; and, as far as the merits of mine went, very justly, hers being greatly superior both in elegance of thought and composition. Had I been constituted the judge myself, I would have given hers the preference by many degrees; and I estimated it the more highly as coming from one of the people that were the hero’s foes, oppressors, and destroyers. I think my heart never warmed so much to an author for any poem that ever was written.”

Acceptable praise this must have been, coming from such a man as the Author of “The Queen’s Wake”—a production entitled to a permanent place in British poetry, independently of the extraordinary circumstances under which it was composed. Whatever may be its blemishes, taken as a whole, “Kilmeny,” “Glenavin,” “Earl Walter,” “The Abbot Mackinnon,” and “The Witch of Fife”—more especially the first and the last—possess peculiar merits, and of a high kind; and are, I doubt not, destined to remain for ever embalmed in the memories of all true lovers of imaginative verse. Poor Hogg was the very reverse of Antæus—he was always in power except when he touched the earth.]

[These verses were thus critically noticed at the time of publication:—

“When we mentioned in the tent, that Mrs Hemans had authorised the judges who awarded to her the prize to send her poem to us, it is needless to say with what enthusiasm the proposal of reading it aloud was received on all sides; and at its conclusion thunders of applause crowned the genius of the fair poet. Scotland has

her Baillie—Ireland her Tighe—England her Hemans."—Blackwood's Magazine, vol. v. Sept. 1819.

"Mrs Hemans so soon again!—and with a palm in her hand! We welcome her cordially, and rejoice to find the high opinion of her genius which we lately expressed so unequivocally confirmed.

"On this animating theme, (the meeting of Wallace and Bruce,) several of the competitors, we understand, were of the other side of the Tweed—a circumstance, we learn, which was known from the references before the prizes were determined. Mrs Hemans's was the first prize, against fifty-seven competitors. That a Scottish prize, for a poem on a subject purely, proudly Scottish, has been adjudged to an English candidate, is a proof at once of the perfect fairness of the award, and of the merit of the poem. It further demonstrates the disappearance of those jealousies which, not a hundred years ago, would have denied to such a candidate any thing like a fair chance with a native—if we can suppose any poet in the south then dreaming of making the trial, or viewing Wallace in any other light than that of an enemy, and a rebel against the paramount supremacy of England. We delight in every gleam of high feeling which warms the two nations alike, and ripens yet more that confidence and sympathy which bind them together in one great family."—Edin. Monthly Review, vol. ii.

The estimation into which the poetry of Mrs Hemans was rising at this time, (1819,) is indicated by the following passage, from a clever and not very lenient satire, entitled "Common Sense," then published, and currently believed to have emanated from the pen of the Rev. Mr Terrot, now Diocesan Bishop of Edinburgh. When alluding to the female writers of the age, Miss Baillie is the first mentioned and characterised. He then proceeds—

——"Next I'd place

Felicia Hemans, second in the race;

I wonder the Reviews, who make such stir

Oft about rubbish, never mention her.

They might have said, I think, from mere good breeding—

Mistress Felicia's works are worth the reading."

"Mrs Hemans," adds the critical satirist in a note, "is a lady, (a young lady, I believe,) of very considerable merit. Her imagination is vigorous, her language copious and elegant, her information extensive. I have no means of ascertaining the extent of her fame, but she certainly deserves well of the republic of letters."

The worthy bishop has lived to read "The Records of Woman;" and, we have no doubt, rejoices to know that the aspirant of 1819 has now taken her place among British classics.]

TALES AND HISTORIC SCENES.

THE ABENCERRAGE.

[The events with which the following tale is interwoven are related in the Historia de las Guerras Civiles de Granada. They occurred in the reign of Abo Abdeli, or Abdali, the last Moorish king of that city, called by the Spaniards El Rey Chico. The conquest of Granada, by Ferdinand and Isabella, is said by some historians to have been greatly facilitated by the Abencerrages, whose defection was the result of the repeated injuries they had received from the king, at the instigation of the Zegris. One of the most beautiful halls of the Alhambra is pointed out as the scene where so many of the former celebrated tribe were massacred; and it still retains their name, being called the "Sala de los Abencerrages." Many of the most interesting old Spanish ballads relate to the events of this chivalrous and romantic period.]

"Le Maure ne se venge pas parce que sa colère dure encore, mais parce que la vengeance seule peut écarter de sa tête le poids d'infamie dont il est accablé.—Il se

venge, parce qu'à ses yeux il n'y a qu'une âme basse qui puisse pardonner les affronts; et il nourrit sa rancune, parce que s'il la sentoit s'éteindre, il croiroit avec elle avoir perdu une vertu."

Sismondi.

Lonely and still are now thy marble halls,
Thou fair Alhambra! there the feast is o'er;
And with the murmur of thy fountain-falls
Blend the wild tones of minstrelsy no more.
Hush'd are the voices that in years gone by
Have mourn'd, exulted, menaced, through thy towers;
Within thy pillar'd courts the grass waves high,
And all uncultured bloom thy fairy bowers.
Unheeded there the flowering myrtle blows,
Through tall arcades unmark'd the sunbeam smiles,
And many a tint of soften'd brilliance throws
O'er fretted walls and shining peristyles.
And well might Fancy deem thy fabrics lone,
So vast, so silent, and so wildly fair,
Some charm'd abode of beings all unknown,
Powerful and viewless, children of the air.
For there no footstep treads th' enchanted ground,
There not a sound the deep repose pervades,
Save winds and founts, diffusing freshness round,
Through the light domes and graceful colonnades.

Far other tones have swell’d those courts along
In days romance yet fondly loves to trace
The clash of arms, the voice of choral song,
The revels, combats of a vanish’d race.
And yet awhile, at Fancy’s potent call,
Shall rise that race, the chivalrous, the bold;
Peopling once more each fair forsaken hall
With stately forms, the knights and chiefs of old.
——The sun declines: upon Nevada’s height
There dwells a mellow flush of rosy light;
Each soaring pinnacle of mountain snow
Smiles in the richness of that parting glow,
And Darro’s wave reflects each passing dye
That melts and mingles in th’ empurpled sky.
Fragrance, exhaled from rose and citron bower,
Blends with the dewy freshness of the hour;
Hush’d are the winds, and nature seems to sleep
In light and stillness; wood, and tower, and steep,
Are dyed with tints of glory, only given
To the rich evening of a southern heaven—
Tints of the sun, whose bright farewell is fraught
With all that art hath dreamt, but never caught
—Yes, Nature sleeps; but not with her at rest
The fiery passions of the human breast,

Hark! from th’ Alhambra’s towers what stormy sound,
Each moment deepening, wildly swells around?
Those are no tumults of a festal throng,
Not the light zambra[65] nor the choral song:
The combat rages—’tis the shout of war,
’Tis the loud clash of shield and scimitar.
Within the Hall of Lions,[66] where the rays
Of eve, yet lingering, on the fountain blaze;
There, girt and guarded by his Zegri bands,
And stern in wrath, the Moorish monarch stands:
There the strife centres—swords around him wave,
There bleed the fallen, there contend the brave;
While echoing domes return the battle-cry,
“Revenge and freedom! let the tyrant die!”
And onward rushing, and prevailing still,
Court, hall, and tower the fierce avengers fill.
But first and bravest of that gallant train,
Where foes are mightiest, charging ne’er in vain;
In his red hand the sabre glancing bright,
His dark eye flashing with a fiercer light,
Ardent, untired, scarce conscious that he bleeds,
His Aben-Zurrahs[67] there young Hamet leads;
While swells his voice that wild acclaim on high,
“Revenge and freedom! let the tyrant die!”

Yes! trace the footsteps of the warrior’s wrath
By helm and corslet shatter’d in his path,
And by the thickest harvest of the slain,
And by the marble’s deepest crimson stain:
Search through the serried fight, where loudest cries
From triumph, anguish, or despair, arise;
And brightest where the shivering falchions glare,
And where the ground is reddest—he is there.
Yes! that young arm, amidst the Zegri host,
Hath well avenged a sire, a brother, lost.
They perish’d—not as heroes should have died,
On the red field, in victory’s hour of pride,
In all the glow and sunshine of their fame,
And proudly smiling as the death-pang came:
Oh! had they thus expired, a warrior’s tear
Had flow’d, almost in triumph, o’er their bier.
For thus alone the brave should weep for those
Who brightly pass in glory to repose.
—Not such their fate: a tyrant’s stern command
Doom’d them to fall by some ignoble hand,
As, with the flower of all their high-born race,
Summon’d Abdallah’s royal feast to grace,
Fearless in heart, no dream of danger nigh,
They sought the banquet’s gilded hall—to die.

Betray’d, unarm’d, they fell—the fountain wave
Flow’d crimson with the life-blood of the brave,
Till far the fearful tidings of their fate
Through the wide city rang from gate to gate,
And of that lineage each surviving son
Rush’d to the scene where vengeance might be won.
For this young Hamet mingles in the strife,
Leader of battle, prodigal of life,
Urging his followers, till their foes, beset,
Stand faint and breathless, but undaunted yet.
Brave Aben-Zurrahs, on! one effort more,
Yours is the triumph, and the conflict o’er.
But lo! descending o’er the darken’d hall,
The twilight-shadows fast and deeply fall,
Nor yet the strife hath ceased—though scarce they know,
Through that thick gloom, the brother from the foe;
Till the moon rises with her cloudless ray,
The peaceful moon, and gives them light to slay.
Where lurks Abdallah?—midst his yielding train
They seek the guilty monarch, but in vain.
He lies not number’d with the valiant dead,
His champions round him have not vainly bled;
But when the twilight spread her shadowy veil,
And his last warriors found each effort fail,

In wild despair he fled—a trusted few,
Kindred in crime, are still in danger true;
And o’er the scene of many a martial deed,
The Vega’s[68] green expanse, his flying footsteps lead.
He pass’d th’ Alhambra’s calm and lovely bowers,
Where slept the glistening leaves and folded flowers
In dew and starlight—there, from grot and cave,
Gush’d in wild music many a sparkling wave;
There on each breeze the breath of fragrance rose,
And all was freshness, beauty, and repose.
But thou, dark monarch! in thy bosom reign
Storms that, once roused, shall never sleep again.
Oh! vainly bright is nature in the course
Of him who flies from terror or remorse!
A spell is round him which obscures her bloom,
And dims her skies with shadows of the tomb;
There smiles no Paradise on earth so fair
But guilt will raise avenging phantoms there.
Abdallah heeds not, though the light gale roves
Fraught with rich odour, stolen from orange-groves;
Hears not the sounds from wood and brook that rise,
Wild notes of nature’s vesper-melodies;
Marks not how lovely, on the mountain’s head,
Moonlight and snow their mingling lustre spread;

But urges onward, till his weary band,
Worn with their toil, a moment's pause demand.
He stops, and turning, on Granada's fanes
In silence gazing, fix'd awhile remains
In stern, deep silence: o'er his feverish brow,
And burning cheek, pure breezes freshly blow,
But waft in fitful murmurs, from afar,
Sounds indistinctly fearful—as of war.
What meteor bursts with sudden blaze on high,
O'er the blue clearness of the starry sky?
Awful it rises, like some Genie-form,
Seen midst the redness of the desert storm,
Magnificently dread—above, below,
Spreads the wild splendour of its deepening glow.
Lo! from the Alhambra's towers the vivid glare
Streams through the still transparence of the air!
Avenging crowds have lit the mighty pyre,
Which feeds that waving pyramid of fire;
And dome and minaret, river, wood, and height,
From dim perspective start to ruddy light.
Oh Heaven! the anguish of Abdallah's soul,
The rage, though fruitless, yet beyond control!
Yet must he cease to gaze, and raving fly
For life—such life as makes it bliss to die!

On yon green height, the mosque, but half reveal’d
Through cypress-groves, a safe retreat may yield.
Thither his steps are bent—yet oft he turns,
Watching that fearful beacon as it burns.
But paler grow the sinking flames at last,
Flickering they fade, their crimson light is past;
And spiry vapours, rising o’er the scene,
Mark where the terrors of their wrath have been.
And now his feet have reach’d that lonely pile,
Where grief and terror may repose awhile;
Embower’d it stands, midst wood and cliff on high,
Through the gray rocks a torrent sparkling nigh:
He hails the scene where every care should cease,
And all—except the heart he brings—is peace.
There is deep stillness in those halls of state
Where the loud cries of conflict rang so late;
Stillness like that, when fierce the Kamsin’s blast
Hath o’er the dwellings of the desert pass’d.[70]
Fearful the calm—nor voice, nor step, nor breath
Disturbs that scene of beauty and of death:
Those vaulted roofs re-echo not a sound,
Save the wild gush of waters—murmuring round
In ceaseless melodies of plaintive tone,
Through chambers peopled by the dead alone.

O’er the mosaic floors, with carnage red,
Breastplate and shield and cloven helm are spread
In mingled fragments—glittering to the light
Of yon still moon, whose rays, yet softly bright,
Their streaming lustre tremulously shed,
And smile in placid beauty o’er the dead:
O’er features where the fiery spirit’s trace
E’en death itself is powerless to efface;
O’er those who flush’d with ardent youth awoke,
When glowing morn in bloom and radiance broke,
Nor dreamt how near the dark and frozen sleep
Which hears not Glory call, nor Anguish weep;
In the low silent house, the narrow spot,
Home of forgetfulness—and soon forgot.
But slowly fade the stars—the night is o’er—
Morn beams on those who hail her light no more;
Slumberers who ne’er shall wake on earth again,
Mourners, who call the loved, the lost, in vain.
Yet smiles the day—oh! not for mortal tear
Doth nature deviate from her calm career:
Nor is the earth less laughing or less fair,
Though breaking hearts her gladness may not share.
O’er the cold urn the beam of summer glows,
O’er fields of blood the zephyr freshly blows;

Bright shines the sun, though all be dark below,
And skies arch cloudless o’er a world of woe;
And flowers renew’d in spring’s green pathway bloom,
Alike to grace the banquet and the tomb.
Within Granada’s walls the funeral rite
Attends that day of loveliness and light;
And many a chief, with dirges and with tears,
Is gather’d to the brave of other years:
And Hamet, as beneath the cypress shade
His martyr’d brother and his sire are laid,
Feels every deep resolve and burning thought
Of ampler vengeance e’en to passion wrought;
Yet is the hour afar—and he must brood
O’er those dark dreams awhile in solitude.
Tumult and rage are hush’d—another day
In still solemnity hath pass’d away,
In that deep slumber of exhausted wrath,
The calm that follows in the tempest’s path.
And now Abdallah leaves yon peaceful fane,
His ravaged city traversing again.
No sound of gladness his approach precedes,
No splendid pageant the procession leads;
Where’er he moves the silent streets along,
Broods a stern quiet o’er the sullen throng.

No voice is heard; but in each alter’d eye,
Once brightly beaming when his steps were nigh,
And in each look of those whose love hath fled
From all on earth to slumber with the dead,
Those by his guilt made desolate, and thrown
On the bleak wilderness of life alone—
In youth’s quick glance of scarce-dissembled rage,
And the pale mien of calmly-mournful age,
May well be read a dark and fearful tale
Of thought that ill the indignant heart can veil,
And passion like the hush’d volcano’s power,
That waits in stillness its appointed hour.
No more the clarion from Granada’s walls,
Heard o’er the Vega, to the tourney calls;
No more her graceful daughters, throned on high,
Bend o’er the lists the darkly-radiant eye:
Silence and gloom her palaces o’erspread,
And song is hush’d, and pageantry is fled.
—Weep, fated city! o’er thy heroes weep—
Low in the dust the sons of glory sleep!
Furl’d are their banners in the lonely hall,
Their trophied shields hang mouldering on the wall,
Wildly their chargers range the pastures o’er—
Their voice in battle shall be heard no more.

And they, who still thy tyrant’s wrath survive,
Whom he hath wrong’d too deeply to forgive,
That race of lineage high, of worth approved,
The chivalrous, the princely, the beloved—
Thine Aben-Zurrahs—they no more shall wield
In thy proud cause the conquering lance and shield:
Condemn’d to bid the cherish’d scenes farewell
Where the loved ashes of their fathers dwell,
And far o’er foreign plains as exiles roam,
Their land the desert, and the grave their home.
Yet there is one shall see that race depart
In deep though silent agony of heart:
One whose dark fate must be to mourn alone,
Unseen her sorrows and their cause unknown,
And veil her heart, and teach her cheek to wear
That smile in which the spirit hath no share—
Like the bright beams that shed their fruitless glow
O’er the cold solitude of Alpine snow.
Soft, fresh, and silent is the midnight hour,
And the young Zayda seeks her lonely bower;
That Zegri maid, within whose gentle mind
One name is deeply, secretly enshrined.
That name in vain stern reason would efface:
Hamet! ’tis thine, thou foe to all her race!

And yet not hers in bitterness to prove
The sleepless pangs of unrequited love—
Pangs which the rose of wasted youth consume,
And make the heart of all delight the tomb,
Check the free spirit in its eagle flight,
And the spring-morn of early genius blight:
Not such her grief—though now she wakes to weep,
While tearless eyes enjoy the honey-dews of sleep.[71]
A step treads lightly through the citron-shade,
Lightly, but by the rustling leaves betray'd—
Doth her young hero seek that well-known spot,
Scene of past hours that ne'er may be forgot?
'Tis he—but changed that eye, whose glance of fire
Could like a sunbeam hope and joy inspire,
As, luminous with youth, with ardour fraught,
It spoke of glory to the inmost thought:
Thence the bright spirit's eloquence hath fled,
And in its wild expression may be read
Stem thoughts and fierce resolves—now veil'd in shade,
And now in characters of fire portray'd.
Changed e'en his voice—as thus its mournful tone
Wakes in her heart each feeling of his own.
"Zayda! my doom is fix'd—another day
And the wrong'd exile shall be far away;

Far from the scenes where still his heart must be,
His home of youth, and, more than all—from thee.
Oh! what a cloud hath gather'd o'er my lot
Since last we met on this fair tranquil spot!
Lovely as then the soft and silent hour,
And not a rose hath faded from thy bower;
But I—my hopes the tempest hath o'erthrown,
And changed my heart, to all but thee alone.
Farewell, high thoughts! inspiring hopes of praise!
Heroic visions of my early days!
In me the glories of my race must end—
The exile hath no country to defend!
E'en in life's morn my dreams of pride are o'er,
Youth's buoyant spirit wakes for me no more,
And one wild feeling in my alter'd breast
Broods darkly o'er the ruins of the rest.
Yet fear not thou—to thee, in good or ill,
The heart, so sternly tried, is faithful still!
But when my steps are distant, and my name
Thou hear'st no longer in the song of fame;
When Time steals on, in silence to efface
Of early love each pure and sacred trace,
Causing our sorrows and our hopes to seem
But as the moonlight pictures of a dream,—

Still shall thy soul be with me, in the truth
And all the fervour of affection’s youth?
If such thy love, one beam of heaven shall play
In lonely beauty o’er thy wanderer’s way.”
“Ask not if such my love! Oh! trust the mind
To grief so long, so silently resign’d!
Let the light spirit, ne’er by sorrow taught
The pure and lofty constancy of thought,
Its fleeting trials eager to forget,
Rise with elastic power o’er each regret!
Foster’d in tears, our young affection grew,
And I have learn’d to suffer and be true.
Deem not my love a frail, ephemeral flower,
Nursed by soft sunshine and the balmy shower;
No! ’tis the child of tempests, and defies,
And meets unchanged, the anger of the skies!
Too well I feel, with grief’s prophetic heart,
That ne’er to meet in happier days we part.
We part! and e’en this agonising hour,
When love first feels his own o’erwhelming power,
Shall soon to memory’s fix’d and tearful eye
Seem almost happiness—for thou wert nigh!
Yes! when this heart in solitude shall bleed,
As days to days all wearily succeed,

When doom’d to weep in loneliness, ’twill be
Almost like rapture to have wept with thee!
“But thou, my Hamet! thou canst yet bestow
All that of joy my blighted lot can know.
Oh! be thou still the high-soul’d and the brave,
To whom my first and fondest vows I gave;
In thy proud fame’s untarnish’d beauty still
The lofty visions of my youth fulfil.
So shall it soothe me, midst my heart’s despair,
To hold undimm’d one glorious image there!”
“Zayda, my best-beloved! my words too well,
Too soon, thy bright illusions must dispel;
Yet must my soul to thee unveil’d be shown,
And all its dreams and all its passions known.
Thou shalt not be deceived—for pure as heaven
Is thy young love, in faith and fervour given.
I said my heart was changed—and would thy thought
Explore the ruin by thy kindred wrought,
In fancy trace the land whose towers and fanes,
Crush’d by the earthquake, strew its ravaged plains;
And such that heart where desolation’s hand
Hath blighted all that once was fair or grand!
But Vengeance, fix’d upon her burning throne,
Sits midst the wreck in silence and alone;

And I, in stem devotion at her shrine,
Each softer feeling, but my love, resign.
Yes! they whose spirits all my thoughts control,
Who hold dread converse with my thrilling soul;
They, the betray’d, the sacrificed, the brave,
Who fill a blood-stain’d and untimely grave,
Must be avenged! and pity and remorse
In that stem cause are banish’d from my course.
Zayda! thou tremblest—and thy gentle breast
Shrinks from the passions that destroy my rest;
Yet shall thy form, in many a stormy hour,
Pass brightly o’er my soul with softening power,
And, oft recall’d, thy voice beguile my lot,
Like some sweet lay, once heard, and ne’er forgot.
“But the night wanes—the hours too swiftly fly,
The bitter moment of farewell draws nigh;
Yet, loved one! weep not thus—in joy or pain,
Oh! trust thy Hamet, we shall meet again!
Yes, we shall meet! and haply smile at last
On all the clouds and conflicts of the past.
On that fair vision teach thy thoughts to dwell,
Nor deem these mingling tears our last farewell!”
Is the voice hush’d, whose loved expressive tone
Thrill’d to her heart—and doth she weep alone?

Alone she weeps; that hour of parting o’er,
When shall the pang it leaves be felt no more?
The gale breathes light, and fans her bosom fair,
Showering the dewy rose-leaves o’er her hair;
But ne’er for her shall dwell reviving power
In balmy dew, soft breeze, or fragrant flower,
To wake once more that calm serene delight,
The soul’s young bloom, which passion’s breath could blight—
The smiling stillness of life’s morning hour,
Ere yet the day-star burns in all his power.
Meanwhile, through groves of deep luxurious shade,
In the rich foliage of the South array’d,
Hamet, ere dawns the earliest blush of day,
Bends to the vale of tombs his pensive way.
Fair is that scene where palm and cypress wave
On high o’er many an Aben-Zurrah’s grave.
Lonely and fair, its fresh and glittering leaves
With the young myrtle there the laurel weaves,
To canopy the dead; nor wanting there
Flowers to the turf, nor fragrance to the air,
Nor wood-bird’s note, nor fall of plaintive stream—
Wild music, soothing to the mourner’s dream.
There sleep the chiefs of old—their combats o’er,
The voice of glory thrills their hearts no more.

Unheard by them th’ awakening clarion blows;
The sons of war at length in peace repose.
No martial note is in the gale that sighs
Where proud their trophied sepulchres arise,
Mid founts, and shades, and flowers of brightest bloom—
As, in his native vale, some shepherd’s tomb.
There, where the trees their thickest foliage spread
Dark o’er that silent valley of the dead;
Where two fair pillars rise, embower’d and lone,
Not yet with ivy clad, with moss o’ergrown,
Young Hamet kneels—while thus his vows are pour’d,
The fearful vows that consecrate his sword:
—“Spirit of him who first within my mind
Each loftier aim, each nobler thought enshrined,
And taught my steps the line of light to trace
Left by the glorious fathers of my race,
Hear thou my voice!—for thine is with me still,
In every dream its tones my bosom thrill,
In the deep calm of midnight they are near,
Midst busy throngs they vibrate on my ear,
Still murmuring ‘vengeance!’—nor in vain the call,
Few, few shall triumph in a hero’s fall!
Cold as thine own to glory and to fame,
Within my heart there lives one only aim;

There, till th’ oppressor for thy fate atone,
Concentring every thought, it reigns alone.
I will not weep—revenge, not grief, must be,
And blood, not tears, an offering meet for thee;
But the dark hour of stern delight will come,
And thou shalt triumph, warrior! in thy tomb.
“Thou, too, my brother! thou art pass’d away,
Without thy fame, in life’s fair dawning day.
Son of the brave! of thee no trace will shine
In the proud annals of thy lofty line;
Nor shall thy deeds be deathless in the lays
That hold communion with the after-days.
Yet, by the wreaths thou might’st have nobly won,
Hadst thou but lived till rose thy noontide sun;
By glory lost, I swear! by hope betray’d,
Thy fate shall amply, dearly, be repaid:
War with thy foes I deem a holy strife,
And to avenge thy death devote my life.
“Hear ye my vows, O spirits of the slain!
Hear, and be with me on the battle-plain!
At noon, at midnight, still around me bide,
Rise on my dreams, and tell me how ye died!”

[65] Zambra, a Moorish dance.

[66] The Hall of Lions was the principal one of the Alhambra, and was so called

from twelve sculptured lions which supported an alabaster basin in the centre.

[67] Aben-Zurrahs: the name thus written is taken from the translation of an Arabic MS. given in the third volume of Bourgoanne's Travels through Spain.

[68] The Vega, the plain surrounding Granada, the scene of frequent actions between the Moors and Christians.

[69] Transcriber's Note: Anchor not found on original page 68 footnote 3. An extreme redness in the sky is the presage of the Simoom.—See Bruce's Travels.

[70] Of the Kamsin, a hot south wind, common in Egypt, we have the following account in Volney's Travels:—"These winds are known in Egypt by the general name of the winds of fifty days, because they prevail more frequently in the fifty days preceding and following the equinox. They are mentioned by travellers under the name of the poisonous winds or hot winds of the desert: their heat is so excessive, that it is difficult to form any idea of its violence without having experienced it. When they begin to blow, the sky, at other times so clear in this climate, becomes dark and heavy; the sun loses his splendour, and appears of a violet colour; the air is not cloudy, but gray and thick, and is filled with a subtle dust, which penetrates every where: respiration becomes short and difficult, the skin parched and dry, the lungs are contracted and painful, and the body consumed with internal heat. In vain is coolness sought for; marble, iron, water, though the sun no longer appears, are hot: the streets are deserted, and a dead silence pervades every where. The natives of towns and villages shut themselves up in their houses, and those of the desert in tents, or holes dug in the earth, where they wait the termination of this heat, which generally lasts three days. Woe to the traveller whom it surprises remote from shelter: he must suffer all its dreadful effects, which are sometimes mortal."

[71] "Enjoy the honey-heavy-dew of slumber."—Shakspeare.

CANTO II.

——“Oh! ben provvide il Cielo

Ch’ Uom per delitti mai lieto non sia.”

Alfieri.

Fair land! of chivalry the old domain,

Land of the vine and olive, lovely Spain!

Though not for thee with classic shores to vie

In charms that fix th’ enthusiast’s pensive eye;

Yet hast thou scenes of beauty, richly fraught

With all that wakes the glow of lofty thought;

Fountains, and vales, and rocks, whose ancient name

High deeds have raised to mingle with their fame.

Those scenes are peaceful now: the citron blows,

Wild spreads the myrtle, where the brave repose.

No sound of battle swells on Douro’s shore,

And banners wave on Ebro’s banks no more.

But who, unmoved, unawed, shall coldly tread

Thy fields that sepulchre the mighty dead?

Blest be that soil! where England’s heroes share

The grave of chiefs, for ages slumbering there;

Whose names are glorious in romantic lays,

The wild, sweet chronicles of elder days—

By goatherd lone and rude serrano sung

Thy cypress dells and vine-clad rocks among.

How oft those rocks have echo’d to the tale

Of knights who fell in Roncesvalles' vale;
Of him, renown'd in old heroic lore,
First of the brave, the gallant Campeador;
Of those, the famed in song, who proudly died
When Rio Verde roll'd a crimson tide;
Or that high name, by Garcilaso's might
On the Green Vega won in single fight.[72]
Round fair Granada, deepening from afar,
O'er that Green Vega rose the din of war.
At morn or eve no more the sunbeams shone
O'er a calm scene, in pastoral beauty lone;
On helm and corslet tremulous they glanced,
On shield and spear in quivering lustre danced.
Far as the sight by clear Xenil could rove,
Tents rose around, and banners glanced above;
And steeds in gorgeous trappings, armour bright
With gold, reflecting every tint of light,
And many a floating plume and blazon'd shield
Diffused romantic splendour o'er the field.
There swell those sounds that bid the life-blood start
Swift to the mantling cheek and beating heart:
The clang of echoing steel, the charger's neigh,
The measured tread of hosts in war's array;
And, oh! that music, whose exulting breath

Speaks but of glory on the road to death;
In whose wild voice there dwells inspiring power
To wake the stormy joy of danger's hour;
To nerve the arm, the spirit to sustain,
Rouse from despondence, and support in pain;
And, midst the deepening tumults of the strife,
Teach every pulse to thrill with more than life.
High o'er the camp, in many a broider'd fold,
Floats to the wind a standard rich with gold:
There, imaged on the cross, his form appears
Who drank for man the bitter cup of tears—[73]
His form, whose word recall'd the spirit fled,
Now borne by hosts to guide them o'er the dead!
O'er yon fair walls to plant the cross on high,
Spain hath sent forth her flower of chivalry.
Fired with that ardour which, in days of yore,
To Syrian plains the bold crusaders bore;
Elate with lofty hope, with martial zeal,
They come, the gallant children of Castile;
The proud, the calmly dignified:—and there
Ebro's dark sons with haughty mien repair,
And those who guide the fiery steed of war
From yon rich province of the western star.[74]
But thou, conspicuous midst the glittering scene,

Stern grandeur stamp’d upon thy princely mien;
Known by the foreign garb, the silvery vest,
The snow-white charger, and the azure crest,[75]
Young Aben-Zurrah! midst that host of foes,
Why shines thy helm, thy Moorish lance? Disclose!
Why rise the tents where dwell thy kindred train,
O son of Afric! midst the sons of Spain?
Hast thou with these thy nation’s fall conspired,
Apostate chief! by hope of vengeance fired?
How art thou changed! still first in every fight,
Hamet the Moor! Castile’s devoted knight!
There dwells a fiery lustre in thine eye,
But not the light that shone in days gone by;
There is wild ardour in thy look and tone,
But not the soul’s expression once thine own,
Nor aught like peace within. Yet who shall say
What secret thoughts thine inmost heart may sway?
No eye but Heaven’s may pierce that curtain’d breast,
Whose joys and griefs alike are unexpress’d.
There hath been combat on the tented plain;
The Vega’s turf is red with many a stain;
And, rent and trampled, banner, crest, and shield
Tell of a fierce and well-contested field.
But all is peaceful now: the west is bright

With the rich splendour of departing light;
Mulhacen’s peak, half lost amidst the sky,
Glows like a purple evening-cloud on high,
And tints, that mock the pencil’s art, o’erspread
Th’ eternal snow that crowns Veleta’s head;[76]
While the warm sunset o’er the landscape throws
A solemn beauty, and a deep repose.
Closed are the toils and tumults of the day,
And Hamet wanders from the camp away.
In silent musings rapt:—the slaughter’d brave
Lie thickly strewn by Darro’s rippling wave.
Soft fall the dews—but other drops have dyed
The scented shrubs that fringe the river side,
Beneath whose shade, as ebbing life retired,
The wounded sought a shelter—and expired.[77]
Lonely, and lost in thoughts of other days,
By the bright windings of the stream he strays,
Till, more remote from battle’s ravaged scene,
All is repose and solitude serene.
There, ’neath an olive’s ancient shade reclined,
Whose rustling foliage waves in evening’s wind,
The harass’d warrior, yielding to the power,
The mild sweet influence of the tranquil hour,
Feels by degrees a long-forgotten calm

Shed o’er his troubled soul unwonted balm;
His wrongs, his woes, his dark and dubious lot,
The past, the future, are awhile forgot;
And Hope, scarce own’d, yet stealing o’er his breast,
Half dares to whisper, “Thou shalt yet be blest!”
Such his vague musings—but a plaintive sound
Breaks on the deep and solemn stillness round;
A low, halt-stifled moan, that seems to rise
From life and death’s contending agonies.
He turns: Who shares with him that lonely shade?
—A youthful warrior on his deathbed laid.
All rent and stain’d his broider’d Moorish vest,
The corslet shatter’d on his bleeding breast;
In his cold hand the broken falchion strain’d,
With life’s last force convulsively retain’d;
His plumage soil’d with dust, with crimson dyed,
And the red lance in fragments by his side:
He lies forsaken—pillow’d on his shield,
His helmet raised, his lineaments reveal’d.
Pale is that quivering lip, and vanish’d now
The light once throned on that commanding brow;
And o’er that fading eye, still upward cast,
The shades of death are gathering dark and fast.
Yet, as yon rising moon her light serene

Sheds the pale olive’s waving boughs between,
Too well can Hamet’s conscious heart retrace,
Though changed thus fearfully, that pallid face,
Whose every feature to his soul conveys
Some bitter thought of long-departed days.
“Oh! is it thus,” he cries, “we meet at last?
Friend of my soul in years for ever past!
Hath fate but led me hither to behold
The last dread struggle, ere that heart is cold,—
Receive thy latest agonising breath,
And with vain pity soothe the pangs of death?
Yet let me bear thee hence—while life remains,
E’en though thus feebly circling through thy veins,
Some healing balm thy sense may still revive;
Hope is not lost—and Osmyn yet may live!
And blest were he whose timely care should save
A heart so noble, e’en from glory’s grave.”
Roused by those accents, from his lowly bed
The dying warrior faintly lifts his head;
O’er Hamet’s mien, with vague uncertain gaze,
His doubtful glance awhile bewilder’d strays;
Till by degrees a smile of proud disdain
Lights up those features late convulsed with pain;
A quivering radiance flashes from his eye,

That seems too pure, too full of soul, to die;
And the mind’s grandeur, in its parting hour,
Looks from that brow with more than wonted power.
“Away!” he cries, in accents of command,
And proudly waves his cold and trembling hand.
“Apostate, hence! my soul shall soon be free—
E’en now it soars, disdaining aid from thee.
’Tis not for thee to close the fading eyes
Of him who faithful to his country dies;
Not for thy hand to raise the drooping head
Of him who sinks to rest on glory’s bed.
Soon shall these pangs be closed, this conflict o’er,
And worlds be mine where thou canst never soar:
Be thine existence with a blighted name,
Mine the bright death which seals a warrior’s fame!”
The glow hath vanish’d from his cheek—his eye
Hath lost that beam of parting energy;
Frozen and fix’d it seems—his brow is chill;
One struggle more—that noble heart is still.
Departed warrior! were thy mortal throes,
Were thy last pangs, ere nature found repose,
More keen, more bitter, than th’ envenom’d dart
Thy dying words have left in Hamet’s heart?
Thy pangs were transient; his shall sleep no more,

Till life’s delirious dream itself be o’er;
But thou shalt rest in glory, and thy grave
Be the pure altar of the patriot brave.
Oh, what a change that little hour hath wrought
In the high spirit and unbending thought!
Yet, from himself each keen regret to hide,
Still Hamet struggles with indignant pride;
While his soul rises, gathering all its force,
To meet the fearful conflict with remorse.
To thee, at length, whose artless love hath been
His own, unchanged, through many a stormy scene;
Zayda! to thee his heart for refuge flies;
Thou still art faithful to affection’s ties.
Yes! let the world upbraid, let foes contemn,
Thy gentle breast the tide will firmly stem;
And soon thy smile and soft consoling voice
Shall bid his troubled soul again rejoice.
Within Granada’s walls are hearts and hands
Whose aid in secret Hamet yet commands;
Nor hard the task, at some propitious hour,
To win his silent way to Zayda’s bower,
When night and peace are brooding o’er the world,
When mute the clarions, and the banners furl’d.
That hour is come—and, o’er the arms he bears,

A wandering fakir’s garb the chieftain wears:
Disguise that ill from piercing eye could hide
The lofty port, and glance of martial pride;
But night befriends—through paths obscure he pass’d,
And hail’d the lone and lovely scene at last;
Young Zayda’s chosen haunt, the fair alcove,
The sparkling fountain, and the orange grove:
Calm in the moonlight smiles the still retreat,
As form’d alone for happy hearts to meet.
For happy hearts!—not such as hers, who there
Bends o’er her lute with dark unbraided hair;
That maid of Zegri race, whose eye, whose mien,
Tell that despair her bosom’s guest hath been.
So lost in thought she seems, the warrior’s feet
Unheard approach her solitary seat,
Till his known accents every sense restore—
“My own loved Zayda! do we meet once more?”
She starts, she turns—the lightning of surprise,
Of sudden rapture, flashes from her eyes;
But that is fleeting—it is past—and how
Far other meaning darkens o’er her brow:
Changed is her aspect, and her tone severe—
“Hence, Aben-Zurrah! death surrounds thee here!”
“Zayda! what means that glance, unlike thine own?

What mean those words, and that unwonted tone?
I will not deem thee changed—but in thy face,
It is not joy, it is not love, I trace!
It was not thus in other days we met:
Hath time, hath absence, taught thee to forget?
Oh! speak once more—these rising doubts dispel:
One smile of tenderness, and all is well!”
“Not thus we met in other days!—oh, no!
Thou wert not, warrior, then thy country’s foe!
Those days are past—we ne’er shall meet again
With hearts all warmth, all confidence, as then.
But thy dark soul no gentler feelings sway,
Leader of hostile bands! away, away!
On in thy path of triumph and of power,
Nor pause to raise from earth a blighted flower.”
“And thou, too, changed! thine earthly vow forgot!
This, this alone, was wanting to my lot!
Exiled and scorn’d, of every tie bereft,
Thy love, the desert’s lonely fount, was left;
And thou, my soul’s last hope, its lingering beam,
Thou! the good angel of each brighter dream,
Wert all the barrenness of life possest
To wake one soft affection in my breast!
That vision ended—fate hath nought in store

Of joy or sorrow e’er to touch me more.
Go, Zegri maid! to scenes of sunshine fly,
From the stem pupil of adversity!
And now to hope, to confidence, adieu!
If thou art faithless, who shall e’er be true?”
“Hamet! oh, wrong me not!—I too could speak
Of sorrows—trace them on my faded cheek,
In the sunk eye, and in the wasted form,
That tell the heart hath nursed a canker-worm!
But words were idle—read my sufferings there,
Where grief is stamp’d on all that once was fair.
“Oh, wert thou still what once I fondly deem’d,
All that thy mien express’d, thy spirit seem’d,
My love had been devotion!—till in death
Thy name had trembled on my latest breath.
But not the chief who leads a lawless band
To crush the altars of his native land;
Th’ apostate son of heroes, whose disgrace
Hath stain’d the trophies of a glorious race;
Not him I loved—but one whose youthful name
Was pure and radiant in unsullied fame.
Hadst thou but died, ere yet dishonour’s cloud
O’er that young name had gather’d as a shroud,
I then had mourn’d thee proudly, and my grief

In its own loftiness had found relief;
A noble sorrow, cherish’d to the last,
When every meaner woe had long been past.
Yes! let affection weep—no common tear
She sheds when bending o’er a hero’s bier.
Let nature mourn the dead—a grief like this,
To pangs that rend my bosom, had been bliss!”
“High-minded maid! the time admits not now
To plead my cause, to vindicate my vow.
That vow, too dread, too solemn, to recall,
Hath urged me onward, haply to my fall.
Yet this believe—no meaner aim inspires
My soul, no dream of power ambition fires.
No! every hope of power, of triumph, fled,
Behold me but th’ avenger of the dead!
One whose changed heart no tie, no kindred knows,
And in thy love alone hath sought repose.
Zayda! wilt thou his stern accuser be?
False to his country, he is true to thee!
Oh, hear me yet!—if Hamet e’er was dear,
By our first vows, our young affection, hear!
Soon must this fair and royal city fall,
Soon shall the cross be planted on her wall;
Then who can tell what tides of blood may flow,

While her fanes echo to the shrieks of woe?
Fly, fly with me, and let me bear thee far
From horrors thronging in the path of war:
Fly, and repose in safety—till the blast
Hath made a desert in its course—and pass'd!"
"Thou that wilt triumph when the hour is come
Hasten'd by thee, to seal thy country's doom,
With thee from scenes of death shall Zayda fly
To peace and safety?—Woman, too, can die!
And die exulting, though unknown to fame,
In all the stainless beauty of her name!
Be mine, unmurmuring, undismay'd, to share
The fate my kindred and my sire must bear.
And deem thou not my feeble heart shall fail,
When the clouds gather and the blasts assail.
Thou hast but known me ere the trying hour
Call'd into life my spirit's latent power;
But I have energies that idly slept,
While withering o'er my silent woes I wept;
And now, when hope and happiness are fled,
My soul is firm—for what remains to dread?
Who shall have power to suffer and to bear
If strength and courage dwell not with Despair?
"Hamet! farewell—retrace thy path again,

To join thy brethren on the tented plain.
There wave and wood in mingling murmurs tell
How, in far other cause, thy fathers fell!
Yes! on that soil hath Glory's footstep been,
Names unforgotten consecrate the scene!
Dwell not the souls of heroes round thee there,
Whose voices call thee in the whispering air?
Unheard, in vain they call—their fallen son
Hath stain'd the name those mighty spirits won,
And to the hatred of the brave and free
Bequeath'd his own through ages yet to be!"
Still as she spoke, th' enthusiast's kindling eye
Was lighted up with inborn majesty,
While her fair form and youthful features caught
All the proud grandeur of heroic thought,
Severely beauteous.[78] Awe-struck and amazed,
In silent trance a while the warrior gazed,
As on some lofty vision—for she seem'd
One all-inspired—each look with glory beam'd,
While, brightly bursting through its cloud of woes,
Her soul at once in all its light arose.
Oh! ne'er had Hamet deem'd there dwelt enshrined
In form so fragile that unconquer'd mind;
And fix'd, as by some high enchantment, there

He stood—till wonder yielded to despair.
“The dream is vanish’d—daughter of my foes!
Reft of each hope the lonely wanderer goes.
Thy words have pierced his soul; yet deem thou not
Thou couldst be once adored, and e’er forgot!
Oh, form’d for happier love, heroic maid!
In grief sublime, in danger undismay’d,
Farewell, and be thou blest!—all words were vain
From him who ne’er may view that form again—
Him, whose sole thought resembling bliss, must be,
He hath been loved, once fondly loved, by thee!”
And is the warrior gone?—doth Zayda hear
His parting footstep, and without a tear?
Thou weep’st not, lofty maid!—yet who can tell
What secret pangs within thy heart may dwell?
They feel not least, the firm, the high in soul,
Who best each feeling’s agony control.
Yes! we may judge the measure of the grief
Which finds in misery’s eloquence relief;
But who shall pierce those depths of silent woe
Whence breathes no language, whence no tears may flow?
The pangs that many a noble breast hath proved,
Scorning itself that thus it could be moved?
He, He alone, the inmost heart who knows,

Views all its weakness, pities all its throes;
He who hath mercy when mankind contemn,
Beholding anguish—all unknown to them.
Fair city! thou that midst thy stately fanes
And gilded minarets, towering o’er the plains,
In eastern grandeur proudly dost arise
Beneath thy canopy of deep-blue skies;
While streams that bear thee treasures in their wave,
Thy citron-groves and myrtle-gardens lave:
Mourn, for thy doom is fixed—the days of fear,
Of chains, of wrath, of bitterness, are near!
Within, around thee, are the trophied graves
Of kings and chiefs—their children shall be slaves.
Fair are thy halls, thy domes majestic swell,
But there a race that rear’d them not shall dwell;
For midst thy councils discord still presides,
Degenerate fear thy wavering monarch guides—
Last of a line whose regal spirit flown
Hath to their offspring but bequeath’d a throne,
Without one generous thought, or feeling high,
To teach his soul how kings should live and die.
A voice resounds within Granada’s wall,
The hearts of warriors echo to its call.[80]
Whose are those tones, with power electric fraught

To reach the source of pure exalted thought?
See, on a fortress tower, with beckoning hand,
A form, majestic as a prophet, stand!
His mien is all impassion’d, and his eye
Fill’d with a light whose fountain is on high;
Wild on the gale his silvery tresses flow,
And inspiration beams upon his brow;
While, thronging round him, breathless thousands gaze,
As on some mighty seer of elder days.
“Saw ye the banners of Castile display’d,
The helmets glittering, and the line array’d?
Heard ye the march of steel-clad hosts?” he cries;
“Children of conquerors! in your strength arise!
O high-born tribes! O names unstain’d by fear!
Azarques, Zegris, Almoradis, hear![81]
Be every feud forgotten, and your hands
Dyed with no blood but that of hostile bands.[82]
Wake, princes of the land! the hour is come,
And the red sabre must decide your doom.
Where is that spirit which prevail’d of yore,
When Tarik’s bands o’erspread the western shore?[83]
When the long combat raged on Xeres’ plain,[84]
And Afric’s tecbir swell’d through yielding Spain?[85]
Is the lance broken, is the shield decay’d,

The warrior’s arm unstrung, his heart dismay’d?
Shall no high spirit of ascendant worth
Arise to lead the sons of Islam forth?
To guard the regions where our fathers’ blood
Hath bathed each plain, and mingled with each flood;
Where long their dust hath blended with the soil
Won by their swords, made fertile by their toil?
“O ye sierras of eternal snow!
Ye streams that by the tombs of heroes flow,
Woods, fountains, rocks of Spain! ye saw their might
In many a fierce and unforgotten fight—
Shall ye behold their lost, degenerate race
Dwell midst your scenes in fetters and disgrace
With each memorial of the past around,
Each mighty monument of days renown’d?
May this indignant heart ere then be cold,
This frame be gather’d to its kindred mould!
And the last life-drop circling through my veins
Have tinged a soil untainted yet by chains!
“And yet one struggle ere our doom is seal’d,
One mighty effort, one deciding field!
If vain each hope, we still have choice to be
In life the fetter’d, or in death the free!”
Still while he speaks each gallant heart beats high,

And ardour flashes from each kindling eye;
Youth, manhood, age, as if inspired, have caught
The glow of lofty hope and daring thought;
And all is hush'd around—as every sense
Dwelt on the tones of that wild eloquence.
But when his voice hath ceased, th' impetuous cry
Of eager thousands bursts at once on high;
Rampart, and rock, and fortress ring around,
And fair Alhambra's inmost halls resound.
"Lead us, O chieftain! lead us to the strife,
To fame in death, or liberty in life!"
O zeal of noble hearts! in vain display'd!
Now, while the burning spirit of the brave
Is roused to energies that yet might save—
E'en now, enthusiasts! while ye rush to claim
Your glorious trial on the field of fame,
Your king hath yielded! Valour's dream is o'er;[86]
Power, wealth, and freedom are your own no more;
And for your children's portion, but remains
That bitter heritage—the stranger's chains.

[72] Garcilaso de la Vega derived his surname from a single combat (in which he was the victor) with a Moor, on the Vega of Granada.

[73] "El Rey D. Fernando bolviò à la Vega, y pusò su Real à la vista de Huecar, a veyute y seys dias del mes de Abril, adonde fuè fortificado de todo lo necessario;

poniendo el Christiano toda su gente en esquadron, con todas sus vanderas tendidas, y su Real Estandarte, el qual llevava por divisa un Christo crucificado."—Historia de las Guerras Civiles de Granada.

[74] Andalusia signifies, in Arabic, the region of the evening or the west; in a word, the Hesperia of the Greeks.—See Casiri's Bibliot. Arabico-Hispana, and Gibbon's Decline and Fall, &c.

[75] "Los Abencerrages salieron con su acostumbrada librea azul y blanca, todos llenos de ricos texidos de plata, las plumas de la misma color; en sus adargas, su acostumbrada divisa, salvages que desquixalavan leones, y otros un mundo que lo deshazia un selvage con un baston."—Guerras Civiles de Granada.

[76] The loftiest heights of the Sierra Nevada are those called Mulhacen and Picacho de Veleta.

[77] It is known to be a frequent circumstance in battle, that the dying and the wounded drag themselves, as it were mechanically, to the shelter which may be afforded by any bush or thicket on the field.

[78] "Severe in youthful beauty."—Milton.

[79] Transcriber's Note: Anchor not found on original page 76 footnote 2. Granada stands upon two hills, separated by the Darro. The Xenil runs under the walls. The Darro is said to carry with its stream small particles of gold, and the Xenil of silver. When Charles V. came to Granada with the Empress Isabella, the city presented him with a crown made of gold, which had been collected from the Darro.—See Bourgoanne's and other Travels.

[80] "At this period, while the inhabitants of Granada were sunk in indolence, one of those men whose natural and impassioned eloquence has sometimes aroused a people to deeds of heroism, raised his voice in the midst of the city, and awakened the inhabitants from their lethargy. Twenty thousand enthusiasts, ranged under his banners, were prepared to sally forth, with the fury of desperation, to attack the

besiegers, when Abo Abdeli, more afraid of his subjects than of the enemy, resolved immediately to capitulate, and made terms with the Christians, by which it was agreed that the Moors should be allowed the free exercise of their religion and laws; should be permitted, if they thought proper, to depart unmolested with their effects to Africa; and that he himself, if he remained in Spain, should retain an extensive estate, with houses and slaves, or be granted an equivalent in money if he preferred retiring to Barbary."—See Jacob's Travel in Spain.

[81] Azarques, Zegris, Almoradis, different tribes of the Moors of Granada, all of high distinction.

[82] The conquest of Granada was greatly facilitated by the civil dissensions which at this period prevailed in the city. Several of the Moorish tribes, influenced by private feuds, were fully prepared for submission to the Spaniards; others had embraced the cause of Muley el Zagal, the uncle and competitor for the throne of Abdallah, (or Abo Abdeli,) and all was jealousy and animosity.

[83] Tarik, the first leader of the Arabs and Moors into Spain. "The Saracens landed at the pillar or point of Europe. The corrupt and familiar appellation of Gibraltar (Gebel al Tarik) describes the mountain of Tarik; and the intrenchments of his camp were the first outline of those fortifications which, in the hands of our countrymen, have resisted the art and power of the house of Bourbon. The adjacent governors informed the court of Toledo of the descent and progress of the Arabs; and the defeat of his lieutenant Edeco, who had been commanded to seize and bind the presumptuous strangers, first admonished Roderic of the magnitude of the danger. At the royal summons, the dukes and counts, the bishops and nobles of the Gothic monarchy, assembled at the head of their followers; and the title of king of the Romans, which is employed by an Arabic historian, may be excused by the close affinity of language, religion, and manners, between the nations of Spain."—Gibbon's Decline and Fall, &c. vol. ix. p. 472, 473.

[84] “In the neighbourhood of Cadiz, the town of Xeres has been illustrated by the encounter which determined the fate of the kingdom; the stream of the Guadalete, which falls into the bay, divided the two camps, and marked the advancing and retreating skirmishes of three successive days. On the fourth day, the two armies joined a more serious and decisive issue. Notwithstanding the valour of the Saracens, they fainted under the weight of multitudes, and the plain of Xeres was overspread with sixteen thousand of their dead bodies.—‘My brethren,’ said Tarik to his surviving companions, ‘the enemy is before you, the sea is behind; whither would ye fly? Follow your general; I am resolved either to lose my life, or to trample on the prostrate king of the Romans.’ Besides the resource of despair, he confided in the secret correspondence and nocturnal interviews of Count Julian with the sons and the brother of Witiza. The two princes, and the Archbishop of Toledo, occupied the most important post: their well-timed defection broke the ranks of the Christians; each warrior was prompted by fear or suspicion to consult his personal safety; and the remains of the Gothic army were scattered or destroyed in the flight and pursuit of the three following days.”—Gibbon’s Decline and Fall, &c. vol. ix. p. 473, 474.

[85] The tecbir, the shout of onset used by the Saracens in battle.

CANTO III.

“Fermossi al fin il cor che balzo tanto.”

Hippolito Pindemonte.

Heroes of elder days! untaught to yield,

Who bled for Spain on many an ancient field;

Ye that around the oaken cross of yore[87]

Stood firm and fearless on Asturia’s shore,

And with your spirit, ne’er to be subdued,

Hallow’d the wild Cantabrian solitude;
Rejoice amidst your dwellings of repose,
In the last chastening of your Moslem foes!
Rejoice!—for Spain, arising in her strength,
Hath burst the remnant of their yoke at length,
And they, in turn, the cup of woe must drain,
And bathe their fetters with their tears in vain.
And thou, the warrior born in happy hour,[88]
Valencia’s lord, whose name alone was power,
Theme of a thousand songs in days gone by,
Conqueror of kings! exult, O Cid! on high;
For still ’twas thine to guard thy country’s weal,
In life, in death, the watcher for Castile!
Thou, in that hour when Mauritania’s bands
Rush’d from their palmy groves and burning lands,
E’en in the realm of spirits didst retain
A patriot’s vigilance, remembering Spain![89]
Then at deep midnight rose the mighty sound,
By Leon heard in shuddering awe profound,
As through her echoing streets, in dread array,
Beings once mortal held their viewless way—
Voices from worlds we know not—and the tread
Of marching hosts, the armies of the dead,
Thou and thy buried chieftains: from the grave

Then did thy summons rouse a king to save,
And join thy warriors with unearthly might
To aid the rescue in Tolosa's fight.
Those days are past—the crescent on thy shore,
O realm of evening! sets, to rise no more.[90]
What banner streams afar from Vela's tower?[91]
The cross, bright ensign of Iberia's power!
What the glad shout of each exulting voice?
"Castile and Aragon! rejoice, rejoice!"
Yielding free entrance to victorious foes,
The Moorish city sees her gates unclose,
And Spain's proud host, with pennon, shield, and lance,
Through her long streets in knightly garb advance.
Oh! ne'er in lofty dreams hath Fancy's eye
Dwelt on a scene of statelier pageantry,
At joust or tourney, theme of poet's lore,
High masque or solemn festival of yore.
The gilded cupolas, that proudly rise
O'erarch'd by cloudless and cerulean skies;
Tall minarets, shining mosques, barbaric towers,
Fountains and palaces, and cypress bowers:
And they, the splendid and triumphant throng,
With helmets glittering as they move along,
With broider'd scarf and gem-bestudded mail,

And graceful plumage streaming on the gale;
Shields, gold-emboss’d, and pennons floating far,
And all the gorgeous blazonry of war,
All brighten’d by the rich transparent hues
That southern suns o’er heaven and earth diffuse—
Blend in one scene of glory, form’d to throw
O’er memory’s page a never-fading glow,
And there, too, foremost midst the conquering brave,
Your azure plumes, O Aben-Zurrahs! wave.
There Hamet moves; the chief whose lofty port
Seems nor reproach to shun, nor praise to court;
Calm, stern, collected—yet within his breast
Is there no pang, no struggle, unconfess’d?
If such there be, it still must dwell unseen,
Nor cloud a triumph with a sufferer’s mien.
Hear’st thou the solemn yet exulting sound
Of the deep anthem floating far around?
The choral voices, to the skies that raise
The full majestic harmony of praise?
Lo! where, surrounded by their princely train,
They come, the sovereigns of rejoicing Spain,
Borne on their trophied car—lo! bursting thence
A blaze of chivalrous magnificence!
Onward their slow and stately course they bend

To where th’ Alhambra’s ancient towers ascend,
Rear’d and adorn’d by Moorish kings of yore,
Whose lost descendants there shall dwell no more.
They reach those towers—irregularly vast
And rude they seem, in mould barbaric cast:[92]
They enter—to their wondering sight is given
A genii palace—an Arabian heaven![93]
A scene by magic raised, so strange, so fair,
Its forms and colour seem alike of air.
Here, by sweet orange-boughs half shaded o’er,
The deep clear bath reveals its marble floor,
Its margin fringed with flowers, whose glowing hues
The calm transparence of its wave suffuse.
There round the court, where Moorish arches bend,
Aërial columns, richly deck’d, ascend;
Unlike the models of each classic race,
Of Doric grandeur or Corinthian grace,
But answering well each vision that portrays
Arabian splendour to the poet’s gaze:
Wild, wondrous, brilliant, all—a mingling glow
Of rainbow-tints, above, around, below;
Bright streaming from the many-tinctured veins
Of precious marble, and the vivid stains
Of rich mosaics o’er the light arcade,

In gay festoons and fairy knots display’d.
On through th’ enchanted realm, that only seems
Meet for the radiant creatures of our dreams,
The royal conquerors pass—while still their sight
On some new wonder dwells with fresh delight.
Here the eye roves through slender colonnades,
O’er bowery terraces and myrtle shades;
Dark olive-woods beyond, and far on high
The vast sierra mingling with the sky.
There, scattering far around their diamond spray,
Clear streams from founts of alabaster play,
Through pillar’d halls, where, exquisitely wrought,
Rich arabesques, with glittering foliage fraught,
Surmount each fretted arch, and lend the scene
A wild, romantic, oriental mien:
While many a verse, from eastern bards of old,
Borders the walls in characters of gold.[94]
Here Moslem luxury, in her own domain,
Hath held for ages her voluptuous reign
Midst gorgeous domes, where soon shall silence brood,
And all be lone—a splendid solitude.
Now wake their echoes to a thousand songs,
From mingling voices of exulting throngs;
Tambour and flute, and atabal are there,[95]

And joyous clarions pealing on the air;
While every hall resounds, “Granada won!
Granada! for Castile and Aragon!”[96]
’Tis night—from dome and tower, in dazzling maze,
The festal lamps innumerably blaze;[97]
Through long arcades their quivering lustre gleams,
From every lattice tremulously streams,
Midst orange-gardens plays on fount and rill,
And gilds the waves of Darro and Xenil;
Red flame the torches on each minaret’s height,
And shines each street an avenue of light;
And midnight feasts are held, and music’s voice
Through the long night still summons to rejoice.
Yet there, while all would seem to heedless eye
One blaze of pomp, one burst of revelry,
Are hearts unsoothed by those delusive hours,
Gall’d by the chain, though deck’d awhile with flowers;
Stern passions working in th’ indignant breast,
Deep pangs untold, high feelings unexpress’d,
Heroic spirits, unsubmitting yet—
Vengeance and keen remorse, and vain regret.
From yon proud height, whose olive-shaded brow
Commands the wide luxuriant plains below,
Who lingering gazes o’er the lovely scene,

Anguish and shame contending in his mien
He who of heroes and of kings the son,
Hath lived to lose whate’er his fathers won;
Whose doubts and fears his people’s fate have seal’d,
Wavering alike in council and in field;
Weak, timid ruler of the wise and brave,
Still a fierce tyrant or a yielding slave.
Far from these vine-clad hills and azure skies,
To Afric’s wilds the royal exile flies;[98]
Yet pauses on his way to weep in vain
O’er all he never must behold again.
Fair spreads the scene around—for him too fair,
Each glowing charm but deepens his despair.
The Vega’s meads, the city’s glittering spires,
The old majestic palace of his sires,
The gay pavilions and retired alcoves,
Bosom’d in citron and pomegranate groves;
Tower-crested rocks, and streams that wind in light,
All in one moment bursting on his sight,
Speak to his soul of glory’s vanish’d years,
And wake the source of unavailing tears.
—Weep’st thou, Abdallah?—Thou dost well to weep,
O feeble heart! o’er all thou couldst not keep!
Well do a woman’s tears befit the eye

Of him who knew not as a man to die.[99]

The gale sighs mournfully through Zayda’s bower,

The hand is gone that nursed each infant flower.

No voice, no step, is in her father’s halls,

Mute are the echoes of their marble walls;

No stranger enters at the chieftain’s gate,

But all is hush’d, and void, and desolate.

There, through each tower and solitary shade,

In vain doth Hamet seek the Zegri maid:

Her grove is silent, her pavilion lone,

Her lute forsaken, and her doom unknown;

And through the scene she loved, unheeded flows

The stream whose music lull’d her to repose.

But oh! to him, whose self-accusing thought

Whispers ’twas he that desolation wrought;

He who his country and his faith betray’d,

And lent Castile revengeful, powerful aid;

A voice of sorrow swells in every gale,

Each wave low rippling tells a mournful tale:

And as the shrubs, untended, unconfined,

In wild exuberance rustle to the wind,

Each leaf hath language to his startled sense,

And seems to murmur—“Thou hast driven her hence!”

And well he feels to trace her flight were vain,

—Where hath lost love been once recall’d again?
In her pure breast, so long by anguish torn,
His name can rouse no feeling now—but scorn.
O bitter hour! when first the shuddering heart
Wakes to behold the void within—and start!
To feel its own abandonment, and brood
O’er the chill bosom’s depth of solitude.
The stormy passions that in Hamet’s breast
Have sway’d so long, so fiercely, are at rest;
The avenger’s task is closed:[100]—he finds too late
It hath not changed his feelings, but his fate.
He was a lofty spirit, turn’d aside
From its bright path by woes, and wrongs, and pride,
And onward, in its new tumultuous course,
Borne with too rapid and intense a force
To pause one moment in the dread career,
And ask if such could be its native sphere.
Now are those days of wild delirium o’er,
Their fears and hopes excite his soul no more;
The feverish energies of passion close,
And his heart sinks in desolate repose,
Turns sickening from the world, yet shrinks not less
From its own deep and utter loneliness.
There is a sound of voices on the air,

A flash of armour to the sunbeam’s glare,
Midst the wild Alpuxarras;[101]—there, on high,
Where mountain-snows are mingling with the sky,
A few brave tribes, with spirits yet unbroke,
Have fled indignant from the Spaniard’s yoke.
O ye dread scenes! where nature dwells alone,
Severely glorious on her craggy throne;
Ye citadels of rock, gigantic forms,
Veil’d by the mists and girdled by the storms,—
Ravines, and glens, and deep resounding caves,
That hold communion with the torrent-waves;
And ye, th’ unstain’d and everlasting snows,
That dwell above in bright and still repose;
To you, in every clime, in every age,
Far from the tyrant’s or the conqueror’s rage,
Hath Freedom led her sons—untired to keep
Her fearless vigils on the barren steep.
She, like the mountain-eagle, still delights
To gaze exulting from unconquer’d heights,
And build her eyrie in defiance proud,
To dare the wind, and mingle with the cloud.
Now her deep voice, the soul’s awakener, swells,
Wild Alpuxarras! through your inmost dells.
There, the dark glens and lonely rocks among,

As at the clarion’s call, her children throng.
She with enduring strength has nerved each frame,
And made each heart the temple of her flame,
Her own resisting spirit, which shall glow
Unquenchably, surviving all below.
There high-born maids, that moved upon the earth
More like bright creatures of aërial birth,
Nurslings of palaces, have fled to share
The fate of brothers and of sires; to bear,
All undismay’d, privation and distress,
And smile the roses of the wilderness:
And mothers with their infants, there to dwell
In the deep forest or the cavern cell,
And rear their offspring midst the rocks, to be,
If now no more the mighty, still the free.
And midst that band are veterans, o’er whose head
Sorrows and years their mingled snow have shed:
They saw thy glory, they have wept thy fall,
O royal city! and the wreck of all
They loved and hallow’d most:—doth aught remain
For these to prove of happiness or pain?
Life’s cup is drain’d—earth fades before their eye;
Their task is closing—they have but to die.
Ask ye why fled they hither?—that their doom

Might be, to sink unfetter’d to the tomb.
And youth, in all its pride of strength, is there,
And buoyancy of spirit, form’d to dare
And suffer all things—fall’n on evil days,
Yet darting o’er the world an ardent gaze,
As on the arena where its powers may find
Full scope to strive for glory with mankind.
Such are the tenants of the mountain-hold,
The high in heart, unconquer’d, uncontroll’d:
By day, the huntsmen of the wild—by night,
Unwearied guardians of the watch-fire’s light,
They from their bleak majestic home have caught
A sterner tone of unsubmitting thought,
While all around them bids the soul arise
To blend with nature’s dread sublimities.
—But these are lofty dreams, and must not be
Where tyranny is near:—the bended knee,
The eye whose glance no inborn grandeur fires,
And the tamed heart, are tributes she requires;
Nor must the dwellers of the rock look down
On regal conquerors, and defy their frown.
What warrior-band is toiling to explore
The mountain-pass, with pine-wood shadow’d o’er,
Startling with martial sounds each rude recess,

Where the deep echo slept in loneliness?
These are the sons of Spain!—Your foes are near,
O exiles of the wild sierra! hear!
Hear! wake! arise! and from your inmost caves
Pour like the torrent in its might of waves!
Who leads the invaders on?—his features bear
The deep-worn traces of a calm despair;
Yet his dark brow is haughty—and his eye
Speaks of a soul that asks not sympathy.
’Tis he! ’tis he again! the apostate chief;
He comes in all the sternness of his grief.
He comes, but changed in heart, no more to wield
Falchion for proud Castile in battle-field,
Against his country’s children though he leads
Castilian bands again to hostile deeds:
His hope is but from ceaseless pangs to fly,
To rush upon the Moslem spears, and die.
So shall remorse and love the heart release,
Which dares not dream of joy, but sighs for peace.
The mountain-echoes are awake—a sound
Of strife is ringing through the rocks around.
Within the steep defile that winds between
Cliffs piled on cliffs, a dark, terrific scene,
Where Moorish exile and Castilian knight

Are wildly mingling in the serried fight.
Red flows the foaming streamlet of the glen,
Whose bright transparence ne’er was stain’d till then;
While swell the war-note and the clash of spears
To the bleak dwellings of the mountaineers,
Where thy sad daughters, lost Granada! wait
In dread suspense the tidings of their fate.
But he—whose spirit, panting for its rest,
Would fain each sword concentrate in his breast—
Who, where a spear is pointed, or a lance
Aim’d at another’s breast, would still advance—
Courts death in vain; each weapon glances by,
As if for him ’twere bliss too great to die.
Yes, Aben-Zurrah! there are deeper woes
Reserved for thee ere nature’s last repose;
Thou know’st not yet what vengeance fate can wreak,
Nor all the heart can suffer ere it break.
Doubtful and long the strife, and bravely fell
The sons of battle in that narrow dell;
Youth in its light of beauty there hath pass’d,
And age, the weary, found repose at last;
Till, few and faint, the Moslem tribes recoil,
Borne down by numbers and o’erpower’d by toil.
Dispersed, dishearten’d, through the pass they fly,

Pierce the deep wood, or mount the cliff on high;
While Hamet's band in wonder gaze, nor dare
Track o'er their dizzy path the footsteps of despair.
Yet he, to whom each danger hath become
A dark delight, and every wild a home,
Still urges onward—undismay'd to tread
Where life's fond lovers would recoil with dread.
But fear is' for the happy—they may shrink
From the steep precipice or torrent's brink;
They to whom earth is paradise—their doom
Lends no stern courage to approach the tomb:
Not such his lot, who, school'd by fate severe,
Were but too blest if aught remain'd to fear.[102]
Up the rude crags, whose giant masses throw
Eternal shadows o'er the glen below;
And by the fall, whose many-tinctured spray
Half in a mist of radiance veils its way,
He holds his venturous track:—supported now
By some o'erhanging pine or ilex bough;
Now by some jutting stone, that seems to dwell
Half in mid-air, as balanced by a spell.
Now hath his footstep gain'd the summit's head,
A level span, with emerald verdure spread,
A fairy circle—there the heath-flowers rise,

And the rock-rose unnoticed blooms and dies;
And brightly plays the stream, ere yet its tide
In foam and thunder cleave the mountain side:
But all is wild beyond—and Hamet's eye
Roves o'er a world of rude sublimity.
That dell beneath, where e'en at noon of day
Earth's charter'd guest, the sunbeam, scarce can stray;
Around, untrodden woods; and far above,
Where mortal footstep ne'er may hope to rove,
Bare granite cliffs, whose fix'd, inherent dyes
Rival the tints that float o'er summer skies:[103]
And the pure glittering snow-realm, yet more high,
That seems a part of heaven's eternity.
There is no track of man where Hamet stands,
Pathless the scene as Lybia's desert sands;
Yet on the calm still air a sound is heard
Of distant voices, and the gathering-word
Of Islam's tribes, now faint and fainter grown,
Now but the lingering echo of a tone.
That sound, whose cadence dies upon his ear,
He follows, reckless if his bands are near.
On by the rushing stream his way he bends,
And through the mountain's forest zone ascends;
Piercing the still and solitary shades

Of ancient pine, and dark luxuriant glades,
Eternal twilight's reign:—those mazes past,
The glowing sunbeams meet his eyes at last,
And the lone wanderer now hath reach'd the source
Whence the wave gushes, foaming on its course.
But there he pauses—for the lonely scene
Towers in such dread magnificence of mien,
And, mingled oft with some wild eagle's cry,
From rock-built eyrie rushing to the sky,
So deep the solemn and majestic sound
Of forests, and of waters murmuring round—
That, rapt in wondering awe, his heart forgets
Its fleeting struggles and its vain regrets.
—What earthly feeling unabash'd can dwell
In nature's mighty presence?—midst the swell
Of everlasting hills, the roar of floods,
And frown of rocks, and pomp of waving woods?
These their own grandeur on the soul impress,
And bid each passion feel its nothingness.
Midst the vast marble cliffs, a lofty cave
Rears its broad arch beside the rushing wave;
Shadow'd by giant oaks, and rude and lone,
It seems the temple of some power unknown,
Where earthly being may not dare intrude

To pierce the secrets of the solitude.
Yet thence at intervals a voice of wail
Is rising, wild and solemn, on the gale.
Did thy heart thrill, O Hamet! at the tone?
Came it not o’er thee as a spirit’s moan?
As some loved sound that long from earth had fled,
The unforgotten accents of the dead!
E’en thus it rose—and springing from his trance
His eager footsteps to the sound advance.
He mounts the cliffs, he gains the cavern floor;
Its dark green moss with blood is sprinkled o’er
He rushes on—and lo! where Zayda rends
Her locks, as o’er her slaughter’d sire she bends,
Lost in despair;—yet, as a step draws nigh,
Disturbing sorrow’s lonely sanctity,
She lifts her head, and, all-subdued by grief,
Views with a wild sad smile the once-loved chief;
While rove her thoughts, unconscious of the past,
And every woe forgetting—but the last.
“Com’st thou to weep with me?—for I am left
Alone on earth, of every tie bereft.
Low lies the warrior on his blood-stain’d bier;
His child may call, but he no more shall hear.
He sleeps—but never shall those eyes unclose;

’Twas not my voice that lull’d him to repose;
Nor can it break his slumbers.—Dost thou mourn?
And is thy heart, like mine, with anguish torn?
Weep, and my soul a joy in grief shall know,
That o’er his grave my tears with Hamet’s flow?”
But scarce her voice had breathed that well-known name,
When, swiftly rushing o’er her spirit, came
Each dark remembrance—by affliction’s power
Awhile effaced in that o’erwhelming hour,
To wake with tenfold strength: ’twas then her eye
Resumed its light, her mien its majesty,
And o’er her wasted cheek a burning glow
Spreads, while her lips’ indignant accents flow.
“Away! I dream! Oh, how hath sorrow’s might
Bow’d down my soul, and quench’d its native light—
That I should thus forget! and bid thy tear
With mine be mingled o’er a father’s bier!
Did he not perish, haply by thy hand,
In the last combat with thy ruthless band?
The morn beheld that conflict of despair:—
’Twas then he fell—he fell!—and thou wert there!
Thou! who thy country’s children hast pursued
To their last refuge midst these mountains rude.
Was it for this I loved thee?—Thou hast taught

My soul all grief, all bitterness of thought!
’Twill soon be past—I bow to heaven’s decree,
Which bade each pang be minister’d by thee.”
“I had not deem’d that aught remain’d below
For me to prove of yet untasted woe;
But thus to meet thee, Zayda! can impart
One more, one keener agony of heart.
Oh, hear me yet!—I would have died to save
My foe, but still thy father, from the grave;
But in the fierce confusion of the strife,
In my own stern despair and scorn of life,
Borne wildly on, I saw not, knew not aught,
Save that to perish there in vain I sought.
And let me share thy sorrows!—hadst thou known
All I have felt in silence and alone,
E’en thou mightst then relent, and deem, at last,
A grief like mine might expiate all the past
“But oh! for thee, the loved and precious flower,
So fondly rear’d in luxury’s guarded bower,
From every danger, every storm secured,
How hast thou suffer’d! what hast thou endured!
Daughter of palaces! and can it be
That this bleak desert is a home for thee!
These rocks thy dwelling! thou, who shouldst have known

Of life the sunbeam and the smile alone!
Oh, yet forgive!—be all my guilt forgot,
Nor bid me leave thee to so rude a lot!”
“That lot is fix’d—’twere fruitless to repine:
Still must a gulf divide my fate from thine.
I may forgive—but not at will the heart
Can bid its dark remembrances depart.
No, Hamet! no!—too deeply are these traced;
Yet the hour comes when all shall be effaced!
Not long on earth, not long, shall Zayda keep
Her lonely vigils o’er the grave to weep.
E’en now, prophetic of my early doom,
Speaks to my soul a presage of the tomb;
And ne’er in vain did hopeless mourner feel
That deep foreboding o’er the bosom steal!
Soon shall I slumber calmly by the side
Of him for whom I lived, and would have died;
Till then, one thought shall soothe my orphan lot,
In pain and peril—I forsook him not.
“And now, farewell!—behold the summer-day
Is passing, like the dreams of life, away.
Soon will the tribe of him who sleeps draw nigh,
With the last rites his bier to sanctify.
Oh, yet in time, away!—’twere not my prayer

Could move their hearts a foe like thee to spare!
This hour they come—and dost thou scorn to fly?
Save me that one last pang—to see thee die!”
E’en while she speaks is heard their echoing tread;
Onward they move, the kindred of the dead.
They reach the cave—they enter—slow their pace,
And calm deep sadness marks each mourner’s face;
And all is hush’d, till he who seems to wait
In silent stern devotedness his fate,
Hath met their glance—then grief to fury turns:
Each mien is changed, each eye indignant burns,
And voices rise, and swords have left their sheath.
Blood must atone for blood, and death for death!
They close around him: lofty still his mien,
His cheek unalter’d, and his brow serene.
Unheard, or heard in vain, is Zayda’s cry;
Fruitless her prayer, unmark’d her agony.
But as his foremost foes their weapons bend
Against the life he seeks not to defend,
Wildly she darts between—each feeling past,
Save strong affection, which prevails at last.
Oh, not in vain its daring!—for the blow
Aim’d at his heart hath bade her life-blood flow;
And she hath sunk a martyr on the breast

Where in that hour her head may calmly rest,
For he is saved! Behold the Zegri band,
Pale with dismay and grief, around her stand:
While, every thought of hate and vengeance o’er,
They weep for her who soon shall weep no more.
She, she alone is calm:—a fading smile,
Like sunset, passes o’er her cheek the while;
And in her eye, ere yet it closes, dwell
Those last faint rays, the parting soul’s farewell.
“Now is the conflict past, and I have proved
How well, how deeply thou hast been beloved!
Yes! in an hour like this ’twere vain to hide
The heart so long and so severely tried:
Still to thy name that heart hath fondly thrill’d,
But sterner duties call’d—and were fulfill’d.
And I am blest!—To every holier tie
My life was faithful,—and for thee I die!
Nor shall the love so purified be vain;
Sever’d on earth, we yet shall meet again.
Farewell!—And ye, at Zayda’s dying prayer,
Spare him, my kindred tribe! forgive and spare!
Oh! be his guilt forgotten in his woes,
While I, beside my sire, in peace repose.”
Now fades her cheek, her voice hath sunk, and death

Sits in her eye, and struggles in her breath.
One pang—’tis past—her task on earth is done,
And the pure spirit to its rest hath flown.
But he for whom she died—oh! who may paint
The grief to which all other woes were faint?
There is no power in language to impart
The deeper pangs, the ordeals of the heart,
By the dread Searcher of the soul survey’d:
These have no words—nor are by words portray’d.
A dirge is rising on the mountain-air,
Whose fitful swells its plaintive murmurs bear
Far o’er the Alpuxarras;—wild its tone,
And rocks and caverns echo, “Thou art gone!”
“Daughter of heroes! thou art gone
To share his tomb who gave thee birth:
Peace to the lovely spirit flown!
It was not form’d for earth.
Thou wert a sunbeam in thy race,
Which brightly pass’d and left no trace.
“But calmly sleep!—for thou art free,
And hands unchain’d thy tomb shall raise.
Sleep! they are closed at length for thee,
Life’s few and evil days!
Nor shalt thou watch, with tearful eye,

The lingering death of liberty.

“Flower of the desert! thou thy bloom

Didst early to the storm resign:

We bear it still—and dark their doom

Who cannot weep for thine!

For us, whose every hope is fled,

The time is past to mourn the dead.

“The days have been, when o’er thy bier

Far other strains than these had flow’d;

Now, as a home from grief and fear,

We hail thy dark abode!

We, who but linger to bequeath

Our sons the choice of chains or death.

“Thou art with those, the free, the brave,

The mighty of departed years;

And for the slumberers of the grave

Our fate hath left no tears.

Though loved and lost, to weep were vain

For thee, who ne’er shalt weep again.

“Have we not seen despoil’d by foes

The land our fathers won of yore?

And is there yet a pang for those

Who gaze on this no more?

Oh, that like them ’twere ours to rest!

Daughter of heroes! thou art blest!”

A few short year’s, and in the lonely cave

Where sleeps the Zegri maid, is Hamet’s grave.

Sever’d in life, united in the tomb—

Such, of the hearts that loved so well, the doom!

Their dirge, of woods and waves th’ eternal moan;

Their sepulchre, the pine-clad rocks alone.

And oft beside the midnight watch-fire’s blaze,

Amidst those rocks, in long-departed days,

(When freedom fled, to hold, sequester’d there,

The stern and lofty councils of despair,)

Some exiled Moor, a warrior of the wild,

Who the lone hours with mournful strains beguiled,

Hath taught his mountain-home the tale of those

Who thus have suffer’d, and who thus repose.

[86] The terrors occasioned by this sudden excitement of popular feeling seem even to have accelerated Abo Abdeli’s capitulation. “Aterrado Abo Abdeli con el alboroto y temiendo no ser ya el Dueño de un pueblo amotinádo, se apresuró á concluir una capitulation, la menos dura que podia obtenir en tan urgentes circumstancias, y ofrecio entregor á Granada el dia seis de Enero.”—Paseos en Granada, vol. i. p. 298.

[87] The oaken cross, carried by Pelagius in battle.

[88] See Southey’s Chronicle of the Cid, in which that warrior is frequently styled, “he who was born in happy hour.”

[89] “Moreover, when the Miramamolin brought over from Africa against King Don Alfonso, the eighth of that name, the mightiest power of the misbelievers that had

ever been brought against Spain, since the destruction of the kings of the Goths, the Cid Campeador remembered his country in that great danger; for the night before the battle was fought at the Navas de Tolosa, in the dead of the night, a mighty sound was heard in the whole city of Leon, as if it were the tramp of a great army passing through; and it passed on to the royal monastery of St Isidro, and there was a great knocking at the gate thereof, and they called to a priest who was keeping vigils in the church, and told him that the captains of the army whom he heard were the Cid Ruydiez, and Count Ferran Gonzalez, and that they came there to call up King Don Fernando the Great, who lay buried in that church, that he might go with them to deliver Spain. And on the morrow that great battle of the Navas de Tolosa was fought, wherein sixty thousand of the misbelievers were slain, which was one of the greatest and noblest battles ever won over the Moors."—Southey's Chronicle of the Cid.

[90] The name of Andalusia, the region of evening, or of the west, was applied by the Arabs not only to the province so called, but to the whole peninsula.

[91] "En este dia, para siempre memorable, los estandartes de la Cruz, de St Jago, y el de los Reyes de Castilla se tremoláran sobre la torre mas alta, llamada de la Vela; y un exercito prosternado, inundandose en lagrimas de gozo y reconocimiento, asistio al mas glorioso de los espectaculos."—Paseos en Granada, vol. i. p. 299.

[92] Swinburne, after describing the noble palace built by Charles V. in the precincts of the Alhambra, thus proceeds: "Adjoining (to the north) stands a huge heap of as ugly buildings as can well be seen, all huddled together, seemingly without the least intention of forming one habitation out of them. The walls are entirely unornamented, all gravel and pebbles, daubed over with plaster by a very coarse hand; yet this is the palace of the Moorish kings of Granada, indisputably the most curious place within that exists in Spain, perhaps in Europe. In many countries you may see excellent modern as well as ancient architecture, both entire and in ruins;

but nothing to be met with any where else can convey an idea of this edifice, except you take it from the decorations of an opera, or the tales of the genii."—Swinburne's Travels through Spain.

[93] "Passing round the corner of the emperor's palace, you are admitted at a plain unornamented door in a corner. On my first visit, I confess, I was struck with amazement as I stept over the threshold, to find myself on a sudden transported into a species of fairy land. The first place you come to is the court called the Communa, or del Mesucar, that is, the common baths: an oblong square, with a deep basin of clear water in the middle; two flights of marble steps leading down to the bottom; on each side a parterre of flowers, and a row of orange-trees. Round the court runs a peristyle paved with marble; the arches bear upon very slight pillars, in proportions and style different from all the regular orders of architecture. The ceilings and walls are incrustated with fretwork in stucco, so minute and intricate that the most patient draughtsman would find it difficult to follow it, unless he made himself master of the general plan."—Swinburne's Travels in Spain.

[94] The walls and cornices of the Alhambra are covered with inscriptions in Arabic characters. "In examining this abode of magnificence," says Bourgoanne, "the observer is every moment astonished at the new and interesting mixture of architecture and poetry. The palace of the Alhambra may be called a collection of fugitive pieces; and whatever duration these may have, time, with which every thing passes away, has too much contributed to confirm to them that title."—See Bourgoanne's Travels in Spain.

[95] Atabal, a kind of Moorish drum.

[96] "Y ansi entraron en la ciudad, y subieron al Alhambra, y encima de la torre de Comares tan famosa se levantò la señal de la Santa Cruz, y luego el real estandarte de los dos Christianos reyes. Y al punto los reyes de armas, à grandes bozes dizieron, 'Granada! Granada! por su magestad, y por la reyna su muger.' La

serenissima reyna D. Isabel, que viò ia señal de la Santa Cruz sobre la hermosa torre de Comares, y el su estandarte real con ella, se hincò de rodillas, y diò infinitas gracias à Dios por la victoria que le avia dado contra aquella gran ciudad. La musica real de la capilla del rey luego à canto de organo cantò Te Deum laudamus. Fuè tan grande el plazer que todos lloravan. Luego del Alhambra sonaron mil instrumentos de musica de belicas trompetas. Los Moros amigos del rey, que querian ser Christianos, cuya cabeza era el valeroso Muça, tomaron mil dulzaynas y añafiles, sonando grande ruydo de atambores por toda la ciudad."—Historia de las Guerras Civiles de Granada.

[97] "Los cavalleros Moros que avemos dicho, aquella noche jugaron galanamente alcancias y cañas. Andava Granada aquella noche con tanta alegria, y con tantas luminarias, que parecia que se ardia la terra."—Historia de las Guerras Civiles de Granada.

Swinburne, in his Travels through Spain, in the years 1775 and 1776, mentions, that the anniversary of the surrender of Granada to Ferdinand and Isabella was still observed in the city as a great festival and day of rejoicing; and that the populace on that occasion paid an annual visit to the Moorish palace.

[98] "Los Gomeles todos se passeron en Africa, y el Rey Chico con ellos, que no quisò estar en España, y en Africa le mataron los Moros de aquellas partes, porque perdiò a Granada."—Guerras Civiles de Granada.

[99] Abo Abdeli, upon leaving Granada, after its conquest by Ferdinand and Isabella, stopped on the hill of Padul to take a last look of his city and palace. Overcome by the sight, he burst into tears, and was thus reproached by his mother, the Sultaness Ayxa,—"Thou dost well to weep like a woman, over the loss of that kingdom which thou knewest not how to defend and die for like a man."

[100] "El rey mandò, que si quedavan Zegris, que no viviessen en Granada, por la maldad qui hizieron contra los Abencerrages."—Guerras Civiles de Granada.

[101] “The Alpuxarras are so lofty that the coast of Barbary, and the cities of Tangier and Ceuta, are discovered from their summits; they are about seventeen leagues in length, from Veles Malaga to Almeria, and eleven in breadth, and abound with fruit trees of great beauty and prodigious size. In these mountains the wretched remains of the Moors took refuge.”—Bourgoanne’s Travels in Spain.

[102] “Plût à Dieu que je craignisse!”—Andromaque.

[103] Mrs Radcliffe, in her journey along the banks of the Rhine, thus describes the colours of granite rocks in the mountains of the Bergstrasse. “The nearer we approached these mountains, the more we had occasion to admire the various tints of their granites. Sometimes the precipices were of a faint pink, then of a deep red, a dull purple, or a blush approaching to lilac; and sometimes gleams of a pale yellow mingled with the low shrubs that grew upon their sides. The day was cloudless and bright, and we were too near these heights to be deceived by the illusions of aërial colouring; the real hues of their features were as beautiful as their magnitude was sublime.”

THE WIDOW OF CRESCENTIUS.

[“In the reign of Otho III. Emperor of Germany, the Romans, excited by their Consul, Crescentius, who ardently desired to restore the ancient glory of the Republic, made a bold attempt to shake off the Saxon yoke, and the authority of the popes, whose vices rendered them objects of universal contempt. The Consul was besieged by Otho in the Mole of Hadrian, which long afterwards continued to be called the Tower of Crescentius. Otho, after many unavailing attacks upon this fortress, at last entered into negotiations; and, pledging his imperial word to respect the life of Crescentius, and the rights of the Roman citizens, the unfortunate leader was betrayed into his power, and immediately beheaded, with many of his partisans. Stephania, his widow, concealing her affliction and her resentment for the insults to which she had been exposed, secretly resolved to revenge her husband and herself.

On the return of Otho from a pilgrimage to Mount Gargano, which perhaps a feeling of remorse had induced him to undertake, she found means to be introduced to him, and to gain his confidence; and a poison administered by her was soon afterwards the cause of his painful death."—Sismondi, History of the Italian Republics, vol. i.]

"L'orage peut briser en un moment les fleurs qui tiennent encore la tête levée."—Mad. de Stael.

Midst Tivoli's luxuriant glades,

Bright-foaming falls, and olive shades,

Where dwelt, in days departed long,

The sons of battle and of song,

No tree, no shrub its foliage rears

But o'er the wrecks of other years,

Temples and domes, which long have been

The soil of that enchanted scene.

There the wild fig-tree and the vine

O'er Hadrian's mouldering villa twine;[104]

The cypress, in funereal grace,

Usurps the vanish'd column's place;

O'er fallen shrine and ruin'd frieze

The wall-flower rustles in the breeze;

Acanthus-leaves the marble hide

They once adorn'd in sculptured pride;

And nature hath resumed her throne

O'er the vast works of ages flown.

Was it for this that many a pile,

Pride of Ilissus and of Nile,
To Anio's banks the image lent
Of each imperial monument?[105]
Now Athens weeps her shatter'd fanes,
Thy temples, Egypt, strew thy plains;
And the proud fabrics Hadrian rear'd
From Tibur's vale have disappear'd.
We need no prescient sibyl there
The doom of grandeur to declare;
Each stone, where weeds and ivy climb,
Reveals some oracle of Time;
Each relic utters Fate's decree—
The future as the past shall be.
Halls of the dead! in Tibur's vale,
Who now shall tell your lofty tale?
Who trace the high patrician's dome,
The bard's retreat, the hero's home?
When moss-clad wrecks alone record
There dwelt the world's departed lord,
In scenes where verdure's rich array
Still sheds young beauty o'er decay,
And sunshine on each glowing hill
Midst ruins finds a dwelling still.
Sunk is thy palace—but thy tomb,

Hadrian! hath shared a prouder doom.[106]
Though vanish’d with the days of old
Its pillars of Corinthian mould;
Though the fair forms by sculpture wrought,
Each bodying some immortal thought,
Which o’er that temple of the dead
Serene but solemn beauty shed,
Have found, like glory’s self, a grave
In time’s abyss or Tiber’s wave;[107]
Yet dreams more lofty and more fair
Than art’s bold hand hath imaged e’er.
High thoughts of many a mighty mind
Expanding when all else declined,
In twilight years, when only they
Recall’d the radiance pass’d away,
Have made that ancient pile their home,
Fortress of freedom and of Rome.
There he, who strove in evil days
Again to kindle glory’s rays,
Whose spirit sought a path of light
For those dim ages far too bright—
Crescentius—long maintain’d the strife
Which closed but with its martyr’s life,
And left th’ imperial tomb a name,

A heritage of holier fame.
There closed De Brescia’s mission high,
From thence the patriot came to die;[108]
And thou, whose Roman soul the last
Spoke with the voice of ages past,[109]
Whose thoughts so long from earth had fled
To mingle with the glorious dead,
That midst the world’s degenerate race
They vainly sought a dwelling-place,
Within that house of death didst brood
O’er visions to thy ruin woo’d.
Yet, worthy of a brighter lot,
Rienzi, be thy faults forgot!
For thou, when all around thee lay
Chain’d in the slumbers of decay—
So sunk each heart, that mortal eye
Had scarce a tear for liberty—
Alone, amidst the darkness there,
Couldst gaze on Rome—yet not despair![110]
’Tis morn—and nature’s richest dyes
Are floating o’er Italian skies;
Tints of transparent lustre shine
Along the snow-clad Apennine;
The clouds have left Soracte’s height,

And yellow Tiber winds in light,
Where tombs and fallen fanes have strew’d
The wide Campagna’s solitude.
’Tis sad amidst that scene to trace
Those relics of a vanish’d race;
Yet, o’er the ravaged path of time—
Such glory sheds that brilliant clime,
Where nature still, though empires fall,
Holds her triumphant festival—
E’en desolation wears a smile,
Where skies and sunbeams laugh the while;
And heaven’s own light, earth’s richest bloom,
Array the ruin and the tomb.
But she, who from yon convent tower
Breathes the pure freshness of the hour;
She, whose rich flow of raven hair
Streams wildly on the morning air,
Heeds not how fair the scene below,
Robed in Italia’s brightest glow.
Though throned midst Latium’s classic plains
Th’ Eternal City’s towers and fanes,
And they, the Pleiades of earth,
The seven proud hills of Empire’s birth,
Lie spread beneath; not now her glance

Roves o’er that vast sublime expanse;
Inspired, and bright with hope,’tis thrown
On Adrian’s massy tomb alone;
There, from the storm, when Freedom fled,
His faithful few Crescentius led;
While she, his anxious bride, who now
Bends o’er the scene her youthful brow,
Sought refuge in the hallow’d fane,
Which then could shelter, not in vain.
But now the lofty strife is o’er,
And Liberty shall weep no more.
At length imperial Otho’s voice
Bids her devoted sons rejoice;
And he, who battled to restore
The glories and the rights of yore,
Whose accents, like the clarion’s sound,
Could burst the dead repose around,
Again his native Rome shall see
The sceptred city of the free!
And young Stephania waits the hour
When leaves her lord his fortress-tower—
Her ardent heart with joy elate,
That seems beyond the reach of fate;
Her mien, like creature from above,

All vivified with hope and love.
Fair is her form, and in her eye
Lives all the soul of Italy;
A meaning lofty and inspired,
As by her native day-star fired;
Such wild and high expression, fraught
With glances of impassion'd thought,
As fancy sheds, in visions bright,
O'er priestess of the God of Light;
And the dark locks that lend her face
A youthful and luxuriant grace,
Wave o'er her cheek, whose kindling dyes
Seem from the fire within to rise,
But deepen'd by the burning heaven
To her own land of sunbeams given.
Italian art that fervid glow
Would o'er ideal beauty throw,
And with such ardent life express
Her high-wrought dreams of loveliness,—
Dreams which, surviving Empire's fall,
The shade of glory still recall.
But see!—the banner of the brave
O'er Adrian's tomb hath ceased to wave.
'Tis lower'd—and now Stephania's eye

Can well the martial train descry,
Who, issuing from that ancient dome,
Pour through the crowded streets of Rome.
Now from her watch-tower on the height,
With step as fabled wood-nymph's light,
She flies—and swift her way pursues
Through the lone convent's avenues.
Dark cypress groves, and fields o'erspread
With records of the conquering dead,
And paths which track a glowing waste,
She traverses in breathless haste;
And by the tombs where dust is shrined
Once tenanted by loftiest mind,
Still passing on, hath reach'd the gate
Of Rome, the proud, the desolate!
Throng'd are the streets, and, still renew'd,
Rush on the gathering multitude.
—Is it their high-soul'd chief to greet
That thus the Roman thousands meet?
With names that bid their thoughts ascend,
Crescentius! thine in song to blend;
And of triumphal days gone by
Recall th' inspiring pageantry?
—There is an air of breathless dread,

An eager glance, a hurrying tread;
And now a fearful silence round,
And now a fitful murmuring sound,
Midst the pale crowds, that almost seem
Phantoms of some tumultuous dream.
Quick is each step and wild each mien,
Portentous of some awful scene.
Bride of Crescentius! as the throng
Bore thee with whelming force along,
How did thine anxious heart beat high,
Till rose suspense to agony!—
Too brief suspense, that soon shall close,
And leave thy heart to deeper woes.
Who midst yon guarded precinct stands,
With fearless mien but fetter’d hands?
The ministers of death are nigh,
Yet a calm grandeur lights his eye;
And in his glance there fives a mind
Which was not form’d for chains to bind,
But cast in such heroic mould
As theirs, th’ ascendant ones of old.
Crescentius! freedom’s daring son,
Is this the guerdon thou hast won?
Oh, worthy to have lived and died

In the bright days of Latium’s pride!
Thus must the beam of glory close
O’er the seven hills again that rose,
When at thy voice, to burst the yoke,
The soul of Rome indignant woke?
Vain dream! the sacred shields are gone,[111]
Sunk is the crowning city’s throne:[112]
Th’ illusions, that around her cast
Their guardian spells, have long been past.[113]
Thy life hath been a shot-star’s ray,
Shed o’er her midnight of decay;
Thy death at freedom’s ruin’d shrine
Must rivet every chain—but thine.
Calm is his aspect, and his eye
Now fix’d upon the deep blue sky,
Now on those wrecks of ages fled
Around in desolation spread—
Arch, temple, column, worn and gray,
Recording triumphs pass’d away;
Works of the mighty and the free,
Whose steps on earth no more shall be,
Though their bright course hath left a trace
Nor years nor sorrows can efface.
Why changes now the patriot’s mien,

Erewhile so loftily serene?
Thus can approaching death control
The might of that commanding soul?
No!—Heard ye not that thrilling cry
Which told of bitterest agony?
He heard it, and at once, subdued,
Hath sunk the hero’s fortitude.
He heard it, and his heart too well
Whence rose that voice of woe can tell;
And midst the gazing throngs around
One well-known form his glance hath found—
One fondly loving and beloved,
In grief, in peril, faithful proved.
Yes! in the wildness of despair,
She, his devoted bride, is there.
Pale, breathless, through the crowd she flies,
The light of frenzy in her eyes:
But ere her arms can clasp the form
Which life ere long must cease to warm—
Ere on his agonising breast
Her heart can heave, her head can rest—
Check’d in her course by ruthless hands,
Mute, motionless, at once she stands;
With bloodless cheek and vacant glance,

Frozen and fix’d in horror’s trance;
Spell-bound, as every sense were fled,
And thought o’erwhelm’d, and feeling dead;
And the light waving of her hair,
And veil, far floating on the air,
Alone, in that dread moment, show
She is no sculptured form of woe.
The scene of grief and death is o’er,
The patriot’s heart shall throb no more:
But hers—so vainly form’d to prove
The pure devotedness of love,
And draw from fond affection’s eye
All thought sublime, all feeling high—
When consciousness again shall wake,
Hath now no refuge but to break.
The spirit long inured to pain
May smile at fate in calm disdain,
Survive its darkest hour, and rise
In more majestic energies.
But in the glow of vernal pride,
If each warm hope at once hath died,
Then sinks the mind, a blighted flower,
Dead to the sunbeam and the shower;
A broken gem, whose inborn light

Is scatter'd—ne'er to re-unite.

[104] "J'étais allé passer quelques jours seuls à Tivoli. Je parcourus les environs, et surtout celles de la Villa Adriana. Surpris par la pluie au milieu de ma course, je me réfugiai dans les Salles des Thermes voisins du Pécile, (monumens de la villa,) sous un figuier qui avait renversé le pan d'un mur en s'élevant. Dans un petit salon octogone, ouvert devant moi, une vigne vierge avait percé la voûte de l'édifice, et son gros cep lisse, rouge, et tortueux, montait le long du mur comme un serpent. Autour de moi, à travers les arcades des ruines, s'ouvraient des points de vue sur la Campagne Romaine. Des buissons de sureau remplissaient les salles désertes où venaient se réfugier quelques merles solitaires. Les fragmens de maçonnerie étaient tapissées de feuilles de scolopendre, dont la verdure satinée se dessinait comme un travail en mosaïque sur la blancheur des marbres: çà et là de hauts cyprès remplaçaient les colonnes tombées dans ces palais de la Mort; l'acanthe sauvage rampait à leurs pieds, sur des débris, comme si la nature s'était plu à reproduire sur ces chefs-d'œuvre mutilés d'architecture, l'ornement de leur beauté passée."—Chateaubriand's Souvenirs d' Italie.

[105] The gardens and buildings of Hadrian's villa were copies of the most celebrated scenes and edifices in his dominions—the Lycæum, the Academia, the Prytaneum of Athens, the Temple of Serapis at Alexandria, the Vale of Tempe, &c.

[106] The mausoleum of Hadrian, now the castle of St Angelo, was first converted into a citadel by Belisarius, in his successful defence of Rome against the Goths. "The lover of the arts," says Gibbon, "must read with a sigh that the works of Praxiteles and Lysippus were torn from their lofty pedestals, and hurled into the ditch on the heads of the besiegers." He adds, in a note, that the celebrated Sleeping Faun of the Barberini palace was found, in a mutilated state, when the ditch of St Angelo was cleansed under Urban VIII. In the middle ages, the Moles Hadriani was made a permanent fortress by the Roman government, and bastions, outworks, &c.

were added to the original edifice, which had been stripped of its marble covering, its Corinthian pillars, and the brazen cone which crowned its summit.

[107] “Les plus beaux monumens des arts, les plus admirables statues, out étés jetées dans le Tibre, et sont cachées sous ses flots. Qui sait si, pour les chercher, on ne le détournera pas un jour de son lit? Mais quand on songe que les chefs-d’œuvres du génie humain sont peut-être là devant nous, et qu’un œil plus perçant les verrait à travers les ondes, l’on éprouve je ne sais quelle émotion, qui renaît à Rome sans cesse sous diverses formes, et fait trouver une société pour la pensée dans les objets physiques, muets partout ailleurs.”—Mad. de Stael.

[108] Arnold de Brescia, the undaunted and eloquent champion of Roman liberty, after unremitting efforts to restore the ancient constitution of the republic, was put to death in the year 1155 by Adrian IV. This event is thus described by Sismondi, Histoire des Républiques Italiennes, vol. ii. pages 68 and 69. “Le préfet demeura dans le château Saint Ange avec son prisonnier: il le fit transporter un matin sur la place destinée aux exécutions, devant la porte du peuple. Arnaud de Brescia, élevé sur un bûcher, fut attaché à un poteau, en face du Corso. Il pouvoit mésurer des yeux les trois longues rues qui aboutissoient devant son échafaud; elles font presqu’ une moitié de Rome. C’est là qu’habitoient les hommes qu’il avoit si souvent appelés à la liberté. Ils reposoient encore en paix, ignorant le danger de leur législateur. Le tumulte de l’exécution et la flamme du bûcher réveillèrent les Romains; ils s’armèrent, ils accoururent, mais trop tard; et les cohortes du pape repoussèrent, avec leurs lances, ceux qui, n’ayant pu sauver Arnaud, vouloient du moins recueillir ses cendres comme de précieuses reliques.”

[109] “Posterity will compare the virtues and fadings of this extraordinary man; but in a long period of anarchy and servitude, the name of Rienzi has often been celebrated as the deliverer of his country, and the last of the Roman patriots.”—Gibbon’s Decline and Fall, &c. vol. xii. p. 362.

[110] “Le consul Terentius Varron avoit fui honteusement jusqu’à Venouse. Cet homme, de la plus basse naissance, n’avoit été élevé au consulat que pour mortifier la noblesse: mais le sénat ne voulut pas jouir de ce malheureux triomphe; il vit combien il étoit nécessaire qu’il s’attirât dans cette occasion la confiance du peuple—il alla au-devant Varron, et le remercia de ce qu’il n’avoit pas désespéré de la republique.”—Montesquieu’s Grandeur et Décadence des Romains.

[111] Of the sacred bucklers, or ancilia of Rome, which were kept in the temple of Mars, Plutarch gives the following account:—“In the eighth year of Numa’s reign, a pestilence prevailed in Italy; Rome also felt its ravages. While the people were greatly dejected, we are told that a brazen buckler fell from heaven into the hands of Numa. Of this he gave a very wonderful account, received from Egeria and the Muses: that the buckler was sent down for the preservation of the city, and should be kept with great care; that eleven others should be made as like it as possible in size and fashion, in order that, if any person were disposed to steal it, he might not be able to distinguish that which fell from heaven from the rest. He further declared, that the place, and the meadows about it, where he frequently conversed with the Muses, should be consecrated to those divinities; and that the spring which watered the ground should be sacred to the use of the Vestal Virgins, daily to sprinkle and purify their temple. The immediate cessation of the pestilence is said to have confirmed the truth of this account.”—Life of Numa.

[112] “Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth?”—Isaiah, chap. 23.

[113] “Un mélange bizarre de grandeur d’àme et de foiblesse entroit dès cette époque (l’onzième siècle) dans le caractère des Romains. Un mouvement généreux vers les grandes choses faisoit place tout-à-coup à l’abattement; ils passoient de la liberté la plus orageuse, à la servitude la plus avilissante. On auroit dit que les ruines

et les portiques déserts de la capitale du monde, entretenoient ses habitans dans le sentiment de leur impuissance; au milieu de ces monumens de leur domination passée, les citoyens éprouvoient d'une manière trop décourageante leur propre nullité. Le nom des Romains qu'ils portoient ranimoit fréquemment leur enthousiasme, comme il le ranime encore aujourd'hui; mas bientôt la vue de Rome, du forum désert, des sept collines de nouveau rendues au pâturage des troupeaux, des temples désolés, des monumens tombant en ruine, les ramenoit à sentir qu'ils n'étoient plus les Romains d'autrefois."—Sismondi, Histoire des Républiques Italiennes, vol. i. p. 172.

PART II.

Hast thou a scene that is not spread
With records of thy glory fled?
A monument that doth not tell
The tale of liberty's farewell?
Italia! thou art but a grave
Where flowers luxuriate o'er the brave,
And nature gives her treasures birth
O'er all that hath been great on earth.
Yet smile thy heavens as once they smiled
When thou wert freedom's favour'd child:
Though fane and tomb alike are low,
Time hath not dimm'd thy sunbeam's glow;
And, robed in that exulting ray,
Thou seem'st to triumph o'er decay—
Oh, yet, though by thy sorrows bent,

In nature’s pomp magnificent!
What marvel if, when all was lost,
Still on thy bright enchanted coast,
Though many an omen warn’d him thence,
Linger’d the lord of eloquence.[114]
Still gazing on the lovely sky,
Whose radiance woo’d him—but to die?
Like him, who would not linger there,
Where heaven, earth, ocean, all are fair?
Who midst thy glowing scenes could dwell,
Nor bid awhile his griefs farewell?
Hath not thy pure and genial air
Balm for all sadness but despair?[115]
No! there are pangs whose deep-worn trace
Not all thy magic can efface!
Hearts by unkindness wrung may learn
The world and all its gifts to spurn;
Time may steal on with silent tread,
And dry the tear that mourns the dead,
May change fond love, subdue regret,
And teach e’en vengeance to forget:
But thou, Remorse! there is no charm
Thy sting, avenger, to disarm!
Vain are bright suns and laughing skies

To soothe thy victim’s agonies:
The heart once made thy burning throne,
Still, while it beats, is thine alone.
In vain for Otho’s joyless eye
Smile the fair scenes of Italy,
As through her landscapes’ rich array
Th’ imperial pilgrim bends his way.
Thy form, Crescentius! on his sight
Rises when nature laughs in light,
Glides round him at the midnight hour,
Is present in his festal bower,
With awful voice and frowning mien,
By all but him unheard, unseen.
Oh! thus to shadows of the grave
Be every tyrant still a slave!
Where, through Gargano’s woody dells,
O’er bending oaks the north wind swells,[116]
A sainted hermit’s lowly tomb
Is bosom’d in umbrageous gloom,
In shades that saw him live and die
Beneath their waving canopy.
’Twas his, as legends tell, to share
The converse of immortals there;
Around that dweller of the wild

There “bright appearances” have smiled,
And angel-wings at eve have been
Gleaming the shadowy boughs between.
And oft from that secluded bower
Hath breathed, at midnight’s calmer hour,
A swell of viewless harps, a sound
Of warbled anthems pealing round.
Oh, none but voices of the sky
Might wake that thrilling harmony,
Whose tones, whose very echoes made
An Eden of the lonely shade!
Years have gone by; the hermit sleeps
Amidst Gargano’s woods and steeps;
Ivy and flowers have half o’ergrown
And veil’d his low sepulchral stone:
Yet still the spot is holy, still
Celestial footsteps haunt the hill;
And oft the awe-struck mountaineer
Aërial vesper-hymns may hear
Around those forest-precincts float,
Soft, solemn, clear, but still remote.
Oft will Affliction breathe her plaint
To that rude shrine’s departed saint,
And deem that spirits of the blest

There shed sweet influence o’er her breast.
And thither Otho now repairs,
To soothe his soul with vows and prayers;
And if for him, on holy ground,
The lost one, Peace, may yet be found,
Midst rocks and forests, by the bed
Where calmly sleep the sainted dead,
She dwells, remote from heedless eye,
With nature’s lonely majesty.
Vain, vain the search!—his troubled breast
Nor vow nor penance lulls to rest:
The weary pilgrimage is o’er,
The hopes that cheer’d it are no more.
Then sinks his soul, and day by day
Youth’s buoyant energies decay.
The light of health his eye hath flown,
The glow that tinged his cheek is gone.
Joyless as one on whom is laid
Some baleful spell that bids him fade,
Extending its mysterious power
O’er every scene, o’er every hour:
E’en thus he withers; and to him
Italia’s brilliant skies are dim.
He withers—in that glorious clime

Where Nature laughs in scorn of Time;
And suns, that shed on all below
Their full and vivifying glow,
From him alone their power withhold,
And leave his heart in darkness cold.
Earth blooms around him, heaven is fair—
He only seems to perish there.
Yet sometimes will a transient smile
Play o’er his faded cheek awhile,
When breathes his minstrel boy a strain
Of power to lull all earthly pain—
So wildly sweet, its notes might seem
Th’ ethereal music of a dream,
A spirit’s voice from worlds unknown,
Deep thrilling power in every tone!
Sweet is that lay! and yet its flow
Hath language only given to woe;
And if at times its wakening swell
Some tale of glory seems to tell,
Soon the proud notes of triumph die,
Lost in a dirge’s harmony.
Oh! many a pang the heart hath proved,
Hath deeply suffer’d, fondly loved,
Ere the sad strain could catch from thence

Such deep impassion’d eloquence!
Yes! gaze on him, that minstrel boy—
He is no child of hope and joy!
Though few his years, yet have they been
Such as leave traces on the mien,
And o’er the roses of our prime
Breathe other blights than those of time.
Yet seems his spirit wild and proud,
By grief unsoften’d and unbow’d.
Oh! there are sorrows which impart
A sternness foreign to the heart,
And, rushing with an earthquake’s power,
That makes a desert in an hour,
Rouse the dread passions in their course,
As tempests wake the billows’ force!—
’Tis sad, on youthful Guido’s face,
The stamp of woes like these to trace.
Oh! where can ruins awe mankind
Dark as the ruins of the mind?
His mien is lofty, but his gaze
Too well a wandering soul betrays:
His full dark eye at times is bright
With strange and momentary light,
Whose quick uncertain flashes throw

O’er his pale cheek a hectic glow:
And oft his features and his air
A shade of troubled mystery wear,
A glance of hurried wildness, fraught
With some unfathomable thought.
Whate’er that thought, still unexpress’d
Dwells the sad secret in his breast;
The pride his haughty brow reveals
All other passion well conceals—
He breathes each wounded feeling’s tone
In music’s eloquence alone;
His soul’s deep voice is only pour’d
Through his full song and swelling chord.
He seeks no friend, but shuns the train
Of courtiers with a proud disdain;
And, save when Otho bids his lay
Its half unearthly power essay
In hall or bower the heart to thrill,
His haunts are wild and lonely still.
Far distant from the heedless throng,
He roves old Tiber’s banks along,
Where Empire’s desolate remains
Lie scatter’d o’er the silent plains;
Or, lingering midst each ruin’d shrine

That strews the desert Palatine,
With mournful yet commanding mien,
Like the sad genius of the scene,
Entranced in awful thought appears
To commune with departed years.
Or at the dead of night, when Rome
Seems of heroic shades the home;
When Tiber's murmuring voice recalls
The mighty to their ancient halls;
When hush'd is every meaner sound,
And the deep moonlight-calm around
Leaves to the solemn scene alone
The majesty of ages flown—
A pilgrim to each hero's tomb,
He wanders through the sacred gloom;
And midst those dwellings of decay
At times will breathe so sad a lay,
So wild a grandeur in each tone,
'Tis like a dirge for empires gone!
Awake thy pealing harp again,
But breathe a more exulting strain,
Young Guido! for awhile forgot
Be the dark secrets of thy lot,
And rouse th' inspiring soul of song

To speed the banquet’s hour along!—
The feast is spread, and music’s call
Is echoing through the royal hall,
And banners wave and trophies shine
O’er stately guests in glittering line;
And Otho seeks awhile to chase
The thoughts he never can erase,
And bid the voice, whose murmurs deep
Rise like a spirit on his sleep—
The still small voice of conscience—die,
Lost in the din of revelry.
On his pale brow dejection lowers,
But that shall yield to festal hours;
A gloom is in his faded eye,
But that from music’s power shall fly;
His wasted cheek is wan with care,
But mirth shall spread fresh crimson there.
Wake, Guido! wake thy numbers high,
Strike the bold chord exultingly!
And pour upon the enraptured ear
Such strains as warriors love to hear!
Let the rich mantling goblet flow,
And banish aught resembling woe;
And if a thought intrude, of power

To mar the bright convivial hour,
Still must its influence lurk unseen,
And cloud the heart—but not the mien!
Away, vain dream!—on Otho's brow,
Still darker lower the shadows now;
Changed are his features, now o'erspread
With the cold paleness of the dead;
Now crimson'd with a hectic dye,
The burning flush of agony!
His lip is quivering, and his breast
Heaves with convulsive pangs oppress'd;
Now his dim eye seems fix'd and glazed,
And now to heaven in anguish raised;
And as, with unavailing aid,
Around him throng his guests dismay'd,
He sinks—while scarce his struggling breath
Hath power to falter—"This is death!"
Then rush'd that haughty child of song,
Dark Guido, through the awe-struck throng.
Fill'd with a strange delirious light,
His kindling eye shone wildly bright;
And on the sufferer's mien awhile
Gazing with stem vindictive smile,
A feverish glow of triumph dyed

His burning cheek, while thus he cried:—
“Yes! these are death-pangs—on thy brow
Is set the seal of vengeance now!
Oh! well was mix’d the deadly draught,
And long and deeply hast thou quaff’d;
And bitter as thy pangs may be,
They are but guerdons meet from me!
Yet these are but a moment’s throes—
Howe’er intense, they soon shall close.
Soon shalt thou yield thy fleeting breath—
My life hath been a lingering death,
Since one dark hour of woe and crime,
A blood-spot on the page of time!
“Deem’st thou my mind of reason void?
It is not frenzied—but destroy’d!
Ay! view the wreck with shuddering thought—
That work of ruin thou hast wrought!
The secret of thy doom to tell,
My name alone suffices well!
Stephania!—once a hero’s bride!
Otho! thou know’st the rest—he died.
Yes! trusting to a monarch’s word,
The Roman fell, untried, unheard!
And thou, whose every pledge was vain,

How couldst thou trust in aught again?
“He died, and I was changed—my soul,
A lonely wanderer, spurn’d control.
From peace, and light, and glory hurl’d,
The outcast of a purer world,
I saw each brighter hope o’erthrown,
And lived for one dread task alone.
The task is closed, fulfill’d the vow—
The hand of death is on thee now.
Betrayer! in thy turn betray’d,
The debt of blood shall soon be paid!
Thine hour is come—the time hath been
My heart had shrunk from such a scene;
That feeling long is past—my fate
Hath made me stern as desolate.
“Ye that around me shuddering stand,
Ye chiefs and princes of the land!
Mourn ye a guilty monarch’s doom?
Ye wept not o’er the patriot’s tomb!
He sleeps unhonour’d—yet be mine
To share his low, neglected shrine.
His soul with freedom finds a home,
His grave is that of glory—Rome!
Are not the great of old with her,

That city of the sepulchre?
Lead me to death! and let me share,
The slumbers of the mighty there!”
The day departs—that fearful day
Fades in calm loveliness away:
From purple heavens its lingering beam
Seems melting into Tiber’s stream,
And softly tints each Roman hill
With glowing light, as clear and still
As if, unstain’d by crime or woe,
Its hours had pass’d in silent flow.
The day sets calmly—it hath been
Mark’d with a strange and awful scene:
One guilty bosom throbs no more,
And Otho’s pangs and life are o’er.
And thou, ere yet another sun
His burning race hath brightly run,
Released from anguish by thy foes,
Daughter of Rome! shalt find repose.
Yes! on thy country’s lovely sky
Fix yet once more thy parting eye!
A few short hours—and all shall be
The silent and the past for thee.
Oh! thus with tempests of a day

We struggle, and we pass away,

Like the wild billows as they sweep,

Leaving no vestige on the deep!

And o’er thy dark and lowly bed

The sons of future days shall tread,

The pangs, the conflicts, of thy lot,

By them unknown, by thee forgot.

[114] “As for Cicero, he was carried to Astyra, where, finding a vessel, he immediately went on board, and coasted along to Circæum with a favourable wind. The pilots were preparing immediately to sail from thence, but whether it was that he feared the sea, or had not yet given up all his hopes in Cæsar, he disembarked, and travelled a hundred furlongs on foot, as if Rome had been the place of his destination. Repenting, however, afterwards, he left that road, and made again for the sea. He passed the night in the most perplexing and horrid thoughts; insomuch, that he was sometimes inclined to go privately into Cæsar’s house, and stab himself upon the altar of his domestic gods, to bring the divine vengeance upon his betrayer. But he was deterred from this by the fear of torture. Other alternatives, equally distressful, presented themselves. At last he put himself in the hands of his servants, and ordered them to carry him by sea to Cajeta, where he had a delightful retreat in the summer, when the Etesian winds set in. There was a temple of Apollo on that coast, from which a flight of crows came with great noise towards Cicero’s vessel as it was making land. They perched on both sides the sail-yard, where some sat croaking, and others pecking the ends of the ropes. All looked upon this as an ill omen; yet Cicero went on shore, and, entering his house, lay down to repose himself. In the meantime a number of the crows settled in the chamber-window, and croaked in the most doleful manner. One of them even entered it, and, alighting on the bed, attempted with its beak to draw off the clothes with which he had covered

his face. On sight of this, the servants began to reproach themselves. ‘Shall we,’ said they, ‘remain to be spectators of our master’s murder? Shall we not protect him, so innocent and so great a sufferer as he is, when the brute creatures give him marks of their care and attention?’ Then, partly by entreaty, partly by force, they got him into his litter, and carried him towards the sea.”—Plutarch, Life of Cicero.

[115]

“Now purer air

Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires

Vernal delight and joy, able to drive

All sadness but despair.”—Milton.

[116] Mount Gargano. “This ridge of mountains forms a very large promontory advancing into the Adriatic, and separated from the Apennines on the west by the plains of Lucera and San Severo. We took a ride into the heart of the mountains through shady dells and noble woods, which brought to our minds the venerable groves that in ancient times bent with the loud winds sweeping along the rugged sides of Garganus:

‘Aquilonibus

Querceta Gargani laborant,

Et foliis viduantur orni.’—Horace.

“There is still a respectable forest of evergreen and common oak, pine, hornbeam, chestnut, and manna-ash. The sheltered valleys are industriously cultivated, and seem to be blest with luxuriant vegetation.”—Swinburne’s Travels.

[117] Transcriber’s Note: Anchor not found in original page 90 footnote 3. “In yonder nether world where shall I seek His bright appearances, or footstep trace?”—Milton.

THE LAST BANQUET OF ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

["Antony, concluding that he could not die more honourably than in battle, determined to attack Cæsar at the same time both by sea and land. The night preceding the execution of this design, he ordered his servants at supper to render him their best services that evening, and fill the wine round plentifully, for the day following they might belong to another master, whilst he lay extended on the ground, no longer of consequence either to them or to himself. His friends were affected, and wept to hear him talk thus; which when he perceived, he encouraged them by assurances that his expectations of a glorious victory were at least equal to those of an honourable death. At the dead of night, when universal silence reigned through the city—a silence that was deepened by the awful thought of the ensuing day—on a sudden was heard the sound of musical instruments, and a noise which resembled the exclamations of Bacchanals. This tumultuous procession seemed to pass through the whole city, and to go out at the gate which led to the enemy's camp. Those who reflected on this prodigy concluded that Bacchus, the god whom Antony affected to imitate, had then forsaken him."—Langhorne's Plutarch.]

Thy foes had girt thee with their dread array,
O stately Alexandria!—yet the sound
Of mirth and music, at the close of day,
Swell'd from thy splendid fabrics far around
O'er camp and wave. Within the royal hall,
In gay magnificence the feast was spread;
And, brightly streaming from the pictured wall,
A thousand lamps their trembling lustre shed
O'er many a column, rich with precious dyes,
That tinge the marble's vein, 'neath Afric's burning skies.

And soft and clear that wavering radiance play’d
O’er sculptured forms, that round the pillar’d scene
Calm and majestic rose, by art array’d
In godlike beauty, awfully serene.
Oh! how unlike the troubled guests, reclined
Round that luxurious board!—in every face
Some shadow from the tempest of the mind,
Rising by fits, the searching eye might trace,
Though vainly mask’d in smiles which are not mirth,
But the proud spirit’s veil thrown o’er the woes of earth.
Their brows are bound with wreaths, whose transient bloom
May still survive the wearers—and the rose
Perchance may scarce be wither’d, when the tomb
Receives the mighty to its dark repose!
The day must dawn on battle, and may set
In death—but fill the mantling wine-cup high!
Despair is fearless, and the Fates e’en yet
Lend her one hour for parting revelry.
They who the empire of the world possess’d
Would taste its joys again, ere all exchanged for rest.
Its joys! oh, mark yon proud Triumvir’s mien,
And read their annals on that brow of care!
Midst pleasure’s lotus-bowers his steps have been:
Earth’s brightest pathway led him to despair.

Trust not the glance that fain would yet inspire
The buoyant energies of days gone by;
There is delusion in its meteor fire,
And all within is shame, is agony!
Away! the tear in bitterness may flow,
But there are smiles which bear a stamp of deeper woe.

Thy cheek is sunk, and faded as thy fame,
O lost, devoted Roman! yet thy brow,
To that ascendant and undying name,
Pleads with stem loftiness thy right e'en now.
Thy glory is departed, but hath left
A lingering light around thee: in decay
Not less than kingly—though of all bereft,
Thou seem'st as empire had not pass'd away.
Supreme in ruin! teaching hearts elate
A deep prophetic dread of still mysterious fate!

But thou, enchantress queen! whose love hath made
His desolation—thou art by his side,
In all thy sovereignty of charms array'd,
To meet the storm with still unconquer'd pride.
Imperial being! e'en though many a stain
Of error be upon thee, there is power
In thy commanding nature, which shall reign
O'er the stern genius of misfortune's hour;

And the dark beauty of thy troubled eye
E’en now is all illumed with wild sublimity.
Thine aspect, all impassion’d, wears a light
Inspiring and inspired—thy cheek a dye,
Which rises not from joy, but yet is bright
With the deep glow of feverish energy.
Proud siren of the Nile! thy glance is fraught
With an immortal fire—in every beam
It darts, there kindles some heroic thought,
But wild and awful as a sibyl’s dream;
For thou with death hast communed to attain
Dread knowledge of the pangs that ransom from the chain.[118]
And the stern courage by such musings lent,
Daughter of Afric! o’er thy beauty throws
The grandeur of a regal spirit, blent
With all the majesty of mighty woes:
While he, so fondly, fatally adored,
Thy fallen Roman, gazes on thee yet,
Till scarce the soul that once exulting soar’d
Can deem the day-star of its glory set;
Scarce his charm’d heart believes that power can be
In sovereign fate, o’er him thus fondly loved by thee.
But there is sadness in the eyes around,
Which mark that ruin’d leader, and survey

His changeful mien, whence oft the gloom profound
Strange triumph chases haughtily away.
“Fill the bright goblet, warrior guests!” he cries;
“Quaff, ere we part, the generous nectar deep!
Ere sunset gild once more the western skies
Your chief in cold forgetfulness may sleep;
While sounds of revel float o’er shore and sea,
And the red bowl again is crown’d—but not for me.
“Yet weep not thus. The struggle is not o’er,
O victors of Philippi! many a field
Hath yielded palms to us: one effort more!
By one stern conflict must our doom be seal’d.
Forget not, Romans! o’er a subject world
How royally your eagle’s wing hath spread,
Though, from his eyrie of dominion hurl’d,
Now bursts the tempest on his crested head!
Yet sovereign still, if banish’d from the sky,
The sun’s indignant bird, he must not droop—but die.”
The feast is o’er. ’Tis night, the dead of night—
Unbroken stillness broods o’er earth and deep;
From Egypt’s heaven of soft and starry light
The moon looks cloudless o’er a world of sleep.
For those who wait the morn’s awakening beams,
The battle-signal to decide their doom,

Have sunk to feverish rest and troubled dreams;—
Rest that shall soon be calmer in the tomb;
Dreams dark and ominous, but there to cease,
When sleep the lords of war in solitude and peace.
Wake, slumberers! wake! Hark! heard ye not a sound
Of gathering tumult?—Near and nearer still
Its murmur swells. Above, below, around.
Bursts a strange chorus forth, confused and shrill.
Wake, Alexandria! through thy streets the tread
Of steps unseen is hurrying, and the note
Of pipe, and lyre, and trumpet, wild and dread,
Is heard upon the midnight air to float;
And voices, clamorous as in frenzied mirth,
Mingle their thousand tones, which are not of the earth.
These are no mortal sounds—their thrilling strain
Hath more mysterious power, and birth more high;
And the deep horror chilling every vein
Owns them of stern terrific augury.
Beings of worlds unknown! ye pass away,
O ye invisible and awful throng!
Your echoing footsteps and resounding lay
To Cæsar's camp exulting move along.
Thy gods forsake thee, Antony! the sky
By that dread sign reveals thy doom—"Despair and die!"[119]

[118] Cleopatra made a collection of poisonous drugs, and being desirous to know which was least painful in the operation, she tried them on the capital convicts. Such poisons as were quick in their operation, she found to be attended with violent pain and convulsions; such as were milder were slow in their effect: she therefore applied herself to the examination of venomous creatures; and at length she found that the bite of the asp was the most eligible kind of death, for it brought on a gradual kind of lethargy.—See Plutarch.

[119]

"To-morrow in the battle think on me,

And fall thy edgeless sword; despair and die!"

Richard III.

ALARIC IN ITALY.

[After describing the conquest of Greece and Italy by the German and Scythian hordes united under the command of Alaric, the historian of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire thus proceeds:—"Whether fame, or conquest, or riches, were the object of Alaric, he pursued that object with an indefatigable ardour, which could neither be quelled by adversity nor satiated by success. No sooner had he reached the extreme land of Italy, than he was attracted by the neighbouring prospect of a fair and peaceful island. Yet even the possession of Sicily he considered only as an intermediate step to the important expedition which he already meditated against the continent of Africa. The straits of Rhegium and Messina are twelve miles in length, and, in the narrowest passage, about one mile and a half broad; and the fabulous monsters of the deep—the rocks of Scylla and the whirlpool of Charybdis—could terrify none but the most timid and unskilful mariners: yet, as soon as the first division of the Goths had embarked, a sudden tempest arose, which sunk or scattered many of the transports. Their courage was daunted by the terrors of a new

element; and the whole design was defeated by the premature death of Alaric, which fixed, after a short illness, the fatal term of his conquests. The ferocious character of the barbarians was displayed in the funeral of a hero, whose valour and fortune they celebrated with mournful applause. By the labour of a captive multitude, they forcibly diverted the course of the Busentinus, a small river that washes the walls of Consentia. The royal sepulchre, adorned with the splendid spoils and trophies of Rome, was constructed in the vacant bed; the waters were then restored to their natural channel, and the secret spot where the remains of Alaric had been deposited was for ever concealed by the inhuman massacre of the prisoners who had been employed to execute the work."—Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. v. p. 329.]

Heard ye the Gothic trumpet's blast?

The march of hosts as Alaric pass'd?

His steps have track'd that glorious clime,

The birth-place of heroic time;

But he, in northern deserts bred,

Spared not the living for the dead,[120]

Nor heard the voice whose pleading cries

From temple and from tomb arise.

He pass'd—the light of burning fanes

Hath been his torch o'er Grecian plains;

And woke they not—the brave, the free,

To guard their own Thermopylæ?

And left they not their silent dwelling,

When Scythia's note of war was swelling?

No! where the bold Three Hundred slept,
Sad freedom battled not—but wept!
For nerveless then the Spartan’s hand,
And Thebes could rouse no Sacred Band;
Nor one high soul from slumber broke
When Athens own’d the northern yoke.
But was there none for thee to dare
The conflict, scorning to despair?
O City of the seven proud hills!
Whose name e’en yet the spirit thrills,
As doth a clarion’s battle-call—
Didst thou, too, ancient empress, fall?
Did no Camillus from the chain
Ransom thy Capitol again?
Oh, who shall tell the days to be
No patriot rose to bleed for thee!
Heard ye the Gothic trumpet’s blast?
The march of hosts as Alaric pass’d?
That fearful sound, at midnight deep,[121]
Burst on the Eternal City’s sleep:—
How woke the mighty? She whose will
So long had bid the world be still,
Her sword a sceptre, and her eye
Th’ ascendant star of destiny!

She woke—to view the dread array
Of Scythians rushing to their prey,
To hear her streets resound the cries
Pour’d from a thousand agonies!
While the strange light of flames, that gave
A ruddy glow to Tiber’s wave,
Bursting in that terrific hour
From fane and palace, dome and tower,
Reveal’d the throngs, for aid divine,
Clinging to many a worshipp’d shrine:
Fierce fitful radiance wildly shed
O’er spear and sword, with carnage red,
Shone o’er the suppliant and the flying,
And kindled pyres for Romans dying.
Weep, Italy! alas, that e’er
Should tears alone thy wrongs declare!
The time hath been when thy distress
Had roused up empires for redress!
Now, her long race of glory run,
Without a combat Rome is won,
And from her plunder’d temples forth
Rush the fierce children of the North,
To share beneath more genial skies
Each joy their own rude clime denies.

Ye who on bright Campania's shore
Bade your fair villas rise of yore,
With all their graceful colonnades,
And crystal baths, and myrtle shades,
Along the blue Hesperian deep,
Whose glassy waves in sunshine sleep—
Beneath your olive and your vine
Far other inmates now recline;
And the tall plane, whose roots ye fed
With rich libations duly shed,[122]
O'er guests, unlike your vanish'd friends,
Its bowery canopy extends.
For them the southern heaven is glowing,
The bright Falernian nectar flowing;
For them the marble halls unfold,
Where nobler beings dwelt of old,
Whose children for barbarian lords
Touch the sweet lyre's resounding chords.
Or wreaths of Pæstan roses twine
To crown the sons of Elbe and Rhine.
Yet, though luxurious they repose
Beneath Corinthian porticoes—
While round them into being start
The marvels of triumphant art—

Oh! not for them hath Genius given
To Parian stone the fire of heaven,
Enshrining in the forms he wrought
A bright eternity of thought.
In vain the natives of the skies
In breathing marble round them rise,
And sculptured nymphs of fount or glade
People the dark-green laurel shade.
Cold are the conqueror’s heart and eye
To visions of divinity;
And rude his hand which dares deface
The models of immortal grace.
Arouse ye from your soft delights!
Chieftains! the war-note’s call invites;
And other lands must yet be won,
And other deeds of havoc done.
Warriors! your flowery bondage break,
Sons of the stormy North, awake!
The barks are launching from the steep—
Soon shall the Isle of Ceres weep,[123]
And Afric’s burning winds afar
Waft the shrill sounds of Alaric’s war.
Where shall his race of victory close?
When shall the ravaged earth repose?

But hark! what wildly mingling cries
From Scythia’s camp tumultuous rise?
Why swells dread Alaric’s name on air?
A sterner conquerer hath been there!
A conqueror—yet his paths are peace,
He comes to bring the world’s release;
He of the sword that knows no sheath,
The avenger, the deliverer—Death!
Is then that daring spirit fled?
Doth Alaric slumber with the dead?
Tamed are the warrior’s pride and strength,
And he and earth are calm at length.
The land where heaven unclouded shines,
Where sleep the sunbeams on the vines;
The land by conquest made his own,
Can yield him now—a grave alone.
But his—her lord from Alp to sea—
No common sepulchre shall be!
Oh, make his tomb where mortal eye
Its buried wealth may ne’er descry!
Where mortal foot may never tread
Above a victor-monarch’s bed.
Let not his royal dust be hid
’Neath star-aspiring pyramid;

Nor bid the gather’d mound arise,
To bear his memory to the skies.
Years roll away—oblivion claims
Her triumph o’er heroic names;
And hands profane disturb the clay
That once was fired with glory’s ray;
And Avarice, from their secret gloom,
Drags e’en the treasures of the tomb.
But thou, O leader of the free!
That general doom awaits not thee:
Thou, where no step may e’er intrude,
Shalt rest in regal solitude,
Till, bursting on thy sleep profound,
The Awakener’s final trumpet sound.
Turn ye the waters from their course,
Bid Nature yield to human force,
And hollow in the torrent’s bed
A chamber for the mighty dead.
The work is done—the captive’s hand
Hath well obey’d his lord’s command.
Within that royal tomb are cast
The richest trophies of the past,
The wealth of many a stately dome,
The gold and gems of plunder’d Rome;

And when the midnight stars are beaming,

And ocean waves in stillness gleaming,

Stern in their grief, his warriors bear

The Chastener of the Nations there;

To rest at length from victory's toil,

Alone, with all an empire's spoil!

Then the freed current's rushing wave

Rolls o'er the secret of the grave;

Then streams the martyr'd captives' blood

To crimson that sepulchral flood,

Whose conscious tide alone shall keep

The mystery in its bosom deep.

Time hath past on since then—and swept

From earth the urns where heroes slept;

Temples of gods and domes of kings

Are mouldering with forgotten things;

Yet not shall ages e'er molest

The viewless home of Alaric's rest:

Still rolls, like them, the unfailing river,

The guardian of his dust for ever.

[120] After the taking of Athens by Sylla, "though such numbers were put to the sword, there were as many who laid violent hands upon themselves in grief for their sinking country. What reduced the best men among them to this despair of finding any mercy or moderate terms for Athens, was the well-known cruelty of Sylla: yet, partly by the intercession of Midias and Calliphon, and the exiles who threw

themselves at his feet—partly by the entreaties of the senators who attended him in that expedition, and being himself satiated with blood besides, he was at last prevailed upon to stop his hand; and in compliment to the ancient Athenians, he said, ‘he forgave the many for the sake of the few, the living for the dead.’”—Plutarch.

[121] “At the hour of midnight the Salarian gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the imperial city, which had subdued and civilised so considerable a portion of mankind, was delivered to the licentious fury of the tribes of Germany and Scythia.”—Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. v. p. 311.

[122] The plane-tree was much cultivated among the Romans, on account of its extraordinary shade; and they used to nourish it with wine instead of water, believing (as Sir W. Temple observes) that “this tree loved that liquor as well as those who used to drink it under its shade.”—See the notes to Melmoth’s Pliny.

[123] Sicily was anciently considered as the favoured and peculiar dominion of Ceres.

THE WIFE OF ASDRUBAL.

[“This governor, who had braved death when it was at a distance, and protested that the sun should never see him survive Carthage—this fierce Asdrubal was so mean-spirited as to come alone, and privately throw himself at the conqueror’s feet. The general, pleased to see his proud rival humbled, granted his life, and kept him to grace his triumph. The Carthaginians in the citadel no sooner understood that their commander had abandoned the place, than they threw open the gates, and put the proconsul in possession of Byrsa. The Romans had now no enemy to contend with but the nine hundred deserters, who, being reduced to despair, retired into the temple of Esculapius, which was a second citadel within the first: there the proconsul

attacked them; and these unhappy wretches, finding there was no way to escape, set fire to the temple. As the flames spread, they retreated from one part to another, till they got to the roof of the building: there Asdrubal's wife appeared in her best apparel, as if the day of her death had been a day of triumph; and after having uttered the most bitter imprecations against her husband, whom she saw standing below with Emilianus,—'Base coward!' said she, 'the mean things thou hast done to save thy life shall not avail thee; thou shalt die this instant, at least in thy two children.' Having thus spoken, she drew out a dagger, stabbed them both, and while they were yet struggling for life, threw them from the top of the temple, and leaped down after them into the flames."—Ancient Universal History.]

The sun sets brightly—but a ruddier glow

O'er Afric's heaven the flames of Carthage throw.

Her walls have sunk, and pyramids of fire

In lurid splendour from her domes aspire;

Sway'd by the wind, they wave—while glares the sky

As when the desert's red simoom is nigh;

The sculptured altar and the pillar'd hall

Shine out in dreadful brightness ere they fall;

Far o'er the seas the light of ruin streams—

Rock, wave, and isle are crimson'd by its beams;

While captive thousands, bound in Roman chains,

Gaze in mute horror on their burning fanes;

And shouts of triumph, echoing far around,

Swell from the victors' tents with ivy crown'd.[124]

—But mark! from yon fair temple's loftiest height

What towering form bursts wildly on the sight,
All regal in magnificent attire,
And sternly beauteous in terrific ire?
She might be deem’d a Pythia in the hour
Of dread communion and delirious power;
A being more than earthly, in whose eye
There dwells a strange and fierce ascendency.
The flames are gathering round—intensely bright,
Full on her features glares their meteor light;
But a wild courage sits triumphant there,
The stormy grandeur of a proud despair;
A daring spirit, in its woes elate,
Mightier than death, untameable by fate.
The dark profusion of her locks unbound
Waves like a warrior’s floating plumage round;
Flush’d is her cheek, inspired her haughty mien—
She seems the avenging goddess of the scene.
Are those her infants, that with suppliant cry
Cling round her shrinking as the flame draws nigh,
Clasp with their feeble hands her gorgeous vest,
And fain would rush for shelter to her breast?
Is that a mother’s glance, where stern disdain,
And passion, awfully vindictive, reign?
Fix’d is her eye on Asdrubal, who stands

Ignobly safe amidst the conquering bands;
On him who left her to that burning tomb,
Alone to share her children's martyrdom;
Who, when his country perish'd, fled the strife,
And knelt to win the worthless boon of life.
"Live, traitor! live!" she cries, "since dear to thee,
E'en in thy fetters, can existence be!
Scorn'd and dishonour'd live!—with blasted name,
The Roman's triumph not to grace, but shame.
O slave in spirit! bitter be thy chain
With tenfold anguish to avenge my pain!
Still may the manès of thy children rise
To chase calm slumber from thy wearied eyes;
Still may their voices on the haunted air
In fearful whispers tell thee to despair,
Till vain remorse thy wither'd heart consume,
Scourged by relentless shadows of the tomb!
E'en now my sons shall die—and thou, their sire,
In bondage safe, shalt yet in them expire.
Think'st thou I love them not?—'Twas thine to fly—
'Tis mine with these to suffer and to die.
Behold their fate!—the arms that cannot save
Have been their cradle, and shall be their grave."
Bright in her hand the lifted dagger gleams,

Swift from her children’s hearts the life-blood streams;

With frantic laugh she clasps them to the breast

Whose woes and passions soon shall be at rest;

Lifts one appealing, frenzied glance on high,

Then deep midst rolling flames is lost to mortal eye.

[124] It was a Roman custom to adorn the tents of victors with ivy.

HELIODORUS IN THE TEMPLE.

[From Maccabees, book ii. chapter 3, verse 21. “Then it would have pitied a man to see the falling down of the multitude of all sorts, and the fear of the high priest, being in such an agony.—22. They then called upon the Almighty Lord to keep the things committed of trust safe and sure, for those that had committed them.—23. Nevertheless Heliodorus executed that which was decreed.—24. Now as he was there present himself, with his guard about the treasury, the Lord of Spirits, and the Prince of all Power, caused a great apparition, so that all that presumed to come in with him were astonished at the power of God, and fainted, and were sore afraid.—25. For there appeared unto them a horse with a terrible rider upon him, and adorned with a very fair covering; and he ran fiercely, and smote at Heliodorus with his fore-feet, and it seemed that he that sat upon the horse had complete harness of gold.—26. Moreover, two other young men appeared before him, notable in strength, excellent in beauty, and comely in apparel, who stood by him on either side, and scourged him continually, and gave him many sore stripes.—27. And Heliodorus fell suddenly to the ground, and was compassed with great darkness; but they that were with him took him up, and put him into a litter.—28. Thus him that lately came with great train, and with all his guard into the said treasury, they carried out, being unable to help himself with his weapons, and manifestly they acknowledged the power of God.—29. For he by the hand of God was cast down,

and lay speechless without all hope of life.”]

A sound of woe in Salem! mournful cries
Rose from her dwellings—youthful cheeks were pale,
Tears flowing fast from dim and aged eyes,
And voices mingling in tumultuous wail;
Hands raised to heaven in agony of prayer,
And powerless wrath, and terror, and despair.
Thy daughters, Judah! weeping, laid aside
The regal splendour of their fair array,
With the rude sackcloth girt their beauty’s pride,
And throng’d the streets in hurrying, wild dismay;
While knelt thy priests before His awful shrine
Who made of old renown and empire thine.
But on the spoiler moves! The temple’s gate,
The bright, the beautiful, his guards unfold;
And all the scene reveals its solemn state,
Its courts and pillars, rich with sculptured gold;
And man with eye unhallow’d views th’ abode,
The sever’d spot, the dwelling-place of God.
Where art thou, Mighty Presence! that of yore
Wert wont between the cherubim to rest,
Veil’d in a cloud of glory, shadowing o’er
Thy sanctuary the chosen and the blest?
Thou! that didst make fair Sion’s ark thy throne,

And call the oracle’s recess thine own!
Angel of God! that through the Assyrian host,
Clothed with the darkness of the midnight hour,
To tame the proud, to hush the invader’s boast,
Didst pass triumphant in avenging power,
Till burst the day-spring on the silent scene,
And death alone reveal’d where thou hadst been.
Wilt thou not wake, O Chastener! in thy might,
To guard thine ancient and majestic hill,
Where oft from heaven the full Shechinah’s light
Hath stream’d the house of holiness to fill?
Oh! yet once more defend thy loved domain,
Eternal One! Deliverer! rise again!
Fearless of thee, the plunderer undismay’d
Hastes on, the sacred chambers to explore
Where the bright treasures of the fane are laid,
The orphan’s portion and the widow’s store:
What recks his heart though age unsuccour’d die,
And want consume the cheek of infancy?
Away, intruders!—hark! a mighty sound!
Behold, a burst of light!—away, away!
A fearful glory fills the temple round,
A vision bright in terrible array!
And lo! a steed of no terrestrial frame,

His path a whirlwind and his breath a flame!
His neck is clothed with thunder,[125] and his mane
Seems waving fire—the kindling of his eye
Is as a meteor—ardent with disdain
His glance, his gesture, fierce in majesty!
Instinct with light he seems, and form'd to bear
Some dread archangel through the fields of air.
But who is he, in panoply of gold,
Throned on that burning charger? Bright his form,
Yet in its brightness awful to behold,
And girt with all the terrors of the storm!
Lightning is on his helmet's crest—and fear
Shrinks from the splendour of his brow severe.
And by his side two radiant warriors stand,
All arm'd, and kingly in commanding grace—
Oh! more than kingly—godlike!—sternly grand,
Their port indignant, and each dazzling face
Beams with the beauty to immortals given,
Magnificent in all the wrath of heaven.
Then sinks each gazer's heart—each knee is bow'd
In trembling awe; but, as to fields of fight,
Th' unearthly war-steed, rushing through the crowd,
Bursts on their leader in terrific might;
And the stern angels of that dread abode

Pursue its plunderer with the scourge of God.

Darkness—thick darkness!—low on earth he lies,

Rash Heliodorus—motionless and pale—

Bloodless his cheek, and o’er his shrouded eyes

Mists, as of death, suspend their shadowy veil;

And thus th’ oppressor, by his fear-struck train,

Is borne from that inviolable fane.

The light returns—the warriors of the sky

Have pass’d, with all their dreadful pomp, away;

Then wakes the timbrel, swells the song on high

Triumphant as in Judah’s elder day;

Rejoice, O city of the sacred hill!

Salem, exult! thy God is with thee still.

[125] “Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?”—Job, chap. xxxix. v. 19.

NIGHT-SCENE IN GENOA.

[“En même temps que les Génois poursuivoient avec ardeur la guerre contre Pise, ils étoient déchirés eux-mêmes par une discorde civile. Les consuls de l’année 1169, pour rétablir la paix dans leur patrie, au milieu des factions sourdes à leur voix et plus puissantes qu’eux, furent obligés d’ourdir en quelque sorte une conspiration. Ils commencèrent par s’assurer secrètement des dispositions pacifiques de plusieurs des citoyens, qui cependant étoient entraînés dans les émeutes par leur parenté avec les chefs de faction; puis, se concertant avec le vénérable vieillard, Hugues, leur archevêque, ils firent, long-temps avant le lever du soleil, appeler au son des cloches les citoyens au parlement: ils se flattoient que la surprise et l’alarme de cette

convocation inattendue, au milieu de l’obscurité de la nuit, rendroit l’assemblée et plus complète et plus docile. Les citoyens, en accourant au parlement général, virent, au milieu de la place publique, le vieil archevêque, entouré de son clergé en habit de cérémonies, et portant des torches allumées; tandis que les reliques de Saint Jean Baptiste, le protecteur de Gênes, étoient exposées devant lui, et que les citoyens les plus respectables portoient à leurs mains des croix suppliantes. Dès que l’assemblée fut formée, le vieillard se leva, et de sa voix cassée il conjura les chefs de parti, au nom du Dieu de paix, au nom du salut de leurs âmes, au nom de leur patrie et de la liberté, dont leurs discordes entraîneroient la ruine, de jurer sur l’évangile l’oubli de leurs querelles, et la paix à venir.

“Les hérauts, dès qu’il eut fini de parler, s’avancèrent aussitôt vers Roland Avogado, le chef de l’une des factions, qui étoit présent à l’assemblée, et, secondés par les acclamations de tout le peuple, et par les prières de ses parens eux-mêmes, ils le sommèrent de se conformer au vœu des consuls et de la nation.

“Roland, à leur approche, déchira ses habits, et, s’asseyant par terre en versant des larmes, il appela à haute voix les morts qu’il avoit juré de venger, et qui ne lui permettoient pas de pardonner leurs vieilles offenses. Comme on ne pouvoit le déterminer à s’avancer, les consuls eux-mêmes, l’archevêque et le clergé, s’approchèrent de lui, et, renouvelant leurs prières, ils l’entraînèrent enfin, et lui firent jurer sur l’évangile l’oubli de ses inimitiés passées.

“Les chefs du parti contraire, Foulques de Castro, et Ingo de Volta, n’étoient pas présens à l’assemblée, mais le peuple et le clergé se portèrent en foule à leurs maisons; ils les trouvèrent dejà ébranlés par ce qu’ils venoient d’apprendre, et, profitant de leur émotion, ils leur firent jurer une réconciliation sincère, et donner le baiser de paix aux chefs de la faction opposée. Alors les cloches de la ville sonnèrent en témoignage d’allégresse, et l’archevêque de retour sur la place publique entonna un Te Deum avec tout le peuple, eu honneur du Dieu de paix qui avoit sauvé leur

patrie.”—Histoire des Républiques Italiennes, vol. ii. pp. 149-150.]

In Genoa, when the sunset gave
Its last warm purple to the wave,
No sound of war, no voice of fear,
Was heard, announcing danger near:
Though deadliest foes were there, whose hate
But slumber’d till its hour of fate,
Yet calmly, at the twilight’s close,
Sunk the wide city to repose.
But when deep midnight reign’d around,
All sudden woke the alarm-bell’s sound,
Full swelling, while the hollow breeze
Bore its dread summons o’er the seas.
Then, Genoa, from their slumber started
Thy sons, the free, the fearless-hearted;
Then mingled with th’ awakening peal
Voices, and steps, and clash of steel.
Arm, warriors! arm! for danger calls;
Arise to guard your native walls!
With breathless haste the gathering throng
Hurry the echoing streets along;
Through darkness rushing to the scene
Where their bold counsels still convene.
But there a blaze of torches bright

Pours its red radiance on the night,
O’er fane, and dome, and column playing,
With every fitful night-wind swaying:
Now floating o’er each tall arcade,
Around the pillar’d scene display’d,
In light relieved by depth of shade:
And now, with ruddy meteor glare,
Full streaming on the silvery hair
And the bright cross of him who stands
Rearing that sign with suppliant hands,
Girt with his consecrated train,
The hallow’d servants of the fane.
Of life’s past woes the fading trace
Hath given that aged patriarch’s face
Expression holy, deep, resign’d,
The calm sublimity of mind.
Years o’er his snowy head have pass’d,
And left him of his race the last,
Alone on earth—yet still his mien
Is bright with majesty serene;
And those high hopes, whose guiding star
Shines from th’ eternal worlds afar,
Have with that light illumed his eye
Whose fount is immortality,

And o’er his features pour’d a ray
Of glory, not to pass away.
He seems a being who hath known
Communion with his God alone,
On earth by nought but pity’s tie
Detain’d a moment from on high!
One to sublimer worlds allied,
One from all passion purified,
E’en now half mingled with the sky,
And all prepared—oh! not to die—
But, like the prophet, to aspire,
In heaven’s triumphal car of fire.
He speaks—and from the throngs around
Is heard not e’en a whisper’d sound;
Awe-struck each heart, and fix’d each glance,
They stand as in a spell-bound trance:
He speaks—oh! who can hear nor own
The might of each prevailing tone?
“Chieftains and warriors! ye, so long
Aroused to strife by mutual wrong,
Whose fierce and far-transmitted hate
Hath made your country desolate;
Now by the love ye bear her name,
By that pure spark of holy flame

On freedom’s altar brightly burning,
But, once extinguished, ne’er returning;
By all your hopes of bliss to come
When burst the bondage of the tomb;
By Him, the God who bade us live
To aid each other, and forgive—
I call upon ye to resign
Your discords at your country’s shrine,
Each ancient feud in peace atone,
Wield your keen swords for her alone,
And swear upon the cross, to cast
Oblivion’s mantle o’er the past!”
No voice replies. The holy bands
Advance to where yon chieftain stands,
With folded arms, and brow of gloom
O’ershadow’d by his floating plume.
To him they lift the cross—in vain:
He turns—oh! say not with disdain,
But with a mien of haughty grief,
That seeks not e’en from heaven relief.
He rends his robes—he sternly speaks—
Yet tears are on the warrior’s checks:—
“Father! not thus the wounds may close
Inflicted by eternal foes.

Deem’st thou thy mandate can efface
The dread volcano’s burning trace?
Or bid the earthquake’s ravaged scene
Be smiling as it once hath been?
No! for the deeds the sword hath done
Forgiveness is not lightly won;
The words by hatred spoke may not
Be as a summer breeze forgot!
’Tis vain—we deem the war-feud’s rage
A portion of our heritage.
Leaders, now slumbering with their fame,
Bequeath’d us that undying flame;
Hearts that have long been still and cold
Yet rule us from their silent mould;
And voices, heard on earth no more,
Speak to our spirits as of yore.
Talk not of mercy!—blood alone
The stain of bloodshed may atone;
Nought else can pay that mighty debt,
The dead forbid us to forget.”
He pauses. From the patriarch’s brow
There beams more lofty grandeur now;
His reverend form, his aged hand,
Assume a gesture of command;

His voice is awful, and his eye
Fill’d with prophetic majesty.
“The dead!—and deem’st thou they retain
Aught of terrestrial passion’s stain?
Of guilt incurr’d in days gone by,
Aught but the fearful penalty?
And say’st thou, mortal! blood alone
For deeds of slaughter may atone?
There hath been blood—by Him ’twas shed
To expiate every crime who bled;
Th’ absolving God, who died to save,
And rose in victory from the grave!
And by that stainless offering given
Alike for all on earth to heaven;
By that inevitable hour
When death shall vanquish pride and power,
And each departing passion’s force
Concentrate all in late remorse;
And by the day when doom shall be
Pass’d on earth’s millions, and on thee—
The doom that shall not be repeal’d,
Once utter’d, and for ever seal’d—
I summon thee, O child of clay!
To cast thy darker thoughts away,

And meet thy foes in peace and love,
As thou wouldst join the blest above.”
Still as he speaks, unwonted feeling
Is o’er the chieftain’s bosom stealing.
Oh, not in vain the pleading cries
Of anxious thousands round him rise!
He yields: devotion’s mingled sense
Of faith, and fear, and penitence,
Pervading all his soul, he bows
To offer on the cross his vows,
And that best incense to the skies,
Each evil passion’s sacrifice.
Then tears from warriors’ eyes were flowing,
High hearts with soft emotions glowing;
Stern foes as long-loved brothers greeting,
And ardent throngs in transport meeting;
And eager footsteps forward pressing,
And accents loud in joyous blessing;
And when their first wild tumults cease,
A thousand voices echo “Peace!”
Twilight’s dim mist hath roll’d away,
And the rich Orient burns with day;
Then as to greet the sunbeam’s birth,
Rises the choral hymn of earth—

Th’ exulting strain through Genoa swelling,

Of peace and holy rapture telling.

Far float the sounds o’er vale and steep,

The seaman hears them on the deep—

So mellow’d by the gale, they seem

As the wild music of a dream.

But not on mortal ear alone

Peals the triumphant anthem’s tone;

For beings of a purer sphere

Bend with celestial joy, to hear.

THE TROUBADOUR AND RICHARD CŒUR DE LION.

[“Not only the place of Richard’s confinement,” (when thrown into prison by the Duke of Austria,) “if we believe the literary history of the times, but even the circumstance of his captivity, was carefully concealed by his vindictive enemies; and both might have remained unknown but for the grateful attachment of a Provençal bard, or minstrel, named Blondel, who had shared that prince’s friendship and tasted his bounty. Having travelled over all the European continent to learn the destiny of his beloved patron, Blondel accidentally got intelligence of a certain castle in Germany, where a prisoner of distinction was confined, and guarded with great vigilance. Persuaded by a secret impulse that this prisoner was the King of England, the minstrel repaired to the place; but the gates of the castle were shut against him, and he could obtain no information relative to the name or quality of the unhappy person it secured. In this extremity, he bethought himself of an expedient for making the desired discovery. He chanted, with a loud voice, some verses of a song which had been composed partly by himself, partly by Richard; and to his unspeakable joy, on making a pause, he heard it re-echoed and continued by

the royal captive.—(Hist. Troubadours.) To this discovery the English monarch is said to have eventually owed his release."—See Russell's Modern Europe, vol. i. p. 369.

The Troubadour o'er many a plain
Hath roam'd unwearied, but in vain.
O'er many a rugged mountain-scene
And forest wild his track hath been:
Beneath Calabria's glowing sky
He hath sung the songs of chivalry;
His voice hath swell'd on the Alpine breeze,
And rung through the snowy Pyrenees;
From Ebro's banks to Danube's wave,
He hath sought his prince, the loved, the brave;
And yet, if still on earth thou art,
Monarch of the lion-heart!
The faithful spirit, which distress
But heightens to devotedness,
By toil and trial vanquish'd not,
Shall guide thy minstrel to the spot.
He hath reach'd a mountain hung with vine,
And woods that wave o'er the lovely Rhine:
The feudal towers that crest its height
Frown in unconquerable might;
Dark is their aspect of sullen state—

No helmet hangs o’er the massy gate[126]
To bid the wearied pilgrim rest,
At the chieftain’s board a welcome guest;
Vainly rich evening’s parting smile
Would chase the gloom of the haughty pile,
That midst bright sunshine lowers on high,
Like a thunder-cloud in a summer sky.
Not these the halls where a child of song
Awhile may speed the hours along;
Their echoes should repeat alone
The tyrant’s mandate, the prisoner’s moan,
Or the wild huntsman’s bugle-blast,
When his phantom train are hurrying past.[127]
The weary minstrel paused—his eye
Roved o’er the scene despondingly:
Within the length’ning shadow, cast
By the fortress-towers and ramparts vast,
Lingering he gazed. The rocks around
Sublime in savage grandeur frown’d;
Proud guardians of the regal flood,
In giant strength the mountains stood—
By torrents cleft, by tempests riven,
Yet mingling still with the calm blue heaven.
Their peaks were bright with a sunny glow,

But the Rhine all shadowy roll’d below;
In purple tints the vineyards smiled,
But the woods beyond waved dark and wild;
Nor pastoral pipe nor convent’s bell
Was heard on the sighing breeze to swell;
But all was lonely, silent, rude,
A stern, yet glorious solitude.
But hark! that solemn stillness breaking,
The Troubadour’s wild song is waking.
Full oft that song in days gone by
Hath cheer’d the sons of chivalry:
It hath swell’d o’er Judah’s mountains lone,
Hermon! thy echoes have learn’d its tone;
On the Great Plain[128] its notes have rung,
The leagued Crusaders’ tents among;
Twas loved by the Lion-heart, who won
The palm in the field of Ascalon;
And now afar o’er the rocks of Rhine
Peals the bold strain of Palestine.

[126] It was a custom in feudal times to hang out a helmet on a castle, as a token that strangers were invited to enter, and partake of hospitality. So in the romance of “Perceforest,” “ils fasoient mettre au plus hault de leur hostel un heaulme, en signe que tous les gentils hommes et gentilles femmes entrassent hardiment en leur hostel comme en leur propre.”

[127] Popular tradition has made several mountains in Germany the haunt of the

wild Jager, or supernatural huntsman. The superstitious tales relating to the Unterburg are recorded in Eustace's Classical Tour; and it is still believed in the romantic district of the Odenwald, that the knight of Rodenstein, issuing from his ruined castle, announces the approach of war by traversing the air with a noisy armament to the opposite castle of Schnellerts.—See the "Manuel pour les Voyageurs sur le Rhin," and "Autumn on the Rhine."

THE TROUBADOUR'S SONG.

"Thine hour is come, and the stake is set,"

The Soldan cried to the captive knight,

"And the sons of the Prophet in throngs are met

To gaze on the fearful sight.

"But be our faith by thy lips profess'd,

The faith of Mecca's shrine,

Cast down the red-cross that marks thy vest,

And life shall yet be thine."

"I have seen the flow of my bosom's blood,

And gazed with undaunted eye;

I have borne the bright cross through fire and flood,

And think'st thou I fear to die?

"I have stood where thousands, by Salem's towers,

Have fall'n for the name Divine;

And the faith that cheer'd their closing hours

Shall be the light of mine."

"Thus wilt thou die in the pride of health,

And the glow of youth's fresh bloom?

Thou art offer’d life, and pomp, and wealth,

Or torture and the tomb.”

“I have been where the crown of thorns was twined

For a dying Saviour’s brow;

He spurn’d the treasures that lure mankind,

And I reject them now!”

“Art thou the son of a noble line

In a land that is fair and blest?

And doth not thy spirit, proud captive! pine

Again on its shores to rest?

“Thine own is the choice to hail once more

The soil of thy father’s birth,

Or to sleep, when thy lingering pangs are o’er,

Forgotten in foreign earth.”

“Oh! fair are the vine-clad hills that rise

In the country of my love;

But yet, though cloudless my native skies,

There’s a brighter clime above!”

The bard hath paused—for another tone

Blends with the music of his own;

And his heart beats high with hope again,

As a well-known voice prolongs the strain.

“Are there none within thy father’s hall,

Far o’er the wide blue main,

Young Christian! left to deplore thy fall,
With sorrow deep and vain?”
“There are hearts that still, through all the past,
Unchanging have loved me well;
There are eyes whose tears were streaming fast
When I bade my home farewell.
“Better they wept o’er the warrior’s bier
Than th’ apostate’s living stain;
There’s a land where those who loved when here
Shall meet to love again.”
’Tis he! thy prince—long sought, long lost,
The leader of the red-cross host!
’Tis he!—to none thy joy betray,
Young Troubadour! away, away!
Away to the island of the brave,
The gem on the bosom of the wave;[129]
Arouse the sons of the noble soil
To win their Lion from the toil.
And free the wassail-cup shall flow,
Bright in each hall the hearth shall glow;
The festal board shall be richly crown’d,
While knights and chieftains revel round,
And a thousand harps with joy shall ring,
When merry England hails her king.

[128] The Plain of Esdräelon, called by way of eminence the “Great Plain;” in Scripture, and elsewhere, the “field of Megiddo,” the “Galilean Plain.” This plain, the most fertile part of all the land of Canaan, has been the scene of many a memorable contest in the first ages of Jewish history, as well as during the Roman empire, the Crusades, and even in later times. It has been a chosen place for encampment in every contest carried on in this country, from the days of Nabuchodonosor, King of the Assyrians, until the disastrous march of Buonaparte from Egypt into Syria. Warriors out of “every nation which is under heaven” have pitched their tents upon the Plain of Esdräelon, and have beheld the various banners of their nations wet with the dews of Hermon and Thabor.—Dr Clarke’s Travels.

[129] “This precious stone set in the sea.”—Richard II.

THE DEATH OF CONRADIN.

[“La défaite de Conradin ne devoit mettre une terme ni à ses malheurs, ni aux vengeances du roi (Charles d’Anjou.) L’amour du peuple pour l’héritier légitime du trône avoit éclaté d’une manière effrayante; il pouvoit causer de nouvelles révolutions, si Conradin demeuroit en vie; et Charles, revêtant sa défiance et sa cruauté des formes de la justice, résolut de faire périr sur l’échafaud le dernier rejeton de la Maison de Souabe, l’unique espérance de son parti. Un seul juge Provençal et sujet de Charles, dont les historiens n’ont pas voulu conserver le nom, osa voter pour la mort, d’autres se renfermèrent dans un timide et coupable silence; et Charles, sur l’autorité de ce seul juge, fit prononcer, par Robert de Bari, protonotaire du royaume, la sentence de mort contre Conradin et tous ses compagnons. Cette sentence fut communiquée à Conradin, comme il jouoit aux échecs; on lui laissa peu de temps pour se préparer à son exécution, et le 26 d’Octobre il fut conduit, avec tous ses amis, sur la Place du Marché de Naples, le long du rivage de la mer. Charles étoit présent, avec toute sa cour, et une foule immense entouroit le roi vainqueur et le roi condamné. Conradin étoit entre les

mains des bourreaux; il détacha lui-même son manteau, et s'étant mis à genoux pour prier, il se releva en s'écriant: 'Oh, ma mère, quelle profonde douleur te causera la nouvelle qu'on va te porter de moi!' Puis il tourna les yeux sur la foule qui l'entouroit; il vit les larmes, il entendit les sanglots de son peuple; alors, détachant son gant, il jeta au milieu de ses sujets ce gage d'un combat de vengeance, et rendit sa tête au bourreau. Après lui, sur le même échafaud, Charles fit trancher la tête au Duc d'Autriche, aux Comtes Gualferano et Bartolommeo Lancia, et aux Comtes Gerard et Galvano Donoratico de Pise. Par un raffinement de cruauté, Charles voulut que le premier, fils du second, précédât son père, et mourût entre ses bras. Les cadavres, d'après ses ordres, furent exclus d'une terre sainte, et inhumés sans pompe sur le rivage de la mer. Charles II. cependant fit dans la suite bâtir sur le même lieu une église de Carmélites, comme pour apaiser ces ombres irritées."—Sismondi's Républiques Italiennes.]

No cloud to dim the splendour of the day
Which breaks o'er Naples and her lovely bay,
And lights that brilliant sea and magic shore
With every tint that charm'd the great of yore—
Th' imperial ones of earth, who proudly bade
Their marble domes e'en ocean's realm invade.
That race is gone—but glorious Nature here
Maintains unchanged her own sublime career,
And bids these regions of the sun display
Bright hues, surviving empires pass'd away.
The beam of heaven expands—its kindling smile
Reveals each charm of many a fairy isle,
Whose image floats, in softer colouring drest,

With all its rocks and vines, on ocean’s breast.
Misenum’s cape hath caught the vivid ray,
On Roman streamers there no more to play;
Still, as of old, unalterably bright,
Lovely it sleeps on Posilippo’s height,
With all Italia’s sunshine to illume
The ilex canopy of Virgil’s tomb.
Campania’s plains rejoice in light, and spread
Their gay luxuriance o’er the mighty dead;
Fair glittering to thine own transparent skies,
Thy palaces, exulting Naples! rise;
While far on high Vesuvius rears his peak,
Furrow’d and dark with many a lava streak.
Oh, ye bright shores of Circe and the Muse!
Rich with all nature’s and all fiction’s hues,
Who shall explore your regions, and declare
The poet err’d to paint Elysium there?
Call up his spirit, wanderer! bid him guide
Thy steps those syren-haunted seas beside;
And all the scene a lovelier light shall wear,
And spells more potent shall pervade the air.
What though his dust be scatter’d, and his urn
Long from its sanctuary of slumber torn,[130]
Still dwell the beings of his verse around,

Hovering in beauty o’er th’ enchanted ground;
His lays are murmur’d in each breeze that roves
Soft o’er the sunny waves and orange-groves;
His memory’s charm is spread o’er shore and sea,
The soul, the genius of Parthenope;
Shedding o’er myrtle shade and vine-clad hill
The purple radiance of Elysium still.
Yet that fair soil and calm resplendent sky
Have witness’d many a dark reality.
Oft o’er those bright blue seas the gale hath borne
The sighs of exiles never to return.[131]
There with the whisper of Campania’s gale
Hath mingled oft affection’s funeral wail,
Mourning for buried heroes—while to her
That glowing land was but their sepulchre.[132]
And there, of old, the dread mysterious moan
Swell’d from strange voices of no mortal tone;
And that wild trumpet, whose unearthly note
Was heard at midnight o’er the hills to float
Around the spot where Agrippina died,
Denouncing vengeance on the matricide.[133]
Pass’d are those ages—yet another crime,
Another woe, must stain th’ Elysian clime.
There stands a scaffold on the sunny shore—

It must be crimson’d ere the day is o’er!
There is a throne in regal pomp array’d,—
A scene of death from thence must be survey’d.
Mark’d ye the rushing throngs?—each mien is pale,
Each hurried glance reveals a fearful tale:
But the deep workings of th’ indignant breast,
Wrath, hatred, pity, must be all suppress’d;
The burning tear awhile must check its course,
Th’ avenging thought concentrate all its force;
For tyranny is near, and will not brook
Aught but submission in each guarded look.
Girt with his fierce Provençals, and with mien
Austere in triumph, gazing on the scene,[134]
And in his eye a keen suspicious glance
Of jealous pride and restless vigilance,
Behold the conqueror! Vainly in his face
Of gentler feeling hope would seek a trace;
Cold, proud, severe, the spirit which hath lent
Its haughty stamp to each dark lineament:
And pleading mercy, in the sternness there,
May read at once her sentence—to despair!
But thou, fair boy! the beautiful, the brave,
Thus passing from the dungeon to the grave,
While all is yet around thee which can give

A charm to earth, and make it bliss to live;
Thou on whose form hath dwelt a mother’s eye,
Till the deep love that not with thee shall die
Hath grown too full for utterance—Can it be!
And is this pomp of death prepared for thee?
Young, royal Conradin! who shouldst have known
Of life as yet the sunny smile alone!
Oh! who can view thee, in the pride and bloom
Of youth, array’d so richly for the tomb,
Nor feel, deep swelling in his inmost soul,
Emotions tyranny may ne’er control?
Bright victim! to Ambition’s altar led,
Crown’d with all flowers that heaven on earth can shed,
Who, from th’ oppressor towering in his pride,
May hope for mercy—if to thee denied?
There is dead silence on the breathless throng,
Dead silence all the peopled shore along,
As on the captive moves—the only sound,
To break that calm so fearfully profound,
The low, sweet murmur of the rippling wave,
Soft as it glides, the smiling shore to lave;
While on that shore, his own fair heritage,
The youthful martyr to a tyrant’s rage
Is passing to his fate: the eyes are dim

Which gaze, through tears that dare not flow, on him.
He mounts the scaffold—doth his footstep fail?
Doth his lip quiver? doth his cheek turn pale?
Oh! it may be forgiven him if a thought
Cling to that world, for him with beauty fraught,
To all the hopes that promised glory's meed,
And all th' affections that with him shall bleed!
If, in his life's young dayspring, while the rose
Of boyhood on his cheek yet freshly glows,
One human fear convulse his parting breath,
And shrink from all the bitterness of death!
But no! the spirit of his royal race
Sits brightly on his brow: that youthful face
Beams with heroic beauty, and his eye
Is eloquent with injured majesty.
He kneels—but not to man; his heart shall own
Such deep submission to his God alone!
And who can tell with what sustaining power
That God may visit him in fate's dread hour?
How the still voice, which answers every moan,
May speak of hope—when hope on earth is gone?
That solemn pause is o'er—the youth hath given
One glance of parting love to earth and heaven:
The sun rejoices in th' unclouded sky,

Life all around him glows—and he must die?
Yet midst his people, undismay'd, he throws
The gage of vengeance for a thousand woes;
Vengeance that, like their own volcano's fire,
May sleep suppress'd a while—but not expire.
One softer image rises o'er his breast,
One fond regret, and all shall be at rest!
"Alas, for thee, my mother! who shall bear
To thy sad heart the tidings of despair,
When thy lost child is gone?"—that thought can thrill
His soul with pangs one moment more shall still.
The lifted axe is glittering in the sun—
It falls—the race of Conradin is run!
Yet, from the blood which flows that shore to stain,
A voice shall cry to heaven—and not in vain!
Gaze thou, triumphant from thy gorgeous throne,
In proud supremacy of guilt alone,
Charles of Anjou!—but that dread voice shall be
A fearful summoner e'en yet to thee!
The scene of death is closed—the throngs depart,
A deep stem lesson graved on every heart.
No pomp, no funeral rites, no streaming eyes,
High-minded boy! may grace thine obsequies.
O vainly royal and beloved! thy grave,

Unsanctified, is bathed by ocean’s wave;
Mark’d by no stone, a rude, neglected spot,
Unhonour’d, unadorn’d—but unforgot;
For thy deep wrongs in tameless hearts shall live,
Now mutely suffering—never to forgive!
The sunset fades from purple heavens away—
A bark hath anchor’d in the unruffled bay:
Thence on the beach descends a female form,[135]
Her mien with hope and tearful transport warm;
But life hath left sad traces on her cheek,
And her soft eyes a chasten’d heart bespeak,
Inured to woes—yet what were all the past!
She sank not feebly ’neath affliction’s blast,
While one bright hope remain’d—who now shall tell
Th’ uncrown’d, the widow’d, how her loved one fell?
To clasp her child, to ransom and to save,
The mother came—and she hath found his grave!
And by that grave, transfix’d in speechless grief,
Whose deathlike trance denies a tear’s relief,
Awhile she kneels—till roused at length to know,
To feel the might, the fulness of her woe,
On the still air a voice of anguish wild,
A mother’s cry is heard—“My Conradin! my child!”

[130] The urn supposed to have contained the ashes of Virgil has long since been

lost.

[131] Many Romans of exalted rank were formerly banished to some of the small islands in the Mediterranean, on the coast of Italy. Julia, the daughter of Augustus, was confined many years in the isle of Pandataria, and her daughter Agrippina, the widow of Germanicus, afterwards died in exile on the same desolate spot.

[132] “Quelques souvenirs du cœur, quelques noms de femmes, réclament aussi vos pleurs. C’est à Misène, dans le lieu même où nous sommes, que la veuve de Pompée Cornélie conserva jusqu’à la mort son noble deuil. Agrippine pleura long-temps Germanicus sur ces bords: un jour, le même assassin qui lui ravit son époux la trouva digne de le suivre. L’île de Nisida fut témoin des adieux de Brutus et de Porcie.”—Madame de Stael, Corinne.

[133] The sight of that coast, and those shores where the crime had been perpetrated, filled Nero with continual horrors; besides, there were some who imagined they heard horrid shrieks and cries from Agrippina’s tomb, and a mournful sound of trumpets from the neighbouring cliffs and hills. Nero, therefore, flying from such tragical scenes, withdrew to Naples.—See Ancient Universal History.

[134] “Ce Charles,” dit Giovanni Villani, “fut sage et prudent dans les conseils, preux dans les armes, âpre et forte redouté de tous les rois du monde, magnanime et de hautes pensées qui l’égaloient aux plus grandes entreprises; inébranlable dans l’adversité, ferme et fidèle dans toutes ses promesses, parlant peu et agissant beaucoup, ni riant presque jamais, décent comme un religieux, zélé catholique, âpre à rendre justice, féroce dans ses regards. Sa taille étoit grande et nerveuse, sa couleur olivâtre, son nez fort grand. Il paroissoit plus fait qu’aucun autre chevalier pour la majesté royale. Il ne dormoit presque point. Jamais il ne prit de plaisir aux mimes, aux troubadours, et aux gens de cour.”—Sismondi, Républiques Italiennes, vol. iii.

[135] “The Carmine (at Naples) calls to mind the bloody catastrophe of those royal youths, Conradin and Frederick of Austria, butchered before its door. Whenever I

traversed that square, my heart yearned at the idea of their premature fate, and at the deep distress of Conradin's mother, who, landing on the beach with her son's ransom, found only a lifeless trunk to redeem from the fangs of his barbarous conqueror."—Swinburne's Travels in the Two Sicilies.

EXTRACTS FROM CONTEMPORARY REVIEWS.

Quarterly Review.—"'Tales and Historic Scenes' is a collection, as the title imports, of narrative poems. Perhaps it was not on consideration that Mrs Hemans passed from a poem of picture-drawing and reflection to the writing of tales; but if we were to prescribe to a young poet his course of practice, this would certainly be our advice. The luxuriance of a young fancy delights in description, and the quickness and inexperience of the same age, in passing judgments,—in the one richness, in the other antithesis and effect, are too often more sought after than truth: the poem is written rapidly, and correctness but little attended to. But in narration more care must be taken: if the tale be fictitious, the conception and sustainment of the characters, the disposition of the facts, the relief of the soberer parts by description, reflection, or dialogue, form so many useful studies for a growing artist. If the tale be borrowed from history, a more delicate task is added to those just mentioned, in determining how far it may be necessary, or safe, to interweave the ornaments of fiction with the groundwork of truth, and in skilfully performing that difficult task. In both cases, the mind is compelled to make a more sustained effort, and acquires thereby greater vigour, and a more practical readiness in the detail of the art.

"The principal poem in this volume is The Abencerrage. It commemorates the capture of Granada by Ferdinand and Isabella, and attributes it, in great measure, to the revenge of Hamet, chief of the Abencerrages, who had been induced to turn his arms against his countrymen the Moors, in order to procure the ruin of their king, the murderer of his father and brothers. During the siege he makes his way by night to the bower of Zayda, his beloved, the daughter of a rival and hated family. Her

character is very finely drawn; and she repels with firmness all the solicitations and prayers of the traitor to his country. The following lines form part of their dialogue,—they are spirited and pathetic, but perfectly free from exaggeration,—

‘Oh! wert thou still what once I fondly deem’d,’” etc.

Edinburgh Monthly Review.—“The more we become acquainted with Mrs Hemans as a poet, the more we are delighted with her productions, and astonished by her powers. She will, she must, take her place among eminent poets. If she has a rival of her own sex, it is Joanna Baillie; but, even compared with the living masters of the lyre, she is entitled to a very high distinction....

“Mrs Hemans manifests, in her own fine imagination, a fund which is less supported by loan than the wealth of some very eminent poets whom we could name. We think it impossible that she can write by mere rule, more than on credit. If she did, her poetry would lose all its charms. It is by inspiration—as it is poetically called—by a fine tact of sympathy, a vivacity and fertility of imagination, that she pours forth her enchanting song and ‘builds her lofty rhyme.’ The judicious propriety wherewith she bestows on each element of her composition its due share of fancy and of feeling, much increases our respect for her powers. With an exquisite airiness and spirit, with an imagery which quite sparkles, are touched her lighter delineations; with a rich and glowing pencil, her descriptions of visible nature: a sublime eloquence is the charm of her sentiments of magnanimity; while she melts into tenderness with a grace in which she has few equals.

“It appears to us that Mrs Hemans has yielded her own to the public taste in conveying her poetry in the vehicle of tales.”

Constable’s Magazine.—“The Abencerrage is a romance, the scene of which is appropriately laid in a most romantic period, and in the country of all others in which the spirit of romance was most powerful, and lingered longest—in the kingdom of Granada, where the power of the Moors was first established, and had

the greatest continuance.... The leading events of the narrative are strictly historical, and with these the fate and sufferings of the unfortunate lovers are very naturally interwoven. The beauty of the descriptions here is exquisite.... Choice is bewildered among the many fine passages we are tempted to extract from The Abencerrage.

"If any reader considers our strictures tedious, and our extracts profuse, our best apology is, that the luxury of doing justice to so much genuine talent, adorning so much private worth, does not often occur to tempt us to an excess of this nature."

THE SCEPTIC.[136]

"Leur raison, qu'ils prennent pour guide, ne presente à leur esprit que des conjectures et des embarras; les absurdités où ils tombent en niant la Religion deviennent plus insoutenables que les verités dont la hauteur les étonne; et pour ne vouloir pas croire des mysteres incomprehensibles, ils suivent l'une après l'autre d'incomprehensibles erreurs."—Bossuet.

When the young Eagle, with exulting eye,
Has learn'd to dare the splendour of the sky,
And leave the Alps beneath him in his course,
To bathe his crest in morn's empyreal source;
Will his free wing, from that majestic height,
Descend to follow some wild meteor's light,
Which far below, with evanescent fire,
Shines to delude and dazzles to expire?
No! still through clouds he wins his upward way,
And proudly claims his heritage of day!
—And shall the spirit, on whose ardent gaze
The dayspring from on high hath pour'd its blaze,

Turn from that pure effulgence to the beam
Of earth-born light that sheds a treacherous gleam,
Luring the wanderer from the star of faith
To the deep valley of the shades of death?
What bright exchange, what treasure shall be given,
For the high birthright of its hope in heaven?
If lost the gem which empires could not buy,
What yet remains?—a dark eternity!
Is earth still Eden?—might a seraph guest
Still midst its chosen bowers delighted rest?
Is all so cloudless and so calm below,
We seek no fairer scenes than life can show?
That the cold Sceptic, in his pride elate,
Rejects the promise of a brighter state,
And leaves the rock no tempest shall displace,
To rear his dwelling on the quicksand's base?
Votary of doubt! then join the festal throng,
Bask in the sunbeam, listen to the song,
Spread the rich board, and fill the wine-cup high,
And bind the wreath ere yet the roses die!
'Tis well—thine eye is yet undimm'd by time,
And thy heart bounds, exulting in its prime;
Smile then unmoved at Wisdom's warning voice,
And in the glory of thy strength rejoice!

But life hath sterner tasks; e’en youth’s brief hours
Survive the beauty of their loveliest flowers;
The founts of joy, where pilgrims rest from toil,
Are few and distant on the desert soil;
The soul’s pure flame the breath of storms must fan,
And pain and sorrow claim their nursling—Man!
Earth’s noblest sons the bitter cup have shared—
Proud child of reason! how art thou prepared?
When years, with silent might, thy frame have bow’d,
And o’er thy spirit cast their wintry cloud,
Will Memory soothe thee on thy bed of pain
With the bright images of pleasure’s train?
Yes! as the sight of some far-distant shore,
Whose well-known scenes his foot shall tread no more,
Would cheer the seaman, by the eddying wave
Drawn, vainly struggling, to th’ unfathom’d grave!
Shall Hope, the faithful cherub, hear thy call,
She who, like heaven’s own sunbeam, smiles for all?
Will she speak comfort?—Thou hast shorn her plume,
That might have raised thee far above the tomb,
And hush’d the only voice whose angel tone
Soothes when all melodies of joy are flown!
For she was born beyond the stars to soar,
And kindling at the source of life, adore;

Thou couldst not, mortal! rivet to the earth
Her eye, whose beam is of celestial birth;
She dwells with those who leave her pinion free,
And sheds the dews of heaven on all but thee.
Yet few there are so lonely, so bereft,
But some true heart, that beats to theirs, is left;
And, haply, one whose strong affection's power
Unchanged may triumph through misfortune's hour,
Still with fond care supports thy languid head,
And keeps unwearied vigils by thy bed.
But thou whose thoughts have no blest home above,
Captive of earth! and canst thou dare to love?
To nurse such feelings as delight to rest
Within that hallow'd shrine—a parent's breast,
To fix each hope, concentrate every tie,
On one frail idol—destined but to die;
Yet mock the faith that points to worlds of light,
Where sever'd souls, made perfect, re-unite?
Then tremble! cling to every passing joy,
Twined with the life a moment may destroy!
If there be sorrow in a parting tear,
Still let "for ever" vibrate on thine ear!
If some bright hour on rapture's wing hath flown,
Find more than anguish in the thought—'tis gone!

Go! to a voice such magic influence give,
Thou canst not lose its melody, and live;
And make an eye the lode-star of thy soul,
And let a glance the springs of thought control;
Gaze on a mortal form with fond delight,
Till the fair vision mingles with thy sight;
There seek thy blessings, there repose thy trust,
Lean on the willow, idolise the dust!
Then, when thy treasure best repays thy care,
Think on that dread “for ever”—and despair!
And oh! no strange, unwonted storm there needs
To wreck at once thy fragile ark of reeds.
Watch well its course—explore with anxious eye
Each little cloud that floats along the sky:
Is the blue canopy serenely fair?
Yet may the thunderbolt unseen be there,
And the bark sink when peace and sunshine sleep
On the smooth bosom of the waveless deep!
Yes! ere a sound, a sign, announce thy fate,
May the blow fall which makes thee desolate!
Not always heaven’s destroying angel shrouds
His awful form in tempests and in clouds;
He fills the summer air with latent power,
He hides his venom in the scented flower,

He steals upon thee in the zephyr’s breath,
And festal garlands veil the shafts of death!
Where art thou then, who thus didst rashly cast
Thine all upon the mercy of the blast,
And vainly hope the tree of life to find
Rooted in sands that flit before the wind?
Is not that earth thy spirit loved so well,
It wish’d not in a brighter sphere to dwell,
Become a desert now, a vale of gloom,
O’ershadow’d with the midnight of the tomb?
Where shalt thou turn? It is not thine to raise
To yon pure heaven thy calm confiding gaze—
No gleam reflected from that realm of rest
Steals on the darkness of thy troubled breast;
Not for thine eye shall Faith divinely shed
Her glory round the image of the dead;
And if, when slumber’s lonely couch is prest,
The form departed be thy spirit’s guest,
It bears no light from purer worlds to this;
Thy future lends not e’en a dream of bliss.
But who shall dare the gate of life to close,
Or say, thus far the stream of mercy flows?
That fount unseal’d, whose boundless waves embrace
Each distant isle, and visit every race,

Pours from the throne of God its current free,
Nor yet denies th’ immortal draught to thee.
Oh! while the doom impends, not yet decreed,
While yet th’ Atoner hath not ceased to plead—
While still, suspended by a single hair,
The sharp bright sword hangs quivering in the air,
Bow down thy heart to Him who will not break
The bruisèd reed; e’en yet, awake, awake!
Patient, because Eternal,[138] He may hear
Thy prayer of agony with pitying ear,
And send his chastening Spirit from above,
O’er the deep chaos of thy soul to move.
But seek thou mercy through his name alone,
To whose unequall’d sorrows none was shown;
Through Him, who here in mortal garb abode,
As man to suffer, and to heal as God;
And, born the sons of utmost time to bless,
Endured all scorn, and aided all distress.
Call thou on Him! for he, in human form,
Hath walk’d the waves of life, and still’d the storm.
He, when her hour of lingering grace was past,
O’er Salem wept, relenting to the last—
Wept with such tears as Judah’s monarch pour’d
O’er his lost child, ungrateful, yet deplored;

And, offering guiltless blood that guilt might live,
Taught from his Cross the lesson—to forgive!
Call thou on Him! His prayer e'en then arose,
Breathed in unpitied anguish for his foes.
And haste!—ere bursts the lightning from on high,
Fly to the City of thy Refuge, fly![139]
So shall th' Avenger turn his steps away,
And sheath his falchion, baffled of its prey.
Yet must long days roll on, ere peace shall brood,
As the soft halcyon, o'er thy heart subdued;
Ere yet the Dove of Heaven descend to shed
Inspiring influence o'er thy fallen head.
—He who hath pined in dungeons, midst the shade
Of such deep night as man for man hath made,
Through lingering years—if call'd at length to be
Once more, by nature's boundless charter, free
Shrinks feebly back, the blaze of noon to shun,
Fainting at day, and blasted by the sun.
Thus, when the captive soul hath long remain'd
In its own dread abyss of darkness chain'd,
If the Deliverer, in his might at last,
Its fetters, born of earth, to earth should cast,
The beam of truth o'erpowers its dazzled sight,
Trembling it sinks, and finds no joy in light.

But this will pass away: that spark of mind,
Within thy frame unquenchably enshrined,
Shall live to triumph in its brightening ray,
Born to be foster’d with ethereal day.
Then wilt thou bless the hour when o’er thee pass’d,
On wing of flame, the purifying blast,
And sorrow’s voice, through paths before untrod,
Like Sinai’s trumpet, call’d thee to thy God!
But hopest thou, in thy panoply of pride,
Heaven’s messenger, affliction, to deride?
In thine own strength unaided to defy,
With Stoic smile, the arrows of the sky?
Torn by the vulture, fetter’d to the rock,
Still, demigod! the tempest wilt thou mock?
Alas! the tower that crests the mountain’s brow
A thousand years may awe the vale below,
Yet not the less be shatter’d on its height
By one dread moment of the earthquake’s might!
A thousand pangs thy bosom may have borne,
In silent fortitude or haughty scorn,
Till comes the one, the master-anguish, sent
To break the mighty heart that ne’er was bent.
Oh! what is nature’s strength? The vacant eye,
By mind deserted, hath a dread reply!

The wild delirious laughter of despair,
The mirth of frenzy—seek an answer there!
Turn not away, though pity's cheek grow pale,
Close not thine ear against their awful tale.
They tell thee Reason, wandering from the ray
Of Faith, the blazing pillar of her way,
In the mid-darkness of the stormy wave
Forsook the struggling soul she could not save!
Weep not, sad moralist! o'er desert plains
Strew'd with the wrecks of grandeur—mouldering fanes,
Arches of triumph, long with weeds o'ergrown,
And regal cities, now the serpent's own:
Earth has more awful ruins—one lost mind,
Whose star is quench'd, hath lessons for mankind
Of deeper import than each prostrate dome
Mingling its marble with the dust of Rome.
But who with eye unshrinking shall explore
That waste, illumed by reason's beam no more?
Who pierce the deep mysterious clouds that roll
Around the shatter'd temple of the soul,
Curtain'd with midnight? Low its columns lie,
And dark the chambers of its imagery;[140]
Sunk are its idols now—and God alone
May rear the fabric by their fall o'erthrown!

Yet from its inmost shrine, by storms laid bare,
Is heard an oracle that cries—“Beware!
Child of the dust! but ransom’d of the skies!
One breath of heaven, and thus thy glory dies!
Haste, ere the hour of doom—draw nigh to Him
Who dwells above, between the cherubim!”
Spirit dethroned! and check’d in mid career—
Son of the morning! exiled from thy sphere,
Tell us thy tale! Perchance thy race was run
With science in the chariot of the sun;
Free as the winds the paths of space to sweep,
Traverse the untrodden kingdoms of the deep,
And search the laws that nature’s springs control,
There tracing all—save Him who guides the whole!
Haply thine eye its ardent glance had cast
Through the dim shades, the portals of the past;
By the bright lamp of thought thy care had fed
From the far beacon-lights of ages fled,
The depths of time exploring, to retrace
The glorious march of many a vanish’d race.
Or did thy power pervade the living lyre
Till its deep chords became instinct with fire,
Silenced all meaner notes, and swell’d on high,
Full and alone, their mighty harmony;

While woke each passion from its cell profound,
And nations started at th’ electric sound?
Lord of th’ ascendant! what avails it now,
Though bright the laurels waved upon thy brow?
What though thy name, through distant empires heard,
Bade the heart bound, as doth a battle-word?
Was it for this thy still unwearied eye
Kept vigil with the watchfires of the sky,
To make the secrets of all ages thine,
And commune with majestic thoughts that shine
O’er Time’s long shadowy pathway?—hath thy mind
Sever’d its lone dominions from mankind,
For this to woo their homage! Thou hast sought
All, save the wisdom with salvation fraught,
Won every wreath—but that which will not die,
Nor aught neglected—save eternity!
And did all fail thee in the hour of wrath,
When burst th’ o’erwhelming vials on thy path?
Could not the voice of Fame inspire thee then,
O spirit! sceptred by the sons of men,
With an immortal’s courage, to sustain
The transient agonies of earthly pain?
—One, one there was, all-powerful to have saved
When the loud fury of the billow raved;

But him thou knew’st not—and the light he lent
Hath vanish’d from its ruin’d tenement,
But left thee breathing, moving, lingering yet,
A thing we shrink from—vainly to forget!
—Lift the dread veil no further! Hide, oh hide
The bleeding form, the couch of suicide!
The dagger, grasp’d in death—the brow, the eye,
Lifeless, yet stamp’d with rage and agony;
The soul’s dark traces left in many a line
Graved on his mein, who died—“and made no sign!”
Approach not, gaze not—lest thy fever’d brain
Too deep that image of despair retain.
Angels of slumber! o’er the midnight hour
Let not such visions claim unhallow’d power,
Lest the mind sink with terror, and above
See but th’ Avenger’s arm, forget th’ Atoner’s love!
O Thou! th’ unseen, th’ all-seeing!—Thou whose ways,
Mantled with darkness, mock all finite gaze,
Before whose eyes the creatures of Thy hand,
Seraph and man alike, in weakness stand,
And countless ages, trampling into clay
Earth’s empires on their march, are but a day;
Father of worlds unknown, unnumber’d!—Thou,
With whom all time is one eternal now,

Who know’st no past nor future—Thou whose breath
Goes forth, and bears to myriads life or death!
Look on us! guide us!—wanderers of a sea
Wild and obscure, what are we, reft of Thee?
A thousand rocks, deep-hid, elude our sight,
A star may set—and we are lost in night;
A breeze may waft us to the whirlpool’s brink,
A treacherous song allure us—and we sink!
Oh! by His love, who, veiling Godhead’s light,
To moments circumscribed the Infinite,
And heaven and earth disdain’d not to ally
By that dread union—Man with Deity;
Immortal tears o’er mortal woes who shed,
And, ere he raised them, wept above the dead;
Save, or we perish! Let Thy word control
The earthquakes of that universe—the soul;
Pervade the depths of passion; speak once more
The mighty mandate, guard of every shore,
“Here shall thy waves be stay’d;” in grief, in pain,
The fearful poise of reason’s sphere maintain.
Thou, by whom suns are balanced! thus secure
In Thee shall faith and fortitude endure;
Conscious of Thee, unfaltering, shall the just
Look upward still, in high and holy trust,

And by affliction guided to Thy shrine,
The first, last thought of suffering hearts be Thine.
And oh! be near when, clothed with conquering power,
The King of Terrors claims his own dread hour:
When on the edge of that unknown abyss
Which darkly parts us from the realm of bliss,
Awe-struck alike the timid and the brave,
Alike subdued the monarch and the slave,
Must drink the cup of trembling[141]—when we see
Nought in the universe but Death and Thee,
Forsake us not! If still, when life was young,
Faith to thy bosom, as her home, hath sprung,
If Hope's retreat hath been, through all the past,
The shadow by the Rock of Ages cast,
Father, forsake us not! When tortures urge
The shrinking soul to that mysterious verge—
When from thy justice to thy love we fly,
On nature's conflict look with pitying eye;
Bid the strong wind, the fire, the earthquake cease,
Come in the "small still voice," and whisper—Peace![142]
For oh! 'tis awful! He that hath beheld
The parting spirit, by its fears repell'd,
Cling in weak terror to its earthly chain,
And from the dizzy brink recoil, in vain;

He that hath seen the last convulsive throe
Dissolve the union form’d and closed in woe,
Well knows that hour is awful. In the pride
Of youth and health, by sufferings yet untried,
We talk of Death as something which ’twere sweet
In glory’s arms exultingly to meet—
A closing triumph, a majestic scene,
Where gazing nations watch the hero’s mien,
As, undismay’d amidst the tears of all,
He folds his mantle, regally to fall!
—Hush, fond enthusiast! Still, obscure, and lone,
Yet not less terrible because unknown,
Is the last hour of thousands: they retire
From life’s throng’d path, unnoticed to expire.
As the light leaf, whose fall to ruin bears
Some trembling insect’s little world of cares,
Descends in silence—while around waves on
The mighty forest, reckless what is gone!
Such is man’s doom; and, ere an hour be flown,
—Start not, thou trifler!—such may be thine own.
But, as life’s current in its ebb draws near
The shadowy gulf, there wakes a thought of fear,
A thrilling thought which, haply mock’d before,
We fain would stifle—but it sleeps no more!

There are who fly its murmurs midst the throng
That join the masque of revelry and song:
Yet still Death’s image, by its power restored,
Frowns midst the roses of the festal board;
And when deep shades o’er earth and ocean brood,
And the heart owns the might of solitude,
Is its low whisper heard?—a note profound,
But wild and startling as the trumpet sound
That bursts, with sudden blast, the dead repose
Of some proud city, storm’d by midnight foes!
Oh! vainly Reason’s scornful voice would prove
That life had nought to claim such lingering love,
And ask if e’er the captive, half unchain’d,
Clung to the links which yet his step restrain’d.
In vain Philosophy, with tranquil pride,
Would mock the feelings she perchance can hide,
Call up the countless armies of the dead,
Point to the pathway beaten by their tread,
And say—“What wouldst thou? Shall the fix’d decree,
Made for creation, be reversed for thee?”
Poor, feeble aid! Proud Stoic! ask not why—
It is enough that nature shrinks to die.
Enough, that horror, which thy words upbraid,
Is her dread penalty, and must be paid!

Search thy deep wisdom, solve the scarce defined
And mystic questions of the parting mind,
Half check’d, half utter’d: tell her what shall burst,
In whelming grandeur, on her vision first,
When freed from mortal films—what viewless world
Shall first receive her wing, but half unfurl’d—
What awful and unbodied beings guide
Her timid flight through regions yet untried;
Say if at once, her final doom to hear,
Before her God the trembler must appear,
Or wait that day of terror, when the sea
Shall yield its hidden dead, and heaven and earth shall flee?
Hast thou no answer? Then deride no more
The thoughts that shrink; yet cease not to explore
The unknown, the unseen, the future—though the heart,
As at unearthly sounds, before them start;
Though the frame shudder, and the spirits sigh,
They have their source in immortality!
Whence, then, shall strength, which reason’s aid denies,
An equal to the mortal conflict rise?
When, on the swift pale horse, whose lightning pace,
Where’er we fly, still wins the dreadful race,
The mighty rider comes—oh whence shall aid
Be drawn to meet his rushing, undismay’d?

Whence, but from thee, Messiah!—thou hast drain’d
The bitter cup, till not the dregs remain’d;
To thee the struggle and the pangs were known,
The mystic horror—all became thine own!
But did no hand celestial succour bring,
Till scorn and anguish haply lost their sting?
Came not th’ Archangel, in the final hour,
To arm thee with invulnerable power?
No, Son of God! upon thy sacred head
The shafts of wrath their tenfold fury shed,
From man averted—and thy path on high
Pass’d through the straight of fiercest agony:
For thus the Eternal, with propitious eyes,
Received the last, the almighty sacrifice!
But wake! be glad, ye nations! from the tomb
Is won the victory, and is fled the gloom!
The vale of death in conquest hath been trod.
Break forth in joy, ye ransom’d! saith your God;
Swell ye the raptures of the song afar,
And hail with harps your bright and Morning Star.
He rose! the everlasting gates of day
Received the King of Glory on his way!
The hope, the comforter of those who wept,
And the first-fruits of them in Him that slept,

He rose, he triumph’d! he will yet sustain
Frail nature sinking in the strife of pain.
Aided by Him, around the martyr’s frame
When fiercely blazed a living shroud of flame,
Hath the firm soul exulted, and the voice
Raised the victorious hymn, and cried, Rejoice!
Aided by Him, though none the bed attend
Where the lone sufferer dies without a friend,
He whom the busy world shall miss no more
Than morn one dewdrop from her countless store,
Earth’s most neglected child, with trusting heart,
Call’d to the hope of glory, shall depart!
And say, cold Sophist! if by thee bereft
Of that high hope, to misery what were left?
But for the vision of the days to be,
But for the comforter despised by thee,
Should we not wither at the Chastener’s look,
Should we not sink beneath our God’s rebuke,
When o’er our heads the desolating blast,
Fraught with inscrutable decrees, hath pass’d,
And the stem power who seeks the noblest prey
Hath call’d our fairest and our best away?
Should we not madden when our eyes behold
All that we loved in marble stillness cold,

No more responsive to our smile or sigh,
Fix’d—frozen—silent—all mortality?
But for the promise, “All shall yet be well,”
Would not the spirit in its pangs rebel
Beneath such clouds as darken’d when the hand
Of wrath lay heavy on our prostrate land;
And thou,[143] just lent thy gladden’d isles to bless,
Then snatch’d from earth with all thy loveliness,
With all a nation’s blessings on thy head,
O England’s flower! wert gather’d to the dead?
But thou didst teach us. Thou to every heart
Faith’s lofty lesson didst thyself impart!
When fled the hope through all thy pangs which smiled,
When thy young bosom o’er thy lifeless child
Yearn’d with vain longing—still thy patient eye
To its last light beam’d holy constancy!
Torn from a lot in cloudless sunshine cast,
Amidst those agonies—thy first and last,
Thy pale lip, quivering with convulsive throes,
Breathed not a plaint—and settled in repose;
While bow’d thy royal head to Him whose power
Spoke in the fiat of that midnight hour,
Who from the brightest vision of a throne,
Love, glory, empire, claim’d thee for his own,

And spread such terror o’er the sea-girt coast,
As blasted Israel when her ark was lost!
“It is the will of God!”—yet, yet we hear
The words which closed thy beautiful career;
Yet should we mourn thee in thy blest abode,
But for that thought—“It is the will of God!”
Who shall arraign th’ Eternal’s dark decree
If not one murmur then escaped from thee?
Oh! still, though vanishing without a trace,
Thou hast not left one scion of thy race,
Still may thy memory bloom our vales among,
Hallow’d by freedom and enshrined in song!
Still may thy pure, majestic spirit dwell
Bright on the isles which loved thy name so well,
E’en as an angel, with presiding care,
To wake and guard thine own high virtues there.
For lo! the hour when storm-presaging skies
Call on the watchers of the land to rise,
To set the sign of fire on every height,[144]
And o’er the mountains rear with patriot might,
Prepared, if summon’d, in its cause to die,
The banner of our faith, the Cross of victory!
By this hath England conquer’d. Field and flood
Have own’d her sovereignty: alone she stood,

When chains o’er all the sceptred earth were thrown,
In high and holy singleness, alone,
But mighty in her God—and shall she now
Forget before th’ Omnipotent to bow?
From the bright fountain of her glory turn,
Or bid strange fire upon his altars burn?
No! sever’d land, midst rocks and billows rude,
Throned in thy majesty of solitude,
Still in the deep asylum of thy breast
Shall the pure elements of greatness rest,
Virtue and faith, the tutelary powers,
Thy hearths that hallow, and defend thy towers!
Still, where thy hamlet vales, O chosen isle!
In the soft beauty of their verdure smile,
Where yew and elm o’ershade the lowly fanes
That guard the peasant’s records and remains,
May the blest echoes of the Sabbath-bell
Sweet on the quiet of the woodlands swell,
And from each cottage-dwelling of thy glades,
When starlight glimmers through the deepening shades,
Devotion’s voice in choral hymns arise,
And bear the land’s warm incense to the skies.
There may the mother, as with anxious joy
To heaven her lessons consecrate her boy,

Teach his young accent still the immortal lays

Of Zion's bards, in inspiration's days,

When angels, whispering through the cedar shade,

Prophetic tones to Judah's harp convey'd;

And as, her soul all glistening in her eyes,

She bids the prayer of infancy arise,

Tell of His name who left his throne on high,

Earth's lowliest lot to bear and sanctify,

His love divine, by keenest anguish tried,

And fondly say—"My child, for thee He died!"

[136] "The poem of The Sceptic, published in 1820, was one in which her revered friend[137] took a peculiar interest. It had been her original wish to dedicate it to him, but he declined the tribute, thinking it might be more advantageous to her to pay this compliment to Mr Gifford, with whom she was at that time in frequent correspondence, and who entered very warmly into her literary undertakings, discussing them with the kindness of an old friend, and desiring her to command frankly whatever assistance his advice or experience could afford. Mrs Hemans, in the first instance, consented to adopt the suggestion regarding the altered dedication; but was afterwards deterred from putting it into execution, by a fear that it might be construed into a manœuvre to propitiate the good graces of the Quarterly Review; and from the slightest approach to any such mode of propitiation, her sensitive nature recoiled with almost fastidious delicacy."—Memoir, p. 31.

"One of the first notices of The Sceptic appeared in the Edinburgh Monthly Magazine; and there is something in its tone so far more valuable than ordinary praise, and at the same time so prophetic of the happy influence her writings were one day to exercise, that the introduction of the concluding paragraph may not be

unwelcome to the readers of this little memorial. After quoting from the poem, the reviewer thus proceeds,—'These extracts must, we think, convey to every reader a favourable impression of the talents of their author, and of the admirable purposes to which her high gifts are directed. It is the great defect, as we imagine, of some of the most popular writers of the day, that they are not sufficiently attentive to the moral dignity of their performances; it is the deep, and will be the lasting reproach of others, that in this point of view they have wantonly sought and realised the most profound literary abasement. With the promise of talents not inferior to any, and far superior to most of them, the author before us is not only free from every stain, but breathes all moral beauty and loveliness; and it will be a memorable coincidence if the era of a woman's sway in literature shall become coeval with the return of its moral purity and elevation.' From suffrages such as these, Mrs Hemans derived not merely present gratification, but encouragement and cheer for her onward course. It was still dearer to her to receive the assurances, with which it often fell to her lot to be blessed, of having, in the exercise of the talents intrusted to her, administered balm to the feelings of the sorrowful, or taught the desponding where to look for comfort. In a letter written at this time to a valued friend, recently visited by one of the heaviest of human calamities—the loss of an exemplary mother—she thus describes her own appreciation of such heart-tributes:—'It is inexpressibly gratifying to me to know, that you should find any thing I have written at all adapted to your present feelings, and that The Sceptic should have been one of the last books upon which the eyes, now opened upon brighter scenes, were cast. Perhaps, when your mind is sufficiently composed, you will inform me which were the passages distinguished by the approbation of that pure and pious mind: they will be far more highly valued by me than any thing I have ever written.'—Ibid. pp. 334-4.

"It is pleasing to record the following tribute from Mrs Hannah More, in a letter to a friend who had sent her a copy of The Sceptic. 'I cannot refuse myself the gratification of saying, that I entertain a very high opinion of Mrs Hemans's superior

genius and refined taste. I rank her, as a poet, very high, and I have seen no work on the subject of her Modern Greece which evinces more just views, or more delicate perceptions of the fine and the beautiful. I am glad she has employed her powerful pen, in this new instance, on a subject so worthy of it; and, anticipating the future by the past, I promise myself no small pleasure in the perusal, and trust it will not only confer pleasure, but benefit.'"—Ibid.

[137] Dr Luxmoore, Bishop of St Asaph.

[138] "He is patient, because He is eternal."—St Augustine.

[139] "Then ye shall appoint you cities, to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither which killeth any person at unawares.—And they shall be unto you cities of refuge from the avenger."—Numbers, chap. xxxv.

[140] "Every man in the chambers of his imagery."—Ezekiel, chap. viii.

[141] "Thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out."—Isaiah, chap. li.

[142] "And behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."—Kings, book i. chap. 19.

[143] The Princess Charlotte.

[144] "And set up a sign of fire."—Jeremiah, chap. vi.

[What follows is worthy of being here recorded. Thirteen years after the publication of the Sceptic, and when the author, towards the termination of her earthly career, was residing with her family in Dublin, a circumstance occurred by which Mrs Hemans was greatly affected and impressed. A stranger one day called at her house, and begged earnestly to see her. She was then just recovering from one of her

frequent illnesses, and was obliged to decline the visits of all but her immediate friends. The applicant was therefore told that she was unable to receive him; but he persisted in entreating for a few minutes' audience, with such urgent importunity that at last the point was conceded. The moment he was admitted, the gentleman (for such his manner and appearance declared him to be) explained, in words and tones of the deepest feeling, that the object of his visit was to acknowledge a debt of obligation which he could not rest satisfied without avowing—that to her he owed, in the first instance, that faith and those hopes which were now more precious to him than life itself; for that it was by reading her poem of The Sceptic he had been first awakened from the miserable delusions of infidelity, and induced to "search the Scriptures." Having poured forth his thanks and benedictions in an uncontrollable gush of emotion, this strange but interesting visitant took his departure, leaving her overwhelmed with a mingled sense of joyful gratitude and wondering humility.—Memoir, p. 255-6.]

CRITICAL EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS.

North American Review.—"In 1820 Mrs Hemans published The Sceptic, a poem of great merit for its style and its sentiments, of which we shall give a rapid sketch. She considers the influence of unbelief on the affections and gentler part of our nature, and, after pursuing the picture of the misery consequent on doubt, shows the relief that may be found in the thoughts that have their source in immortality. Glancing at pleasure as the only resort of the sceptic, she turns to the sterner tasks of life:—

'E'en youth's brief hours

Survive the beauty of their loveliest flowers;

The soul's pure flame the breath of storms must fan,

And pain and sorrow claim their nursling—Man.'

But then the sceptic has no relief in memory; for memory recalls no joys but such as were transitory, and known to be such; and as for hope—

‘She, who like heaven’s own sunbeam, smiles for all,

Will she speak comfort?—Thou hast shorn her plume,

That might have raised thee far above the tomb,

And hush’d the only voice whose angel-tone

Soothes when all melodies of joy are flown.’

“The poet then asks, if an infidel dare love; and, having no home for his thoughts in a better world, nurse such feelings as delight to enshrine themselves in the breast of a parent. She addresses him on the insecurity of an attachment to a vain idol, from which death may at any time divide him ‘for ever.’... For relief the infidel is referred to the Christian religion, in a strain which unites the fervour of devotion with poetic sensibility.... The poem proceeds to depict, in a forcible manner, the unfortunate state of a mind which acquires every kind of knowledge but that which gives salvation; and, having gained possession of the secrets of all ages, and communed with the majestic minds that shine along the pathway of time, neglects nothing but eternity. Such a one, in the season of suffering, finds relief in suicide, and escapes to death as to an eternal rest. The thought of death recurs to the mind of the poet, and calls forth a fervent prayer for the divine presence and support in the hour of dissolution; for the hour, when the soul is brought to the mysterious verge of another life, is an ‘awful one.’... This is followed by an allusion to the strong love of life which belongs to human nature, and the instinctive apprehension with which the parting mind muses on its future condition, and asks of itself mystic questions, that it cannot solve. But through the influence of religion—

‘He whom the busy world shall miss no more

Than morn one dewdrop from her countless store,

Earth’s most neglected child, with trusting heart,

Call’d to the hope of glory, shall depart.’

“After some lines expressing the spirit of English patriotism, in a manner with which foreigners can only be pleased, the poem closes with the picture of a mother teaching her child the first lessons of religion, by holding up the divine example of the Saviour.

“We have been led into a longer notice of this poem, for it illustrates the character of Mrs Hemans’s manner. We perceive in it a loftiness of purpose, an earnestness of thought, sometimes made more interesting by a tinge of melancholy, a depth of religious feeling, a mind alive to all the interests, gratifications, and sorrows of social life.”—Professor Norton.

Edinburgh Monthly Review.—“We have on more than one occasion expressed the very high opinion which we entertain of the talents of this lady; and it is gratifying to find that she gives us no reason to retract or modify in any degree the applause already bestowed, and that every fresh exhibition of her powers enhances and confirms her claims upon our admiration. Mrs Hemans is indeed but in the infancy of her poetical career; but it is an infancy of unrivalled beauty, and of very high promise. Not but that she has already performed more than has often been sufficient to win for other candidates no mean place in the roll of fame, but because what she has already done shrinks, when compared with what we consider to be her own great capacity, to mere incipient excellence—the intimation rather than the fulfilment of the high destiny of her genius.

... “The verses of Mrs Hemans appear the spontaneous offspring of intense and noble feeling, governed by a clear understanding, and fashioned into elegance by an exquisite delicacy and precision of taste. With more than the force of many of her masculine competitors, she never ceases to be strictly feminine in the whole current of her thought and feeling, nor approaches by any chance the verge of that free and intrepid course of speculation, of which the boldness is more conspicuous than the wisdom, but into which some of the most remarkable among the female literati of

our times have freely and fearlessly plunged. She has, in the poem before us, made choice of a subject of which it would have been very difficult to have reconciled the treatment, in the hands of some female authors, to the delicacy which belongs to the sex, and the tenderness and enthusiasm which form its finest characteristics. A coarse and chilling cento of the exploded fancies of modern scepticism, done into rhyme by the hand of a woman, would have been doubly disgusting, by the revival of absurdities long consigned to oblivion, and by the revolting exhibition of a female mind shorn of all its attractions, and wrapt in darkness and defiance. But Mrs Hemans has chosen the better and the nobler cause, and, while she has left in the poem before us every trace of vigorous intellect of which the subject admitted, and has far transcended in energy of thought the prosing pioneers of unbelief, she has sustained throughout a tone of warm and confiding piety, and has thus proved that the humility of hope and of faith has in it none of the weakness with which it has been charged by the arrogance of impiety, but owns a divine and mysterious vigour residing under the very aspect of gentleness and devotion."

Quarterly Review.—"Her last two publications are works of a higher stamp; works, indeed, of which no living poet need to be ashamed. The first of them is entitled The Sceptic, and is devoted, as our readers will easily anticipate, to advocating the cause of religion. Undoubtedly the poem must have owed its being to the circumstances of the times—to a laudable indignation at the course which literature in many departments seemed lately to be taking in this country, and at the doctrines disseminated with industry, principally (but by no means exclusively, as has been falsely supposed) among the lower orders. Mrs Hemans, however, does not attempt to reason learnedly or laboriously in verse; few poems, ostensibly philosophical or didactic, have ever been of use, except to display the ingenuity and talent of the writers. People are not often taught a science or an art in poetry, and much less will an infidel be converted by a theological treatise in verse. But the argument of The Sceptic is one of irresistible force to confirm a wavering mind; it is simply resting

the truth of religion on the necessity of it—on the utter misery and helplessness of man without it. This argument is in itself available for all the purposes of poetry: it appeals to the imagination and passions of man; it is capable of interesting all our affectionate hopes and charities, of acting upon all our natural fears. Mrs Hemans has gone through this range with great feeling and ability; and when she comes to the mind which has clothed itself in its own strength, and relying proudly on that alone in the hour of affliction, has sunk into distraction in the contest, she rises into a strain of moral poetry not often surpassed:—

‘Oh, what is nature’s strength? The vacant eye,

By mind deserted, hath a dread reply,’ etc.”]

SUPERSTITION AND REVELATION,

AN UNFINISHED POEM.

I.

Beings of brighter worlds! that rise at times

As phantoms with ideal beauty fraught,

In those brief visions of celestial climes

Which pass like sunbeams o’er the realms of thought,

Dwell ye around us?—are ye hovering nigh,

Throned on the cloud, or buoyant in the air?

And in deep solitudes, where human eye

Can trace no step, Immortals! are ye there?

Oh! who can tell?—what power, but Death alone,

Can lift the mystic veil that shades the world unknown?

II.

But Earth hath seen the days, ere yet the flowers

Of Eden wither'd, when reveal'd ye shone
In all your brightness midst those holy bowers—
Holy, but not unfading, as your own!
While He, the child of that primeval soil,
With you its paths in high communion trode,
His glory yet undimm'd by guilt or toil,
And beaming in the image of his God,
And his pure spirit glowing from the sky,
Exulting in its light, a spark of Deity.

III.

Then, haply, mortal and celestial lays,
Mingling their tones, from nature's temple rose,
When nought but that majestic song of praise
Broke on the sanctity of night's repose,
With music since unheard: and man might trace
By stream and vale, in deep embow'ring shade,
Devotion's first and loveliest dwelling-place,
The footsteps of th' Omnipotent, who made
That spot a shrine, where youthful nature cast
Her consecrated wealth, rejoicing as He pass'd.

IV.

Short were those days, and soon, O sons of Heaven!
Your aspect changed for man. In that dread hour,
When from his paradise the alien driven

Beheld your forms in angry splendour tower,
Guarding the clime where he no more might dwell
With meteor-swords: he saw the living flame,
And his first cry of misery was—“Farewell!”
His heart’s first anguish, exile: he became
A pilgrim on the earth, whose children’s lot
Is still for happier lands to pine—and reach them not.

V.

Where now the chosen bowers that once beheld
Delight and Love their first bright sabbath keep?
From all its founts the world of waters swell’d,
And wrapt them in the mantle of the deep!
For He, to whom the elements are slaves,
In wrath unchain’d the oceans of the cloud,
And heaved the abyss beneath, till waves on waves
Folded creation in their mighty shroud;
Then left the earth a solitude, o’erspread
With its own awful weeks—a desert of the dead.

VI.

But onward flow’d life’s busy course again,
And rolling ages with them bore away—
As to be lost amidst the boundless main,
Rich orient streams their golden sands convey—
The hallow’d lore of old—the guiding light

Left by tradition to the sons of earth,
And the blest memory of each sacred rite
Known in the region of their father's birth,
When in each breeze around his fair abode
Whisper'd a seraph's voice, or lived the breath of God.

VII.

Who hath not seen, what time the orb of day,
Cinctured with glory, seeks the ocean's breast,
A thousand clouds all glowing in his ray,
Catching brief splendour from the purple west?
So round thy parting steps, fair Truth! awhile
With borrow'd hues unnumber'd phantoms shone;
And Superstition, from thy lingering smile,
Caught a faint glow of beauty not her own,
Blending her rites with thine—while yet afar
Thine eye's last radiance beam'd, a slow-receding star.

VIII.

Yet still one stream was pure—one sever'd shrine
Was fed with holier fire, by chosen hands;
And sounds, and dreams, and impulses divine,
Were in the dwellings of the patriarch bands.
There still the father to his child bequeath'd
The sacred torch of never-dying flame;
There still Devotion's suppliant accents breathed

The One adored and everlasting Name;
And angel guests would linger and repose
Where those primeval tents amid their palm-trees rose.

IX.

But far o’er earth the apostate wanderers bore
Their alien rites. For them, by fount or shade,
Nor voice, nor vision, holy as of yore,
In thrilling whispers to the soul convey’d
High inspiration: yet in every clime,
Those sons of doubt and error fondly sought
With beings, in their essence more sublime,
To hold communion of mysterious thought;
On some dread power in trembling hope to lean,
And hear in every wind the accents of th’ Unseen.

X.

Yes! we have need to bid our hopes repose
On some protecting influence: here confined,
Life hath no healing balm for mortal woes,
Earth is too narrow for th’ immortal mind.
Our spirits burn to mingle with the day,
As exiles panting for their native coast,
Yet lured by every wild-flower from their way,
And shrinking from the gulf that must be cross’d.
Death hovers round us: in the zephyr’s sigh,

As in the storm, he comes—and lo! Eternity!

XI.

As one left lonely on the desert sands

Of burning Afric, where, without a guide,

He gazes as the pathless waste expands—

Around, beyond, interminably wide;

While the red haze, presaging the Simoom,

Obscures the fierce resplendence of the sky,

Or suns of blasting light perchance illume

The glistening Serab[145] which illudes his eye:

Such was the wanderer Man, in ages flown,

Kneeling in doubt and fear before the dread Unknown.

XII.

His thoughts explored the past—and where were they,

The chiefs of men, the mighty ones gone by?

He turn'd—a boundless void before him lay,

Wrapp'd in the shadows of futurity.

How knew the child of Nature that the flame

He felt within him struggling to ascend,

Should perish not with that terrestrial frame

Doom'd with the earth on which it moved, to blend?

How, when affliction bade his spirit bleed,

If 'twere a Father's love or Tyrant's wrath decreed?

XIII.

Oh! marvel not if then he sought to trace
In all sublimities of sight and sound,
In rushing winds that wander through all space,
Or midst deep woods, with holy gloom embrown’d,
The oracles of Fate! or if the train
Of floating forms that throng the world of sleep,
And sounds that vibrate on the slumberer’s brain,
When mortal voices rest in stillness deep,
Were deem’d mysterious revelations, sent
From viewless powers, the lords of each dread element.

XIV.

Was not wild Nature, in that elder-time,
Clothed with a deeper power?—earth’s wandering race,
Exploring realms of solitude sublime,
Not as we see, beheld her awful face!
Art had not tamed the mighty scenes which met
Their searching eyes; unpeopled kingdoms lay
In savage pomp before them—all was yet
Silent and vast, but not as in decay;
And the bright daystar, from his burning throne,
Look’d o’er a thousand shores, untrodden, voiceless, lone.

XV.

The forests in their dark luxuriance waved,
With all their swell of strange Æolian sound;

The fearful deep, sole region ne’er enslaved,
Heaved, in its pomp of terror, darkly round.
Then, brooding o’er the images, imprest
By forms of grandeur thronging on his eye,
And faint traditions, guarded in his breast,
Midst dim remembrances of infancy,
Man shaped unearthly presences, in dreams,
Peopling each wilder haunt of mountains, groves, and streams.

XVI.

Then bled the victim—then in every shade
Of rock or turf arose the votive shrine;
Fear bow’d before the phantoms she portray’d,
And Nature teem’d with many a mystic sign.
Meteors, and storms, and thunders! ye whose course
E’en yet is awful to th’ enlighten’d eye,
As, wildly rushing from your secret source,
Your sounding chariot sweeps the realms on high,
Then o’er the earth prophetic gloom ye cast,
And the wide nations gazed, and trembled as ye pass’d.

XVII.

But you, ye stars! in distant glory burning,
Nurtured with flame, bright altars of the sky!
To whose far climes the spirit, vainly turning,
Would pierce the secrets of infinity—

To you the heart, bereft of other light,
Its first deep homage paid, on Eastern plains,
Where Day hath terrors, but majestic Night,
Calm in her pomp, magnificently reigns,
Cloudless and silent, circled with the race
Of some unnumber'd orbs, that light the depths of space.

XVIII.

Shine on! and brightly plead for erring thought,
Whose wing, unaided in its course, explored
The wide creation, and beholding nought
Like your eternal beauty, then adored
Its living splendours; deeming them inform'd
By natures temper'd with a holier fire—
Pure beings, with ethereal effluence warm'd,
Who to the source of spirit might aspire,
And mortal prayers benignantly convey
To some presiding Power, more awful far than they.

XIX.

Guides o'er the desert and the deep! to you
The seaman turn'd, rejoicing at the helm,
When from the regions of empyreal blue
Ye pour'd soft radiance o'er the ocean-realm;
To you the dweller of the plains address'd
Vain prayers, that call'd the clouds and dews your own;

To you the shepherd, on the mountain’s crest,
Kindled the fires that far through midnight shone,
As earth would light up all her hills, to vie
With your immortal host, and image back the sky.

XX.

Hail to the queen of heaven! her silvery crown
Serenely wearing, o’er her high domain
She walks in brightness, looking cloudless down,
As if to smile on her terrestrial reign.
Earth should be hush’d in slumber—but the night
Calls forth her worshippers; the feast is spread,
On hoary Lebanon’s umbrageous height
The shrine is raised, the rich libation shed
To her, whose beams illume those cedar-shades
Faintly as Nature’s light the ’wilder’d soul pervades.

XXI.

But when thine orb, all earth’s rich hues restoring,
Came forth, O sun! in majesty supreme,
Still, from thy pure exhaustless fountain, pouring
Beauty and life in each triumphant beam,
Through thine own East what joyous rites prevail’d!
What choral songs re-echo’d! while thy fire
Shone o’er its thousand altars, and exhaled
The precious incense of each odorous pyre,

Heap’d with the richest balms of spicy vales,
And aromatic woods that scent the Arabian gales.

XXII.

Yet not with Saba’s fragrant wealth alone,
Balsam and myrrh, the votive pile was strew’d;
For the dark children of the burning zone
Drew frenzy from thy fervours, and bedew’d
With their own blood thy shrine; while that wild scene,
Haply with pitying eye, thine angel view’d,
And though with glory mantled, and severe
In his own fulness of beatitude,
Yet mourn’d for those whose spirits from thy ray
Caught not one transient spark of intellectual day.

XXIII.

But earth had deeper stains. Ethereal powers!
Benignant seraphs! wont to leave the skies,
And hold high converse, midst his native bowers,
With the once glorious son of Paradise,
Look’d ye from heaven in sadness! were your strains
Of choral praise suspended in dismay,
When the polluted shrine of Syria’s plains
With clouds of incense dimm’d the blaze of day?
Or did ye veil indignantly your eyes.
While demons hail’d the pomp of human sacrifice?

XXIV.

And well the powers of evil might rejoice,
When rose from Tophet's vale the exulting cry,
And, deaf to Nature's supplicating voice,
The frantic mother bore her child to die!
Around her vainly clung his feeble hands
With sacred instinct: love hath lost its sway,
While ruthless zeal the sacrifice demands,
And the fires blaze, impatient for their prey.
Let not his shrieks reveal the dreadful tale!
Well may the drum's loud peal o'erpower an infant's wail?

XXV.

A voice of sorrow! not from thence it rose;
'Twas not the childless mother. Syrian maids,
Where with red wave the mountain streamlet flows,
Keep tearful vigil in their native shades.
With dirge and plaint the cedar-groves resound,
Each rock's deep echo for Adonis mourns:
Weep for the dead! Away! the lost is found—
To life and love the buried god returns!
Then wakes the timbrel—then the forests ring,
And shouts of frenzied joy are on each breeze's wing!

XXVI.

But fill'd with holier joy the Persian stood,

In silent reverence, on the mountain’s brow,
At early dayspring, while the expanding flood
Of radiance burst around, above, below—
Bright, boundless as eternity: he gazed
Till his full soul, imbibing heaven, o’erflow’d
In worship of th’ Invisible, and praised
In thee, O Sun! the symbol and abode
Of life, and power, and excellence—the throne
Where dwelt the Unapproach’d, resplendently alone.[146]

XXVII.

What if his thoughts, with erring fondness, gave
Mysterious sanctity to things which wear
Th’ Eternal’s impress?—if the living wave,
The circling heavens, the free and boundless air—
If the pure founts of everlasting flame,
Deep in his country’s hallow’d vales enshrined,
And the bright stars maintain’d a silent claim
To love and homage from his awe-struck mind?
Still with his spirit dwelt a lofty dream
Of uncreated Power, far, far o’er these supreme.

XXVIII.

And with that faith was conquest. He whose name
To Judah’s harp of prophecy had rung—
He, of whose yet unborn and distant fame

The mighty voice of Inspiration sung,

He came, the victor Cyrus! As he pass’d,

Thrones to his footstep rock’d, and monarchs lay

Suppliant and clothed with dust; while nations cast

Their ancient idols down before his way,

Who in majestic march, from shore to shore,

The quenchless flame revered by Persia’s children bore.

[145] Serab, mirage.

[146] At an earlier stage in the composition of this poem, the following stanza was here inserted:—

“Nor rose the Magian’s hymn, sublimely swelling

In full-toned homage to the source of flame,

From fabric rear’d by man, the gorgeous dwelling

Of such bright idol-forms as art could frame.

Be rear’d no temple, bade no walls contain

The breath of incense or the voice of prayer;

But made the boundless universe his fane,

The rocks his altar-stone—adoring there

The Being whose Omnipotence pervades

All deserts and all depths, and hallows loneliest shades.”

[In the spring of 1820, Mrs Hemans first made the acquaintance of one who became afterwards a zealous and valuable friend, revered in life, and sincerely mourned in death—Bishop Heber, then Rector of Hodnet, and a frequent visitor at Bodryddan, the residence of his father-in-law, the late Dean of St Asaph, from whom also, during an intercourse of many years, Mrs Hemans at all times received much

kindness and courtesy. Mr Reginald Heber was the first eminent literary character with whom she had ever familiarly associated; and she therefore entered with a peculiar freshness of feeling in to the delight inspired by his conversational powers, enhanced as they were by that gentle benignity of manner, so often the characteristic of minds of the very highest order. In a letter to a friend on this occasion, she thus describes her enjoyment:—"I am more delighted with Mr Heber than I can possibly tell you; his conversation is quite rich with anecdote, and every subject on which he speaks had been, you would imagine, the whole study of his life. In short, his society has made much the same sort of impression on my mind that the first perusal of Ivanhoe did; and was something so perfectly new to me, that I can hardly talk of any thing else. I had a very long conversation with him on the subject of the poem, which he read aloud, and commented upon as he proceeded. His manner was so entirely that of a friend, that I felt perfectly at ease, and did not hesitate to express all my own ideas and opinions on the subject, even where they did not exactly coincide with his own."

The poem here alluded to was the one entitled Superstition and Revelation, which Mrs Hemans had commenced some time before, and which was intended to embrace a very extensive range of subject. Her original design will be best given in her own words, from a letter to her friend Miss Park:—"I have been thinking a good deal of the plan we discussed together, of a poem on national superstitions. 'Our thoughts are linked by many a hidden chain,' and in the course of my lucubrations on this subject, an idea occurred to me, which I hope you will not think me too presumptuous in wishing to realise. Might not a poem of some extent and importance, if the execution were at all equal to the design, be produced, from contrasting the spirit and tenets of Paganism with those of Christianity? It would contain, of course, much classical allusion; and all the graceful and sportive fictions of ancient Greece and Italy, as well as the superstitions of more barbarous climes, might be introduced to prove how little consolation they could convey in the hour of

affliction—or hope, in that of death. Many scenes from history might be portrayed in illustration of this idea; and the certainty of a future state, and of the immortality of the soul, which we derive from revelation, are surely subjects for poetry of the highest class. Descriptions of those regions which are still strangers to the blessings of our religion, such as the greatest part of Africa, India, &c., might contain much that is poetical; but the subject is almost boundless, and I think of it till I am startled by its magnitude."

Mr Heber approved highly of the plan of the work, and gave her every encouragement to proceed in it; supplying her with many admirable suggestions, both as to the illustrations which might be introduced with the happiest effect, and the sources from whence the requisite information would best be derived. But the great labour and research necessary to the development of a plan which included the superstitions of every age and country, from the earliest of all idolatries—the adoration of the sun, moon, and host of heaven, alluded to in the book of Job—to the still existing rites of the Hindoos—would have demanded a course of study too engrossing to be compatible with the many other claims, both domestic and literary, which daily pressed more and more upon the author's time. The work was, therefore, laid aside; and the fragment now first published is all that remains of it, though the project was never distinctly abandoned.]

ITALIAN LITERATURE.[147]

THE BASVIGLIANA OF MONTI.

FROM SISMONDI's "LITTERATURE DU MIDI."

[147] "About this time (1820) Mrs Hemans was an occasional contributor to the Edinburgh Monthly Magazine, then conducted by the Rev. Robert Morehead, whose liberal courtesy in the discharge of his editorial office associated many agreeable

recollections with the period of this literary intercourse. Several of her poems appeared in the above-mentioned periodical, as also a series of papers on foreign literature, which, with very few exceptions, were the only prose compositions she ever gave to the world; and indeed to these papers such a distinctive appellation is perhaps scarcely applicable, as the prose writing may be considered subordinate to the poetical translations, which it is used to introduce."—Memoir, p. 41.

Vincenzo Monti, a native of Ferrara, is acknowledged, by the unanimous consent of the Italians, as the greatest of their living poets. Irritable, impassioned, variable to excess, he is always actuated by the impulse of the moment. Whatever he feels is felt with the most enthusiastic vehemence. He sees the objects of his thoughts—they are present, and clothed with life—before him, and a flexible and harmonious language is always at his command to paint them with the richest colouring. Persuaded that poetry is only another species of painting, he makes the art of the poet consist in rendering apparent, to the eyes of all, the pictures created by his imagination for himself; and he permits not a verse to escape him which does not contain an image. Deeply impressed by the study of Dante, he has restored to the character of Italian poetry those severe and exalted beauties by which it was distinguished at its birth; and he proceeds from one picture to another with a grandeur and dignity peculiar to himself. It is extraordinary that, with something so lofty in his manner and style of writing, the heart of so impassioned a character should not be regulated by principles of greater consistency. In many other poets, this defect might pass unobserved: but circumstances have thrown the fullest light upon the versatility of Monti, and his glory as a poet is attached to works which display him in continual opposition to himself. Writing in the midst of the various Italian revolutions, he has constantly chosen political subjects for his compositions, and he has successively celebrated opposite parties in proportion to their success. Let us suppose, in his justification, that he composes as an improvisatore, and that his feelings, becoming highly excited by the given theme, he seizes the political

ideas it suggests, however foreign they may be to his individual sentiments.[148] In these political poems—the object and purport of which are so different—the invention and manner are, perhaps, but too similar. The Basvigliana, or poem on the death of Basville, is the most celebrated; but, since its appearance, it has been discovered that Monti, who always imitated Dante, has now also very frequently imitated himself.

Hugh Basville was the French Envoy who was put to death at Rome by the people, for attempting, at the beginning of the Revolution, to excite a sedition against the Pontifical government. Monti, who was then the poet of the Pope, as he has since been of the Republic, supposes that, at the moment of Basville's death, he is saved by a sudden repentance, from the condemnation which his philosophical principles had merited. But, as a punishment for his guilt, and a substitute for the pains of purgatory, he is condemned by Divine Justice to traverse France until the crimes of that country have received their due chastisement, and doomed to contemplate the misfortunes and reverses to which he has contributed by assisting to extend the progress of the Revolution.

An angel of heaven conducts Basville from province to province, that he may behold the desolation of his lovely country. He then conveys him to Paris, and makes him witness the sufferings and death of Louis XVI., and afterwards shows him the Allied armies prepared to burst upon France, and avenge the blood of her king. The poem concludes before the issue of the contest is known. It is divided into four cantos of three hundred lines each, and written in terza rima, like the poem of Dante. Not only many expressions, epithets, and lines are borrowed from the Divine Comedy, but the invention itself is similar. An angel conducts Basville through the suffering world; and this faithful guide, who consoles and supports the spectator-hero of the poem, acts precisely the same part which is performed by Virgil in Dante. Basville himself thinks, feels, and suffers, exactly as Dante would have done. Monti has not preserved any traces of his revolutionary character—he describes him as feeling

more pity than remorse—and he seems to forget, in thus identifying himself with his hero, that he has at first represented Basville, and perhaps without foundation, as an infidel and a ferocious revolutionist. The Basvigliana is, perhaps, more remarkable than any other poem for the majesty of its verse, the sublimity of its expression, and the richness of its colouring. In the first canto the spirit of Basville thus takes leave of the body:—

“Sleep, O beloved companion of my woes,
Rest thou in deep and undisturb’d repose;
Till at the last great day, from slumber’s bed,
Heaven’s trumpet-summons shall awake the dead.
“Be the earth light upon thee, mild the shower,
And soft the breeze’s wing, till that dread hour;
Nor let the wanderer passing o’er thee, breathe
Words of keen insult to the dust beneath.
“Sleep thou in peace! Beyond the funeral pyre,
There live no flames of vengeance or of ire;
And midst high hearts I leave thee, on a shore
Where mercy’s home hath been from days of yore.”
Thus to its earthly form the spirit cried,
Then turn’d to follow its celestial guide;
But with a downcast mien, a pensive sigh,
A lingering step, and oft reverted eye—
As when a child’s reluctant feet obey
Its mother’s voice, and slowly leave its play.
Night o’er the earth her dewy veil had cast,

When from th’ Eternal City’s towers they pass’d,
And rising in their flight, on that proud dome,
Whose walls enshrine the guardian saint of Rome,
Lo! where a cherub-form sublimely tower’d,
But dreadful in his glory! Sternly lower’d
Wrath in his kingly aspect. One he seem’d
Of the bright seven, whose dazzling splendour beam’d
On high amidst the burning lamps of heaven,
Seen in the dread, o’erwhelming visions given
To the rapt seer of Patmos. Wheels of fire
Seem’d his fierce eyes, all kindling in their ire;
And his loose tresses, floating as he stood,
A comet’s glare, presaging woe and blood.
He waved his sword—its red, terrific light
With fearful radiance tinged the clouds of night;
While his left hand sustain’d a shield so vast,
Far o’er the Vatican beneath was cast
Its broad, protecting shadow. As the plume
Of the strong eagle spreads in sheltering gloom
O’er its young brood, as yet untaught to soar;
And while, all trembling at the whirlwind’s roar,
Each humbler bird shrinks cowering in its nest,
Beneath that wing of power, and ample breast,
They sleep unheeding; while the storm on high

Breaks not their calm and proud security.

In the second canto, Basville enters Paris with his angelic guide, at the moment preceding the execution of Louis XVI.

The air was heavy, and the brooding skies
Look'd fraught with omens, as to harmonise
With his pale aspect. Through the forest round
Not a leaf whisper'd—and the only sound
That broke the stillness was a streamlet's moan
Murmuring amidst the rocks with plaintive tone,
As if a storm within the woodland bowers
Were gathering. On they moved—and lo! the towers
Of a far city! Nearer now they drew;
And all reveal'd, expanding on their view,
The Babylon, the scene of crimes and woes—
Paris, the guilty, the devoted, rose!
In the dark mantle of a cloud array'd,
Viewless and hush'd, the angel and the shade
Enter'd that evil city. Onward pass'd
The heavenly being first, with brow o'ercast
And troubled mien, while in his glorious eyes
Tears had obscured the splendour of the skies.
Pale with dismay, the trembling spirit saw
That alter'd aspect, and, in breathless awe,
Mark'd the strange silence round. The deep-toned swell

Of life’s full tide was hush’d; the sacred bell,
The clamorous anvil, mute; all sounds were fled
Of labour or of mirth, and in their stead
Terror and stillness, boding signs of woe,
Inquiring glances, rumours whisper’d low,
Questions half-utter’d, jealous looks that keep
A fearful watch around, and sadness deep
That weighs upon the heart; and voices, heard
At intervals, in many a broken word—
Voices of mothers, trembling as they press’d
Th’ unconscious infant closer to their breast;
Voices of wives, with fond imploring cries,
And the wild eloquence of tears and sighs,
On their own thresholds striving to detain
Their fierce impatient lords; but weak and vain
Affection’s gentle bonds, in that dread hour
Of fate and fury—Love hath lost his power!
For evil spirits are abroad, the air
Breathes of their influence. Druid phantoms there,
Fired by that thirst for victims which of old
Raged in their bosoms fierce and uncontroll’d,
Rush, in ferocious transport, to survey
The deepest crime that e’er hath dimm’d the day.
Blood, human blood, hath stain’d their vests and hair,

On the winds tossing, with a sanguine glare,
Scattering red showers around them! Flaming brands
And serpent scourges in their restless hands
Are wildly shaken. Others lift on high
The steel, th’ envenom’d bowl; and, hurrying by,
With touch of fire contagious fury dart
Through human veins, fast kindling to the heart.
Then comes the rush of crowds! restrain’d no more,
Fast from each home the frenzied inmates pour;
From every heart affrighted mercy flies,
While her soft voice amidst the tumult dies.
Then the earth trembles, as from street to street
The tramp of steeds, the press of hastening feet,
The roll of wheels, all mingling in the breeze,
Come deepening onward, as the swell of seas
Heard at the dead of midnight; or the moan
Of distant tempests, or the hollow tone
Of the far thunder! Then what feelings press’d,
O wretched Basville! on thy guilty breast;
What pangs were thine, thus fated to behold
Death’s awful banner to the winds unfold!
To see the axe, the scaffold, raised on high—
The dark impatience of the murderer’s eye,
Eager for crime! And he, the great, the good,

Thy martyr-king, by men athirst for blood
Dragg’d to a felon’s death! Yet still his mien,
Midst that wild throng, is loftily serene;
And his step falters not. O hearts unmoved!
Where have you borne your monarch?—He who loved—
Loved you so well! Behold! the sun grows pale,
Shrouding his glory in a tearful veil;
The misty air is silent, as in dread,
And the dim sky with shadowy gloom o’erspread;
While saints and martyrs, spirits of the blest,
Look down, all weeping, from their bowers of rest.
In that dread moment, to the fatal pile
The regal victim came; and raised the while
His patient glance, with such an aspect high,
So firm, so calm, in holy majesty,
That e’en th’ assassins’ hearts a moment shook
Before the grandeur of that kingly look;
And a strange thrill of pity, half-renew’d,
Ran through the bosoms of the multitude.
Like Him, who, breathing mercy to the last,
Pray’d till the bitterness of death was past—
E’en for his murderers pray’d, in that dark hour
When his soul yielded to affliction’s power,
And the winds bore his dying cry abroad—

“Hast thou forsaken me, my God! my God?”—

E’en thus the monarch stood; his prayer arose,

Thus calling down forgiveness on his foes—

“To Thee my spirit I commend,” he cried;

“And my lost people, Father! be their guide!”

But the sharp steel descends—the blow is given,

And answer’d by a thunder-peal from heaven;

Earth, stain’d with blood, convulsive terrors owns,

And her kings tremble on their distant thrones!

[148] The observation of a French author (Le Censeur du Dictionnaire des Girouettes) on the general versatility of poets, seems so peculiarly appropriate to the character of Monti, that it might almost be supposed to have been written for the express purpose of such an application.—“Le cerveau d’un poète est d’une cire molle et flexible, où s’imprime naturellement tout ce qui le flatte, le séduit, et l’alimente. La muse du chant n’a pas de partie; c’est une étourdie sans conséquence, qui folâtre également et sur de riches gazons et sur d’arides bruyères. Un poète en délire chante indifféremment Titus et Thamask, Louis 12me et Cromwell, Christine de Suède et Stanchon la Vielleuse.”

THE ALCESTIS OF ALFIERI.

The Alcestis of Alfieri is said to have been the last tragedy he composed, and is distinguished to a remarkable degree by that tenderness of which his former works present so few examples. It would appear as if the pure and exalted affection by which the impetuosity of his fiery spirit was ameliorated during the latter years of his life, had impressed its whole character on this work, as a record of that domestic happiness in whose bosom his heart at length found a resting-place. Most of his earlier writings bear witness to that “fever at the core,” that burning impatience of

restraint, and those incessant and untameable aspirations after a wider sphere of action, by which his youth was consumed; but the poetry of Alcestis must find its echo in every heart which has known the power of domestic ties, or felt the bitterness of their dissolution. The interest of the piece, however, though entirely domestic, is not for a moment allowed to languish; nor does the conjugal affection, which forms the mainspring of the action, ever degenerate into the pastoral insipidity of Metastasio. The character of Alcestis herself, with all its lofty fortitude, heroic affection, and subdued anguish, powerfully recalls to our imagination the calm and tempered majesty distinguishing the masterpieces of Greek sculpture, in which the expression of mental or bodily suffering is never allowed to transgress the limits of beauty and sublimity. The union of dignity and affliction impressing more than earthly grandeur on the countenance of Niobe, would be, perhaps, the best illustration of this analogy.

The following scene, in which Alcestis announces to Pheres, the father of Admetus, the terms upon which the oracle of Delphos has declared that his son may be restored, has seldom been surpassed by the author, even in his most celebrated productions. It is, however, to be feared that little of its beauty can be transfused into a translation, as the severity of a style so completely devoid of imagery, must render it dependent for many incommunicable attractions upon the melody of the original language.

ACT I.—Scene II.

Alcestis, Pheres.

Alc. Weep thou no more! O monarch, dry thy tears!

For know, he shall not die; not now shall fate

Bereave thee of thy son.

Phe. What mean thy words?

Hath then Apollo—is there then a hope?

Alc. Yes! hope for thee—hope by the voice announced
From the prophetic cave. Nor would I yield
To other lips the tidings, meet alone
For thee to hear from mine.
Phe. But say! oh! say,
Shall then my son be spared?
Alc. He shall, to thee.
Thus hath Apollo said—Alcestis thus
Confirms the oracle—be thou secure.
Phe. O sounds of joy! He lives!
Alc. But not for this,
Think not that e'en for this the stranger Joy
Shall yet revisit these devoted walls.
Phe. Can there be grief when from his bed of death
Admetus rises? What deep mystery lurks
Within thy words? What mean'st thou? Gracious heaven!
Thou, whose deep love is all his own, who hear'st
The tidings of his safety, and dost bear
Transport and life in that glad oracle
To his despairing sire; thy cheek is tinged
With death, and on thy pure ingenuous brow,
To the brief lightning of a sudden joy,
Shades dark as night succeed, and thou art wrapt
In troubled silence. Speak! oh, speak!

Alc. The gods
Themselves have limitations to their power
Impassable, eternal—and their will
Resists not the tremendous laws of fate:
Nor small the boon they grant thee in the life
Of thy restored Admetus.
Phe. In thy looks
There is expression, more than in thy words,
Which thrills my shuddering heart. Declare, what terms
Can render fatal to thyself and us
The rescued life of him thy soul adores?
Alc. O father! could my silence aught avail
To keep that fearful secret from thine ear,
Still should it rest unheard, till all fulfill'd
Were the dread sacrifice. But vain the wish;
And since too soon, too well it must be known,
Hear it from me.
Phe. Throughout my curdling veins
Runs a cold, deathlike horror; and I feel
I am not all a father. In my heart
Strive many deep affections. Thee I love,
O fair and high-soul'd consort of my son!
More than a daughter; and thine infant race,
The cherish'd hope and glory of my age;

And, unimpair’d by time, within my breast,
High, holy, and unalterable love
For her, the partner of my cares and joys,
Dwells pure and perfect yet. Bethink thee, then,
In what suspense, what agony of fear,
I wait thy words; for well, too well, I see
Thy lips are fraught with fatal auguries,
To some one of my race.
Alc. Death hath his rights,
Of which not e’en the great Supernal Powers
May hope to rob him. By his ruthless hand,
Already seized, the noble victim lay,
The heir of empire, in his glowing prime
And noonday, struck:—Admetus, the revered,
The bless’d, the loved, by all who own’d his sway—
By his illustrious parents, by the realms
Surrounding his—and oh! what need to add,
How much by his Alcestis?—Such was he,
Already in th’ unsparing grasp of death
Withering, a certain prey. Apollo thence
Hath snatch’d him, and another in his stead,
Though not an equal—(who can equal him?)
Must fall a voluntary sacrifice.
Another, of his lineage or to him

By closest bonds united, must descend
To the dark realm of Orcus in his place,
Who thus alone is saved.
Phe. What do I hear?
Woe to us, woe!—what victim?—who shall be
Accepted in his stead?
Alc. The dread exchange
E’en now, O father! hath been made; the prey
Is ready, nor is wholly worthless him
For whom ’tis freely offer’d. Nor wilt thou,
O mighty goddess of th’ infernal shades!
Whose image sanctifies this threshold floor,
Disdain the victim.
Phe. All prepared the prey!
And to our blood allied! Oh, heaven!—and yet
Thou had’st me weep no more!
Alc. Yes! thus I said,
And thus again I say, thou shalt not weep
Thy son’s, nor I deplore my husband’s doom.
Let him be saved, and other sounds of woe
Less deep, less mournful far, shall here be heard,
Than those his death had caused.—With some few tears,
But grief, and mingled with a gleam of joy,
E’en while the involuntary tribute lasts,

The victim shall be honour’d who resign’d
Life for Admetus.—Would’st thou know the prey,
The vow’d, the willing, the devoted one,
Offer’d and hallow’d to th’ infernal gods,
Father!—’tis I.
Phe. What hast thou done? Oh, heaven!
What hast thou done? And think’st thou he is saved
By such a compact? Think’st thou he can live
Bereft of thee?—Of thee, his light of life,
His very soul!—Of thee, beloved far more
Than his loved parents—than his children more—
More than himself? Oh no! it shall not be?
Thou perish, O Alcestis! in the flower
Of thy young beauty!—perish, and destroy
Not him, not him alone, but us, but all,
Who as a child adore thee! Desolate
Would be the throne, the kingdom, reft of thee.
And think’st thou not of those whose tender years
Demand thy care?—thy children! think of them!
O thou, the source of each domestic joy,
Thou, in whose life alone Admetus lives,
His glory, his delight, thou shalt not die
While I can die for thee! Me, me alone,
The oracle demands—a wither’d stem,

Whose task, whose duty, is for him to die.
My race is run—the fulness of my years,
The faded hopes of age, and all the love
Which hath its dwelling in a father's heart,
And the fond pity, half with wonder blent,
Inspired by thee, whose youth with heavenly gifts
So richly is endow'd;—all, all unite
To grave in adamant the just decree,
That I must die. But thou, I bid thee live!
Pheres commands thee, O Alcestis—live!
Ne'er, ne'er shall woman's youthful love surpass
An aged sire's devotedness.
Alc. I know
Thy lofty soul, thy fond paternal love;
Pheres, I know them well, and not in vain
Strove to anticipate their high resolves.
But if in silence I have heard thy words,
Now calmly list to mine, and thou shalt own
They may not be withstood.
Phe. What canst thou say
Which I should hear? I go, resolved to save
Him who with thee would perish;—to the shrine
E'en now I fly.
Alc. Stay, stay thee! 'tis too late.

Already hath consenting Proserpine,
From the remote abysses of her realms,
Heard and accepted the terrific vow
Which binds me, with indissoluble ties,
To death. And I am firm, and well I know
None can deprive me of the awful right
That vow hath won.
Yes! thou mayst weep my fate,
Mourn for me, father! but thou canst not blame
My lofty purpose. Oh! the more endear'd
My life by every tie—the more I feel
Death's bitterness, the more my sacrifice
Is worthy of Admetus. I descend
To the dim shadowy regions of the dead
A guest more honour'd....
In thy presence here
Again I utter'd the tremendous vow,
Now more than half fulfill'd. I feel, I know,
Its dread effects. Through all my burning veins
Th' insatiate fever revels. Doubt is o'er.
The Monarch of the Dead hath heard—he calls,
He summons me away—and thou art saved,
O my Admetus!

In the opening of the third act, Alcestis enters, with her son Eumeles, and her

daughter, to complete the sacrifice by dying at the feet of Proserpine's statue. The following scene ensues between her and Admetus.

Alc. Here, O my faithful handmaids! at the feet
Of Proserpine's dread image spread my couch;
For I myself e'en now must offer here
The victim she requires. And you, meanwhile,
My children! seek your sire. Behold him there,
Sad, silent, and alone. But through his veins
Health's genial current flows once more, as free
As in his brightest days: and he shall live—
Shall live for you. Go, hang upon his neck,
And with your innocent encircling arms
Twine round him fondly.
Eum. Can it be indeed,
Father, loved father! that we see thee thus
Restored? What joy is ours!
Adm. There is no joy!
Speak not of joy! Away, away! my grief
Is wild and desperate. Cling to me no more!
I know not of affection, and I feel
No more a father.
Eum. Oh! what words are these?
Are we no more thy children? Are we not
Thine own? Sweet sister! twine around his neck

More close; he must return the fond embrace.
Adm. O children! O my children! to my soul
Your innocent words and kisses are as darts,
That pierce it to the quick. I can no more
Sustain the bitter conflict. Every sound
Of your soft accents but too well recalls
The voice which was the music of my life.
Alcestis! my Alcestis!—was she not
Of all her sex the flower? Was woman e'er
Adored like her before? Yet this is she,
The cold of heart, th' ungrateful, who hath left
Her husband and her infants! This is she,
O my deserted children! who at once
Bereaves you of your parents.
Alc. Woe is me!
I hear the bitter and reproachful cries
Of my despairing lord. With life's last powers,
Oh! let me strive to soothe him still. Approach,
My handmaids, raise me, and support my steps
To the distracted mourner. Bear me hence,
That he may hear and see me.
Adm. Is it thou?
And do I see thee still? and com'st thou thus
To comfort me, Alcestis? Must I hear

The dying accents thus? Alas! return
To thy sad couch—return! ’tis meet for me
There by thy side for ever to remain.
Alc. For me thy care is vain. Though meet for
thee—
Adm. O voice! O looks of death! are these, are these,
Thus darkly shrouded with mortality,
The eyes that were the sunbeams and the life
Of my fond soul? Alas! how faint a ray
Falls from their faded orbs, so brilliant once,
Upon my drooping brow! How heavily,
With what a weight of death thy languid voice
Sinks on my heart! too faithful far, too fond.
Alcestis! thou art dying—and for me!
Alcestis! and thy feeble hand supports
With its last power, supports my sinking head,
E’en now, while death is on thee! Oh! the touch
Rekindles tenfold frenzy in my heart.
I rush, I fly impetuous to the shrine,
The image of yon ruthless Deity,
Impatient for her prey. Before thy death,
There, there, I too, self-sacrificed, will fall.
Vain is each obstacle—in vain the gods
Themselves would check my fury. I am lord

Of my own days—and thus I swear——

Alc. Yes! swear,

Admetus! for thy children to sustain

The load of life. All other impious vows,

Which thou, a rebel to the sovereign will

Of those who rule on high, mightst dare to form

Within thy breast, thy lip, by them enchain'd,

Would vainly seek to utter. Seest thou not,

It is from them the inspiration flows

Which in my language breathes? They lend me power,

They bid me through thy strengthen'd soul transfuse

High courage, noble constancy. Submit,

Bow down to them thy spirit. Be thou calm;

Be near me. Aid me. In the dread extreme

To which I now approach, from whom but thee

Should comfort be derived? Afflict me not,

In such an hour, with anguish worse than death.

O faithful and beloved, support me still!

The choruses with which this tragedy is interspersed are distinguished for their melody and classic beauty. The following translation will give our readers a faint idea of the one by which the third act is concluded.

Alc. My children! all is finish'd. Now, farewell!

To thy fond care, O Pheres! I commit

My widow'd lord: forsake him not.

Eum. Alas!

Sweet mother! wilt thou leave us? From thy side

Are we for ever parted?

Phe. Tears forbid

All utterance of our woes. Bereft of sense,

More lifeless than the dying victim, see

The desolate Admetus. Farther yet,

Still farther, let us bear him from the sight

Of his Alcestis.

Alc. O my handmaids! still

Lend me your pious aid, and thus compose

With sacred modesty these torpid limbs

When death’s last pang is o’er.

Chorus.

Alas! how weak

Her struggling voice! that last keen pang is near.

Peace, mourners, peace!

Be hush’d, be silent, in this hour of dread!

Our cries would but increase

The sufferer’s pang; let tears unheard be shed,

Cease, voice of weeping, cease!

Sustain, O friend!

Upon thy faithful breast,

The head that sinks with mortal pain opprest!

And thou assistance lend

To close the languid eye,

Still beautiful in life’s last agony.

Alas, how long a strife!

What anguish struggles in the parting breath,

Ere yet immortal life

Be won by death!

Death! death! thy work complete!

Let thy sad hour be fleet,

Speed, in thy mercy, the releasing sigh!

No more keen pangs impart

To her, the high in heart,

Th’ adored Alcestis, worthy ne’er to die.

Chorus of Admetus.

’Tis not enough, oh no!

To hide the scene of anguish from his eyes;

Still must our silent band

Around him watchful stand,

And on the mourner ceaseless care bestow,

That his ear catch not grief’s funereal cries.

Yet, yet hope is not dead,

All is not lost below,

While yet the gods have pity on our woe.

Oft when all joy is fled,

Heaven lends support to those
Who on its care in pious hope repose.
Then to the blessed skies
Let our submissive prayers in chorus rise.
Pray! bow the knee, and pray!
What other task have mortals, born to tears,
Whom fate controls with adamantine sway?
O ruler of the spheres!
Jove! Jove! enthroned immortally on high,
Our supplication hear!
Nor plunge in bitterest woes
Him, who nor footstep moves, nor lifts his eye
But as a child, which only knows
Its father to revere.

IL CONTE DI CARMAGNOLA;

A TRAGEDY.

BY ALESSANDRO MANZONI.

Francesco Bussone, the son of a peasant in Carmagnola, from whence his nom-de-guerre was derived, was born in the year 1390. Whilst yet a boy, and employed in the care of flocks and herds, the lofty character of his countenance was observed by a soldier of fortune, who invited the youth to forsake his rustic occupations, and accompany him to the busier scenes of the camp. His persuasions were successful, and Francesco entered with him into the service of Facino Cane, Lord of Alessandria. At the time when Facino died, leaving fourteen cities acquired by conquest to Beatrice di Tenda, his wife, Francesco di Carmagnola was amongst

the most distinguished of his captains. Beatrice afterwards marrying Philip Visconti, Duke of Milan, (who rewarded her by an ignominious death for the regal dowery she had conferred upon him,) Carmagnola entered his army at the same time; and having, by his eminent services, firmly established the tottering power of that prince, received from him the title of Count, and was placed at the head of all his forces. The natural caprice and ingratitude of Philip's disposition, however, at length prevailed; and Carmagnola, disgusted with the evident proof of his wavering friendship and doubtful faith, left his service and his territories, and after a variety of adventures took refuge in Venice. Thither the treachery of the Duke pursued him, and emissaries were employed to procure his assassination. The plot, however, proved abortive, and Carmagnola was elected captain-general of the Venetian armies, during the league formed by that republic against the Duke of Milan. The war was at first carried on with much spirit and success, and the battle of Maclodio, gained by Carmagnola, was one of the most important and decisive actions of those times. The night after the combat, the victorious soldiers gave liberty to almost all their prisoners. The Venetian envoys having made a complaint on this subject to the Count, he inquired what was become of the captives; and upon being informed that all, except four hundred, had been set free, he gave orders that the remaining ones also should be released immediately, according to the custom which prevailed amongst the armies of those days, the object of which was to prevent a speedy termination of the war. This proceeding of Carmagnola's occasioned much distrust and irritation in the minds of the Venetian rulers; and their displeasure was increased when the armada of the Republic, commanded by Il Trevisani, was defeated upon the Po, without any attempt in its favour having been made by the Count. The failure of their attempt upon Cremona was also imputed to him as a crime; and the Senate, resolving to free themselves from a powerful chief, now become an object of suspicion, after many deliberations on the best method of carrying their designs into effect, at length determined to invite him to Venice, under pretence of consulting

him on their negotiations for peace. He obeyed their summons without hesitation or mistrust, and was every where received with extraordinary honours during the course of his journey. On his arrival at Venice, and before he entered his own house, eight gentlemen were sent to meet him, by whom he was escorted to St Mark's Place. When he was introduced into the ducal palace, his attendants were dismissed, and informed that he would be in private with the Doge for a considerable time. He was arrested in the palace, then examined by the Secret Council, put to the torture, which a wound he had received in the service of the Republic rendered still more agonising, and condemned to death. On the 5th May 1432 he was conducted to execution, with his mouth gagged, and beheaded between the two columns of St Mark's Place. With regard to the innocence or guilt of this distinguished character, there exists no authentic information. The author of the tragedy, which we are about to analyse, has chosen to represent him as entirely innocent, and probability at least is on this side. It is possible, that the haughtiness of an aspiring warrior, accustomed to command, and impatient of control, might have been the principal cause of offence to the Venetians; or perhaps their jealousy was excited by his increasing power over the minds of an obedient army; and, not considering it expedient to displace him, they resolved upon his destruction.

This tragedy, which is formed upon the model of the English and German drama, comprises the history of Carmagnola's life, from the day on which he was made commander of the Venetian armies to that of his execution, thus embracing a period of about seven years. The extracts we are about to present to our readers, will enable them to form their own opinion of a piece which has excited so much attention in Italy. The first act opens in Venice, in the hall of the Senate. The Doge proposes that the Count di Carmagnola should be consulted on the projected league between the Republic and the Florentines, against the Duke of Milan. To this all agree; and the Count is introduced. He begins by justifying his conduct from the imputations to which it might be liable, in consequence of his appearing as the enemy of the Prince

whom he had so recently served:—

——He cast me down

From the high place my blood had dearly won;

And when I sought his presence, to appeal

For justice there, ’twas vain! My foes had form’d

Around his throne a barrier: e’en my life

Became the mark of hatred; but in this

Their hopes have fail’d—I gave them not the time.

My life!—I stand prepared to yield it up

On the proud field, and in some noble cause

For glory well exchanged; but not a prey,

Not to be caught ignobly in the toils

Of those I scorn. I left him, and obtain’d

With you a place of refuge; yet e’en here

His snares were cast around me. Now all ties

Are broke between us; to an open foe,

An open foe I come.

He then gives counsel in favour of war, and retires, leaving the Senate engaged in deliberation. War is resolved upon, and he is elected commander. The fourth scene represents the house of Carmagnola. His soliloquy is noble; but its character is much more that of English than of Italian poetry, and may be traced, without difficulty, to the celebrated monologue of Hamlet.

A leader—or a fugitive? To drag

Slow years along in idle vacancy,

As a worn veteran living on the fame

Of former deeds—to offer humble prayers
And blessings for protection—owing all
Yet left me of existence to the might
Of other swords, dependent on some arm
Which soon may cast me off; or on the field
To breathe once more, to feel the tide of life
Rush proudly through my veins—to hail again
My lofty star, and at the trumpet's voice
To wake! to rule! to conquer!—Which must be
My fate, this hour decides. And yet, if peace
Should be the choice of Venice, shall I cling
Still poorly to ignoble safety here,
Secluded as a homicide, who cowers
Within a temple's precincts? Shall not he
Who made a kingdom's fate, control his own!
Is there not one among the many lords
Of this divided Italy—not one
With soul enough to envy that bright crown
Encircling Philip's head? And know they not
'Twas won by me from many a tyrant's grasp,
Snatch'd by my hand, and placed upon the brow
Of that ingrate, from whom my spirit burns
Again to wrest it, and bestow the prize
On him who best shall call the prowess forth

Which slumbers in my arm?

Marco, a senator, and a friend of the Count, now arrives, and announces to him that war is resolved upon, and that he is appointed to the command of the armies, at the same time advising him to act with caution towards his enemies in the Republic.

Car. Think’st thou I know not whom to deem my foes?

Ay, I could number all.

Mar. And know’st thou, too,

What fault hath made them such? ’Tis that thou art

So high above them: ’tis that thy disdain

Doth meet them undisguised. As yet not one

Hath done thee wrong; but who, when so resolved,

Finds not his time to injure? In thy thoughts,

Save when they cross thy path, no place is theirs;

But they remember thee. The high in soul

Scorn and forget; but to the grovelling heart

There is delight in hatred. Rouse it not;

Subdue it, while the power is yet thine own.

I counsel no vile arts, from which my soul

Revolts indignantly—thou know’st it well:

But there is yet a wisdom, not unmeet

For the most lofty nature,—there is power

Of winning meaner minds, without descent

From the high spirit’s glorious eminence,—

And would’st thou seek that magic, it were thine.

The first scene of the second act represents part of the Duke of Milan's camp near Maclodio. Malatesti, the commander-in-chief, and Pergola, a Condottiere of great distinction, are deliberating upon the state of the war. Pergola considers it imprudent to give battle, Malatesti is of a contrary opinion. They are joined by Sforza and Fortebraccio, who are impatient for action, and Torello, who endeavours to convince them of its inexpediency.

Sfo. Torello, didst thou mark the ardent soul

Which fires each soldier's eye?

Tor. I mark'd it well.

I heard th' impatient shout, th' exulting voice

Of Hope and Courage; and I turn'd aside,

That on my brow the warrior might not read

Th' involuntary thought whose sudden gloom

Had cast deep shadows there. It was a thought,

That this vain semblance of delusive joy

Soon like a dream shall fade. It was a thought

On wasted valour doom'd to perish here.

For these—what boots it to disguise the truth?—

These are no wars in which, for all things loved,

And precious, and revered—for all the ties

Clinging around the heart—for those whose smile

Makes home so lovely—for his native land,

And for its laws, the patriot soldier fights!

These are no wars in which the chieftain's aim

Is but to station his devoted bands,

And theirs, thus fix’d—to die! It is our fate
To lead a hireling train, whose spirits breathe
Fury, not fortitude. With burning hearts
They rush where Victory, smiling, waves them on;
But if delay’d, if between flight and death
Pausing they stand—is there no cause to doubt
What choice were theirs? And but too well our hearts
That choice might here foresee. Oh! evil times,
When for the leader care augments, the more
Bright glory fades away! Yet once again,
This is no field for us.

After various debates, Malatesti resolves to attack the enemy. The fourth and fifth scenes of the second act represent the tent of the Count in the Venetian camp, and his preparations for battle. And here a magnificent piece of lyric poetry is introduced, in which the battle is described, and its fatal effects lamented with all the feeling of a patriot and a Christian. It appears to us, however, that this ode, hymn, or chorus as the author has entitled it, striking as its effect may be in a separate recitation, produces a much less powerful impression in the situation it occupies at present. It is even necessary, in order to appreciate its singular beauty, that it should be re-perused, as a thing detached from the tragedy. The transition is too violent, in our opinion, from a tragic action, in which the characters are represented as clothed with existence, and passing before us with all their contending motives and feelings laid open to our inspection, to the comparative coldness of a lyric piece, where the author’s imagination expatiates alone. The poet may have been led into this error by a definition of Schlegel’s, who, speaking of the Greek choruses, gives it as his opinion, that “the chorus is to be considered as a personification of the moral

thoughts inspired by the action—as the organ of the poet, who speaks in the name of the whole human race. The chorus, in short, is the ideal spectator."

But the fact was not exactly thus. The Greek chorus was composed of real characters, and expressed the sentiments of the people before whose eyes the action was imagined to be passing: thus the true spectator, after witnessing in representation the triumphs or misfortunes of kings and heroes, heard from the chorus the idea supposed to be entertained on the subject by the more enlightened part of the multitude. If the author, availing himself of his talent for lyric poetry, and varying the measure in conformity to the subject, had brought his chorus into action—introducing, for example, a veteran looking down upon the battle from an eminence, and describing its vicissitudes to the persons below, with whom he might interchange a variety of national and moral reflections—it appears to us that the dramatic effect would have been considerably heightened, and the assertion that the Greek chorus is not compatible with the system of the modern drama possibly disapproved. We shall present our readers with the entire chorus of which we have spoken, as a piece to be read separately, and one to which the following title would be much more appropriate.

The Battle of Maclodio (or Macalo.) An Ode.

Hark! from the right bursts forth a trumpet's sound,

A loud shrill trumpet from the left replies!

On every side hoarse echoes from the ground

To the quick tramp of steeds and warriors rise,

Hollow and deep—and banners, all around,

Meet hostile banners waving to the skies;

Here steel-clad bands in marshall'd order shine,

And there a host confronts their glittering line.

Lo! half the field already from the sight
Hath vanish’d, hid by closing groups of foes!
Swords crossing swords flash lightning o’er the fight,
And the strife deepens and the life-blood flows!
Oh! who are these? What stranger in his might
Comes bursting on the lovely land’s repose?
What patriot hearts have nobly vow’d to save
Their native soil, or make its dust their grave?
One race, alas! these foes—one kindred race,
Were born and rear’d the same fair scenes among!
The stranger calls them brothers—and each face
That brotherhood reveals;—one common tongue
Dwells on their lips—the earth on which we trace
Their heart’s blood is the soil from whence they sprung.
One mother gave them birth—this chosen land,
Circled with Alps and seas by Nature’s guardian hand.
Oh, grief and horror! who the first could dare
Against a brother’s breast the sword to wield?
What cause unhallow’d and accursed, declare,
Hath bathed with carnage this ignoble field?
Think’st thou they know?—they but inflict and share
Misery and death, the motive unreveal’d!
—Sold to a leader, sold himself to die,
With him they strive—they fall—and ask not why.

But are there none who love them? Have they none—
No wives, no mothers, who might rush between,
And win with tears the husband and the son
Back to his home, from this polluted scene?
And they whose hearts, when life’s bright day is done,
Unfold to thoughts more solemn and serene,
Thoughts of the tomb—why cannot they assuage
The storms of passion with the voice of age?
Ask not!—the peasant at his cabin-door
Sits calmly pointing to the distant cloud
Which skirts th’ horizon, menacing to pour
Destruction down o’er fields he hath not plough’d.
Thus, where no echo of the battle’s roar
Is heard afar, even thus the reckless crowd
In tranquil safety number o’er the slain,
Or tell of cities burning on the plain.
There mayst thou mark the boy, with earnest gaze
Fix’d on his mother’s lips, intent to know,
By names of insult, those whom future days
Shall see him meet in arms, their deadliest foe.
There proudly many a glittering dame displays
Bracelet and zone, with radiant gems that glow,
By lovers, husbands, home in triumph borne,
From the sad brides of fallen warriors torn.

Woe to the victors and the vanquish’d! woe!
The earth is heap’d, is loaded with the slain;
Loud and more loud the cries of fury grow—
A sea of blood is swelling o’er the plain.
But from th’ embattled front, already, lo!
A band recedes—it flies—all hope is vain,
And venal hearts, despairing of the strife,
Wake to the love, the clinging love of life.
As the light grain disperses in the air,
Borne from the winnowing by the gales around,
Thus fly the vanquish’d in their wild despair,
Chased, sever’d, scatter’d, o’er the ample ground.
But mightier bands, that lay in ambush there,
Burst on their flight; and hark! the deepening sound
Of fierce pursuit!—still nearer and more near,
The rush of war-steeds trampling in the rear.
The day is won! They fall—disarm’d they yield,
Low at the conqueror’s feet all suppliant lying!
Midst shouts of victory pealing o’er the field,
Ah! who may hear the murmurs of the dying?
Haste! let the tale of triumph be reveal’d!
E’en now the courier to his steed is flying,
He spurs—he speeds—with tidings of the day,
To rouse up cities in his lightning way.

Why pour ye forth from your deserted homes,
O eager multitudes! around him pressing?
Each hurrying where his breathless courser foams,
Each tongue, each eye, infatuate hope confessing!
Know ye not whence th’ ill-omen’d herald comes,
And dare ye dream he comes with words of blessing?—
Brothers, by brothers slain, lie low and cold,—
Be ye content! the glorious tale is told.
I hear the voice of joy, th’ exulting cry!
They deck the shrine, they swell the choral strains:
E’en now the homicides assail the sky
With pæans, which indignant heaven disdains!
But from the soaring Alps the stranger’s eye
Looks watchful down on our ensanguined plains,
And, with the cruel rapture of a foe,
Numbers the mighty, stretch’d in death below.
Haste! form your lines again, ye brave and true!
Haste, haste! your triumphs and your joys suspending.
Th’ invader comes: your banners raise anew,
Rush to the strife, your country’s call attending!
Victors! why pause ye?—Are ye weak and few?—
Ay! such he deem’d you, and for this descending,
He waits you on the field ye know too well,
The same red war-field where your brethren fell.

O thou devoted land! that canst not rear
In peace thine offspring; thou, the lost and won,
The fair and fatal soil, that dost appear
Too narrow still for each contending son;
Receive the stranger, in his fierce career
Parting thy spoils! Thy chastening is begun!
And, wresting from thy kings the guardian sword,
Foes whom thou ne’er hadst wrong’d sit proudly at thy board.
Are these infatuate too!—Oh! who hath known
A people e’er by guilt’s vain triumph blest?
The wrong’d, the vanquish’d, suffer not alone,
Brief is that joy that swells th’ oppressor’s breast.
What though not yet his day of pride be flown,
Though yet heaven’s vengeance spare his haughty crest,
Well hath it mark’d him—and decreed the hour,
When his last sigh shall own the terror of its power.
Are we not creatures of one hand divine,
Form’d in one mould, to one redemption born?
Kindred alike where’er our skies may shine,
Where’er our sight first drank the vital morn?
Brothers! one bond around our souls should twine,
And woe to him by whom that bond is torn!
Who mounts by trampling broken hearts to earth,
Who bows down spirits of immortal birth!

The third act, which passes entirely in the tent of the Count, is composed of long discourses between Carmagnola and the Venetian envoys. One of these requires him to pursue the fugitives after his victory, which he haughtily refuses to do, declaring that he will not leave the field until he has gained possession of the surrounding fortresses. Another complains that the Condottieri and the soldiers have released their prisoners, to which he replies, that it is an established military custom; and, sending for the remaining four hundred captives, he gives them their liberty also. This act, which terminates with the suspicious observations of the envoys on Carmagnola's conduct, is rather barren of interest, though the episode of the younger Pergola, which we shall lay before our readers, is happily imagined.

As the prisoners are departing, the Count observes the younger Pergola, and stops him.

Car. Thou art not, youth!

One to be number'd with the vulgar crowd.

Thy garb, and more, thy towering mien, would speak

Of nobler parentage. Yet with the rest

Thou minglest, and art silent!

Per. Silence best,

O chief! befits the vanquish'd.

Car. Bearing up

Against thy fate thus proudly, thou art proved

Worthy a better star. Thy name?

Per. 'Tis one

Whose heritage doth impose no common task

On him that bears it; one which to adorn

With brighter blazonry were hard emprise:

My name is Pergola.

Car. And art thou, then,

That warrior’s son?

Per. I am.

Car. Approach! embrace

Thy father’s early friend! What thou art now

I was when first we met. Oh! thou dost bring

Back on my heart remembrance of the days,

The young, and joyous, and adventurous days,

Of hope and ardour. And despond not thou!

My dawn, ’tis true, with brighter omens smiled,

But still fair Fortune’s glorious promises

Are for the brave; and, though delay’d awhile,

She soon or late fulfils them. Youth! salute

Thy sire for me; and say, though not of thee

I ask’d it, yet my heart is well assured

He counsell’d not this battle.

Per. Oh! he gave

Far other counsels, but his fruitless words

Were spoken to the winds.

Car. Lament thou not.

Upon his chieftain’s head the shame will rest

Of this defeat; and he who firmly stood

Fix’d at his post of peril hath begun

A soldier’s race full nobly. Follow me,

I will restore thy sword.

The fourth act is occupied by the machinations of the Count’s enemies at Venice; and the jealous and complicated policy of that Republic, and the despotic authority of the Council of Ten, are skilfully developed in many of the scenes.

The first scene of the fifth act opens at Venice in the hall of the Council of Ten. Carmagnola is consulted by the Doge on the terms of peace offered by the Duke of Milan. His advice is received with disdain, and, after various insults, he is accused of treason. His astonishment and indignation at this unexpected charge are expressed with all the warmth and simplicity of innocence.

Car. A traitor! I!—that name of infamy

Reaches not me. Let him the title bear

Who best deserves such meed—it is not mine.

Call me a dupe, and I may well submit,

For such my part is here; yet would I not

Exchange that name, for ’tis the worthiest still.

A traitor!—I retrace in thought the time

When for your cause I fought; ’tis all one path

Strew’d o’er with flowers. Point out the day on which

A traitor’s deeds were mine; the day which pass’d

Unmark’d by thanks, and praise, and promises

Of high reward! What more? Behold me here!

And when I came to seeming honour call’d,

When in my heart most deeply spoke the voice

Of love, and grateful zeal, and trusting faith—

Of trusting faith!—Oh, no! Doth he who comes

Th’ invited guest of friendship dream of faith?

I came to be ensnared! Well! it is done,

And be it so! but since deceitful hate

Hath thrown at length her smiling mask aside,

Praise be to heaven! an open field at least

Is spread before us. Now ’tis yours to speak,

Mine to defend my cause; declare ye then

My treasons!

Doge. By the secret college soon

All shall be told thee.

Car. I appeal not there.

What I have done for you hath all been done

In the bright noonday, and its tale shall not

Be told in darkness. Of a warrior’s deeds

Warriors alone should judge; and such I choose

To be mine arbiters—my proud defence

Shall not be made in secret. All shall hear.

Doge. The time for choice is past.

Car. What! Is there force

Employ’d against me?—Guards! (raising his voice.)

Doge. They are not nigh.

Soldiers! (enter armed men.) Thy guards are these.

Car. I am betray’d!

Doge. ’Twas then a thought of wisdom to disperse

Thy followers. Well and justly was it deem’d

That the bold traitor, in his plots surprised,

Might prove a rebel too.

Car. E’en as ye list.

Now be it yours to charge me.

Doge. Bear him hence,

Before the secret college.

Car. Hear me yet

One moment first. That ye have doom’d my death

I well perceive; but with that death ye doom

Your own eternal shame. Far o’er these towers,

Beyond its ancient bounds, majestic floats

The banner of the Lion, in its pride

Of conquering power, and well doth Europe know

I bore it thus to empire. Here, ’tis true,

No voice will speak men’s thoughts; but far beyond

The limits of your sway, in other scenes,

Where that still, speechless terror hath not reach’d,

Which is your sceptre’s attribute, my deeds

And your reward will live in chronicles

For ever to endure. Yet, yet, respect

Your annals, and the future! Ye will need

A warrior soon, and who will then be yours?
Forget not, though your captive now I stand,
I was not born your subject. No! my birth
Was midst a warlike people, one in soul,
And watchful o’er its rights, and used to deem
The honour of each citizen its own.
Think ye this outrage will be there unheard?
There is some treachery here. Our common foes
Have urged you on to this. Full well ye know
I have been faithful still. There yet is time.
Doge. The time is past. When thou didst meditate
Thy guilt, and in thy pride of heart defy
Those destined to chastise it; then the hour
Of foresight should have been.
Car. O mean in soul!
And dost thou dare to think a warrior’s breast
For worthless life can tremble? Thou shalt soon
Learn how to die. Go! When the hour of fate
On thy vile couch o’ertakes thee, thou wilt meet
Its summons with far other mien than such
As I shall bear to ignominious death.
Scene II.—The House of Carmagnola.
Antonietta, Matilda.
Mat. The hours fly fast, the morn is risen, and yet

My father comes not!

Ant. Ah! thou hast not learn’d,

By sad experience, with how slow a pace

Joys ever come; expected long, and oft

Deceiving expectation! while the steps

Of grief o’ertake us ere we dream them nigh.

But night is past, the long and lingering hours

Of hope deferr’d are o’er, and those of bliss

Must soon succeed. A few short moments more,

And he is with us. E’en from this delay

I augur well. A council held so long

Must be to give us peace. He will be ours.

Perhaps for years our own.

Mat. O mother! thus

My hopes too whisper. Nights enough in tears,

And days in all the sickness of suspense,

Our anxious love hath pass’d. It is full time

That each sad moment, at each rumour’d tale,

Each idle murmur of the people’s voice,

We should not longer tremble, that no more

This thought should haunt our souls—E’en now,

perchance,

He for whom thus your hearts are yearning—dies!

Ant. Oh! fearful thought—but vain and distant

now!

Each joy, my daughter, must be bought with grief.

Hast thou forgot the day when, proudly led

In triumph midst the noble and the brave,

Thy glorious father to the temple bore

The banners won in battle from his foes?

Mat. A day to be remember'd!

Ant. By his side

Each seem'd inferior. Every breath of air

Swell'd with his echoing name; and we, the while

Station'd on high and sever'd from the throng,

Gazed on that one who drew the gaze of all,

While, with the tide of rapture half o'erwhelm'd,

Our hearts beat high, and whisper'd—"We are his."

Mat. Moments of joy!

Ant. What have we done, my child,

To merit such? Heaven, for so high a fate,

Chose us from thousands, and upon thy brow

Inscribed a lofty name—a name so bright,

That he to whom thou bear'st the gift, whate'er

His race, may boast it proudly. What a mark

For envy is the glory of our lot!

And we should weigh its joys against these hours

Of fear and sorrow.

Mat. They are past e’en now.

Hark! ’twas the sound of oars!—it swells—’tis hush’d!

The gates unclose. O mother! I behold

A warrior clad in mail—he comes, ’tis he!

Ant. Whom should it be if not himself?—my

husband!

(She comes forward.)

(Enter Gonzaga and others.)

Ant. Gonzaga!—Where is he we look’d for?

Where?

Thou answer’st not! Oh, heaven! thy looks are fraught

With prophecies of woe!

Gon. Alas! too true

The omens they reveal!

Mat. Of woe to whom?

Gon. Oh! why hath such a task of bitterness

Fallen to my lot?

Ant. Thou wouldst be pitiful,

And thou art cruel. Close this dread suspense;

Speak! I adjure thee, in the name of God!

Where is my husband?

Gon. Heaven sustain your souls

With fortitude to bear the tale! My chief——

Mat. Is he return’d unto the field?

Gon. Alas!

Thither the warrior shall return no more.

The senate’s wrath is on him. He is now

A prisoner!

Ant. He is a prisoner!—and for what?

Gon. He is accused of treason.

Mat. Treason! He

A traitor!—Oh! my father!

Ant. Haste! proceed,

And pause no more. Our hearts are nerved for all.

Say, what shall be his sentence?

Gon. From my lips

It shall not be reveal’d.

Ant. Oh! he is slain!

Gon. He lives, but yet his doom is fix’d.

Ant. He lives!

Weep not, my daughter! ’tis the time to act.

For pity’s sake, Gonzaga, be thou not

Wearied of our afflictions. Heaven to thee

Intrusts the care of two forsaken ones.

He was thy friend—ah! haste, then, be our guide;

Conduct us to his judges. Come, my child!

Poor innocent, come with me. There yet is left

Mercy upon the earth. Yes! they themselves

Are husbands, they are fathers! When they sign’d
The fearful sentence, they remember’d not
He was a father and a husband too.
But when their eyes behold the agony
One word of theirs hath caused, their hearts will melt:
They will, they must revoke it. Oh! the sight
Of mortal woe is terrible to man!
Perhaps the warrior’s lofty soul disdain’d
To vindicate his deeds, or to recall
His triumphs won for them. It is for us
To wake each high remembrance. Ah! we know
That he implored not, but our knees shall bend,
And we will pray.
Gon. Oh, heaven! that I could leave
Your hearts one ray of hope! There is no ear,
No place for prayers. The judges here are deaf,
Implacable, unknown. The thunderbolt
Falls heavy, and the hand by which ’tis launch’d
Is veil’d in clouds. There is one comfort still,
The sole sad comfort of a parting hour,
I come to bear. Ye may behold him yet.
The moments fly. Arouse your strength of heart.
Oh! fearful is the trial, but the God
Of mourners will be with you.

Mat. Is there not

One hope?

Ant. Alas! my child!

Scene IV.—A Prison.

Carmagnola.

They must have heard it now.—Oh! that at least

I might have died far from them! Though their hearts

Had bled to hear the tidings, yet the hour,

The solemn hour of nature's parting pangs

Had then been past. It meets us darkly now,

And we must drain its draught of bitterness

Together, drop by drop. O ye wide fields,

Ye plains of fight, and thrilling sounds of arms!

O proud delights of danger! Battle-cries,

And thou, my war-steed! and ye trumpet-notes

Kindling the soul! Midst your tumultuous joys

Death seem'd all beautiful.—And must I then,

With shrinking cold reluctance, to my fate

Be dragg'd, e'en as a felon, on the winds

Pouring vain prayers and impotent complaints?

And Marco! hath he not betray'd me too?

Vile doubt! That I could cast it from my soul

Before I die!—But no! What boots it now

Thus to look back on life with eye that turns

To linger where my footstep may not tread?

Now, Philip! thou wilt triumph! Be it so!

I too have proved such vain and impious joys,

And know their value now. But oh! again

To see those loved ones, and to hear the last,

Last accents of their voices! By those arms

Once more to be encircled, and from thence

To tear myself for ever!—Hark! they come!—

O God of mercy, from thy throne look down

In pity on their woes!

Scene V.

Antonietta, Matilda, Gonzaga, and Carmagnola.

Ant. My husband!

Mat. O my father!

Ant. Is it thus

That thou returnest? and is this the hour

Desired so long!

Car. O ye afflicted ones!

Heaven knows I dread its pangs for you alone.

Long have my thoughts been used to look on Death,

And calmly wait his time. For you alone

My soul hath need of firmness; will ye, then,

Deprive me of its aid? When the Most High

On virtue pours afflictions, he bestows

The courage to sustain them. Oh! let yours
Equal your sorrows! Let us yet find joy
In this embrace: ’tis still a gift of heaven.
Thou weep’st, my child! and thou, beloved wife!
Ah! when I made thee mine, thy days flow’d on
In peace and gladness; I united thee
To my disastrous fate, and now the thought
Embitters death! Oh! that I had not seen
The woes I cause thee!
Ant. Husband of my youth!
Of my bright days, thou who didst make them bright,
Read thou my heart! the pangs of death are there,
And yet e’en now—I would not but be thine.
Car. Full well I know how much I lose in thee;
Oh! make me not too deeply feel it now.
Mat. The homicides!
Car. No, sweet Matilda, no!
Let no dark thought of rage or vengeance rise
To cloud thy gentle spirit, and disturb
These moments—they are sacred. Yes! my wrongs
Are deep, but thou, forgive them, and confess,
That, e’en midst all the fulness of our woe,
High, holy joy remains. Death! death!—our foes,
Our most relentless foes, can only speed

Th’ inevitable hour. Oh! man hath not
Invented death for man; it would be then
Madd’ning and insupportable: from heaven
’Tis sent, and heaven doth temper all its pangs
With such blest comfort as no mortal power
Can give or take away. My wife! my child!
Hear my last words—they wring your bosoms now
With agony, but yet, some future day,
’Twill soothe you to recall them. Live, my wife!
Sustain thy grief, and live! this ill-starr’d girl
Must not be reft of all. Fly swiftly hence,
Conduct her to thy kindred: she is theirs,
Of their own blood—and they so loved thee once!
Then, to their foe united, thou becamest
Less dear; for feuds and wrongs made warring sounds
Of Carmagnola’s and Visconti’s names.
But to their bosoms thou wilt now return
A mourner; and the object of their hate
Will be no more.—Oh! there is joy in death!—
And thou, my flower! that, midst the din of arms,
Wert born to cheer my soul, thy lovely head
Droops to the earth! Alas! the tempest’s rage
Is on thee now. Thou tremblest, and thy heart
Can scarce contain the heavings of its woe.

I feel thy burning tears upon my breast—
I feel, and cannot dry them. Dost thou claim
Pity from me, Matilda? Oh! thy sire
Hath now no power to aid thee, but thou know’st
That the forsaken have a Father still
On high. Confide in Him, and live to days
Of peace, if not of joy; for such to thee
He surely destines. Wherefore hath He pour’d
The torrent of affliction on thy youth,
If to thy future years be not reserved
All His benign compassion! Live! and soothe
Thy suffering mother. May she to the arms
Of no ignoble consort lead thee still!—
Gonzaga! take the hand which thou hast press’d
Oft in the morn of battle, when our hearts
Had cause to doubt if we should meet at eve.
Wilt thou yet press it, pledging me thy faith
To guide and guard these mourners, till they join
Their friends and kindred?
Gon. Rest assured, I will.
Car. I am content. And if, when this is done,
Thou to the field returnest, there for me
Salute my brethren; tell them that I died
Guiltless; thou hast been witness of my deeds,

Hast read my inmost thoughts—and know’st it well.
Tell them I never with a traitor’s shame
Stain’d my bright sword. Oh, never!—I myself
Have been ensnared by treachery. Think of me
When trumpet-notes are stirring every heart,
And banners proudly waving in the air,—
Think of thine ancient comrade! And the day
Following the combat, when upon the field,
Amidst the deep and solemn harmony
Of dirge and hymn, the priest of funeral rites,
With lifted hands, is offering for the slain
His sacrifice to heaven; forget me not!
For I, too, hoped upon the battle-plain
E’en so to die.
Ant. Have mercy on us, heaven!
Car. My wife! Matilda! Now the hour is nigh,
And we must part.—Farewell!
Mat. No, father! no!
Car. Come to this breast yet, yet once more, and then
For pity’s sake depart!
Ant. No! force alone
Shall tear us hence.
(A sound of arms is heard.)
Mat. Hark! what dread sound!

Ant. Great God!

(The door is half opened, and armed men enter, the chief of whom advances to the Count. His wife and daughter fall senseless.)

Car. O God! I thank thee. O most merciful!

Thus to withdraw their senses from the pangs

Of this dread moment's conflict!

Thou, my friend,

Assist them, bear them from this scene of woe,

And tell them, when their eyes again unclose

To meet the day—that naught is left to fear.

Notwithstanding the pathetic beauties of the last act, the attention which this tragedy has excited in Italy must be principally attributed to the boldness of the author in so completely emancipating himself from the fetters of the dramatic unities. The severity with which the tragic poets of that country have, in general, restricted themselves to those rules has been sufficiently remarkable to obtain, at least, temporary distinction for the courage of the writer who should attempt to violate them. Although this piece comprises a period of several years, and that, too, in days so troubled and so "full of fate"—days in which the deepest passions and most powerful energies of the human mind were called into action by the strife of conflicting interests—there is, nevertheless, as great a deficiency of incident, as if "to be born and die" made all the history of aspiring natures contending for supremacy. The character of the hero is portrayed in words, not in actions; it does not unfold itself in any struggle of opposite feelings and passions, and the interest excited for him only commences at the moment when it ought to have reached its climax. The merits of the piece may be summed up in the occasional energy of the language and dignity of the thoughts; and the truth with which the spirit of the age is

characterised, as well in the development of that suspicious policy distinguishing the system of the Venetian government, as in the pictures of the fiery Condottieri, holding their councils of war—

"Jealous of honour, sudden and quick in quarrel."

CAIUS GRACCHUS.

A TRAGEDY,

BY MONTI.

This tragedy, though inferior in power and interest to the Aristodemo of the same author, is nevertheless distinguished by beauties of a high order, and such as, in our opinion, fully establish its claims to more general attention than it has hitherto received. Although the loftiness and severity of Roman manners, in the days of the Republic, have been sufficiently preserved to give an impressive character to the piece, yet those workings of passion and tenderness—without which dignity soon becomes monotonous, and heroism unnatural—have not been (as in the tragedies of Alfieri upon similar subjects) too rigidly suppressed.

The powerful character of the high-hearted Cornelia, with all the calm collected majesty which our ideas are wont to associate with the name of a Roman matron, and the depth and sublimity of maternal affection more particularly belonging to the mother of the Gracchi, are beautifully contrasted with the softer and more womanish feelings, the intense anxieties, the sensitive and passionate attachment, embodied in the person of Sicinia, the wife of Gracchus. The appeals made by Gracchus to the people are full of majestic eloquence; and the whole piece seems to be animated by that restless and untameable spirit of freedom, whose immortalised struggles for ascendency give so vivid a colouring, so exalted an interest, to the annals of the ancient republics.

The tragedy opens with the soliloquy of Caius Gracchus, who is returned in secret to

Rome, after having been employed in rebuilding Carthage, which Scipio had utterly demolished.

Caius, in Rome behold thyself! The night
Hath spread her favouring shadows o’er thy path:
And thou, be strong, my country! for thy son
Gracchus is with thee! All is hush’d around,
And in deep slumber; from the cares of day
The worn plebeians rest. Oh! good and true,
And only Romans! your repose is sweet,
For toil hath given it zest; ’tis calm and pure,
For no remorse hath troubled it. Meanwhile,
My brother’s murderers, the patricians, hold
Inebriate vigils o’er their festal boards,
Or in dark midnight councils sentence me
To death, and Rome to chains. They little deem
Of the unlook’d-for and tremendous foe
So near at hand!—It is enough. I tread
In safety my paternal threshold.—Yes!
This is my own! O mother! O my wife!
My child!—I come to dry your tears. I come
Strengthen’d by three dread furies:—One is wrath,
Fired by my country’s wrongs; and one deep love,
For those, my bosom’s inmates; and the third—
Vengeance, fierce vengeance, for a brother’s blood!

His soliloquy is interrupted by the entrance of Fulvius, his friend, with whose profligate character and unprincipled designs he is represented as unacquainted. From the opening speech made by Fulvius (before he is aware of the presence of Caius) to the slave by whom he is attended, it appears that he is just returned from the perpetration of some crime, the nature of which is not disclosed until the second act.

The suspicions of Caius are, however, awakened, by the obscure allusions to some act of signal but secret vengeance, which Fulvius throws out in the course of the ensuing discussion.

Ful. This is no time for grief and feeble tears,

But for high deeds.

Caius. And we will make it such.

But prove we first our strength. Declare, what friends

(If yet misfortune hath her friends) remain

True to our cause?

Ful. Few, few, but valiant hearts!

Oh! what a change is here! There was a time

When, over all supreme, thy word gave law

To nations and their rulers; in thy presence

The senate trembled, and the citizens

Flock’d round thee in deep reverence. Then a word,

A look from Caius—a salute, a smile,

Fill’d them with pride. Each sought to be the friend,

The client, ay, the very slave, of him,

The people’s idol; and beholding them

Thus prostrate in thy path, thou, thou thyself,
Didst blush to see their vileness! But thy fortune
Is waning now, her glorious phantoms melt
Into dim vapour; and the earthly god,
So worshipp’d once, from his forsaken shrines
Down to the dust is hurl’d.
Caius. And what of this?
There is no power in fortune to deprive
Gracchus of Gracchus. Mine is such a heart
As meets the storm exultingly—a heart
Whose stem delight it is to strive with fate,
And conquer. Trust me, fate is terrible
But because man is vile. A coward first
Made her a deity.
But say, what thoughts
Are foster’d by the people? Have they lost
The sense of their misfortunes? Is the name
Of Gracchus in their hearts—reveal the truth—
Already number’d with forgotten things?
Ful. A breeze, a passing breeze, now here, now there,
Borne on light pinion—such the people’s love!
Yet have they claims on pardon, for their faults
Are of their miseries; and their feebleness
Is to their woes proportion’d. Haply still

The secret sigh of their full hearts is thine.
But their lips breathe it not. Their grief is mute;
And the deep paleness of their timid mien,
And eyes in fix’d despondence bent on earth,
And sometimes a faint murmur of thy name,
Alone accuse them. They are hush’d—for now
Not one, nor two, their tyrants; but a host
Whose numbers are the numbers of the rich,
And the patrician Romans. Yes! and well
May proud oppression dauntlessly go forth,
For Rome is widow’d! Distant wars engage
The noblest of her youth, by Fabius led,
And but the weak remain. Hence every heart
Sickens with voiceless terror; and the people,
Subdued and trembling, turn to thee in thought,
But yet are silent.
Caius. I will make them heard.
Rome is a slumbering lion, and my voice
Shall wake the mighty. Thou shalt see I came
Prepared for all; and as I track’d the deep
For Rome, my dangers to my spirit grew
Familiar in its musings. With a voice
Of wrath the loud winds fiercely swell’d; the waves
Mutter’d around; heaven flash’d in lightning forth,

And the pale steersman trembled: I the while
Stood on the tossing and bewilder’d bark,
Retired and shrouded in my mantle’s folds,
With thoughtful eyes cast down, and all absorb’d
In a far deeper storm! Around my heart,
Gathering in secret then, my spirit’s powers
Held council with themselves; and on my thoughts
My country rose,—and I foresaw the snares,
The treacheries of Opimius, and the senate,
And my false friends, awaiting my return.
Fulvius! I wept; but they were tears of rage!
For I was wrought to frenzy by the thought
Of my wrong’d country, and of him, that brother
Whose shade through ten long years hath sternly cried
“Vengeance!”—nor found it yet.
Ful. It is fulfill’d.
Caius. And how?
Ful. Thou shalt be told.
Caius. Explain thy words.
Ful. Then know—(incautious that I am!)
Caius. Why thus
Falters thy voice? Why speak’st thou not?
Ful. Forgive!
E’en friendship sometimes hath its secrets.

Caius. No!

True friendship never!

Caius afterwards inquires what part his brother-in-law, Scipio Emilianus, is likely to adopt in their enterprises.

His high renown—

The glorious deeds, whereby was earn’d his name

Of second Africanus; and the blind,

Deep reverence paid him by the people’s hearts,

Who, knowing him their foe, respect him still—

All this disturbs me: hardly will be won

Our day of victory, if by him withstood.

Ful. Yet won it shall be. If but this thou fear’st,

Then be at peace.

Caius. I understand thee not

Ful. Thou wilt ere long. But here we vainly waste

Our time and words. Soon, will the morning break,

Nor know thy friends as yet of thy return;

I fly to cheer them with the tidings.

Caius. Stay!

Ful. And wherefore?

Caius. To reveal thy meaning.

Ful. Peace!

I hear the sound of steps.

This conversation is interrupted by the entrance of Cornelia, with the wife and child

of Caius. They are about to seek an asylum in the house of Emilianus, by whom Cornelia has been warned of the imminent danger which menaces the family of her son from the fury of the patricians, who intend, on the following day, to abrogate the laws enacted by the Gracchi in favour of the plebeians. The joy and emotion of Gracchus, on thus meeting with his family, may appear somewhat inconsistent with his having remained so long engaged in political discussion, on the threshold of their abode, without ever having made an inquiry after their welfare; but it would be somewhat unreasonable to try the conduct of a Roman (particularly in a tragedy) by the laws of nature. Before, however, we are disposed to condemn the principles which seem to be laid down for the delineation of Roman character in dramatic poetry, let us recollect that the general habits of the people whose institutions gave birth to the fearful grandeur displayed in the actions of the elder Brutus, and whose towering spirit was fostered to enthusiasm by the contemplation of it, must have been deeply tinctured by the austerity of even their virtues. Shakspeare alone, without compromising the dignity of his Romans, has disencumbered them of the formal scholastic drapery which seems to be their official garb, and has stamped their features with the general attributes of human nature, without effacing the impress which distinguished “the men of iron,” from the nations who “stood still before them.”

The first act concludes with the parting of Caius and Fulvius in wrath and suspicion—Cornelia having accused the latter of an attempt to seduce her daughter, the wife of Scipio, and of concealing the most atrocious designs under the mask of zeal for the cause of liberty.

Of liberty

What speak’st thou, and to whom? Thou hast no shame—

No virtue—and thy boast is, to be free!

Oh! zeal for liberty! eternal mask

Assumed by every crime!

In the second act, the death of Emilianus is announced to Opimius the consul, in the presence of Gracchus, and the intelligence is accompanied by a rumour of his having perished by assassination. The mysterious expressions of Fulvius, and the accusation of Cornelia, immediately recur to the mind of Caius. The following scene, in which his vehement emotion, and high sense of honour, are well contrasted with the cold-blooded sophistry of Fulvius, is powerfully wrought up.

Caius. Back on my thoughts the words of Fulvius rush,

Like darts of fire. All hell is in my heart!

(Fulvius enters.)

Thou comest in time. Speak, thou perfidious friend!

Scipio lies murder’d on his bed of death!—

Who slew him?

Ful. Ask’st thou me?

Caius. Thee! thee, who late

Didst in such words discourse of him as now

Assure me thou ’rt his murderer. Traitor, speak!

Ful. If thus his fate doth weigh upon thy heart,

Thou art no longer Gracchus, or thou ravest!

More grateful praise and warmer thanks might well

Reward the generous courage which hath freed

Rome from a tyrant, Gracchus from a foe.

Caius. Then he was slain by thee?

Ful. Ungrateful friend!

Why dost thou tempt me? Danger menaces

Thy honour. Freedom’s wavering light is dim;
Rome wears the fetters of a guilty senate;
One Scipio drove thy brother to a death
Of infamy, another seeks thy fall;
And when one noble, one determined stroke
To thee and thine assures the victory, wreaks
The people’s vengeance, gives thee life and fame
And pacifies thy brother’s angry shade,
Is it a cause for wailing? Am I call’d
For this a murderer? Go!—I say once more,
Thou art no longer Gracchus, or thou ravest!
Caius. I know thee now, barbarian! Would’st thou serve
My cause with crimes?
Ful. And those of that proud man
Whom I have slain, and thou dost mourn, are they
To be forgotten? Hath oblivion then
Shrouded the stern destroyer’s ruthless work,
The famine of Numantia? Such a deed
As on our name the world’s deep curses drew!
Or the four hundred Lusian youths betray’d,
And with their bleeding, mutilated limbs
Back to their parents sent? Is this forgot?
Go, ask of Carthage!—bid her wasted shores
Of him, this reveller in blood, recount

The terrible achievements! At the cries,
The groans, th’ unutterable pangs of those,
The more than hundred thousand wretches, doom’d
(Of every age and sex) to fire, and sword,
And fetters, I could marvel that the earth
In horror doth not open! They were foes,
They were barbarians, but unarm’d, subdued,
Weeping, imploring mercy! And the law
Of Roman virtue is, to spare the weak,
To tame the lofty! But in other lands,
Why should I seek for records of his crimes,
If there the suffering people ask in vain
A little earth to lay their bones in peace?
If the decree which yielded to their claims
So brief a heritage, and the which to seal
Thy brother’s blood was shed—if this remain
Still fruitless, still delusive, who was he
That mock’d its power?—Who to all Rome declared
Thy brother’s death was just, was needful?—Who
But Scipio? And remember thou the words
Which burst in thunder from thy lips e’en then,
Heard by the people! Caius, in my heart
They have been deeply treasured. He must die,
(Thus did’st thou speak) this tyrant! We have need

That he should perish! I have done the deed;
And call’st thou me his murderer? If the blow
Was guilt, then thou art guilty. From thy lips
The sentence came—the crime is thine alone.
I, thy devoted friend, did but obey
Thy mandate.
Caius. Thou my friend! I am not one
To call a villain friend. Let thunders, fraught
With fate and death, awake to scatter those
Who, bringing liberty through paths of blood,
Bring chains!—degrading Freedom’s lofty self
Below e’en Slavery’s level! Say thou not,
Wretch! that the sentence and the guilt were mine!
I wish’d him slain!—’tis so—but by the axe
Of high and public justice—that whose stroke
On thy vile head will fall. Thou hast disgraced
Unutterably my name: I bid thee tremble!
Ful. Caius, let insult cease, I counsel thee:
Let insult cease! Be the deed just or guilty,
Enjoy its fruits in silence. Force me not
To utter more.
Caius. And what hast thou to say?
Ful. That which I now suppress.
Caius. How! are there yet,

Perchance, more crimes to be reveal’d?

Ful. I know not.

Caius. Thou know’st not?—Horror chills my curdling veins;

I dare not ask thee further.

Ful. Thou dost well.

Caius. What saidst thou?

Ful. Nothing.

Caius. On my heart the words

Press heavily. Oh! what a fearful light

Bursts o’er my soul!—Hast thou accomplices?

Ful. Insensate! ask me not.

Caius. I must be told.

Ful. Away!—thou wilt repent.

Caius. No more of this, for I will know.

Ful. Thou wilt?

Ask then thy sister.

Caius. (alone.) Ask my sister! What!

Is she a murderess? Hath my sister slain

Her lord? Oh! crime of darkest dye! Oh! name

Till now unstain’d, name of the Gracchi, thus

Consign’d to infamy!—to infamy?

The very hair doth rise upon my head,

Thrill’d by the thought! Where shall I find a place

To hide my shame, to lave the branded stains

From this dishonour'd brow? What should I do?

There is a voice whose deep tremendous tones

Murmur within my heart, and sternly cry,

"Away!—and pause not—slay thy guilty sister!"

Voice of lost honour, of a noble line

Disgraced, I will obey thee!—terribly

Thou call'st for blood, and thou shalt be appeased.

PATRIOTIC EFFUSIONS OF THE ITALIAN POETS.

Whoever has attentively studied the works of the Italian poets, from the days of Dante and Petrarch to those of Foscolo and Pindemonte, must have been struck with those allusions to the glory and the fall, the renown and the degradation, of Italy, which give a melancholy interest to their pages. Amidst all the vicissitudes of that devoted country, the warning voice of her bards has still been heard to prophesy the impending storm, and to call up such deep and spirit-stirring recollections from the glorious past, as have resounded through the land, notwithstanding the loudest tumults of those discords which have made her—

"Long, long, a bloody stage

For petty kinglings tame,

Their miserable game

Of puny war to wage."

There is something very affecting in these vain, though exalted aspirations after that independence which the Italians, as a nation, seem destined never to regain. The strains in which their high-toned feelings on this subject are recorded, produce on our minds the same effect with the song of the imprisoned bird, whose melody is fraught, in our imagination, with recollections of the green woodland, the free air,

and unbounded sky. We soon grow weary of the perpetual violets and zephyrs, whose cloying sweetness pervades the sonnets and canzoni of the minor Italian poets, till we are ready to “die in aromatic pain;” nor is our interest much more excited even by the everlasting laurel which inspires the enamoured Petrarch with so ingenious a variety of concetti, as might reasonably cause it to be doubted whether the beautiful Laura, or the emblematic tree, are the real object of the bard’s affection; but the moment a patriotic chord is struck, our feelings are awakened, and we find it easy to sympathise with the emotions of a modern Roman, surrounded by the ruins of the Capitol; a Venetian when contemplating the proud trophies won by his ancestors at Byzantium; or a Florentine amongst the tombs of the mighty dead, in the church of Santa Croce. It is not, perhaps, now the time to plead, with any effect, the cause of Italy; yet cannot we consider that nation as altogether degraded, whose literature, from the dawn of its majestic immortality, has been consecrated to the nurture of every generous principle and ennobling recollection; and whose “choice and master spirits,” under the most adverse circumstances, have kept alive a flame, which may well be considered as imperishable, since the “ten thousand tyrants” of the land have failed to quench its brightness. We present our readers with a few of the minor effusions, in which the indignant though unavailing regrets of those who, to use the words of Alfieri, are “slaves, yet still indignant slaves,”[149] have been feelingly portrayed.

The first of these productions must, in the original, be familiar to every reader who has any acquaintance with Italian literature.

VINCENZO DA FILICAJA.

When from the mountain’s brow the gathering shades

Of twilight fall, on one deep thought I dwell:

Day beams o’er other lands, if here she fades,

Nor bids the universe at once farewell.
But thou, I cry, my country! what a night
Spreads o’er thy glories one dark sweeping pall!
Thy thousand triumphs, won by valour’s might
And wisdom’s voice—what now remains of all?
And see’st thou not th’ ascending flame of war
Burst through thy darkness, reddening from afar?
Is not thy misery’s evidence complete?
But if endurance can thy fall delay,
Still, still endure, devoted one! and say,
If it be victory thus but to retard defeat.

CARLO MARIA MAGGI.

I cry aloud, and ye shall hear my call,
Arno, Sessino, Tiber, Adrian deep,
And blue Tyrrhene! Let him first roused from sleep
Startle the next! one peril broods o’er all.
It nought avails that Italy should plead,
Forgetting valour, sinking in despair,
At strangers’ feet!—our land is all too fair;
Nor tears, nor prayers, can check ambition’s speed.
In vain her faded cheek, her humbled eye,
For pardon sue; ’tis not her agony,
Her death alone may now appease her foes.
Be theirs to suffer who to combat shun!

But oh, weak pride! thus feeble and undone,

Nor to wage battle nor endure repose!

[149] “Schiavi siam, ma schiavi ognor frementi.”—Alfieri.

ALESSANDRO MARCHETTI.

Italia! oh, no more Italia now!

Scarce of her form a vestige dost thou wear:

She was a queen with glory mantled—thou,

A slave, degraded, and compell’d to bear,

Chains gird thy hands and feet; deep clouds of care

Darken thy brow, once radiant as thy skies;

And shadows, born of terror and despair—

Shadows of death have dimm’d thy glorious eyes.

Italia! oh, Italia now no more!

For thee my tears of shame and anguish flow;

And the glad strains my lyre was wont to pour

Are changed to dirge-notes: but my deepest woe

Is, that base herds of thine own sons the while

Behold thy miseries with insulting smile.

ALESSANDRO PEGOLOTTI.

She that cast down the empires of the world,

And, in her proud triumphal course through Rome,

Dragg’d them, from freedom and dominion hurl’d,

Bound by the hair, pale, humbled, and o’ercome:

I see her now, dismantled of her state,
Spoil’d of her sceptre, crouching to the ground
Beneath a hostile car—and lo! the weight
Of fetters, her imperial neck around!
Oh! that a stranger’s envious hands had wrought
This desolation! for I then would say,
“Vengeance, Italia!”—in the burning thought
Losing my grief: but ’tis th’ ignoble sway
Of vice hath bow’d thee! Discord, slothful ease,
Theirs is that victor car; thy tyrant lords are these.

FRANCESCO MARIA DE CONTI.

THE SHORE OF AFRICA.

Pilgrim! whose steps those desert sands explore,
Where verdure never spreads its bright array;
Know, ’twas on this inhospitable shore
From Pompey’s heart the life-blood ebb’d away.
Twas here betray’d he fell, neglected lay;
Nor found his relics a sepulchral stone,
Whose life, so long a bright triumphal day,
O’er Tiber’s wave supreme in glory shone!
Thou, stranger! if from barbarous climes thy birth,
Look round exultingly, and bless the earth
Where Rome, with him, saw power and virtue die;
But if ’tis Roman blood that fills thy veins,

Then, son of heroes! think upon thy chains,

And bathe with tears the grave of liberty.

JEU-D'ESPRIT ON THE WORD "BARB."

["It was either during the present or a future visit to the same friends,[150] that the jeu-d'esprit was produced which Mrs Hemans used to call her 'sheet of forgeries' on the use of the word Barb. A gentleman had requested her to furnish him with some authorities from the old English writers, proving that this term was in use as applied to a steed. She very shortly supplied him with the following imitations, which were written down almost impromptu: the mystification succeeded perfectly, and was not discovered until some time afterwards."—Memoir, p. 43.]

[150] The family of the late Henry Park, Esq., Wavertree Lodge, near Liverpool.

The warrior donn'd his well-worn garb,

And proudly waved his crest,

He mounted on his jet-black barb,

And put his lance in rest.

Percy's Reliques.

Eftsoons the wight, withouten more delay,

Spurr'd his brown barb, and rode full swiftly on his way.

Spenser.

Hark! was it not the trumpet's voice I heard?

The soul of battle is awake within me!

The fate of ages and of empires hangs

On this dread hour. Why am I not in arms?

Bring my good lance, caparison my steed!

Base, idle grooms! are ye in league against me?

Haste with my barb, or, by the holy saints,

Ye shall not live to saddle him to-morrow!

Massinger.

No sooner had the pearl-shedding fingers of the young Aurora tremulously unlocked the oriental portals of the golden horizon, than the graceful flower of chivalry and the bright cynosure of ladies' eyes—he of the dazzling breastplate and swanlike plume—sprang impatiently from the couch of slumber, and eagerly mounted the noble barb presented to him by the Emperor of Aspramontania.

Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia.

See'st thou yon chief whose presence seems to rule

The storm of battle? Lo! where'er he moves

Death follows. Carnage sits upon his crest—

Fate on his sword is throned—and his white barb,

As a proud courser of Apollo's chariot,

Seems breathing fire. Potter's Æschylus.

Oh! bonnie look'd my ain true knight,

His barb so proudly reining;

I watch'd him till my tearfu' sight

Grew amaist dim wi' straining. Border Minstrelsy.

Why, he can heel the lavolt, and wind a fiery barb, as well as any gallant in Christendom. He's the very pink and mirror of accomplishment.

Shakspeare.

Fair star of beauty's heaven! to call thee mine,

All other joys I joyously would yield;

My knightly crest, my bounding barb resign,
For the poor shepherd’s crook and daisied field;
For courts or camps no wish my soul would prove,
So thou wouldst live with me, and be my love!
Earl of Surrey’s Poems.

For thy dear love my weary soul hath grown
Heedless of youthful sports: I seek no more
Or joyous dance, or music’s thrilling tone,
Or joys that once could charm in minstrel lore,
Or knightly tilt where steel-clad champions meet,
Borne on impetuous barbs to bleed at beauty’s feet.
Shakspeare’s Sonnets.

As a warrior clad
In sable arms, like chaos dull and sad,
But mounted on a barb as white
As the fresh new-born light,—
So the black night too soon
Came riding on the bright and silver moon,
Whose radiant heavenly ark
Made all the clouds, beyond her influence, seem
E’en more than doubly dark,
Mourning, all widow’d of her glorious beam.
Cowley.

THE FEVER DREAM.

[Amongst the very few specimens that have been preserved of Mrs Hemans's livelier effusions, which she never wrote with any other view than the momentary amusement of her own immediate circle, is a letter addressed about this time to her sister who was then travelling in Italy. The following extracts from this familiar epistle may serve to show her facility in a style of composition which she latterly entirely discontinued. The first part alludes to a strange fancy produced by an attack of fever, the description of which had given rise to many pleasantries—being an imaginary voyage to China, performed in a cocoa-nut shell with that eminent old English worthy, John Evelyn.]

Apropos of your illness, pray give, if you please,

Some account of the converse you held on high seas

With Evelyn, the excellent author of "Sylva,"

A work that is very much prized at Bronwylfa.

I think that old Neptune was visited ne'er

In so well-rigg'd a ship, by so well-matched a pair.

There could not have fallen, dear H., to your lot any

Companion more pleasant, since you're fond of botany,

And his horticultural talents are known,

Just as well as Canova's for fashioning stone.

Of the vessel you sail'd in, I just will remark

That I ne'er heard before of so curious a bark.

Of gondola, coracle, pirogue, canoe,

I have read very often, as doubtless have you;

Of the Argo conveying that hero young Jason;

Of the ship moor’d by Trajan in Nemi’s deep basin;
Of the galley (in Plutarch you’ll find the description)
Which bore along Cydnus the royal Egyptian;
Of that wonderful frigate (see “Curse of Kehama”)
Which wafted fair Kailyal to regions of Brama,
And the venturous barks of Columbus and Gama.
But Columbus and Gama to you must resign a
Full half of their fame, since your voyage to China,
(I’m astonish’d no shocking disaster befel,)
In that swift-sailing first-rate—a cocoa-nut shell!
I hope, my dear H., that you touch’d at Loo Choo,
That abode of a people so gentle and true,
Who with arms and with money have nothing to do.
How calm must their lives be! so free from all fears
Of running in debt, or of running on spears!
Oh dear! what an Eden!—a land without money!
It excels e’en the region of milk and of honey,
Or the vale of Cashmere, as described in a book
Full of musk, gems, and roses, and call’d “Lalla Rookh.”
But, of all the enjoyments you have, none would e’er be
More valued by me than a chat with Acerbi,
Of whose travels—related in elegant phrases—
I have seen many extracts, and heard many praises,
And have copied (you know I let nothing escape)

His striking account of the frozen North Cape.
I think ’twas in his works I read long ago
(I’ve not the best memory for dates, as you know,)
Of a warehouse, where sugar and treacle were stored,
Which took fire (I suppose being made but of board)
In the icy domains of some rough northern hero,
Where the cold was some fifty degrees below zero.
Then from every burnt cask as the treacle ran out,
And in streams, just like lava, meander’d about,
You may fancy the curious effect of the weather,
The frost, and the fire, and the treacle together.
When my first for a moment had harden’d my last,
My second burst out, and all melted as fast;
To win their sweet prize long the rivals fought on,
But I quite forget which of the elements won.
But a truce with all joking—I hope you’ll excuse me,
Since I know you still love to instruct and amuse me,
For hastily putting a few questions down,
To which answers from you all my wishes will crown;
For you know I’m so fond of the land of Corinne
That my thoughts are still dwelling its precincts within,
And I read all that authors, or gravely or wittily,
Or wisely or foolishly, write about Italy;
From your shipmate John Evelyn’s amusing old tour,

To Forsyth’s one volume, and Eustace’s four,
In spite of Lord Byron, or Hobhouse, who glances
At the classical Eustace, and says he romances.
—Pray describe me from Venice, (don’t think it a bore,)
The literal state of the famed Bucentaur,
And whether the horses, that once were the sun’s,
Are of bright yellow brass, or of dark dingy bronze;
For some travellers say one thing, and some say another,
And I can’t find out which, they all make such a pother.
Oh! another thing, too, which I’d nearly forgot,
Are the songs of the gondoliers pleasing or not?
These are matters of moment, you’ll surely allow,
For Venice must interest all—even now.
These points being settled, I ask for no more hence,
But should wish for a few observations from Florence.
Let me know if the Palaces Strozzi and Pitti
Are finish’d; if not ’tis a shame for the city
To let one for ages—was e’er such a thing?—
Its entablature want, and the other its wing.
Say, too, if the Dove (should you be there at Easter,
And watch her swift flight, when the priests have released her)
Is a turtle, or ring-dove, or but a wood-pigeon,
Which makes people gulls in the name of Religion?
Pray tell if the forests of famed Vallombrosa

Are cut down or not; for this, too, is a Cosa
About which I'm anxious—as also to know
If the Pandects, so famous long ages ago,
Came back (above all, don't forget this to mention)
To that manuscript library called the Laurentian.
Since I wrote the above, I by chance have found out,
That the horses are bright yellow brass beyond doubt;
So I'll ask you but this, the same subject pursuing,
Do you think they are truly Lysippus's doing?
—When to Naples you get, let me know, if you will,
If the Acqua Toffana's in fashion there still;
For, not to fatigue you with needless verbosity,
'Tis a point upon which I feel much curiosity.
I should like to have also, and not written shabbily,
Your opinion about the Piscina mirabile;
And whether the tomb, which is near Sannazaro's,
Is decided by you to be really Maro's.

DARTMOOR.

A PRIZE POEM.

[In 1820, the Royal Society of Literature advertised their intention of awarding a prize for the best poem on "Dartmoor;" and, as might have been expected, many competitors entered the field. In the following June, the palm was awarded to Mrs Hemans for the composition which follows.

She thus writes to the friends who had been the first to convey to her the pleasing

intelligence of her success:—

“What with surprise, bustle, and pleasure, I am really almost bewildered. I wish you had but seen the children, when the prize was announced to them yesterday.... The Bishop’s kind communication put us in possession of the gratifying intelligence a day sooner than we should otherwise have known it, as I did not receive the Secretary’s letter till this morning. Besides the official announcement of the prize, his despatch also contained a private letter, with which, although it is one of criticism, I feel greatly pleased, as it shows an interest in my literary success, which, from so distinguished a writer as Mr Croly, (of course you have read his poem of Paris,) cannot but be highly gratifying.”]

“Come, bright Improvement! on the car of Time,

And rule the spacious world from clime to clime.

Thy handmaid, Art, shall every wild explore,

Trace every wave, and culture every shore.” Campbell.

“May ne’er

That true succession fail of English hearts,

That can perceive, not less than heretofore

Our ancestors did feelingly perceive,

... the charm

Of pious sentiment, diffused afar,

And human charity, and social love.” Wordsworth.

Amidst the peopled and the regal isle,

Whose vales, rejoicing in their beauty, smile;

Whose cities, fearless of the spoiler, tower,

And send on every breeze a voice of power;

Hath Desolation rear’d herself a throne,
And mark’d a pathless region for her own?
Yes! though thy turf no stain of carnage wore
When bled the noble hearts of many a shore;
Though not a hostile step thy heath-flowers bent
When empires totter’d, and the earth was rent;
Yet lone, as if some trampler of mankind
Had still’d life’s busy murmurs on the wind,
And, flush’d with power in daring pride’s excess,
Stamp’d on thy soil the curse of barrenness;
For thee in vain descend the dews of heaven,
In vain the sunbeam and the shower are given,
Wild Dartmoor! thou that, midst thy mountains rude,
Hast robed thyself with haughty solitude,
As a dark cloud on summer’s clear blue sky,
A mourner, circled with festivity!
For all beyond is life!—the rolling sea,
The rush, the swell, whose echoes reach not thee.
Yet who shall find a scene so wild and bare
But man has left his lingering traces there?
E’en on mysterious Afric’s boundless plains,
Where noon with attributes of midnight reigns,
In gloom and silence fearfully profound,
As of a world unwaked to soul or sound.

Though the sad wanderer of the burning zone
Feels, as amidst infinity, alone,
And naught of life be near, his camel’s tread
Is o’er the prostrate cities of the dead!
Some column, rear’d by long-forgotten hands,
Just lifts its head above the billowy sands—
Some mouldering shrine still consecrates the scene,
And tells that glory’s footstep there hath been.
There hath the spirit of the mighty pass’d,
Not without record; though the desert blast,
Borne on the wings of Time, hath swept away
The proud creations rear’d to brave decay.
But thou, lone region! whose unnoticed name
No lofty deeds have mingled with their fame,
Who shall unfold thine annals?—who shall tell
If on thy soil the sons of heroes fell,
In those far ages which have left no trace,
No sunbeam, on the pathway of their race?
Though, haply, in the unrecorded days
Of kings and chiefs who pass’d without their praise,
Thou mightst have rear’d the valiant and the free,
In history’s page there is no tale of thee.
Yet hast thou thy memorials. On the wild,
Still rise the cairns, of yore all rudely piled,[151]

But hallow’d by that instinct which reveres
Things fraught with characters of elder years.
And such are these. Long centuries are flown,
Bow’d many a crest, and shatter’d many a throne,
Mingling the urn, the trophy, and the bust,
With what they hide—their shrined and treasured dust.
Men traverse Alps and oceans, to behold
Earth’s glorious works fast mingling with her mould;
But still these nameless chronicles of death,
Midst the deep silence of the unpeopled heath,
Stand in primeval artlessness, and wear
The same sepulchral mien, and almost share
Th’ eternity of nature, with the forms
Of the crown’d hills beyond, the dwellings of the storms.
Yet what avails it if each moss-grown heap
Still on the waste its lonely vigils keep,
Guarding the dust which slumbers well beneath
(Nor needs such care) from each cold season’s breath?
Where is the voice to tell their tale who rest,
Thus rudely pillow’d, on the desert’s breast?
Doth the sword sleep beside them? Hath there been
A sound of battle midst the silent scene
Where now the flocks repose?—did the scythed car
Here reap its harvest in the ranks of war?

And rise these piles in memory of the slain,
And the red combat of the mountain-plain?
It may be thus:—the vestiges of strife,
Around yet lingering, mark the steps of life,
And the rude arrow's barb remains to tell[152]
How by its stroke, perchance, the mighty fell
To be forgotten. Vain the warrior's pride,
The chieftain's power—they had no bard, and died.[153]
But other scenes, from their untroubled sphere,
The eternal stars of night have witness'd here.
There stands an altar of unsculptured stone,[154]
Far on the moor, a thing of ages gone,
Propp'd on its granite pillars, whence the rains
And pure bright dews have laved the crimson stains
Left by dark rites of blood: for here, of yore,
When the bleak waste a robe of forest wore,
And many a crested oak, which now lies low,
Waved its wild wreath of sacred mistletoe—
Here, at dim midnight, through the haunted shade,
On druid-harps the quivering moonbeam play'd,
And spells were breathed, that fill'd the deepening gloom
With the pale, shadowy people of the tomb.
Or, haply, torches waving through the night
Bade the red cairn-fires blaze from every height,[155]

Like battle-signals, whose unearthly gleams
Threw o’er the desert’s hundred hills and streams,
A savage grandeur; while the starry skies
Rang with the peal of mystic harmonies,
As the loud harp its deep-toned hymns sent forth
To the storm-ruling powers, the war-gods of the North.
But wilder sounds were there: th’ imploring cry
That woke the forest’s echo in reply,
But not the heart’s! Unmoved the wizard train
Stood round their human victim, and in vain
His prayer for mercy rose; in vain his glance
Look’d up, appealing to the blue expanse,
Where in their calm immortal beauty shone
Heaven’s cloudless orbs. With faint and fainter moan,
Bound on the shrine of sacrifice he lay,
Till, drop by drop, life’s current ebb’d away;
Till rock and turf grew deeply, darkly red,
And the pale moon gleam’d paler on the dead.
Have such things been, and here?—where stillness dwells
Midst the rude barrows and the moorland swells,
Thus undisturb’d? Oh! long the gulf of time
Hath closed in darkness o’er those days of crime,
And earth no vestige of their path retains,
Save such as these, which strew her loneliest plains

With records of man’s conflicts and his doom,
His spirit and his dust—the altar and the tomb.
But ages roll’d away: and England stood
With her proud banner streaming o’er the flood;
And with a lofty calmness in her eye,
And regal in collected majesty,
To breast the storm of battle. Every breeze
Bore sounds of triumph o’er her own blue seas;
And other lands, redeem’d and joyous, drank
The life-blood of her heroes, as they sank
On the red fields they won; whose wild flowers wave
Now in luxuriant beauty o’er their grave.
’Twas then the captives of Britannia’s war[156]
Here for their lovely southern climes afar
In bondage pined; the spell-deluded throng
Dragg’d at ambition’s chariot-wheels so long
To die—because a despot could not clasp
A sceptre fitted to his boundless grasp!
Yes! they whose march had rock’d the ancient thrones
And temples of the world—the deepening tones
Of whose advancing trumpet from repose
Had startled nations, wakening to their woes—
Were prisoners here. And there were some whose dreams
Were of sweet homes, by chainless mountain-streams,

And of the vine-clad hills, and many a strain
And festal melody of Loire or Seine;
And of those mothers who had watch’d and wept,
When on the field the unshelter’d conscript slept,
Bathed with the midnight dews. And some were there
Of sterner spirits, harden’d by despair;
Who, in their dark imaginings, again
Fired the rich palace and the stately fane,
Drank in their victim’s shriek, as music’s breath,
And lived o’er scenes, the festivals of death!
And there was mirth, too!—strange and savage mirth,
More fearful far than all the woes of earth!
The laughter of cold hearts, and scoffs that spring
From minds for which there is no sacred thing;
And transient bursts of fierce, exulting glee—
The lightning’s flash upon its blasted tree!
But still, howe’er the soul’s disguise were worn,
If from wild revelry, or haughty scorn,
Or buoyant hope, it won an outward show,
Slight was the mask, and all beneath it—woe.
Yet, was this all? Amidst the dungeon-gloom,
The void, the stillness of the captive’s doom,
Were there no deeper thoughts? And that dark power
To whom guilt owes one late but dreadful hour,

The mighty debt through years of crime delay’d,
But, as the grave’s, inevitably paid;
Came he not thither, in his burning force,
The lord, the tamer of dark souls—Remorse?
Yes! as the night calls forth from sea and sky,
From breeze and wood, a solemn harmony,
Lost when the swift triumphant wheels of day
In light and sound are hurrying on their way:
Thus, from the deep recesses of the heart,
The voice which sleeps, but never dies, might start,
Call’d up by solitude, each nerve to thrill
With accents heard not, save when all is still!
The voice, inaudible when havoc’s strain
Crush’d the red vintage of devoted Spain;
Mute, when sierras to the war-whoop rung,
And the broad light of conflagration sprung
From the south’s marble cities; hush’d midst cries
That told the heavens of mortal agonies;
But gathering silent strength, to wake at last
In concentrated thunders of the past!
And there, perchance, some long-bewilder’d mind,
Torn from its lowly sphere, its path confined
Of village duties, in the Alpine glen,
Where nature cast its lot midst peasant men;

Drawn to that vortex, whose fierce ruler blent
The earthquake power of each wild element,
To lend the tide which bore his throne on high
One impulse more of desperate energy;
Might—when the billow's awful rush was o'er
Which toss'd its wreck upon the storm-beat shore,
Won from its wanderings past, by suffering tried,
Search'd by remorse, by anguish purified—
Have fix'd, at length, its troubled hopes and fears
On the far world, seen brightest through our tears;
And, in that hour of triumph or despair,
Whose secrets all must learn—but none declare,
When, of the things to come, a deeper sense
Fills the dim eye of trembling penitence,
Have turn'd to Him whose bow is in the cloud,
Around life's limits gathering as a shroud—
The fearful mysteries of the heart who knows,
And, by the tempest, calls it to repose!
Who visited that deathbed? Who can tell
Its brief sad tale, on which the soul might dwell,
And learn immortal lessons? Who beheld
The struggling hope, by shame, by doubt repell'd—
The agony of prayer—the bursting tears—
The dark remembrances of guilty years,

Crowding upon the spirit in their might?
He, through the storm who look’d, and there was light!
That scene is closed!—that wild, tumultuous breast,
With all its pangs and passions, is at rest!
He, too, is fallen, the master-power of strife,
Who woke those passions to delirious life;
And days, prepared a brighter course to run,
Unfold their buoyant pinions to the sun!
It is a glorious hour when Spring goes forth
O’er the bleak mountains of the shadowy north,
And with one radiant glance, one magic breath,
Wakes all things lovely from the sleep of death;
While the glad voices of a thousand streams,
Bursting their bondage, triumph in her beams!
But Peace hath nobler changes! O’er the mind,
The warm and living spirit of mankind,
Her influence breathes, and bids the blighted heart,
To life and hope from desolation start!
She with a look dissolves the captive’s chain,
Peopling with beauty widow’d homes again;
Around the mother, in her closing years,
Gathering her sons once more, and from the tears
Of the dim past but winning purer light,
To make the present more serenely bright.

Nor rests that influence here. From clime to clime,
In silence gliding with the stream of time,
Still doth it spread, borne onwards, as a breeze
With healing on its wings, o’er isles and seas.
And as Heaven’s breath call’d forth, with genial power,
From the dry wand the almond’s living flower,
So doth its deep-felt charm in secret move
The coldest heart to gentle deeds of love;
While round its pathway nature softly glows,
And the wide desert blossoms as the rose.
Yes! let the waste lift up the exulting voice!
Let the far-echoing solitude rejoice!
And thou, lone moor! where no blithe reaper’s song
E’er lightly sped the summer hours along,
Bid thy wild rivers, from each mountain-source
Rushing in joy, make music on their course!
Thou, whose sole records of existence mark
The scene of barbarous rites in ages dark,
And of some nameless combat; hope’s bright eye
Beams o’er thee in the light of prophecy!
Yet shalt thou smile, by busy culture drest,
And the rich harvest wave upon thy breast!
Yet shall thy cottage smoke, at dewy morn,
Rise in blue wreaths above the flowering thorn,

And, midst thy hamlet shades, the embosom’d spire
Catch from deep-kindling heavens their earliest fire.
Thee, too, that hour shall bless, the balmy close
Of labour’s day, the herald of repose,
Which gathers hearts in peace; while social mirth
Basks in the blaze of each free village hearth;
While peasant-songs are on the joyous gales,
And merry England’s voice floats up from all her vales.
Yet are there sweeter sounds; and thou shalt hear
Such as to Heaven’s immortal host are dear.
Oh! if there still be melody on earth
Worthy the sacred bowers where man drew birth,
When angel-steps their paths rejoicing trode,
And the air trembled with the breath of God;
It lives in those soft accents, to the sky[157]
Borne from the lips of stainless infancy,
When holy strains, from life’s pure fount which sprung,
Breathed with deep reverence, falter on his tongue.
And such shall be thy music, when the cells,
Where Guilt, the child of hopeless Misery, dwells,
(And, to wild strength by desperation wrought,
In silence broods o’er many a fearful thought,)
Resound to pity’s voice; and childhood thence,
Ere the cold blight hath reach’d its innocence,

Ere that soft rose-bloom of the soul be fled,
Which vice but breathes on and its hues are dead,
Shall at the call press forward, to be made
A glorious offering, meet for Him who said,
“Mercy, not sacrifice!” and, when of old
Clouds of rich incense from his altars roll’d,
Dispersed the smoke of perfumes, and laid bare
The heart’s deep folds, to read its homage there!
When some crown’d conqueror, o’er a trampled world
His banner, shadowing nations, hath unfurl’d,
And, like those visitations which deform
Nature for centuries, hath made the storm
His pathway to dominion’s lonely sphere,
Silence behind—before him, flight and fear!
When kingdoms rock beneath his rushing wheels,
Till each fair isle the mighty impulse feels,
And earth is moulded but by one proud will,
And sceptred realms wear fetters, and are still;
Shall the free soul of song bow down to pay,
The earthquake homage on its baleful way?
Shall the glad harp send up exulting strains
O’er burning cities and forsaken plains?
And shall no harmony of softer close
Attend the stream of mercy as it flows,

And, mingling with the murmur of its wave,
Bless the green shores its gentle currents lave?
Oh! there are loftier themes, for him whose eyes
Have search'd the depths of life's realities,
Than the red battle, or the trophied car,
Wheeling the monarch-victor fast and far;
There are more noble strains than those which swell
The triumphs ruin may suffice to tell!
Ye prophet-bards, who sat in elder days
Beneath the palms of Judah! ye whose lays
With torrent rapture, from their source on high,
Burst in the strength of immortality!
Oh! not alone, those haunted groves among,
Of conquering hosts, of empires crush'd, ye sung,
But of that spirit destined to explore,
With the bright day-spring, every distant shore,
To dry the tear, to bind the broken reed,
To make the home of peace in hearts that bleed;
With beams of hope to pierce the dungeon's gloom.
And pour eternal starlight o'er the tomb.
And bless'd and hallow'd be its haunts! for there
Hath man's high soul been rescued from despair!
There hath th' immortal spark for heaven been nursed;
There from the rock the springs of life have burst

Quenchless and pure! and holy thoughts, that rise

Warm from the source of human sympathies—

Where’er its path of radiance may be traced,

Shall find their temple in the silent waste.

[151] “In some parts of Dartmoor, the surface is thickly strewed with stones, which in many instances appear to have been collected into piles, on the tops of prominent hillocks, as if in imitation of the natural Tors. The Stone-barrows of Dartmoor resemble the cairns of the Cheviot and Grampian hills, and those in Cornwall.”—See Cooke’s Topographical Survey of Devonshire.

[152] Flint arrow-heads have occasionally been found upon Dartmoor.

[153]

“Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona

Multi; sed omnes illachrymabiles

Urgentur, ignotique longâ

Nocte, carent quia vate sacro.”—Horace.

“They had no poet, and they died.”—Pope’s Translation.

[154] On the east of Dartmoor are some Druidical remains, one of which is a Cromlech, whose three rough pillars of granite support a ponderous table-stone, and form a kind of large irregular tripod.

[155] In some of the Druid festivals, fires were lighted on all the cairns and eminences around, by priests, carrying sacred torches. All the household fires were previously extinguished, and those who were thought worthy of such a privilege, were allowed to relight them with a flaming brand, kindled at the consecrated cairn-fire.

[156] The French prisoners, taken in the wars with Napoleon, were confined in a depot on Dartmoor.

[157] In allusion to a plan for the erection of a great national school-house on Dartmoor, where it was proposed to educate the children of convicts.

WELSH MELODIES.

THE HARP OF WALES.

INTRODUCTORY STANZAS, INSCRIBED TO THE RUTHIN WELSH LITERARY SOCIETY.

Harp of the mountain-land! sound forth again
As when the foaming Hirlas[158] horn was crown’d,
And warrior hearts beat proudly to the strain,
And the bright mead at Owain’s feast went round:
Wake with the spirit and the power of yore!
Harp of the ancient hills! be heard once more!
Thy tones are not to cease! The Roman came
O’er the blue waters with his thousand oars:
Through Mona’s oaks he sent the wasting flame;
The Druid shrines lay prostrate on our shores:
All gave their ashes to the wind and sea—
Ring out, thou harp! he could not silence thee.
Thy tones are not to cease! The Saxon pass’d,
His banners floated on Eryri’s gales;[159]
But thou wert heard above the trumpet’s blast,
E’en when his towers rose loftiest o’er the vales!
Thine was the voice that cheer’d the brave and free;

They had their hills, their chainless hearts, and thee.

Those were dark years!—They saw the valiant fall,

The rank weeds gathering round the chieftain’s board,

The hearth left lonely in the ruin’d hall—

Yet power was thine—a gift in every chord!

Call back that spirit to the days of peace,

Thou noble harp! thy tones are not to cease!

[158] Hirlas, from hir, long, and glas, blue or azure.

[159] Eryri, the Welsh name for the Snowdon mountains.

DRUID CHORUS ON THE LANDING OF THE ROMANS.

By the dread and viewless powers

Whom the storms and seas obey,

From the Dark Isle’s[160] mystic bowers,

Romans! o’er the deep away!

Think ye, ’tis but nature’s gloom

O’er our shadowy coast which broods?

By the altar and the tomb,

Shun these haunted solitudes!

Know ye Mona’s awful spells?

She the rolling orbs can stay!

She the mighty grave compels

Back to yield its fetter’d prey!

Fear ye not the lightning stroke?

Mark ye not the fiery sky?

Hence!—around our central oak

Gods are gathering—Romans, fly!

[160] Ynys Dywyll, or the Dark Island—an ancient name for Anglesey.

THE GREEN ISLES OF OCEAN.[161]

Where are they, those green fairy islands, reposing

In sunlight and beauty on ocean’s calm breast?

What spirit, the things which are hidden disclosing,

Shall point the bright way to their dwellings of rest?

Oh! lovely they rose on the dreams of past ages,

The mighty have sought them, undaunted in faith;

But the land hath been sad for her warriors and sages,

For the guide to those realms of the blessèd is death.

Where are they, the high-minded children of glory,

Who steer’d for those distant green spots on the wave?

To the winds of the ocean they left their wild story,

In the fields of their country they found not a grave.

Perchance they repose where the summer-breeze gathers

From the flowers of each vale immortality’s breath;

But their steps shall be ne’er on the hills of their fathers—

For the guide to those realms of the blessèd is death.

[161] The “Green Islands of Ocean,” or “Green Spots of the Floods,” called in the Triads “Gwerddonan Llion,” (respecting which some remarkable superstitions have been preserved in Wales,) were supposed to be the abode of the Fair Family, or souls of the virtuous Druids, who could not enter the Christian heaven, but were

permitted to enjoy this paradise of their own. Gafran, a distinguished British chieftain of the fifth century, went on a voyage with his family to discover these islands; but they were never heard of afterwards. This event, the voyage of Merddin Emrys with his twelve bards, and the expedition of Madoc, were called the three losses by disappearance of the island of Britain.—See W. O. Pughe's Cambrian Biography; also Cambro-Briton, i. 124.

THE SEA-SONG OF GAFRAN.[162]

Watch ye well! The moon is shrouded
On her bright throne;
Storms are gathering, stars are clouded,
Waves make wild moan.
'Tis no night of hearth-fires glowing,
And gay songs and wine-cups flowing;
But of winds, in darkness blowing,
O'er seas unknown!
In the dwellings of our fathers,
Round the glad blaze,
Now the festive circle gathers
With harps and lays;
Now the rush-strewn halls are ringing,
Steps are bounding, bards are singing,
—Ay! the hour to all is bringing
Peace, joy, or praise.
Save to us, our night-watch keeping,

Storm-winds to brave,

While the very sea-bird sleeping

Rests in its cave!

Think of us when hearths are beaming,

Think of us when mead is streaming,

Ye, of whom our souls are dreaming

On the dark wave!

[162] See note to the “Green Isles of Ocean.”

THE HIRLAS HORN.

Fill high the blue hirlas that shines like the wave[163]

When sunbeams are bright on the spray of the sea;

And bear thou the rich foaming mead to the brave,

The dragons of battle, the sons of the free!

To those from whose spears, in the shock of the fight,

A beam, like heaven’s lightning,[164] flash’d over the field;

To those who came rushing as storms in their might,

Who have shiver’d the helmet, and cloven the shield;

The sound of whose strife was like oceans afar,

When lances were red from the harvest of war.

Fill high the blue hirlas! O cup-bearer, fill

For the lords of the field in their festival’s hour,

And let the mead foam, like the stream of the hill

That bursts o’er the rock in the pride of its power:

Praise, praise to the mighty, fill high the smooth horn

Of honour and mirth,[165] for the conflict is o’er;

And round let the golden-tipp’d hirlas be borne

To the lion-defenders of Gwynedd’s fair shore,

Who rush’d to the field where the glory was won,

As eagles that soar from their cliffs to the sun.

Fill higher the hirlas! forgetting not those

Who shared its bright draught in the days which are fled!

Though cold on their mountains the valiant repose,

Their lot shall be lovely—renown to the dead!

While harps in the hall of the feast shall be strung,

While regal Eryri with snow shall be crown’d—

So long by the bards shall their battles be sung,

And the heart of the hero shall burn at the sound.

The free winds of Maelor[166] shall swell with their name,

And Owain’s rich hirlas be fill’d to their fame.

[163] “Fetch the horn, that we may drink together, whose gloss is like the waves of the sea; whose green handles show the skill of the artist, and are tipped with gold.”—From the Hirlas Horn of Owain Cyfeiliog.

[164] “Heard ye in Maelor the noise of war, the horrid din of arms, their furious onset, loud as in the battle of Bangor, where fire flashed out of their spears?”—From the same.

[165] “Fill, then, the yellow-lipped horn—badge of honour and mirth.”—From the same.

[166] Maelor, part of the counties of Denbigh and Flint, according to the modern division.

THE HALL OF CYNDDYLAN.

The Hall of Cynddylan is gloomy to-night;[167]
I weep, for the grave has extinguish’d its light;
The beam of the lamp from its summit is o’er,
The blaze of its hearth shall give welcome no more!
The Hall of Cynddylan is voiceless and still,
The sound of its harpings hath died on the hill!
Be silent for ever, thou desolate scene,
Nor let e’en an echo recall what hath been!
The Hall of Cynddylan is lonely and bare,
No banquet, no guest, not a footstep is there!
Oh! where are the warriors who circled its board?
—The grass will soon wave where the mead-cup was pour’d!
The Hall of Cynddylan is loveless to-night,
Since he is departed whose smile made it bright!
I mourn; but the sigh of my soul shall be brief,
The pathway is short to the grave of my chief!
[167]
“The Hall of Cynddylan is gloomy this night,
Without fire, without bed—
I must weep awhile, and then be silent.
The Hall of Cynddylan is gloomy this night,
Without fire, without being lighted—
Be thou encircled with spreading silence!

The Hall of Cynddylan is without love this night,

Since he that own'd it is no more—

Ah Death! it will be but a short time he will leave me.

The Hall of Cynddylan it is not easy this night,

On the top of the rock of Hydwyth,

Without its lord, without company, without the circling feasts!"

Owen's Heroic Elegies of Llywarch Hen.

THE LAMENT OF LLYWARCH HEN.

[Llywarch Hen, or Llywarch the Aged, a celebrated bard and chief of the times of Arthur, was prince of Argoed, supposed to be a part of the present Cumberland. Having sustained the loss of his patrimony, and witnessed the fall of most of his sons, in the unequal contest maintained by the North Britons against the growing power of the Saxons, Llywarch was compelled to fly from his country, and seek refuge in Wales. He there found an asylum for some time in the residence of Cynddylan, Prince of Powys, whose fall he pathetically laments in one of his poems. These are still extant; and his elegy on old age and the loss of his sons, is remarkable for its simplicity and beauty.—See Cambrian Biography, and Owen's Heroic Elegies and other poems of Llywarch Hen.]

The bright hours return, and the blue sky is ringing

With song, and the hills are all mantled with bloom;

But fairer than aught which the summer is bringing,

The beauty and youth gone to people the tomb!

Oh! why should I live to hear music resounding,

Which cannot awake ye, my lovely, my brave?

Why smile the waste flowers, my sad footsteps surrounding?

—My sons! they but clothe the green turf of your grave!
Alone on the rocks of the stranger I linger,
My spirit all wrapt in the past as a dream!
Mine ear hath no joy in the voice of the singer,[168]
Mine eye sparkles not to the sunlight's glad beam;
Yet, yet I live on, though forsaken and weeping!
—O grave! why refuse to the aged thy bed,
When valour's high heart on thy bosom is sleeping,
When youth's glorious flower is gone down to the dead!
Fair were ye, my sons! and all kingly your bearing,
As on to the fields of your glory ye trode!
Each prince of my race the bright golden chain wearing,
Each eye glancing fire, shrouded now by the sod![169]
I weep when the blast of the trumpet is sounding,
Which rouses ye not, O my lovely! my brave!
When warriors and chiefs to their proud steeds are bounding,
I turn from heaven's light, for it smiles on your grave![170]

[168] "What I loved when I was a youth is hateful to me now."

[169]

"Four and twenty sons to me have been
Wearing the golden chain, and leading princes."
Elegies of Llywarch Hen.

The golden chain, as a badge of honour, worn by heroes, is frequently alluded to in the works of the ancient British bards.

[170]

“Hardly has the snow covered the vale,

When the warriors are hastening to the battle;

I do not go, I am hinder’d by infirmity.”

Elegies of Llywarch Hen.

GRUFYDD’S FEAST.

[“Grufydd ab Rhys ab Tewdwr, having resisted the English successfully in the time of Stephen, and at last obtained from them an honourable peace, made a great feast at his palace in Ystrad Tywi to celebrate this event. To this feast, which was continued for forty days, he invited all who would come in peace from Gwynedd, Powys, the Deheubarth, Glamorgan, and the marches. Against the appointed time he prepared all kinds of delicious viands and liquors; with every entertainment of vocal and instrumental song; thus patronising the poets and musicians. He encouraged, too, all sorts of representations and manly games, and afterwards sent away all those who had excelled in them with honourable gifts.”—Cambrian Biography.]

Let the yellow mead shine for the sons of the brave,

By the bright festal torches around us that wave!

Set open the gates of the prince’s wide hall,

And hang up the chief’s ruddy spear on the wall!

There is peace in the land we have battled to save:

Then spread ye the feast, bid the wine-cup foam high,[171]

That those may rejoice who have fear’d not to die!

Let the horn whose loud blast gave the signal for fight,

With the bees sunny nectar now sparkle in light;[172]

Let the rich draught it offers with gladness be crown’d,

For the strong hearts in combat that leap’d at its sound!

Like the billows’ dark swell was the path of their might,

Red, red as their blood, fill the wine-cup on high,

That those may rejoice who have fear’d not to die!

And wake ye the children of song from their dreams,

On Maelor’s wild hills and by Dyfed’s fair streams![173]

Bid them haste with those strains of the lofty and free,

Which shall flow down the waves of long ages to be.

Sheath the sword which hath given them unperishing themes,

And pour the bright mead: let the wine-cup foam high,

That those may rejoice who have fear’d not to die!

[171] Wine, as well as mead, is frequently mentioned in the poems of the ancient British bards.

[172] The horn was used for two purposes—to sound the alarm in war, and to drink the mead at feasts.

[173] Dyfed, (said to signify a land abounding with streams of water,) the modern Pembrokeshire.

THE CAMBRIAN IN AMERICA.

When the last flush of eve is dying

On boundless lakes afar that shine;

When winds amidst the palms are sighing,

And fragrance breathes from every pine:[174]

When stars through cypress-boughs are gleaming,

And fire-flies wander bright and free,

Still of thy harps, thy mountains dreaming,
My thoughts, wild Cambria! dwell with thee!
Alone o’er green savannas roving,
Where some broad stream in silence flows,
Or through th’ eternal forests moving,
One only home my spirit knows!
Sweet land, whence memory ne’er hath parted!
To thee on sleep’s light wing I fly;
But happier could the weary-hearted
Look on his own blue hills and die!

TALIESIN’S PROPHECY.

[A prophecy of Taliesin relating to the ancient Britons is still extant, and has been strikingly verified. It is to the following effect:—

“Their God they shall worship,
Their language they shall retain,
Their land they shall lose,
Except wild Wales.”]

A voice from time departed yet floats thy hills among,
O Cambria! thus thy prophet bard, thy Taliesin sung:
“The path of unborn ages is traced upon my soul,
The clouds which mantle things unseen away before me roll,
A light the depths revealing hath o’er my spirit pass’d,
A rushing sound from days to be swells fitful in the blast,
And tells me that for ever shall live the lofty tongue

To which the harp of Mona’s woods by freedom’s hand was strung.

“Green island of the mighty![175] see thine ancient race

Driven from their fathers’ realm to make the rocks their dwelling-place!

I see from Uthyr’s[176] kingdom the sceptre pass away,

And many a fine of bards and chiefs and princely men decay.

But long as Arvon’s mountains shall lift their sovereign forms,

And wear the crown to which is given dominion o’er the storms,

So long, their empire sharing, shall live the lofty tongue

To which the harp of Mona’s woods by freedom’s hand was strung!”

[174] The aromatic odour of the pine has frequently been mentioned by travellers.

[175] Ynys y Cedeirn, or Isle of the Mighty—an ancient name given to Britain.

[176] Uthyr Pendragon, king of Britain, supposed to have been the father of Arthur.

OWEN GLYNDWR’S WAR-SONG.

Saw ye the blazing star?[177]

The heavens look’d down on freedom’s war,

And lit her torch on high!

Bright on the dragon crest[178]

It tells that glory’s wing shall rest,

When warriors meet to die!

Let earth’s pale tyrants read despair

And vengeance in its flame;

Hail ye, my bards! the omen fair

Of conquest and of fame,

And swell the rushing mountain air

With songs to Glendwr’s name.

At the dead hour of night,

Mark’d ye how each majestic height

Burn’d in its awful beams?

Red shone th’ eternal snows,

And all the land, as bright it rose,

Was full of glorious dreams!

O eagles of the battle,[179] rise!

The hope of Gwynedd wakes![180]

It is your banner in the skies

Through each dark cloud which breaks,

And mantles with triumphal dyes

Your thousand hills and lakes!

A sound is on the breeze,

A murmur as of swelling seas!

The Saxon on his way!

Lo! spear and shield and lance,

From Deva’s waves, with lightning glance,

Reflected to the day!

But who the torrent-wave compels

A conqueror’s chain to bear?

Let those who wake the soul that dwells

On our free winds, beware!

The greenest and the loveliest dells

May be the lion’s lair!

Of us they told, the seers,

And monarch bards of elder years,

Who walk’d on earth as powers!

And in their burning strains,

A spell of might and mystery reigns,

To guard our mountain-towers!

—In Snowdon’s caves a prophet lay:[181]

Before his gifted sight,

The march of ages pass’d away

With hero-footsteps bright;

But proudest in that long array,

Was Glendwr’s path of light!

[177] The year 1402 was ushered in with a comet or blazing star, which the bards interpreted as an omen favourable to the cause of Glendwr. It served to infuse spirit into the minds of a superstitious people, the first success of their chieftain confirmed this belief, and gave new vigour to their actions.—Pennant.

[178] Owen Glendwr styled himself the Dragon; a name he assumed in imitation of Uthyr, whose victories over the Saxons were foretold by the appearances of a star with a dragon beneath, which Uthyr used as his badge; and on that account it became a favourite one with the Welsh.—Pennant.

PRINCE MADOC’S FAREWELL.

Why lingers my gaze where the last hues of day

On the hills of my country in loveliness sleep?

Too fair is the sight for a wand’rer, whose way
Lies far o’er the measureless worlds of the deep!
Fall, shadows of twilight! and veil the green shore,
That the heart of the mighty may waver no more!
Why rise on my thoughts, ye free songs of the land
Where the harp’s lofty soul on each wild wind is borne?
Be hush’d, be forgotten! for ne’er shall the hand
Of minstrel with melody greet my return.
—No! no!—let your echoes still float on the breeze,
And my heart shall be strong for the conquest of seas!
’Tis not for the land of my sires to give birth
Unto bosoms that shrink when their trial is nigh;
Away! we will bear over ocean and earth
A name and a spirit that never shall die.
My course to the winds, to the stars, I resign;
But my soul’s quenchless fire, O my country! is thine.

[179] “Bring the horn to Tudwrou, the Eagle of Battles.”—See the Hirlas Horn of Owain Cyfeiliog. The eagle is a very favourite image with the ancient Welsh poets.

[180] Gwynedd, (pronounced Gwyneth,) North Wales.

[181] Merlin, or Merddin Emrys, is said to have composed his prophecies on the future lot of the Britons, amongst the mountains of Snowdon. Many of these, and other ancient prophecies, were applied by Glyndwr to his own cause, and assisted him greatly in animating the spirit of his followers.

CASWALLON’S TRIUMPH.

[Caswallon (or Cassivelaunus) was elected to the supreme command of the Britons, (as recorded in the Triads,) for the purpose of opposing Cæsar, under the title of Elected Chief of Battle. Whatever impression the disciplined legions of Rome might have made on the Britons in the first instance, the subsequent departure of Cæsar they considered as a cause of triumph; and it is stated that Caswallon proclaimed an assembly of the various states of the island, for the purpose of celebrating that event by feasting and public rejoicing.—Cambrian Biography.]

From the glowing southern regions,
Where the sun-god makes his dwelling,
Came the Roman's crested legions
O'er the deep, round Britain swelling.
The wave grew dazzling as he pass'd,
With light from spear and helmet cast;
And sounds in every rushing blast
Of a conqueror's march were telling.
But his eagle's royal pinion,
Bowing earth beneath its glory,
Could not shadow with dominion
Our wild seas and mountains hoary!
Back from their cloudy realm it flies,
To float in light through softer skies;
Oh! chainless winds of heaven arise!
Bear a vanquish'd world the story!
Lords of earth! to Rome returning,
Tell how Britain combat wages,

How Caswallon’s soul is burning

When the storm of battle rages!

And ye that shrine high deeds in song,

O holy and immortal throng!

The brightness of his name prolong,

As a torch to stream through ages!

HOWEL’S SONG.

[Howel ab Einion Llygliw was a distinguished bard of the fourteenth century. A beautiful poem, addressed by him to Myfanwy Vychan, a celebrated beauty of those times, is still preserved amongst the remains of the Welsh bards. The ruins of Myfanwy’s residence, Castle Dinas Brân, may yet be traced on a high hill near Llangollen.]

Press on, my steed! I hear the swell[182]

Of Valle Crucis’ vesper-bell,

Sweet floating from the holy dell

O’er woods and waters round.

Perchance the maid I love, e’en now,

From Dinas Brân’s majestic brow,

Looks o’er the fairy world below,

And listens to the sound!

I feel her presence on the scene!

The summer air is more serene,

The deep woods wave in richer green,

The wave more gently flows!

O fair as ocean’s curling foam![183]

Lo! with the balmy hour I come—

The hour that brings the wanderer home,

The weary to repose!

Haste! on each mountain’s darkening crest

The glow hath died, the shadows rest,

The twilight star on Deva’s breast

Gleams tremulously bright;

Speed for Myfanwy’s bower on high!

Though scorn may wound me from her eye,

Oh! better by the sun to die,

Than live in rayless night!

[182] “I have rode hard, mounted on a fine high-bred steed, upon thy account, O thou with the countenance of cherry-flower bloom. The speed was with eagerness, and the strong long-hamm’d steed of Alban reached the summit of the high land of Brân.”

[183] “My loving heart sinks with grief without thy support, O thou that hast the whiteness of the curling waves!... I know that this pain will avail me nothing towards obtaining thy love, O thou whose countenance is bright as the flowers of the hawthorn!”—Howel’s Ode to Myfanwy.

THE MOUNTAIN FIRES.

[“The custom retained in Wales of lighting fires (Coelcerthi) on November eve, is said to be a traditional memorial of the massacre of the British chiefs by Hengist, on Salisbury plain. The practice is, however, of older date, and had reference originally to the Alban Elved, or new-year.”—Cambro-Briton.

When these fires are kindled on the mountains, and seen through the darkness of a stormy night, casting a red and fitful glare over heath and rock, their effect is strikingly picturesque.]

Light the hills! till heaven is glowing
As with some red meteor’s rays!
Winds of night, though rudely blowing,
Shall but fan the beacon-blaze.
Light the hills! till flames are streaming
From Yr Wyddfa’s sovereign steep,[184]
To the waves round Mona gleaming,
Where the Roman track’d the deep!
Be the mountain watch-fires heighten’d,
Pile them to the stormy sky!
Till each torrent-wave is brighten’d,
Kindling as it rushes by.
Now each rock, the mist’s high dwelling,
Towers in reddening light sublime;
Heap the flames! around them telling
Tales of Cambria’s elder time.
Thus our sires, the fearless-hearted,
Many a solemn vigil kept,
When, in ages long departed,
O’er the noble dead they wept.
In the winds we hear their voices—

“Sons! though yours a brighter lot,

When the mountain-land rejoices,

Be her mighty unforgot!”

ERYRI WEN.

[“Snowdon was held as sacred by the ancient Britons, as Parnassus was by the Greeks, and Ida by the Cretans. It is still said, that whosoever slept upon Snowdon would wake inspired, as much as if he had taken a nap on the hill of Apollo. The Welsh had always the strongest attachment to the tract of Snowdon. Our princes had, in addition to their title, that of Lord of Snowdon.”—Pennant.]

Theirs was no dream, O monarch hill,

With heaven’s own azure crown’d!

Who call’d thee—what thou shalt be still,

White Snowdon!—holy ground.

They fabled not, thy sons who told

Of the dread power enshrined

Within thy cloudy mantle’s fold,

And on thy rushing wind!

It shadow’d o’er thy silent height,

It fill’d thy chainless air,

Deep thoughts of majesty and might

For ever breathing there.

Nor hath it fled! the awful spell

Yet holds unbroken sway,

As when on that wild rock it fell

Where Merddin Emrys lay![185]

Though from their stormy haunts of yore

Thine eagles long have flown,[186]

As proud a flight the soul shall soar

Yet from thy mountain-throne!

Pierce then the heavens, thou hill of streams!

And make the snows thy crest!

The sunlight of immortal dreams

Around thee still shall rest.

Eryri! temple of the bard!

And fortress of the free!

Midst rocks which heroes died to guard,

Their spirit dwells with thee!

[184] Yr Wyddfa, the Welsh name of Snowdon, said to mean the conspicuous place, or object.

[185] Dinas Emrys, (the fortress of Ambrose,) a celebrated rock amongst the mountains of Snowdon, is said to be so called from having been the residence of Merddin Emrys, called by the Latins Merlinus Ambrosius, the celebrated prophet and magician: and there, tradition says, he wrote his prophecies concerning the future state of the Britons.

There is another curious tradition respecting a large stone, on the ascent of Snowdon, called Maen du yr Arddu, the black stone of Arddu. It is said, that if two persons were to sleep a night on this stone, in the morning one would find himself endowed with the gift of poetry, and the other would become insane.—Williams's Observations on the Snowdon Mountains.

[186] It is believed amongst the inhabitants of these mountains, that eagles have heretofore bred in the lofty clefts of their rocks. Some wandering ones are still seen at times, though very rarely, amongst the precipices.—Williams's Observations on the Snowdon Mountains.

CHANT OF THE BARDS BEFORE THEIR MASSACRE BY EDWARD I.[187]

Raise ye the sword! let the death-stroke be given;
Oh! swift may it fall as the lightning of heaven!
So shall our spirits be free as our strains—
The children of song may not languish in chains!
Have ye not trampled our country's bright crest?
Are heroes reposing in death on her breast?
Red with their blood do her mountain-streams flow,
And think ye that still we would linger below?
Rest, ye brave dead! midst the hills of your sires,
Oh! who would not slumber when freedom expires?
Lonely and voiceless your halls must remain—
The children of song may not breathe in the chain!

[187] This sanguinary deed is not attested by any historian of credit. And it deserves to be also noticed, that none of the bardic productions since the time of Edward make any allusion to such an event.—Cambro-Briton, vol. i., p. 195.

THE DYING BARD'S PROPHECY.[188]

The hall of harps is lone to-night,
And cold the chieftain's hearth:

It hath no mead, it hath no light;
No voice of melody, no sound of mirth.
The bow lies broken on the floor
Whence the free step is gone;
The pilgrim turns him from the door
Where minstrel-blood hath stain'd the threshold stone.
"And I, too, go: my wound is deep,
My brethren long have died;
Yet, ere my soul grow dark with sleep,
Winds! bear the spoiler one more tone of pride!
"Bear it where, on his battle-plain,
Beneath the setting sun,
He counts my country's noble slain—
Say to him—Saxon, think not all is won.
"Thou hast laid low the warrior's head,
The minstrel's chainless hand:
Dreamer! that numberest with the dead
The burning spirit of the mountain-land!
"Think'st thou, because the song hath ceased,
The soul of song is flown?
Think'st thou it woke to crown the feast,
It lived beside the ruddy hearth alone?
"No! by our wrongs, and by our blood!
We leave it pure and free;

Though hush’d awhile, that sounding flood

Shall roll in joy through ages yet to be.

“We leave it midst our country’s woe—

The birthright of her breast;

We leave it as we leave the snow

Bright and eternal on Eryri’s crest.

We leave it with our fame to dwell

Upon our children’s breath;

Our voice in theirs through time shall swell—

The bard hath gifts of prophecy from death.

He dies; but yet the mountains stand,

Yet sweeps the torrent’s tide;

And this is yet Aneurin’s[189] land—

Winds! bear the spoiler one more tone of pride!

[188] At the time of the supposed massacre of the Welsh bards by Edward the First.

[189] Aneurin, one of the noblest of the Welsh bards.

THE FAIR ISLE.[190]

FOR THE MELODY CALLED THE “WELSH GROUND.”

[The Bard of the Palace, under the ancient Welsh princes, always accompanied the army when it marched into an enemy’s country; and, while it was preparing for battle or dividing the spoils, he performed an ancient song, called Unbennaeth Prydain, the Monarchy of Britain. It has been conjectured that this poem referred to the tradition of the Welsh, that the whole island had once been possessed by their ancestors, who were driven into a corner of it by their Saxon invaders. When the

prince had received his share of the spoils, the bard, for the performance of this song, was rewarded with the most valuable beast that remained.—Jones's Historical Account of the Welsh Bards.]

[190] Ynys Prydain was the ancient Welsh name of Britain, and signifies fair or beautiful isle.

I.

Sons of the Fair Isle! forget not the time

Ere spoilers had breathed the free air of your clime;

All that its eagles behold in their flight

Was yours, from the deep to each storm-mantled height.

Though from your race that proud birthright be torn,

Unquench'd is the spirit for monarchy born.

CHORUS.

Darkly though clouds may hang o'er us awhile,

The crown shall not pass from the Beautiful Isle.

II.

Ages may roll ere your children regain

The land for which heroes have perish'd in vain;

Yet, in the sound of your names shall be power,

Around her still gathering in glory's full hour.

Strong in the fame of the mighty that sleep,

Your Britain shall sit on the throne of the deep.

CHORUS.

Then shall their spirits rejoice in her smile,

Who died for the crown of the Beautiful Isle.

THE ROCK OF CADER IDRIS.

[It is an old tradition of the Welsh bards, that on the summit of the mountain Cader Idris, is an excavation resembling a couch; and that whoever should pass a night in that hollow, would be found in the morning either dead, in a a frenzy, or endowed with the highest poetical inspiration.]

I lay on that rock where the storms have their dwelling,
The birthplace of phantoms, the home of the cloud;
Around it for ever deep music is swelling,
The voice of the mountain-wind, solemn and loud.
’Twas a midnight of shadows all fitfully streaming,
Of wild waves and breezes, that mingled their moan;
Of dim shrouded stars, as from gulfs faintly gleaming;
And I met the dread gloom of its grandeur alone.
I lay there in silence—a spirit came o’er me;
Man’s tongue hath no language to speak what I saw;
Things glorious, unearthly, pass’d floating before me,
And my heart almost fainted with rapture and awe.
I view’d the dread beings around us that hover,
Though veil’d by the mists of mortality’s breath;
And I call’d upon darkness the vision to cover,
For a strife was within me of madness and death.
I saw them—the powers of the wind and the ocean,
The rush of whose pinion bears onward the storms;

Like the sweep of the white-rolling wave was their motion—

I felt their dim presence, but knew not their forms!

I saw them—the mighty of ages departed—

The dead were around me that night on the hill:

From their eyes, as they pass'd, a cold radiance they darted,—

There was light on my soul, but my heart's blood was chill.

I saw what man looks on, and dies—but my spirit

Was strong, and triumphantly lived through that hour;

And, as from the grave, I awoke to inherit

A flame all immortal, a voice, and a power!

Day burst on that rock with the purple cloud crested,

And high Cader Idris rejoiced in the sun;—

But oh! what new glory all nature invested,

When the sense which gives soul to her beauty was won![191]

["The Welsh Melodies, which first introduced Mrs Hemans to the public as a song-writer, had already made their appearance. Some of them are remarkable for the melody of their numbers—in particular, the song to the well-known air, 'Ar hyd y nos.' Her fine feeling for music, in which, as also in drawing, she would have signally excelled, could she have bestowed the time and patient labour requisite for obtaining mastery over the mechanical difficulties of these arts, assisted her not only in her choice of measures, but also of her words; and, although in speaking of her songs, it must be remarked that some of the later ones are almost too full of meaning to require the further clothing of sweet sound, instead of their being left, as in outline, waiting for the musician's colouring hand, they must be all praised as flowing and expressive; and it is needless to remind the reader how many of them, united with her sister's music, have obtained the utmost popularity. She had well

studied the national character of the Welsh airs, and the allusions to the legendary history of the ancient Britons, which her songs contain, are happily chosen. But it was an instinct with Mrs Hernans to catch the picturesque points of national character, as well as of national music: in the latter she always delighted."—Chorley's Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 80-1.]

[191] Transcriber's Note: Footnote not found for original page 153 footnote 1.

THE VESPERS OF PALERMO.

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.

["Mrs Hemans was at this time (1821) occupied in the composition of her tragedy, 'The Vespers of Palermo,' which she originally wrote without any idea of offering it for the stage. The sanguine recommendations, however, of Mr Reginald Heber, and the equally kind encouragement of Mr Milman, (to whose correspondence she was introduced through the medium of a mutual friend, though she had never the advantage of his personal acquaintance,) induced her to venture upon a step which her own diffidence would have withheld her from contemplating, but for the support of such high literary authorities. Indeed, notwithstanding the flattering encomiums which were bestowed upon the tragedy by all who read it, and most especially by the critics of the green-room, whose imprimatur might have been supposed a sufficiently safe guarantee of success, her own anticipations, throughout the long period of suspense which intervened between its acceptance and representation, were far more modified than those of her friends. In this subdued tone of feeling she thus wrote to Mr Milman:—'As I cannot help looking forward to the day of trial with much more of dread than of sanguine expectation, I most willingly acquiesce in your recommendations of delay, and shall rejoice in having the respite as much prolonged as possible. I begin almost to shudder at my own presumption, and, if it were not for the kind encouragement I have received from you and Mr Reginald

Heber, should be much more anxiously occupied in searching for any outlet of escape, than in attempting to overcome the difficulties which seem to obstruct my onward path.’”—Memoir, p. 81-2.]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Count di Procida.

Raimond di Procida, his Son.

Eribert, Viceroy.

De Couci.

Montalba.

Guido.

Alberti.

Anselmo, a Monk.

Vittoria.

Constance, Sister to Eribert.

Nobles, Soldiers, Messengers, Vassals, Peasants, &c. &c. Scene—Palermo.

ACT I.

Scene I.—A Valley, with vineyards and cottages.

Groups of Peasants—Procida, disguised as a Pilgrim, among them.

1st Pea. Ay, this was wont to be a festal time

In days gone by! I can remember well

The old familiar melodies that rose

At break of morn, from all our purple hills,

To welcome in the vintage. Never since

Hath music seem’d so sweet. But the light hearts
Which to those measures beat so joyously,
Are tamed to stillness now. There is no voice
Of joy through all the land.
2d Pea. Yes! there are sounds
Of revelry within the palaces,
And the fair castles of our ancient lords,
Where now the stranger banquets. Ye may hear
From thence the peals of song and laughter rise
At midnight’s deepest hour.
3d Pea. Alas! we sat,
In happier days, so peacefully beneath
The olives and the vines our fathers rear’d,
Encircled by our children, whose quick steps
Flew by us in the dance! The time hath been
When peace was in the hamlet, wheresoe’er
The storm might gather. But this yoke of France
Falls on the peasant’s neck as heavily
As on the crested chieftain’s. We are bow’d
E’en to the earth.
Pea’s Child. My father, tell me when
Shall the gay dance and song again resound
Amidst our chestnut-woods, as in those days
Of which thou’rt wont to tell the joyous tale?

1st Pea. When there are light and reckless hearts once more
In Sicily's green vales. Alas, my boy!
Men meet not now to quaff the flowing bowl,
To hear the mirthful song, and cast aside
The weight of work-day care: they meet to speak
Of wrongs and sorrows, and to whisper thoughts
They dare not breathe aloud.
Pro. (from the background.) Ay, it is well
So to relieve th' o'erburthen'd heart, which pants
Beneath its weight of wrongs; but better far
In silence to avenge them!
An Old Pea. What deep voice
Came with that startling tone?
1st Pea. It was our guest's,
The stranger pilgrim who hath sojourn'd here
Since yester-morn. Good neighbours, mark him well:
He hath a stately bearing, and an eye
Whose glance looks through the heart. His mien accords
Ill with such vestments. How he folds around him
His pilgrim-cloak, e'en as it were a robe
Of knightly ermine! That commanding step
Should have been used in courts and camps to move.
Mark him!
Old Pea. Nay, rather mark him not; the times

Are fearful, and they teach the boldest hearts
A cautious lesson. What should bring him here?
A Youth. He spoke of vengeance!
Old Pea. Peace! we are beset
By snares on every side, and we must learn
In silence and in patience to endure.
Talk not of vengeance, for the word is death.
Pro. (coming forward indignantly.)
The word is death! And what hath life for thee,
That thou shouldst cling to it thus? thou abject thing!
Whose very soul is moulded to the yoke,
And stamp'd with servitude. What! is it life
Thus at a breeze to start, to school thy voice
Into low fearful whispers, and to cast
Pale jealous looks around thee, lest, e'en then,
Strangers should catch its echo?—Is there aught
In this so precious, that thy furrow'd cheek
Is blanch'd with terror at the passing thought
Of hazarding some few and evil days,
Which drag thus poorly on?
Some of the Peas. Away, away!
Leave us, for there is danger in thy presence.
Pro. Why, what is danger? Are there deeper
ills Than those ye bear thus calmly? Ye have drain'd

The cup of bitterness till naught remains
To fear or shrink from—therefore, be ye strong!
Power dwelleth with despair. Why start ye thus
At words which are but echoes of the thoughts
Lock'd in your secret souls? Full well I know
There is not one among you but hath nursed
Some proud indignant feeling, which doth make
One conflict of his life. I know thy wrongs—
And thine—and thine; but if within your breast
There is no chord that vibrates to my voice,
Then fare ye well.
A Youth (coming forward.) No, no! say on, say on!
There are still free and fiery hearts e'en here,
That kindle at thy words.
Pea. If that indeed
Thou hast a hope to give us——
Pro. There is hope
For all who suffer with indignant thoughts
Which work in silent strength. What! think ye heaven
O'erlooks the oppressor, if he bear awhile
His crested head on high? I tell you, no!
Th' avenger will not sleep. It was an hour
Of triumph to the conqueror, when our king,
Our young brave Conradin, in life's fair morn

On the red scaffold died. Yet not the less
Is Justice throned above; and her good time
Comes rushing on in storms: that royal blood
Hath lifted an accusing voice from earth,
And hath been heard. The traces of the past
Fade in man’s heart, but ne’er doth heaven forget.
Pea. Had we but arms and leaders, we are men
Who might earn vengeance yet; but wanting these,
What wouldst thou have us do?
Pro. Be vigilant;
And when the signal wakes the land, arise!
The peasant’s arm is strong, and there shall be
A rich and noble harvest. Fare ye well.
[Exit Procida.
1st Pea. This man should be a prophet: how he seem’d
To read our hearts with his dark searching glance
And aspect of command! and yet his garb
Is mean as ours.
2d Pea. Speak low; I know him well.
At first his voice disturb’d me, like a dream
Of other days; but I remember now
His form, seen oft when in my youth I served
Beneath the banners of our kings! ’Tis he
Who hath been exiled and proscribed so long,

The Count di Procida.

Pea. And is this he?

Then heaven protect him! for around his steps

Will many snares be set.

1st Pea. He comes not thus

But with some mighty purpose—doubt it not;

Perchance to bring us freedom. He is one

Whose faith, through many a trial, hath been proved

True to our native princes. But away!

The noontide heat is past, and from the seas

Light gales are wandering through the vineyards; now

We may resume our toil.

Exeunt Peasants.

Scene II.—The Terrace of a Castle.

Eribert, Vittoria.

Vit. Have I not told thee, that I bear a heart

Blighted and cold?—Th’ affections of my youth

Lie slumbering in the grave; their fount is closed,

And all the soft and playful tenderness

Which hath its home in woman’s breast, ere yet

Deep wrongs have sear’d it—all is fled from mine.

Urge me no more.

Eri. O lady! doth the flower

That sleeps entomb’d through the long wintry storms,

Unfold its beauty to the breath of spring,
And shall not woman’s heart, from chill despair,
Wake at love’s voice?
Vit. Love!—make love’s name thy spell,
And I am strong!—the very word calls up
From the dark past, thoughts, feelings, powers, array’d
In arms against thee! Know’st thou whom I loved,
While my soul’s dwelling-place was still on earth?
One who was born for empire, and endow’d
With such high gifts of princely majesty,
As bow’d all hearts before him! Was he not
Brave, royal, beautiful? And such he died;
He died!—hast thou forgotten?—And thou’rt here,
Thou meet’st my glance with eyes which coldly look’d,
—Coldly!—nay, rather with triumphant gaze,
Upon his murder! Desolate as I am,
Yet in the mien of thine affianced bride,
O my lost Conradin! there should be still
Somewhat of loftiness, which might o’erawe
The hearts of thine assassins.
Eri. Haughty dame!
If thy proud heart to tenderness be closed,
Know danger is around thee: thou hast foes
That seek thy ruin, and my power alone

Can shield thee from their arts.

Vit. Provençal, tell

Thy tale of danger to some happy heart

Which hath its little world of loved ones round.

For whom to tremble; and its tranquil joys

That make earth Paradise. I stand alone;

—They that are blest may fear.

Eri. Is there not one

Who ne’er commands in vain? Proud lady, bend

Thy spirit to thy fate; for know that he,

Whose car of triumph in its earthquake path,

O’er the bow’d neck of prostrate Sicily,

Hath borne him to dominion; he, my king,

Charles of Anjou, decrees thy hand the boon

My deeds have well deserved; and who hath power

Against his mandates?

Vit. Viceroy, tell thy lord

That, e’en where chains lie heaviest on the land,

Souls may not all be fetter’d. Oft, ere now,

Conquerors have rock’d the earth, yet fail’d to tame

Unto their purposes that restless fire

Inhabiting man’s breast. A spark bursts forth,

And so they perish! ’Tis the fate of those

Who sport with lightning—and it may be his.

Tell him I fear him not, and thus am free.

Eri. ’Tis well. Then nerve that lofty heart to bear

The wrath which is not powerless. Yet again

Bethink thee, lady! Love may change—hath changed

To vigilant hatred oft, whose sleepless eye

Still finds what most it seeks for. Fare thee well.

—Look to it yet!—To-morrow I return.

[Exit Eribert.

Vit. To-morrow!—Some ere now have slept and dreamt

Of morrows which ne’er dawn’d—or ne’er for them;

So silently their deep and still repose

Hath melted into death! Are there not balms

In nature’s boundless realm, to pour out sleep

Like this on me? Yet should my spirit still

Endure its earthly bonds, till it could bear

To his a glorious tale of his own isle,

Free and avenged.—Thou shouldst be now at work,

In wrath, my native Etna! who dost lift

Thy spiry pillar of dark smoke so high,

Through the red heaven of sunset!—sleep’st thou still,

With all thy founts of fire, while spoilers tread

The glowing vales beneath?

[Procida enters, disguised.

Ha! who art thou,

Unbidden guest, that with so mute a step
Dost steal upon me?
Pro. One o’er whom hath pass’d
All that can change man’s aspect! Yet not long
Shalt thou find safety in forgetfulness.
I am he, to breathe whose name is perilous,
Unless thy wealth could bribe the winds to silence.
—Know’st thou this, lady?
[He shows a ring.
Vit. Righteous heaven! the pledge
Amidst his people from the scaffold thrown
By him who perish’d, and whose kingly blood
E’en yet is unatoned. My heart beats high—
—Oh, welcome, welcome! thou art Procida,
Th’ Avenger, the Deliverer!
Pro. Call me so,
When my great task is done. Yet who can tell
If the return’d be welcome? Many a heart
Is changed since last we met.
Vit. Why dost thou gaze,
With such a still and solemn earnestness,
Upon my alter’d mien?
Pro. That I may read
If to the widow’d love of Conradin,

Or the proud Eribert's triumphant bride,
I now intrust my fate.
Vit. Thou, Procida!
That thou shouldst wrong me thus!—prolong thy gaze
Till it hath found an answer.
Pro. 'Tis enough.
I find it in thy cheek, whose rapid change
Is from death's hue to fever's; in the wild
Unsettled brightness of thy proud dark eye,
And in thy wasted form. Ay, 'tis a deep
And solemn joy, thus in thy looks to trace,
Instead of youth's gay bloom, the characters
Of noble suffering: on thy brow the same
Commanding spirit holds its native state,
Which could not stoop to vileness. Yet the voice
Of Fame hath told afar, that thou shouldst wed
This tyrant Eribert.
Vit. And told it not
A tale of insolent love repell'd with scorn—
Of stern commands and fearful menaces
Met with indignant courage? Procida!
It was but now that haughtily I braved
His sovereign's mandate, which decrees my hand,
With its fair appanage of wide domains

And wealthy vassals, a most fitting boon,
To recompense his crimes.—I smiled—ay, smiled—
In proud security; for the high of heart
Have still a pathway to escape disgrace,
Though it be dark and lone.
Pro. Thou shalt not need
To tread its shadowy mazes. Trust my words:
I tell thee that a spirit is abroad
Which will not slumber, till its path be traced
By deeds of fearful fame. Vittoria, live!
It is most meet that thou shouldst live, to see
The mighty expiation; for thy heart
(Forgive me that I wrong'd its faith!) hath nursed
A high, majestic grief, whose seal is set
Deep on thy marble brow.
Vit. Then thou canst tell
By gazing on the wither'd rose, that there
Time, or the blight, hath work'd! Ay, this is in
Thy vision's scope: but oh! the things unseen,
Untold, undreamt of, which like shadows pass
Hourly o'er that mysterious world, a mind
To ruin struck by grief! Yet doth my soul,
Far midst its darkness, nurse one soaring hope,
Wherein is bright vitality. 'Tis to see

His blood avenged, and his fair heritage,
My beautiful native land, in glory risen,
Like a warrior from his slumbers!
Pro. Hear’st thou not
With what a deep and ominous moan the voice
Of our great mountain swells? There will be soon
A fearful burst! Vittoria! brood no more
In silence o’er thy sorrows, but go forth
Amidst thy vassals, (yet be secret still,)
And let thy breath give nurture to the spark
Thou’lt find already kindled. I move on
In shadow, yet awakening in my path
That which shall startle nations. Fare thee well.
Vit. When shall we meet again?—Are we not those
Whom most he loved on earth, and think’st thou not
That love e’en yet shall bring his spirit near,
While thus we hold communion?
Pro. Yes, I feel
Its breathing influence whilst I look on thee,
Who wert its light in life. Yet will we not
Make womanish tears our offering on his tomb;
He shall have nobler tribute!—I must hence,
But thou shalt soon hear more. Await the time.
[Exeunt separately.

Scene III.—The Sea-shore.

Raimond di Procida, Constance.

Con. There is a shadow far within your eye,
Which hath of late been deepening. You were wont,
Upon the clearness of your open brow,
To wear a brighter spirit, shedding round
Joy like our southern sun. It is not well,
If some dark thought be gathering o’er your soul,
To hide it from affection. Why is this?
My Raimond, why is this?
Raim. Oh! from the dreams
Of youth, sweet Constance, hath not manhood still
A wild and stormy wakening? They depart—
Light after light, our glorious visions fade,
The vaguely beautiful! till earth, unveil’d,
Lies pale around; and life’s realities
Press on the soul, from its unfathom’d depth
Rousing the fiery feelings, and proud thoughts,
In all their fearful strength! ’Tis ever thus,
And doubly so with me; for I awoke
With high aspirings, making it a curse
To breathe where noble minds are bow’d, as here.
—To breathe!—It is not breath!
Con. I know thy grief,

—And is't not mine?—for those devoted men
Doom'd with their life to expiate some wild word,
Born of the social hour. Oh! I have knelt,
E'en at my brother's feet, with fruitless tears,
Imploring him to spare. His heart is shut
Against my voice; yet will I not forsake
The cause of mercy.
Raim. Waste not thou thy prayers,
O gentle love! for them. There's little need
For pity, though the galling chain be worn
By some few slaves the less. Let them depart!
There is a world beyond the oppressor's reach,
And thither lies their way.
Con. Alas! I see
That some new wrong hath pierced you to the soul.
Raim. Pardon, belovèd Constance, if my words,
From feelings hourly stung, have caught, perchance,
A tone of bitterness. Oh! when thine eyes,
With their sweet eloquent thoughtfulness, are fix'd
Thus tenderly on mine, I should forget
All else in their soft beams; and yet I came
To tell thee——
Con. What? What wouldst thou say? Oh speak!
Thou wouldst not leave me!

Raim. I have cast a cloud,
The shadow of dark thoughts and ruin'd fortunes,
O'er thy bright spirit. Haply, were I gone,
Thou wouldst resume thyself, and dwell once more
In the clear sunny light of youth and joy,
E'en as before we met—before we loved!
Con. This is but mockery. Well thou know'st thy love
Hath given me nobler being; made my heart
A home for all the deep sublimities
Of strong affection; and I would not change
Th' exalted life I draw from that pure source,
With all its checker'd hues of hope and fear,
E'en for the brightest calm. Thou most unkind!
Have I deserved this?
Raim. Oh! thou hast deserved
A love less fatal to thy peace than mine.
Think not 'tis mockery! But I cannot rest
To be the scorn'd and trampled thing I am
In this degraded land. Its very skies,
That smile as if but festivals were held
Beneath their cloudless azure, weigh me down
With a dull sense of bondage, and I pine
For freedom's charter'd air. I would go forth
To seek my noble father: he hath been

Too long a lonely exile, and his name
Seems fading in the dim obscurity
Which gathers round my fortunes.
Con. Must we part?
And is it come to this? Oh! I have still
Deem'd it enough of joy with thee to share
E'en grief itself. And now! But this is vain.
Alas! too deep, too fond, is woman's love:
Too full of hope, she casts on troubled waves
The treasures of her soul!
Raim. Oh, speak not thus!
Thy gentle and desponding tones fall cold
Upon my inmost heart. I leave thee but
To be more worthy of a love like thine;
For I have dreamt of fame! A few short years,
And we may yet be blest.
Con. A few short years!
Less time may well suffice for death and fate
To work all change on earth; to break the ties
Which early love had form'd; and to bow down
Th' elastic spirit, and to blight each flower
Strewn in life's crowded path! But be it so!
Be it enough to know that happiness
Meets thee on other shores.

Raim. Where’er I roam,

Thou shalt be with my soul! Thy soft low voice

Shall rise upon remembrance, like a strain

Of music heard in boyhood, bringing back

Life’s morning freshness. Oh! that there should be

Things which we love with such deep tenderness,

But, through that love, to learn how much of woe

Dwells in one hour like this! Yet weep thou not!

We shall meet soon; and many days, dear love!

Ere I depart.

Con. Then there’s a respite still.

Days!—not a day but in its course may bring

Some strange vicissitude to turn aside

Th’ impending blow we shrink from. Fare thee well.

(Returning.)

—Oh, Raimond! this is not our last farewell!

Thou wouldst not so deceive me?

Raim. Doubt me not,

Gentlest and best beloved! we meet again.

[Exit Constance.

Raim. (after a pause.) When shall I breathe in freedom, and give scope

To those untameable and burning thoughts,

And restless aspirations, which consume

My heart i’ th’ land of bondage? Oh! with you,

Ye everlasting images of power
And of infinity! thou blue-rolling deep,
And you, ye stars! whose beams are characters
Wherewith the oracles of fate are traced—
With you my soul finds room, and casts aside
The weight that doth oppress her. But my thoughts
Are wandering far; there should be one to share
This awful and majestic solitude
Of sea and heaven with me.
[Procida enters unobserved.
It is the hour
He named, and yet he comes not.
Pro. (coming forward.) He is here.
Raim. Now, thou mysterious stranger—thou, whose glance
Doth fix itself on memory, and pursue
Thought like a spirit, haunting its lone hours—
Reveal thyself; what art thou?
Pro. One whose life
Hath been a troubled stream, and made its way
Through rocks and darkness, and a thousand storms,
With still a mighty aim. But now the shades
Of eve are gathering round me, and I come
To this, my native land, that I may rest
Beneath its vines in peace.

Raim. Seek’st thou for peace?
This is no land of peace: unless that deep
And voiceless terror, which doth freeze men’s thoughts
Back to their source, and mantle its pale mien
With a dull hollow semblance of repose,
May so be call’d.
Pro. There are such calms full oft
Preceding earthquakes. But I have not been
So vainly school’d by fortune, and inured
To shape my course on peril’s dizzy brink,
That it should irk my spirit to put on
Such guise of hush’d submissiveness as best
May suit the troubled aspect of the times.
Raim. Why, then, thou’rt welcome, stranger, to the land
Where most disguise is needful. He were bold
Who now should wear his thoughts upon his brow
Beneath Sicilian skies. The brother’s eye
Doth search distrustfully the brother’s face;
And friends, whose undivided lives have drawn
From the same past their long remembrances,
Now meet in terror, or no more; lest hearts
Full to o’erflowing, in their social hour,
Should pour out some rash word, which roving winds
Might whisper to our conquerers. This it is,

To wear a foreign yoke.

Pro. It matters not

To him who holds the mastery o’er his spirit,

And can suppress its workings, till endurance

Becomes as nature. We can tame ourselves

To all extremes, and there is that in life

To which we cling with most tenacious grasp,

Even when its lofty aims are all reduced

To the poor common privilege of breathing.

—Why dost thou turn away?

Raim. What wouldst thou with me?

I deem’d thee, by th’ ascendant soul which lived

And made its throne on thy commanding brow,

One of a sovereign nature, which would scorn

So to abase its high capacities

For aught on earth. But thou art like the rest.

What wouldst thou with me?

Pro. I would counsel thee.

Thou must do that which men—ay, valiant men—

Hourly submit to do; in the proud court,

And in the stately camp, and at the board

Of midnight revellers, whose flush’d mirth is all

A strife, won hardly. Where is he whose heart

Lies bare, through all its foldings, to the gaze

Of mortal eye? If vengeance wait the foe,
Or fate th’ oppressor, ’tis in depths conceal’d
Beneath a smiling surface.—Youth, I say,
Keep thy soul down! Put on a mask!—’tis worn
Alike by power and weakness, and the smooth
And specious intercourse of life requires
Its aid in every scene.
Raim. Away, dissembler!
Life hath its high and its ignoble tasks,
Fitted to every nature. Will the free
And royal eagle stoop to learn the arts
By which the serpent wins his spell-bound prey?
It is because I will not clothe myself
In a vile garb of coward semblances,
That now, e’en now, I struggle with my heart,
To bid what most I love a long farewell,
And seek my country on some distant shore,
Where such things are unknown!
Pro. (exultingly.) Why, this is joy:
After a long conflict with the doubts and fears,
And the poor subtleties, of meaner minds,
To meet a spirit, whose bold elastic wing
Oppression hath not crush’d. High-hearted youth,
Thy father, should his footsteps e’er again

Visit these shores——

Raim. My father! what of him?

Speak! was he known to thee?

Pro. In distant lands

With him I've traversed many a wild, and look'd

On many a danger; and the thought that thou

Wert smiling then in peace, a happy boy,

Oft through the storm hath cheer'd him.

Raim. Dost thou deem

That still he lives? Oh! if it be in chains,

In woe, in poverty's obscurest cell,

Say but he lives—and I will track his steps

E'en to earth's verge!

Pro. It may be that he lives,

Though long his name hath ceased to be a word

Familiar in man's dwellings. But its sound

May yet be heard! Raimond di Procida,

Rememberest thou thy father?

Raim. From my mind

His form hath faded long, for years have pass'd

Since he went forth to exile: but a vague,

Yet powerful image of deep majesty,

Still dimly gathering round each thought of him,

Doth claim instinctive reverence; and my love

For his inspiring name hath long become

Part of my being.

Pro. Raimond! doth no voice

Speak to thy soul, and tell thee whose the arms

That would enfold thee now? My son! my son!

Raim. Father! Oh God!—my father! Now I know

Why my heart woke before thee!

Pro. Oh! this hour

Makes hope reality; for thou art all

My dreams had pictured thee!

Raim. Yet why so long

E’en as a stranger hast thou cross’d my paths,

One nameless and unknown?—and yet I felt

Each pulse within me thrilling to thy voice.

Pro. Because I would not link thy fate with I mine,

Till I could hail the dayspring of that hope

Which now is gathering round us. Listen, youth!

Thou hast told me of a subdued and scorn’d

And trampled land, whose very soul is bow’d

And fashion’d to her chains:—but I tell thee

Of a most generous and devoted land,

A land of kindling energies; a land

Of glorious recollections!—proudly true

To the high memory of her ancient kings,

And rising, in majestic scorn, to cast

Her alien bondage off!

Raim. And where is this?

Pro. Here, in our isle, our own fair Sicily!

Her spirit is awake, and moving on,

In its deep silence mightier, to regain

Her place amongst the nations; and the hour

Of that tremendous effort is at hand.

Raim. Can it be thus indeed? Thou pour’st new life

Through all my burning veins! I am as one

Awakening from a chill and deathlike sleep

To the full glorious day.

Pro. Thou shalt hear more!

Thou shalt hear things which would—which will, arouse

The proud free spirits of our ancestors

E’en from their marble rest. Yet mark me well!

Be secret!—for along my destined path

I yet must darkly move. Now, follow me,

And join a band of men, in whose high hearts

There lies a nation’s strength.

Raim. My noble father!

Thy words have given me all for which I pined—

An aim, a hope, a purpose! And the blood

Doth rush in warmer currents through my veins,

As a bright fountain from its icy bonds

By the quick sun-stroke freed.

Pro. Ay, this is well!

Such natures burst men’s chains!—Now follow me.

[Exeunt.

ACT II.

Scene I.—Apartment in a Palace.

Eribert, Constance.

Con. Will you not hear me? Oh! that they who need

Hourly forgiveness—they who do but live

While mercy’s voice, beyond th’ eternal stars,

Wins the great Judge to listen, should be thus,

In their vain exercise of pageant power,

Hard and relentless! Gentle brother! yet

’Tis in your choice to imitate that heaven,

Whose noblest joy is pardon.

Eri. ’Tis too late.

You have a soft and moving voice, which pleads

With eloquent melody—but they must die.

Con. What!—die!—for words?—for breath which leaves no trace

To sully the pure air wherewith it blends,

And is, being utter’d, gone? Why, ’twere enough

For such a venial fault to be deprived

One little day of man’s free heritage,

Heaven’s warm and sunny light! Oh! if you deem
That evil harbours in their souls, at least
Delay the stroke, till guilt, made manifest,
Shall bid stem justice wake.
Eri. I am not one
Of those weak spirits that timorously keep watch
For fair occasions, thence to borrow hues
Of virtue for their deeds. My school hath been
Where power sits crown’d and arm’d. And, mark me, sister!
To a distrustful nature it might seem
Strange, that your lips thus earnestly should plead
For these Sicilian rebels. O’er my being
Suspicion holds no power. And yet, take note—
I have said, and they must die.
Con. Have you no fear?
Eri. Of what?—that heaven should fall?
Con. No!—But that earth
Should arm in madness. Brother! I have seen
Dark eyes bent on you, e’en midst festal throngs,
With such deep hatred settled in their glance,
My heart hath died within me.
Eri. Am I then
To pause, and doubt, and shrink, because a girl,
A dreaming girl, hath trembled at a look?

Con. Oh! looks are no illusions, when the soul,
Which may not speak in words, can find no way
But theirs to liberty! Have not these men
Brave sons or noble brothers?
Eri. Yes! whose name
It rests with me to make a word of fear—
A sound forbidden midst the haunts of men.
Con. But not forgotten! Ah! beware, beware!
—Nay, look not sternly on me. There is one
Of that devoted band, who yet will need
Years to be ripe for death. He is a youth,
A very boy, on whose unshaded cheek
The spring-time glow is lingering. ’Twas but now
His mother left me, with a timid hope
Just dawning in her breast: and I—I dared
To foster its faint spark. You smile!—Oh! then
He will be saved!
Eri. Nay, I but smiled to think
What a fond fool is Hope! She may be taught
To deem that the great sun will change his course
To work her pleasure, or the tomb give back
Its inmates to her arms. In sooth, ’tis strange!
Yet, with your pitying heart, you should not thus
Have mock’d the boy’s sad mother: I have said—

You should not thus have mock’d her!—Now, farewell!

[Exit Eribert.

Con. O brother! hard of heart!—for deeds like these

There must be fearful chastening, if on high

Justice doth hold her state. And I must tell

Yon desolate mother that her fair young son

Is thus to perish! Haply the dread tale

May slay her too—for heaven is merciful.

—’Twill be a bitter task!

[Exit Constance.

Scene II.—A ruined Tower surrounded by woods.

Procida, Vittoria.

Pro. Thy vassals are prepared, then?

Vit. Yes; they wait

Thy summons to their task.

Pro. Keep the flame bright,

But hidden till this hour. Wouldst thou dare, lady,

To join our councils at the night’s mid watch,

In the lone cavern by the rock-hewn cross?

Vit. What should I shrink from?

Pro. Oh! the forest-paths

Are dim and wild, e’en when the sunshine streams

Through their high arches; but when powerful night

Comes, with her cloudy phantoms, and her pale

Uncertain moonbeams, and the hollow sounds
Of her mysterious winds; their aspect then
Is of another and more fearful world—
A realm of indistinct and shadowy forms,
Waking strange thoughts almost too much for this—
Our frail terrestrial nature.
Vit. Well I know
All this, and more. Such scenes have been th’ abodes
Where through the silence of my soul have pass’d
Voices and visions from the sphere of those
That have to die no more! Nay, doubt it not!
If such unearthly intercourse hath e’er
Been granted to our nature, ’tis to hearts
Whose love is with the dead. They, they alone,
Unmadden’d could sustain the fearful joy
And glory of its trances! At the hour
Which makes guilt tremulous, and peoples earth
And air with infinite viewless multitudes,
I will be with thee, Procida.
Pro. Thy presence
Will kindle nobler thoughts, and, in the souls
Of suffering and indignant men, arouse
That which may strengthen our majestic cause
With yet a deeper power. Know’st thou the spot?

Vit. Full well. There is no scene so wild and lone,

In these dim woods, but I have visited

Its tangled shades.

Pro. At midnight, then, we meet.

[Exit Procida.

Vit. Why should I fear? Thou wilt be with me—thou,

Th’ immortal dream and shadow of my soul,

Spirit of him I love! that meet’st me still

In loneliness and silence; in the noon

Of the wild night, and in the forest depths,

Known but to me; for whom thou giv’st the winds

And sighing leaves a cadence of thy voice,

Till my heart faints with that o’erthrilling joy!

—Thou wilt be with me there, and lend my lips

Words, fiery words, to flush dark cheeks with shame

That thou art unavenged!

[Exit Vittoria.

Scene III.—A Chapel, with a monument on which is laid a sword.—Moonlight.

Procida, Raimond, Montalba.

Mon. And know you not my story?

Pro. In the lands

Where I have been a wanderer, your deep wrongs

Were number’d with our country’s; but their tale

Came only in faint echoes to mine ear.

I would fain hear it now.

Mon. Hark! while you spoke,

There was a voice-like murmur in the breeze,

Which even like death came o’er me. ’Twas a night

Like this, of clouds contending with the moon,

A night of sweeping winds, of rustling leaves,

And swift wild shadows floating o’er the earth,

Clothed with a phantom life, when, after years

Of battle and captivity, I spurr’d

My good steed homewards. Oh! what lovely dreams

Rose on my spirit! There were tears and smiles,

But all of joy! And there were bounding steps,

And clinging arms, whose passionate clasp of love

Doth twine so fondly round the warrior’s neck

When his plumed helm is doff’d.—Hence, feeble thoughts!

—I am sterner now, yet once such dreams were mine!

Raim. And were they realised?

Mon. Youth! ask me not,

But listen! I drew near my own fair home—

There was no light along its walls, no sound

Of bugle pealing from the watch-tower’s height

At my approach, although my trampling steed

Made the earth ring, yet the wide gates were thrown

All open. Then my heart misgave me first,

And on the threshold of my silent hall
I paused a moment, and the wind swept by
With the same deep and dirge-like tone which pierced
My soul e'en now! I call'd—my struggling voice
Gave utterance to my wife's, my children's names.
They answer'd not. I roused my failing strength,
And wildly rush'd within.—And they were there.
Raim. And was all well?
Mon. Ay, well!—for death is well:
And they were all at rest! I see them yet,
Pale in their innocent beauty, which had fail'd
To stay the assassin's arm!
Raim. Oh, righteous Heaven!
Who had done this?
Mon. Who!
Pro. Canst thou question, who?
Whom hath the earth to perpetrate such deeds,
In the cold-blooded revelry of crime,
But those whose yoke is on us?
Raim. Man of woe!
What words hath pity for despair like thine?
Mon. Pity!—fond youth!—My soul disdains the grief
Which doth unbosom its deep secrecies
To ask a vain companionship of tears,

And so to be relieved!

Pro. For woes like these

There is no sympathy but vengeance.

Mon. None!

Therefore I brought you hither, that your hearts

Might catch the spirit of the scene! Look round!

We are in th’ awful presence of the dead;

Within yon tomb they sleep whose gentle blood

Weighs down the murderer’s soul. They sleep!—but I

Am wakeful o’er their dust! I laid my sword,

Without its sheath, on their sepulchral stone,

As on an altar; and the eternal stars,

And heaven, and night, bore witness to my vow,

No more to wield it save in one great cause—

The vengeance of the grave! And now the hour

Of that atonement comes!

[He takes the sword from the tomb.

Raim. My spirit burns!

And my full heart almost to bursting swells.

—Oh, for the day of battle!

Pro. Raimond, they

Whose souls are dark with guiltless blood must die,

—But not in battle.

Raim. How, my father?

Pro. No!

Look on that sepulchre, and it will teach

Another lesson. But the appointed hour

Advances. Thou wilt join our chosen band,

Noble Montalba?

Mon. Leave me for a time,

That I may calm my soul by intercourse

With the still dead, before I mix with men

And with their passions. I have nursed for years,

In silence and in solitude, the flame

Which doth consume me; and it is not used

Thus to be look’d or breathed on. Procida!

I would be tranquil—or appear so—ere

I join your brave confederates. Through my heart

There struck a pang—but it will soon have pass’d.

Pro. Remember!—in the cavern by the cross.

Now follow me, my son.

[Exeunt Procida and Raimond.

Mon. (after a pause, leaning on the tomb.)

Said he, “My son?” Now, why should this man’s life

Go down in hope, thus resting on a son,

And I be desolate? How strange a sound

Was that—“my son!” I had a boy, who might

Have worn as free a soul upon his brow

As doth this youth. Why should the thought of him
Thus haunt me? When I tread the peopled ways
Of life again, I shall be pass'd each hour
By fathers with their children, and I must
Learn calmly to look on. Methinks 'twere now
A gloomy consolation to behold
All men bereft as I am! But away,
Vain thoughts!—One task is left for blighted hearts,
And it shall be fulfill'd.
Exit Montalba.

Scene IV.—Entrance of a Cave, surrounded by rocks and forests. A rude Cross seen among the rocks.

Procida, Raimond.

Pro. And is it thus, beneath the solemn skies
Of midnight, and in solitary caves,
Where the wild forest creatures make their lair—
Is't thus the chiefs of Sicily must hold
The councils of their country?
Raim. Why, such scenes
In their primeval majesty, beheld
Thus by faint starlight and the partial glare
Of the red-streaming lava, will inspire
Far deeper thoughts than pillar'd halls, wherein
Statesmen hold weary vigils. Are we not

O’ershadow’d by that Etna, which of old
With its dread prophecies hath struck dismay
Through tyrants’ hearts, and bade them seek a home
In other climes? Hark! from its depths, e’en now,
What hollow moans are sent!
Enter Montalba, Guido, and other Sicilians.
Pro. Welcome, my brave associates! We can share
The wolf’s wild freedom here! Th’ oppressor’s haunt
Is not midst rocks and caves. Are we all met?
Sicilians. All, all!
Pro. The torchlight, sway’d by every gust,
But dimly shows your features.—Where is he
Who from his battles had return’d to breathe
Once more without a corslet, and to meet
The voices and the footsteps and the smiles
Blent with his dreams of home? Of that dark tale
The rest is known to vengeance! Art thou here,
With thy deep wrongs and resolute despair,
Childless Montalba?
Mon. (advancing.) He is at thy side.
Call on that desolate father in the hour
When his revenge is nigh.
Pro. Thou, too, come forth,
From thine own halls an exile! Dost thou make

The mountain-fastnesses thy dwelling still,
While hostile banners o’er thy rampart walls
Wave their proud blazonry?
1st Sicilian. Even so. I stood
Last night before my own ancestral towers
An unknown outcast, while the tempest beat
On my bare head. What reck’d it? There was joy
Within, and revelry; the festive lamps
Were streaming from each turret, and gay songs
I’ th’ stranger’s tongue, made mirth. They little deem’d
Who heard their melodies! But there are thoughts
Best nurtured in the wild; there are dread vows
Known to the mountain echoes. Procida!
Call on the outcast, when revenge is nigh.
Pro. I knew a young Sicilian—one whose heart
Should be all fire. On that most guilty day
When, with our martyr’d Conradin, the flower
Of the land’s knighthood perish’d; he of whom
I speak, a weeping boy, whose innocent tears
Melted a thousand hearts that dared not aid,
Stood by the scaffold with extended arms,
Calling upon his father, whose last look
Turn’d full on him its parting agony.
The father’s blood gush’d o’er him! and the boy

Then dried his tears, and with a kindling eye,
And a proud flush on his young cheek, look’d up
To the bright heaven.—Doth he remember still
That bitter hour?
2d Sicilian. He bears a sheathless sword!
—Call on the orphan when revenge is nigh.
Pro. Our band shows gallantly—but there are men
Who should be with us now, had they not dared
In some wild moment of festivity
To give their full hearts way, and breathe a wish
For freedom!—and some traitor—it might be
A breeze perchance—bore the forbidden sound
To Eribert: so they must die—unless
Fate (who at times is wayward) should select
Some other victim first! But have they not
Brothers or sons among us?
Gui. Look on me!
I have a brother—a young high-soul’d boy,
And beautiful as a sculptor’s dream, with brow
That wears amidst its dark rich curls, the stamp
Of inborn nobleness. In truth, he is
A glorious creature! But his doom is seal’d
With theirs of whom ye spoke; and I have knelt—
Ay, scorn me not! ’twas for his life—I knelt

E’en at the viceroy’s feet, and he put on
That heartless laugh of cold malignity
We know so well, and spurn’d me. But the stain
Of shame like this takes blood to wash it off,
And thus it shall be cancell’d! Call on me,
When the stern moment of revenge is nigh.
Pro. I call upon thee now! The land’s high soul
Is roused, and moving onward, like a breeze
Or a swift sunbeam, kindling nature’s hues
To deeper life before it. In his chains,
The peasant dreams of freedom!—Ay, ’tis thus
Oppression fans th’ imperishable flame
With most unconscious hands. No praise be hers
For what she blindly works! When slavery’s cup
O’erflows its bounds, the creeping poison, meant
To dull our senses, through each burning vein
Pours fever, lending a delirious strength
To burst man’s fetters. And they shall be burst!
I have hoped, when hope seem’d frenzy; but a power
Abides in human will, when bent with strong
Unswerving energy on one great aim,
To make and rule its fortunes! I have been
A wanderer in the fulness of my years,
A restless pilgrim of the earth and seas,

Gathering the generous thoughts of other lands,
To aid our holy cause. And aid is near:
But we must give the signal. Now, before
The majesty of yon pure heaven, whose eye
Is on our hearts—whose righteous arm befriends
The arm that strikes for freedom—speak! decree
The fate of our oppressors.
Mon. Let them fall
When dreaming least of peril!—when the heart,
Basking in sunny pleasure, doth forget
That hate may smile, but sleeps not. Hide the sword
With a thick veil of myrtle; and in halls
Of banqueting, where the full wine-cup shines
Red in the festal torchlight, meet we there,
And bid them welcome to the feast of death.
Pro. Thy voice is low and broken, and thy words
Scarce meet our ears.
Mon. Why, then, I must repeat
Their import. Let th' avenging sword burst forth
In some free festal hour—and woe to him
Who first shall spare!
Raim. Must innocence and guilt
Perish alike?
Mon. Who talks of innocence?

When hath their hand been stay’d for innocence?
Let them all perish!—Heaven will choose its own.
Why should their children live? The earthquake whelms
Its undistinguish’d thousands, making graves
Of peopled cities in its path—and this
Is heaven’s dread justice—ay, and it is well!
Why then should we be tender, when the skies
Deal thus with man? What if the infant bleed?
Is there not power to hush the mother’s pangs?
What if the youthful bride perchance should fall
In her triumphant beauty? Should we pause?
As if death were not mercy to the pangs
Which make our lives the records of our woes?
Let them all perish! And if one be found
Amidst our band to stay th’ avenging steel
For pity, or remorse, or boyish love,
Then be his doom as theirs!
[A pause.
Why gaze ye thus?
Brethren, what means your silence!
Sicilians. Be it so!
If one among us stay th’ avenging steel
For love or pity, be his doom as theirs!
Pledge we our faith to this!

Raim. (rushing forward indignantly.) Our faith to this!
No! I but dreamt I heard it! Can it be?
My countrymen, my father!—is it thus
That freedom should be won? Awake!—awake
To loftier thoughts! Lift up exultingly,
On the crown'd heights and to the sweeping winds,
Your glorious banner! Let your trumpet's blast
Make the tombs thrill with echoes! Call aloud,
Proclaim from all your hills, the land shall bear
The stranger's yoke no longer! What is he
Who carries on his practised lip a smile,
Beneath his vest a dagger, which but waits
Till the heart bounds with joy, to still its beatings?
That which our nature's instinct doth recoil from,
And our blood curdle at—ay, yours and mine—
A murderer! Heard ye? Shall that name with ours
Go down to after days? O friends! a cause
Like that for which we rise, hath made bright names
Of th' elder time as rallying-words to men—
Sounds full of might and immortality!
And shall not ours be such?
Mon. Fond dreamer, peace!
Fame! What is fame? Will our unconscious dust
Start into thrilling rapture from the grave!

At the vain breath of praise? I tell thee, youth
Our souls are parch’d with agonising thirst,
Which must be quench’d, though death were in the draught:
We must have vengeance, for our foes have left
No other joy unblighted.
Pro. O my son!
The time is past for such high dreams as thine.
Thou know’st not whom we deal with: knightly faith
And chivalrous honour are but things whereon
They cast disdainful pity. We must meet
Falsehood with wiles, and insult with revenge.
And, for our names—whate’er the deeds by which
We burst our bondage—is it not enough
That in the chronicle of days to come,
We, through a bright “For Ever,” shall be call’d
The men who saved their country?
Raim. Many a land
Hath bow’d beneath the yoke, and then arisen
As a strong lion rending silken bonds,
And on the open field, before high heaven,
Won such majestic vengeance as hath made
Its name a power on earth. Ay, nations own
It is enough of glory to be call’d
The children of the mighty, who redeem’d

Their native soil—but not by means like these.

Mon. I have no children. Of Montalba's blood

Not one red drop doth circle through the veins

Of aught that breathes? Why, what have I to do

With far futurity? My spirit lives

But in the past. Away! when thou dost stand

On this fair earth as doth a blasted tree

Which the warm sun revives not, then return,

Strong in thy desolation: but till then,

Thou art not for our purpose; we have need

Of more unshrinking hearts.

Raim. Montalba! know

I shrink from crime alone. Oh! if my voice

Might yet have power among you, I would say,

Associates, leaders, be avenged! but yet

As knights, as warriors!

Mon. Peace! have we not borne

Th' indelible taint of contumely and chains?

We are not knights and warriors. Our bright crests

Have been defiled and trampled to the earth.

Boy! we are slaves—and our revenge shall be

Deep as a slave's disgrace.

Raim. Why, then, farewell:

I leave you to your counsels. He that still

Would hold his lofty nature undebased,

And his name pure, were but a loiterer here.

Pro. And is it thus indeed?—dost thou forsake

Our cause, my son!

Raim. O father! what proud hopes

This hour hath blighted! Yet, whate’er betide,

It is a noble privilege to look up

Fearless in heaven’s bright face—and this is mine,

And shall be still.

[Exit Raimond.

Pro. He’s gone! Why, let it be!

I trust our Sicily hath many a son

Valiant as mine. Associates! ’tis decreed

Our foes shall perish. We have but to name

The hour, the scene, the signal.

Mon. It should be

In the full city, when some festival

Hath gather’d throngs, and lull’d infatuate hearts

To brief security. Hark! is there not

A sound of hurrying footsteps on the breeze?

We are betray’d.—Who art thou?

Vittoria enters.

Pro. One alone

Should be thus daring. Lady, lift the veil

That shades thy noble brow.

[She raises her veil—the Sicilians draw back with respect.

Sicilians. Th’ affianced bride

Of our lost king!

Pro. And more, Montalba; know

Within this form there dwells a soul as high

As warriors in their battles e’er have proved,

Or patriots on the scaffold.

Vit. Valiant men!

I come to ask your aid. You see me, one

Whose widow’d youth hath all been consecrate

To a proud sorrow, and whose life is held

In token and memorial of the dead.

Say, is it meet that lingering thus on earth,

But to behold one great atonement made,

And keep one name from fading in men’s hearts,

A tyrant’s will should force me to profane

Heaven’s altar with unhallow’d vows—and live

Stung by the keen unutterable scorn

Of my own bosom, live—another’s bride?

Sicilians. Never! oh, never! Fear not, noble lady!

Worthy of Conradin!

Vit. Yet hear me still—

His bride, that Eribert’s, who notes our tears

With his insulting eye of cold derision,

And, could he pierce the depths where feeling works,

Would number e’en our agonies as crimes.

—Say, is this meet?

Gui. We deem’d these nuptials, lady,

Thy willing choice; but ’tis a joy to find

Thou’rt noble still. Fear not; by all our wrongs,

This shall not be.

Pro. Vittoria, thou art come

To ask our aid—but we have need of thine.

Know, the completion of our high designs

Requires—a festival; and it must be

Thy bridal!

Vit. Procida!

Pro. Nay, start not thus.

’Tis no hard task to bind your raven hair

With festal garlands, and to bid the song

Rise, and the wine-cup mantle. No—nor yet

To meet your suitor at the glittering shrine,

Where death, not love, awaits him!

Vit. Can my soul

Dissemble thus?

Pro. We have no other means

Of winning our great birthright back from those

Who have usurp’d it, than so lulling them
Into vain confidence, that they may deem
All wrongs forgot; and this may be best done
By what I ask of thee.
Mon. Then we will mix
With the flush’d revellers, making their gay feast
The harvest of the grave.
Vit. A bridal day!
—Must it be so? Then, chiefs of Sicily,
I bid you to my nuptials! but be there
With your bright swords unsheathed, for thus alone
My guests should be adorn’d.
Pro. And let thy banquet
Be soon announced; for there are noble men
Sentenced to die, for whom we fain would purchase
Reprieve with other blood.
Vit. Be it then the day
Preceding that appointed for their doom.
Gui. My brother! thou shalt live! Oppression boasts
No gift of prophecy!—It but remains
To name our signal, chiefs!
Mon. The Vesper-bell!
Pro. Even so—the Vesper-bell, whose deep-toned peal
Is heard o’er land and wave. Part of our band,

Wearing the guise of antic revelry,
Shall enter, as in some fantastic pageant,
The halls of Eribert; and at the hour
Devoted to the sword's tremendous task,
I follow with the rest. The Vesper-bell!
That sound shall wake th' avenger; for 'tis come,
The time when power is in a voice, a breath,
To burst the spell which bound us. But the night
Is waning, with her stars, which one by one
Warn us to part. Friends to your homes!—your homes?
That name is yet to win. Away! prepare
For our next meeting in Palermo's walls.
The Vesper-bell! Remember!
Sicilians. Fear us not
The Vesper-bell!
[Exeunt omnes.

ACT III.

Scene I.—Apartment in a Palace.

Eribert, Vittoria.

Vit. Speak not of love—it is a word with deep
Strange magic in its melancholy sound,
To summon up the dead; and they should rest,
At such an hour, forgotten. There are things
We must throw from us, when the heart would gather

Strength to fulfil its settled purposes;
Therefore, no more of love! But if to robe
This form in bridal ornaments—to smile
(I can smile yet) at thy gay feast, and stand
At th’ altar by thy side;—if this be deem’d
Enough, it shall be done.
Eri. My fortune’s star
Doth rule th’ ascendant still! (Apart.)—If not of love,
Then pardon, lady, that I speak of joy,
And with exulting heart——
Vit. There is no joy!
—Who shall look through the far futurity,
And, as the shadowy visions of events
Develop on his gaze, midst their dim throng,
Dare, with oracular mien, to point, and say,
“This will bring happiness?” Who shall do this?
Who, thou and I, and all! There’s One, who sits
In His own bright tranquillity enthroned,
High o’er all storms, and looking far beyond
Their thickest clouds! but we, from whose dull eyes
A grain of dust hides the great sun—e’en we
Usurp his attributes, and talk, as seers,
Of future joy and grief!
Eri. Thy words are strange.

Yet will I hope that peace at length shall settle
Upon thy troubled heart, and add soft grace
To thy majestic beauty. Fair Vittoria!
Oh! if my cares——
Vit. I know a day shall come
Of peace to all. Ev'n from my darken'd spirit
Soon shall each restless wish be exorcised,
Which haunts it now, and I shall then lie down
Serenely to repose. Of this no more.
I have a boon to ask.
Eri. Command my power,
And deem it thus most honour'd.
Vit. Have I then
Soar'd such an eagle pitch, as to command
The mighty Eribert?—And yet 'tis meet;
For I bethink me now, I should have worn
A crown upon this forehead. Generous lord!
Since thus you give me freedom, know, there is
An hour I have loved from childhood, and a sound
Whose tones, o'er earth and ocean sweetly bearing
A sense of deep repose, have lull'd me oft
To peace—which is forgetfulness; I mean
The Vesper-bell. I pray you let it be
The summons to our bridal. Hear you not?

To our fair bridal!

Eri. Lady, let your will

Appoint each circumstance. I am too bless’d,

Proving my homage thus.

Vit. Why, then, ’tis mine

To rule the glorious fortunes of the day,

And I may be content. Yet much remains

For thought to brood on, and I would be left

Alone with my resolves. Kind Eribert!

(Whom I command so absolutely,) now

Part we a few brief hours; and doubt not, when

I’m at thy side once more, but I shall stand

There—to the last!

Eri. Your smiles are troubled, lady—

May they ere long be brighter! Time will seem

Slow till the Vesper-bell.

Vit. ’Tis lovers’ phrase

To say—Time lags; and therefore meet for you;

But with an equal pace the hours move on,

Whether they bear, on their swift silent wing,

Pleasure or—fate.

Eri. Be not so full of thought

On such a day. Behold, the skies themselves

Look on my joy with a triumphant smile

Unshadow’d by a cloud.

Vit. ’Tis very meet

That heaven (which loves the just) should wear a smile

In honour of his fortunes. Now, my lord,

Forgive me if I say farewell until

Th’ appointed hour.

Eri. Lady, a brief farewell.

[Exeunt separately.

Scene II.—The Sea-shore.

Procida, Raimond.

Pro. And dost thou still refuse to share the glory

Of this, our daring enterprise?

Raim. O father!

I, too, have dreamt of glory, and the word

Hath to my soul been as a trumpet’s voice,

Making my nature sleepless. But the deeds

Whereby ’twas won—the high exploits, whose tale

Bids the heart burn, were of another cast

Than such as thou requirest.

Pro. Every deed

Hath sanctity, if bearing for its aim

The freedom of our country; and the sword

Alike is honour’d in the patriot’s hand,

Searching, midst warrior hosts, the heart which gave

Oppression birth, or flashing through the gloom
Of the still chamber, o’er its troubled couch,
At dead of night.
Raim. (turning away.) There is no path but one
For noble natures.
Pro. Wouldst thou ask the man
Who to the earth hath dash’d a nation’s chains,
Rent as with heaven’s own lightning, by what means
The glorious end was won? Go, swell th’ acclaim!
Bid the deliverer, hail! and if his path,
To that most bright and sovereign destiny,
Hath led o’er trampled thousands, be it call’d
A stem necessity, but not a crime!
Raim. Father! my soul yet kindles at the thought
Of nobler lessons, in my boyhood learn’d,
Ev’n from thy voice. The high remembrances
Of other days are stirring in the heart
Where thou didst plant them; and they speak of men
Who needed no vain sophistry to gild
Acts that would bear heaven’s light—and such be mine!
O father! is it yet too late to draw
The praise and blessing of all valiant hearts
On our most righteous cause?
Pro. What wouldst thou do?

Raim. I would go forth, and rouse th’ indignant land
To generous combat. Why should freedom strike
Mantled with darkness? Is there not more strength
Ev’n in the waving of her single arm
Than hosts can wield against her? I would rouse
That spirit whose fire doth press resistless on
To its proud sphere—the stormy field of fight!
Pro. Ay! and give time and warning to the foe
To gather all his might! It is too late.
There is a work to be this eve begun
When rings the Vesper-bell; and, long before
To-morrow’s sun hath reach’d i’ th’ noonday heaven
His throne of burning glory, every sound
Of the Provençal tongue within our walls,
As by one thunderstroke—(you are pale, my son)—
Shall be for ever silenced!
Raim. What! such sounds
As falter on the lip of infancy,
In its imperfect utterance? or are breathed
By the fond mother as she lulls her babe?
Or in sweet hymns, upon the twilight air
Pour’d by the timid maid? Must all alike
Be still’d in death? and wouldst thou tell my heart
There is no crime in this?

Pro. Since thou dost feel

Such horror of our purpose, in thy power

Are means that might avert it.

Raim. Speak! oh speak!

Pro. How would those rescued thousands bless thy name

Shouldst thou betray us!

Raim. Father! I can bear—

Ay, proudly woo—the keenest questioning

Of thy soul-gifted eye, which almost seems

To claim a part of heaven's dread royalty,

—The power that searches thought.

Pro. (after a pause.) Thou hast a brow

Clear as the day—and yet I doubt thee, Raimond!

Whether it be that I have learn'd distrust

From a long look through man's deep-folded heart;

Whether my paths have been so seldom cross'd

By honour and fair mercy, that they seem

But beautiful deceptions, meeting thus

My unaccustom'd gaze: howe'er it be—

I doubt thee! See thou waver not—take heed.

Time lifts the veil from all things!

[Exit Procida.

Raim. And 'tis thus

Youth fades from off our spirit; and the robes

Of beauty and of majesty, wherewith
We clothed our idols, drop! Oh, bitter day!
When, at the crushing of our glorious world,
We start, and find men thus! Yet be it so!
Is not my soul still powerful in itself
To realise its dreams? Ay, shrinking not
From the pure eye of heaven, my brow may well
Undaunted meet my father's. But, away!
Thou shalt be saved, sweet Constance!—Love is yet
Mightier than vengeance.
[Exit Raimond.
Scene III.——Gardens of a Palace.
Constance alone.
Con. There was a time when my thoughts wander'd not
Beyond these fairy scenes!—when but to catch
The languid fragrance of the southern breeze
From the rich flowering citrons, or to rest,
Dreaming of some wild legend, in the shade
Of the dark laurel foliage, was enough
Of happiness. How have these calm delights
Fled from before one passion, as the dews,
The delicate gems of morning, are exhaled
By the great sun!
[Raimond enters.

Raimond! oh! now thou’rt come—

I read it in thy look—to say farewell

For the last time—the last!

Raim. No, best beloved!

I come to tell thee there is now no power

To part us but in death.

Con. I have dreamt of joy,

But never aught like this. Speak yet again!

Say we shall part no more!

Raim. No more—if love

Can strive with darker spirits; and he is strong

In his immortal nature! All is changed

Since last we met. My father—keep the tale

Secret from all, and most of all, my Constance,

From Eribert—my father is return’d:

I leave thee not.

Con. Thy father! blessèd sound!

Good angels be his guard! Oh! if he knew

How my soul clings to thine, he could not hate

Even a Provençal maid! Thy father!—now

Thy soul will be at peace, and I shall see

The sunny happiness of earlier days

Look from thy brow once more! But how is this?

Thine eye reflects not the glad soul of mine;

And in thy look is that which ill befits

A tale of joy.

Raim. A dream is on my soul.

I see a slumberer, crown’d with flowers, and smiling

As in delighted visions, on the brink

Of a dread chasm; and this strange fantasy

Hath cast so deep a shadow o’er my thoughts,

I cannot but be sad.

Con. Why, let me sing

One of the sweet wild strains you love so well,

And this will banish it.

Raim. It may not be.

O gentle Constance! go not forth to-day:

Such dreams are ominous.

Con. Have you then forgot

My brother’s nuptial feast? I must be one

Of the gay train attending to the shrine

His stately bride. In sooth, my step of joy

Will print earth lightly now. What fear’st thou, love?

Look all around! the blue transparent skies,

And sunbeams pouring a more buoyant life

Through each glad thrilling vein, will brightly chase

All thought of evil. Why, the very air

Breathes of delight! Through all its glowing realms

Doth music blend with fragrance; and e’en here
The city’s voice of jubilee is heard,
Till each light leaf seems trembling unto sounds
Of human joy!
Raim. There lie far deeper things—
Things that may darken thought for life, beneath
That city’s festive semblance. I have pass’d
Through the glad multitudes, and I have mark’d
A stern intelligence in meeting eyes,
Which deem’d their flash unnoticed, and a quick,
Suspicious vigilance, too intent to clothe
Its mien with carelessness; and now and then,
A hurrying start, a whisper, or a hand
Pointing by stealth to some one, singled out
Amidst the reckless throng. O’er all is spread
A mantling flush of revelry, which may hide
Much from unpractised eyes; but lighter signs
Have been prophetic oft.
Con. I tremble!—Raimond!
What may these things portend?
Raim. It was a day
Of festival like this; the city sent
Up through her sunny firmament a voice
Joyous as now; when, scarcely heralded

By one deep moan, forth from his cavernous depths
The earthquake burst; and the wide splendid scene
Became one chaos of all fearful things,
Till the brain whirl'd, partaking the sick motion
Of rocking palaces.
Con. And then didst thou,
My noble Raimond! through the dreadful paths
Laid open by destruction, past the chasms,
Whose fathomless clefts, a moment's work, had given
One burial unto thousands, rush to save
Thy trembling Constance! she who lives to bless
Thy generous love, that still the breath of heaven
Wafts gladness to her soul!
Raim. Heaven!—heaven is just!
And being so, must guard thee, sweet one! still.
Trust none beside. Oh! the omnipotent skies
Make their wrath manifest, but insidious man
Doth compass those he hates with secret snares,
Wherein lies fate. Know, danger walks abroad,
Mask'd as a reveller. Constance! oh, by all
Our tried affection, all the vows which bind
Our hearts together, meet me in these bowers,
Here, I adjure thee, meet me, when the bell
Doth sound for vesper prayer!

Con. And know’st thou not
’Twill be the bridal hour?
Raim. It will not, love!
That hour will bring no bridal! Naught of this
To human ear; but speed thou hither—fly,
When evening brings that signal. Dost thou heed?
This is no meeting by a lover sought
To breathe fond tales, and make the twilight groves
And stars attest his vows; deem thou not so,
Therefore denying it! I tell thee, Constance!
If thou wouldst save me from such fierce despair
As falls on man, beholding all he loves
Perish before him, while his strength can but
Strive with his agony—thou’lt meet me then.
Look on me, love!—I am not oft so moved—
Thou’lt meet me?
Con. Oh! what mean thy words? If then
My steps are free,—I will. Be thou but calm.
Raim. Be calm!—there is a cold and sullen calm,
And, were my wild fears made realities,
It might be mine; but, in this dread suspense—
This conflict of all terrible fantasies,
There is no calm. Yet fear thou not, dear love!
I will watch o’er thee still. And now, farewell

Until that hour!

Con. My Raimond, fare thee well.

[Exeunt.

Scene IV.—Room in the Citadel of Palermo.

Alberti, De Couci.

De Cou. Saidst thou this night?

Alb. This very night—and lo!

E’en now the sun declines.

De Cou. What! are they arm’d?

Alb. All arm’d, and strong in vengeance and despair.

De Cou. Doubtful and strange the tale! Why was not this reveal’d before?

Alb. Mistrust me not, my lord!

That stern and jealous Procida hath kept

O’er all my steps (as though he did suspect

The purposes, which oft his eye hath sought

To read in mine) a watch so vigilant

I knew not how to warn thee, though for this

Alone I mingled with his bands—to learn

Their projects and their strength. Thou know’st my faith

To Anjou’s house full well.

De Cou. How may we now

Avert the gathering storm? The viceroy holds

His bridal feast, and all is revelry.

’Twas a true-boding heaviness of heart

Which kept me from these nuptials.

Alb. Thou thyself

May’st yet escape, and haply of thy bands

Rescue a part, ere long to wreak full vengeance

Upon these rebels. ’Tis too late to dream

Of saving Eribert. E’en shouldst thou rush

Before him with the tidings, in his pride

And confidence of soul, he would but laugh

Thy tale to scorn.

De Cou. He must not die unwarn’d,

Though it be all in vain. But thou, Alberti,

Rejoin thy comrades, lest thine absence wake

Suspicion in their hearts. Thou hast done well,

And shalt not pass unguerdon’d, should I live

Through the deep horrors of th’ approaching night.

Alb. Noble De Couci, trust me still. Anjou

Commands no heart more faithful than Alberti’s.

[Exit Alberti.

De Cou. The grovelling slave!—And yet he spoke too true!

For Eribert, in blind elated joy,

Will scorn the warning voice. The day wanes fast,

And through the city, recklessly dispersed,

Unarm’d and unprepared, my soldiers revel,

E’en on the brink of fate. I must away.

[Exit De Couci.

Scene V.—A Banqueting Hall.—Provençal Nobles assembled.

1st Noble. Joy be to this fair meeting! Who hath seen
The viceroy's bride?
2d Noble. I saw her as she pass'd
The gazing throngs assembled in the city.
'Tis said she hath not left for years, till now,
Her castle's wood-girt solitude. 'Twill gall
These proud Sicilians that her wide domains
Should be the conqueror's guerdon.
3d Noble. 'Twas their boast
With what fond faith she worshipp'd still the name
Of the boy Conradin. How will the slaves
Brook this new triumph of their lords?
2d Noble. In sooth,
It stings them to the quick. In the full streets
They mix with our Provençals, and assume
A guise of mirth, but it sits hardly on them.
'Twere worth a thousand festivals to see
With what a bitter and unnatural effort
They strive to smile!
1st Noble. Is this Vittoria fair?
2d Noble. Of a most noble mien; but yet her beauty
Is wild and awful, and her large dark eye,

In its unsettled glances, hath strange power,

From which thou'lt shrink as I did.

1st Noble. Hush! they come.

Enter Eribert, Vittoria, Constance, and others.

Eri. Welcome, my noble friends!—there must not lower

One clouded brow to-day in Sicily!

—Behold my bride!

Nobles. Receive our homage, lady!

Vit. I bid all welcome. May the feast we offer

Prove worthy of such guests!

Eri. Look on her, friends!

And say if that majestic brow is not

Meet for a diadem?

Vit. 'Tis well, my lord!

When memory's pictures fade—'tis kindly done

To brighten their dimm'd hues!

1st Noble (apart.) Mark'd you her glance?

2d Noble (apart.) What eloquent scorn was there?

Yet he, th' elate

Of heart, perceives it not.

Eri. Now to the feast!

Constance, you look not joyous. I have said

That all should smile to-day.

Con. Forgive me, brother;

The heart is wayward, and its garb of pomp

At times oppresses it.

Eri. Why, how is this?

Con. Voices of woe, and prayers of agony,

Unto my soul have risen, and left sad sounds

There echoing still. Yet would I fain be gay,

Since ’tis your wish. In truth, I should have been

A village maid.

Eri. But being as you are,

Not thus ignobly free, command your looks

(They may be taught obedience) to reflect

The aspect of the time.

Vit. And know, fair maid!

That, if in this unskill’d, you stand alone

Amidst our court of pleasure.

Eri. To the feast!

Now let the red wine foam!—There should be mirth

When conquerors revel! Lords of this fair isle!

Your good swords’ heritage, crown each bowl, and pledge

The present and the future! for they both

Look brightly on us. Dost thou smile, my bride?

Vit. Yes, Eribert!—thy prophecies of joy

Have taught e’en me to smile.

Eri. ’Tis well. To-day

I have won a fair and almost royal bride;
To-morrow let the bright sun speed his course,
To waft me happiness!—my proudest foes
Must die; and then my slumber shall be laid
On rose-leaves, with no envious fold to mar
The luxury of its visions!—Fair Vittoria,
Your looks are troubled!
Vit. It is strange—but oft,
Midst festal songs and garlands, o’er my soul
Death comes, with some dull image! As you spoke
Of those whose blood is claim’d, I thought for them
Who, in a darkness thicker than the night
E’er wove with all her clouds, have pined so long,
How blessèd were the stroke which makes them things
Of that invisible world, wherein, we trust,
There is at least no bondage! But should we,
From such a scene as this, where all earth’s joys
Contend for mastery, and the very sense
Of life is rapture—should we pass, I say,
At once from such excitements to the void
And silent gloom of that which doth await us—
Were it not dreadful?
Eri. Banish such dark thoughts!
They ill beseem the hour.

Vit. There is no hour

Of this mysterious world, in joy or woe,

But they beseem it well! Why, what a slight

Impalpable bound is that, th' unseen, which severs

Being from death! And who can tell how near

Its misty brink he stands?

1st Noble (aside.) What mean her words?

2d Noble. There's some dark mystery here.

Eri. No more of this!

Pour the bright juice, which Etna's glowing vines

Yield to the conquerors! And let music's voice

Dispel these ominous dreams!—Wake, harp and song!

Swell out your triumph!

A Messenger enters, bearing a letter.

Mes. Pardon, my good lord!

But this demands——

Eri. What means thy breathless haste,

And that ill-boding mien? Away! such looks

Befit not hours like these.

Mes. The Lord De Couci

Bade me bear this, and say, 'tis fraught with tidings

Of life and death.

Vit. (hurriedly.) Is this a time for aught

But revelry? My lord, these dull intrusions

Mar the bright spirit of the festal scene!

Eri. (to the Messenger.) Hence! Tell the Lord De Couci, we will talk

Of life and death to-morrow.

[Exit Messenger.

Let there be

Around me none but joyous looks to-day,

And strains whose very echoes wake to mirth!

A band of the conspirators enter, to the sound of music, disguised as shepherds, bacchanals, &c.

Eri. What forms are these? What means this antic triumph?

Vit. ’Tis but a rustic pageant, by my vassals

Prepared to grace our bridal. Will you not

Hear their wild music? Our Sicilian vales

Have many a sweet and mirthful melody,

To which the glad heart bounds. Breathe ye some strain

Meet for the time, ye sons of Sicily!

One of the Masquers sings.

The festal eve, o’er earth and sky,

In her sunset robe looks bright,

And the purple hills of Sicily

With their vineyards laugh in light;

From the marble cities of her plains,

Glad voices mingling swell;

—But with yet more loud and lofty strains,

They shall hail the Vesper-bell!

Oh! sweet its tones, when the summer breeze

Their cadence wafts afar,

To float o’er the blue Sicilian seas,

As they gleam to the first pale star!

The shepherd greets them on his height,

The hermit in his cell;

—But a deeper voice shall breathe to-night,

In the sound of the Vesper-bell!

[The bell rings.

Eri. It is the hour! Hark, hark!—my bride, our summons!

The altar is prepared and crown’d with flowers,

That wait——

Vit. The victim!

[A tumult heard without.

Procida and Montalba enter, with others, armed.

Pro. Strike! the hour is come!

Vit. Welcome, avengers! welcome! Now, be strong!

(The conspirators throw off their disguise, and rush with their swords drawn upon the Provençals. Eribert is wounded, and falls.)

Pro. Now hath fate reach’d thee, in thy mid career,

Thou reveller in a nation’s agonies!

(The Provençals are driven off, pursued by the Sicilians.)

Con. (supporting Eribert.) My brother! oh,

my brother!

Eri. Have I stood

A leader in the battle-fields of kings,

To perish thus at last? Ay, by these pangs,

And this strange chill, that heavily doth creep,

Like a slow poison, through my curdling veins,

This should be—death! In sooth, a dull exchange

For the gay bridal feast!

Voices (without.) Remember Conradin!—spare none!—spare none!

Vit. (throwing off her bridal wreath and ornaments.)

This is proud freedom! Now my soul may cast,

In generous scorn, her mantle of dissembling

To earth for ever! And it is such joy,

As if a captive from his dull cold cell

Might soar at once, on charter’d wing, to range

The realms of starr’d infinity! Away!

Vain mockery of a bridal wreath! The hour

For which stem patience ne’er kept watch in vain

Is come; and I may give my bursting heart

Full and indignant scope. Now, Eribert!

Believe in retribution! What! proud man!

Prince, ruler, conqueror! didst thou deem heaven slept?

“Or that the unseen, immortal ministers,

Ranging the world to note e’en purposed crime

In burning characters, had laid aside

Their everlasting attributes for thee?”

O blind security! He in whose dread hand

The lightnings vibrate, holds them back, until

The trampler of this goodly earth hath reach’d

His pyramid height of power; that so his fall

May with more fearful oracles make pale

Man’s crown’d oppressors!

Con. Oh! reproach him not!

His soul is trembling on the dizzy brink

Of that dim world where passion may not enter.

Leave him in peace.

Voices (without.) Anjou! Anjou!—De Couci, to the rescue!

Eri. (half raising himself.) My brave Provençals! do ye combat still?

And I your chief am here! Now, now I feel

That death indeed is bitter!

Vit. Fare thee well!

Thine eyes so oft with their insulting smile

Have look’d on man’s last pangs, thou shouldst by this,

Be perfect how to die!

Exit Vittoria.

Raimond enters.

Raim. Away, my Constance!

Now is the time for flight. Our slaughtering bands

Are scatter’d far and wide. A little while
And thou shalt be in safety. Know’st thou not
That low sweet vale, where dwells the holy man
Anselmo?—he whose hermitage is rear’d
Mid some old temple’s ruins? Round the spot
His name hath spread so pure and deep a charm,
’Tis hallow’d as a sanctuary wherein
Thou shalt securely bide, till this wild storm
Have spent its fury. Haste!
Con. I will not fly!
While in his heart there is one throb of life,
One spark in his dim eyes, I will not leave
The brother of my youth to perish thus,
Without one kindly bosom to sustain
His dying head.
Eri. The clouds are darkening round.
There are strange voices ringing in mine ear
That summon me—to what? But I have been
Used to command!—Away! I will not die,
But on the field—
[He dies.
Con. (kneeling by him.) O Heaven! be merciful
As thou art just!—for he is now where naught
But mercy can avail him.—It is past!

Guido enters with his sword drawn.

Gui. (to Raimond.) I've sought thee long—why art thou lingering here?

Haste, follow me! Suspicion with thy name

Joins that word—Traitor!

Raim. Traitor!—Guido?

Gui. Yes!

Hast thou not heard that, with his men-at-arms,

After vain conflict with a people's wrath,

De Couci hath escaped? And there are those

Who murmur that from thee the warning came

Which saved him from our vengeance. But e'en yet,

In the red current of Provençal blood,

That doubt may be effaced. Draw thy good sword,

And follow me!

Raim. And thou couldst doubt me, Guido!

'Tis come to this!—Away! mistrust me still.

I will not stain my sword with deeds like thine.

Thou knowst me not!

Gui. Raimond di Procida!—

If thou art he whom once I deem'd so noble—

Call me thy friend no more!

[Exit Guido.

Raim. (after a pause.) Rise, dearest, rise!

Thy duty's task hath nobly been fulfill'd,

E’en in the face of death; but all is o’er,
And this is now no place where nature’s tears
In quiet sanctity may freely flow.
—Hark! the wild sounds that wait on fearful deeds
Are swelling on the winds, as the deep roar
Of fast-advancing billows; and for thee
I shame not thus to tremble.—Speed! oh, speed!
Exeunt.

ACT IV.

Scene I.—A Street in Palermo.

Procida enters.

Pro. How strange and deep a stillness loads the air,
As with the power of midnight! Ay, where death
Hath pass’d, there should be silence. But this hush
Of nature’s heart, this breathlessness of all things,
Doth press on thought too heavily, and the sky,
With its dark robe of purple thunder-clouds,
Brooding in sullen masses o’er my spirit,
Weighs like an omen! Wherefore should this be?
Is not our task achieved—the mighty work
Of our deliverance! Yes; I should be joyous:
But this our feeble nature, with its quick
Instinctive superstitions, will drag down
Th’ ascending soul. And I have fearful bodings

That treachery lurks amongst us.—Raimond! Raimond!

Oh, guilt ne’er made a mien like his its garb!

It cannot be!

Montalba, Guido, and other Sicilians enter.

Pro. Welcome! we meet in joy!

Now may we bear ourselves erect, resuming

The kingly port of freemen! Who shall dare,

After this proof of slavery’s dread recoil,

To weave us chains again? Ye have done well.

Mon. We have done well. There needs no choral song,

No shouting multitudes, to blazon forth

Our stern exploits. The silence of our foes

Doth vouch enough, and they are laid to rest,

Deep as the sword could make it. Yet our task

Is still but half achieved, since with his bands

De Couci hath escaped, and doubtless leads

Their footsteps to Messina, where our foes

Will gather all their strength. Determined hearts

And deeds to startle earth, are yet required

To make the mighty sacrifice complete.—

Where is thy son?

Pro. I know not. Once last night

He cross’d my path, and with one stroke beat down

A sword just raised to smite me, and restored

My own, which in that deadly strife had been
Wrench'd from my grasp; but when I would have press'd him
To my exulting bosom, he drew back,
And with a sad, and yet a scornful smile,
Full of strange meaning, left me. Since that hour
I have not seen him. Wherefore didst thou ask?
Mon. It matters not. We have deep things to speak of.
Know'st thou that we have traitors in our councils?
Pro. I know some voice in secret must have warn'd
De Couci, or his scatter'd bands had ne'er
So soon been marshall'd, and in close array
Led hence as from the field. Hast thou heard aught
That may develop this?
Mon. The guards we set
To watch the city gates, have seized, this morn,
One whose quick fearful glance, and hurried step,
Betray'd his guilty purpose. Mark! he bore
(Amidst the tumult, deeming that his flight
Might all unnoticed pass) these scrolls to him—
The fugitive Provençal. Read and judge!
Pro. Where is this messenger?
Mon. Where should he be?—
They slew him in their wrath.
Pro. Unwisely done!

Give me the scrolls.

[He reads.

Now, if there be such things

As may to death add sharpness, yet delay

The pang which gives release; if there be power

In execration, to call down the fires

Of yon avenging heaven, whose rapid shafts

But for such guilt were aimless; be they heap’d

Upon the traitor’s head!—Scorn make his name

Her mark for ever!

Mon. In our passionate blindness,

We send forth curses, whose deep stings recoil

Oft on ourselves.

Pro. Whate’er fate hath of ruin

Fall on his house! What! to resign again

That freedom for whose sake our souls have now

Engrain’d themselves in blood! Why, who is he

That hath devised this treachery? To the scroll

Why fix’d he not his name, so stamping it

With an immortal infamy, whose brand

Might warn men from him? Who should be so vile?

Alberti?—In his eye is that which ever

Shrinks from encountering mine!—But no! his race

Is of our noblest. Oh! he could not shame

That high descent! Urbino?—Conti?—No!
They are too deeply pledged. There's one name more!
—I cannot utter it! Now shall I read
Each face with cold suspicion, which doth blot
From man's high mien its native royalty,
And seal his noble forehead with the impress
Of its own vile imaginings! Speak your thoughts,
Montalba! Guido!—Who should this man be?
Mon. Why, what Sicilian youth unsheathed last night
His sword to aid our foes, and turn'd its edge
Against his country's chiefs?—He that did this,
May well be deem'd for guiltier treason ripe.
Pro. And who is he?
Mon. Nay, ask thy son.
Pro. My son!
What should he know of such a recreant heart?
Speak, Guido! thou'rt his friend!
Gui. I would not wear
The brand of such a name!
Pro. How? what means this?
A flash of light breaks in upon my soul!
Is it to blast me? Yet the fearful doubt
Hath crept in darkness through my thoughts before,
And been flung from them. Silence!—Speak not yet!

I would be calm and meet the thunder-burst

With a strong heart.

[A pause.

Now, what have I to hear?

Your tidings?

Gui. Briefly, ’twas your son did thus!

He hath disgraced your name.

Pro. My son did thus!

Are thy words oracles, that I should search

Their hidden meaning out? What did my son?

I have forgot the tale. Repeat it, quick!

Gui. ’Twill burst upon thee all too soon. While we

Were busy at the dark and solemn rites

Of retribution; while we bathed the earth

In red libations, which will consecrate

The soil they mingled with to freedom’s step

Through the long march of ages: ’twas his task

To shield from danger a Provençal maid,

Sister of him whose cold oppression stung

Our hearts to madness.

Mon. What! should she be spared

To keep that name from perishing on earth?

—I cross’d them in their path, and raised my sword

To smite her in her champion’s arms. We fought

The boy disarm’d me! And I live to tell
My shame, and wreak my vengeance!
Gui. Who but he
Could warn De Couci, or devise the guilt
These scrolls reveal? Hath not the traitor still
Sought, with his fair and specious eloquence,
To win us from our purpose? All things seem
Leagued to unmask him.
Mon. Know you not there came,
E’en in the banquet’s hour, from this De Couci,
One, bearing unto Eribert the tidings
Of all our purposed deeds? And have we not
Proof, as the noon-day clear, that Raimond loves
The sister of that tyrant?
Pro. There was one
Who mourn’d for being childless! Let him now
Feast o’er his children’s graves, and I will join
The revelry!
Mon. (apart.) You shall be childless too!
Pro. Was’t you, Montalba!—Now rejoice, I say!
There is no name so near you that its stains
Should call the fever’d and indignant blood
To your dark cheek! But I will dash to earth
The weight that presses on my heart, and then

Be glad as thou art.

Mon. What means this, my lord?

Who hath seen gladness on Montalba's mien?

Pro. Why, should not all be glad who have no sons

To tarnish their bright name?

Mon. I am not used

To bear with mockery.

Pro. Friend! By yon high heaven,

I mock thee not! 'Tis a proud fate to live

Alone and unallied. Why, what's alone?

A word whose sense is—free!—Ay, free from all

The venom'd stings implanted in the heart

By those it loves. Oh! I could laugh to think

O' th' joy that riots in baronial halls,

When the word comes—"A son is born!"—A son!

They should say thus—"He that shall knit your brow

To furrows, not of years—and bid your eye

Quail its proud glance to tell the earth its shame,

Is born, and so rejoice!" Then might we feast,

And know the cause! Were it not excellent?

Mon. This is all idle. There are deeds to do:

Arouse thee, Procida!

Pro. Why, am I not

Calm as immortal justice! She can strike,

And yet be passionless—and thus will I.
I know thy meaning. Deeds to do!—'tis well.
They shall be done ere thought on. Go ye forth:
There is a youth who calls himself my son.
His name is Raimond—in his eye is light
That shows like truth—but be not ye deceived!
Bear him in chains before us. We will sit
To-day in judgment, and the skies shall see
The strength which girds our nature. Will not this
Be glorious, brave Montalba? Linger not,
Ye tardy messengers! for there are things
Which ask the speed of storms.
[Exeunt Guido and others.
Is not this well?
Mon. 'Tis noble. Keep thy spirit to this proud height—
(Aside.) And then be desolate like me! My woes
Will at the thought grow light.
Pro. What now remains
To be prepared? There should be solemn pomp
To grace a day like this. Ay, breaking hearts
Require a drapery to conceal their throbs
From cold inquiring eyes; and it must be
Ample and rich, that so their gaze may not
Explore what lies beneath.

[Exit Procida.

Mon. Now this is well!

—I hate this Procida; for he hath won

In all our councils that ascendency

And mastery o’er bold hearts, which should have been

Mine by a thousand claims. Had he the strength

Of wrongs like mine? No! for that name—his country—

He strikes; my vengeance hath a deeper fount:

But there’s dark joy in this!—And fate hath barr’d

My soul from every other.

[Exit Montalba.

Scene II.—A Hermitage surrounded by the Ruins of an Ancient Temple.

Constance, Anselmo.

Con. ’Tis strange he comes not! Is not this the still

And sultry hour of noon? He should have been

Here by the daybreak. Was there not a voice?

—“No! ’tis the shrill cicada, with glad life

Peopling these marble ruins, as it sports

Amidst them in the sun.” Hark! yet again!

No! no! Forgive me, father! that I bring

Earth’s restless griefs and passions, to disturb

The stillness of thy holy solitude:

My heart is full of care.

Ans. There is no place

So hallow'd as to be unvisited

By mortal cares. Nay, whither should we go

With our deep griefs and passions, but to scenes

Lonely and still, where He that made our hearts

Will speak to them in whispers? I have known

Affliction too, my daughter.

Con. Hark! his step!

I know it well—he comes—my Raimond, welcome!

Vittoria enters, Constance shrinks back on perceiving her.

Oh, heaven! that aspect tells a fearful tale.

Vit. (not observing her.) There is a cloud of horror on my soul;

And on thy words, Anselmo, peace doth wait,

Even as an echo, following the sweet close

Of some divine and solemn harmony:

Therefore I sought thee now. Oh! speak to me

Of holy things and names, in whose deep sound

Is power to bid the tempests of the heart

Sink, like a storm rebuked.

Ans. What recent grief

Darkens thy spirit thus?

Vit. I said not grief.

We should rejoice to-day, but joy is not

That which it hath been. In the flowers which wreathe

Its mantling cup, there is a scent unknown,

Fraught with a strange delirium. All things now
Have changed their nature: still, I say, rejoice!
There is a cause, Anselmo! We are free—
Free and avenged! Yet on my soul there hangs
A darkness, heavy as the oppressive gloom
Of midnight fantasies. Ay, for this, too,
There is a cause.
Ans. How say'st thou, we are free?—
There may have raged, within Palermo's walls,
Some brief wild tumult; but too well I know
They call the stranger lord.
Vit. Who calls the dead
Conqueror or lord? Hush! breathe it not aloud,
The wild winds must not hear it! Yet again,
I tell thee we are free!
Ans. Thine eye hath look'd
On fearful deeds, for still their shadows hang
O'er its dark orb. Speak! I adjure thee: say,
How hath this work been wrought?
Vit. Peace! ask me not!
Why shouldst thou hear a tale to send thy blood
Back on its fount? We cannot wake them now!
The storm is in my soul, but they are all
At rest!—Ay, sweetly may the slaughter'd babe

By its dead mother sleep; and warlike men,
Who midst the slain have slumber’d oft before,
Making their shield their pillow, may repose
Well, now their toils are done.—Is’t not enough?
Con. Merciful heaven! have such things been? And yet
There is no shade come o’er the laughing sky!
—I am an outcast now.
Ans. O Thou whose ways
Clouds mantle fearfully! of all the blind
But terrible ministers that work thy wrath,
How much is man the fiercest! Others know
Their limits—yes! the earthquakes, and the storms,
And the volcanoes!—he alone o’erleaps
The bounds of retribution! Couldst thou gaze,
Vittoria! with thy woman’s heart and eye,
On such dread scenes unmoved?
Vit. Was it for me
To stay th’ avenging sword? No, though it pierced
My very soul! Hark! hark! what thrilling shrieks
Ring through the air around me! Canst thou not
Bid them be hush’d? Oh!—look not on me thus!
Ans. Lady! thy thoughts lend sternness to the looks
Which are but sad! Have all then perish’d? all?
Was there no mercy!

Vit. Mercy! it hath been

A word forbidden as th’ unhallow’d names

Of evil powers. Yet one there was who dared

To own the guilt of pity, and to aid

The victims!—but in vain. Of him no more!

He is a traitor, and a traitor’s death

Will be his meed.

Con. (coming forward.) Oh, heaven!—his name, his name!

Is it—it cannot be!

Vit. (starting.) Thou here, pale girl!

I deem’d thee with the dead! How hast thou ’scaped

The snare! Who saved thee, last of all thy race!

Was it not he of whom I spake e’en now,

Raimond di Procida?

Con. It is enough:

Now the storm breaks upon me, and I sink.

Must he too die?

Vit. Is it e’en so? Why then,

Live on—thou hast the arrow at thy heart!

“Fix not on me thy sad reproachful eyes—”

I mean not to betray thee. Thou may’st live!

Why should Death bring thee his oblivious balms!

He visits but the happy. Didst thou ask

If Raimond too must die? It is as sure

As that his blood is on thy head, for thou

Didst win him to this treason.

Con. When did men

Call mercy treason? Take my life, but save

My noble Raimond!

Vit. Maiden! he must die.

E’en now the youth before his judges stands;

And they are men who, to the voice of prayer,

Are as the rock is to the murmur’d sigh

Of summer-waves!—ay, though a father sit

On their tribunal. Bend thou not to me.

What wouldst thou?

Con. Mercy!—Oh! wert thou to plead

But with a look, e’en yet he might be saved!

If thou hast ever loved——

Vit. If I have loved?

It is that love forbids me to relent.

I am what it hath made me. O’er my soul

Lightning hath pass’d and sear’d it. Could I weep

I then might pity—but it will not be.

Con. Oh, thou wilt yet relent! for woman’s heart

Was form’d to suffer and to melt.

Vit. Away!

Why should I pity thee? Thou wilt but prove

What I have known before—and yet I live!
Nature is strong, and it may all be borne—
The sick impatient yearning of the heart
For that which is not; and the weary sense
Of the dull void, wherewith our homes have been
Circled by death; yes, all things may be borne!
All, save remorse. But I will not bow down
My spirit to that dark power; there was no guilt!—
Anselmo! wherefore didst thou talk of guilt?
Ans. Ay, thus doth sensitive conscience quicken thought,
Lending reproachful voices to a breeze,
Keen lightning to a look.
Vit. Leave me in peace!
Is’t not enough that I should have a sense
Of things thou canst not see, all wild and dark,
And of unearthly whispers, haunting me
With dread suggestions, but that thy cold words,
Old man, should gall me, too? Must all conspire
Against me?——O thou beautiful spirit! wont
To shine upon my dreams with looks of love,
Where art thou vanish’d? Was it not the thought
Of thee which urged me to the fearful task,
And wilt thou now forsake me? I must seek
The shadowy woods again, for there, perchance,

Still may thy voice be in my twilight-paths;

—Here I but meet despair!

[Exit Vittoria.

Ans. (to Constance.) Despair not thou,

My daughter! He that purifies the heart

With grief will lend it strength.

Con. (endeavouring to rouse herself.) Did she not say

That some one was to die?

Ans. I tell thee not

Thy pangs are vain—for nature will have way.

Earth must have tears: yet in a heart like thine,

Faith may not yield its place.

Con. Have I not heard

Some fearful tale?—Who said that there should rest

Blood on my soul? What blood? I never bore

Hatred, kind father! unto aught that breathes:

Raimond doth know it well. Raimond!—High heaven!

It bursts upon me now! And he must die!

For my sake—e’en for mine!

Ans. Her words were strange,

And her proud mind seem’d half to frenzy wrought;

—Perchance this may not be.

Con. It must not be.

Why do I linger here?

[She rises to depart.

Ans. Where wouldst thou go?

Con. To give their stern and unrelenting hearts

A victim in his stead.

Ans. Stay! wouldst thou rush

On certain death?

Con. I may not falter now.

—Is not the life of woman all bound up

In her affections? What hath she to do

In this bleak world alone? It may be well

For man on his triumphal course to move,

Uncumber’d by soft bonds; but we were born

For love and grief.

Ans. Thou fair and gentle thing,

Unused to meet a glance which doth not speak

Of tenderness or homage! how shouldst thou

Bear the hard aspect of unpitying men,

Or face the King of Terrors?

Con. There is strength

Deep-bedded in our hearts, of which we reck

But little, till the shafts of heaven have pierced

Its fragile dwelling. Must not earth be rent

Before her gems are found?—Oh! now I feel

Worthy the generous love which hath not shunn’d

To look on death for me! My heart hath given

Birth to as deep a courage, and a faith

As high in its devotion.

[Exit Constance.

Ans. She is gone!

Is it to perish?—God of mercy! lend

Power to my voice, that so its prayer may save

This pure and lofty creature! I will follow—

But her young footstep and heroic heart

Will bear her to destruction, faster far

Than I can track her path.

[Exit Anselmo.

Scene III.—Hall of a Public Building.

Procida, Montalba, Guido, and others, seated as on a Tribunal.

Pro. The morn lower'd darkly; but the sun hath now,

With fierce and angry splendour, through the clouds

Burst forth, as if impatient to behold

This our high triumph.—Lead the prisoner in.

Raimond is brought in, fettered and guarded.

Why, what a bright and fearless brow is here!

—Is this man guilty?—Look on him, Montalba!

Mon. Be firm. Should justice falter at a look?

Pro. No, thou say'st well. Her eyes are filleted,

Or should be so. Thou, that dost call thyself—

But no! I will not breathe a traitor's name—
Speak! thou art arraign'd of treason.
Raim. I arraign
You, before whom I stand, of darker guilt,
In the bright face of heaven; and your own hearts
Give echo to the charge. Your very looks
Have ta'en the stamp of crime, and seem to shrink,
With a perturb'd and haggard wildness, back
From the too-searching light. Why, what hath wrought
This change on noble brows? There is a voice
With a deep answer, rising from the blood
Your hands have coldly shed! Ye are of those
From whom just men recoil with curdling veins,
All thrill'd by life's abhorrent consciousness,
And sensitive feeling of a murderer's presence.
—Away! come down from your tribunal seat,
Put off your robes of state, and let your mien
Be pale and humbled; for ye bear about you
That which repugnant earth doth sicken at,
More than the pestilence. That I should live
To see my father shrink!
Pro. Montalba, speak!
There's something chokes my voice—but fear me not.
Mon. If we must plead to vindicate our acts,

Be it when thou hast made thine own look clear,
Most eloquent youth! What answer canst thou make
To this our charge of treason?
Raim. I will plead
That cause before a mightier judgment-throne,
Where mercy is not guilt. But here I feel
Too buoyantly the glory and the joy
Of my free spirit's whiteness; for e'en now
The embodied hideousness of crime doth seem
Before me glaring out. Why, I saw thee,
Thy foot upon an aged warrior's breast,
Trampling out nature's last convulsive heavings.
And thou, thy sword—O valiant chief!—is yet
Red from the noble stroke which pierced at once
A mother and the babe, whose little life
Was from her bosom drawn!—Immortal deeds
For bards to hymn!
Gui. (aside.) I look upon his mien,
And waver. Can it be? My boyish heart
Deem'd him so noble once! Away, weak thoughts!
Why should I shrink, as if the guilt were mine,
From his proud glance?
Pro. O thou dissembler! thou,
So skill'd to clothe with virtue's generous flush

The hollow cheek of cold hypocrisy,
That, with thy guilt made manifest, I can scarce
Believe thee guilty!—look on me, and say
Whose was the secret warning voice, that saved
De Couci with his bands, to join our foes,
And forge new fetters for th' indignant land?
Whose was this treachery?
[Shows him papers.
Who hath promised here
(Belike to appease the manès of the dead)
At midnight to unfold Palermo's gates,
And welcome in the foe? Who hath done this,
But thou—a tyrant's friend?
Raim. Who hath done this?
Father!—if I may call thee by that name—
Look, with thy piercing eye, on those whose smiles
Were masks that hid their daggers. There, perchance,
May lurk what loves not light too strong. For me,
I know but this—there needs no deep research
To prove the truth that murderers may be traitors,
Even to each other.
Pro. (to Montalba.) His unaltering cheek
Still vividly doth hold its natural hue,
And his eye quails not! Is this innocence?

Mon. No! ’tis th’ unshrinking hardihood of crime.
—Thou bear’st a gallant mien. But where is she
Whom thou hast barter’d fame and life to save,
The fair Provençal maid? What! know’st thou not
That this alone were guilt, to death allied?
Was’t not our law that he who spared a foe
(And is she not of that detested race?)
Should thenceforth be amongst us as a foe?
—Where hast thou borne her? speak!
Raim. That Heaven, whose eye
Burns up thy soul with its far-searching glance,
Is with her: she is safe.
Pro. And by that word
Thy doom is seal’d. Oh, God! that I had died
Before this bitter hour, in the full strength
And glory of my heart!
Constance enters, and rushes to Raimond.
Con. Oh! art thou found?
—But yet, to find thee thus! Chains, chains for thee!
My brave, my noble love! Off with these bonds;
Let him be free as air: for I am come
To be your victim now.
Raim. Death has no pang
More keen than this. Oh! wherefore art thou here

I could have died so calmly, deeming thee

Saved, and at peace.

Con. At peace!—And thou hast thought

Thus poorly of my love! But woman's breast

Hath strength to suffer too. Thy father sits

On this tribunal; Raimond, which is he?

Raim. My father! who hath lull'd thy gentle heart

With that false hope? Beloved! gaze around—

See if thine eye can trace a father's soul

In the dark looks bent on us.

[Constance, after earnestly examining the countenances of the Judges, falls at the feet of Procida.

Con. Thou art he!

Nay, turn thou not away! for I beheld

Thy proud lip quiver, and a watery mist

Pass o'er thy troubled eye; and then I knew

Thou wert his father! Spare him! take my life!

In truth, a worthless sacrifice for his,

But yet mine all. Oh! he hath still to run

A long bright race of glory.

Raim. Constance, peace!

I look upon thee, and my failing heart

Is as a broken reed.

Con. (still addressing Procida.) Oh, yet relent!

If ’twas his crime to rescue me—behold
I come to be the atonement! Let him live
To crown thine age with honour. In thy heart
There’s a deep conflict; but great Nature pleads
With an o’ermastering voice, and thou wilt yield!
—Thou art his father!
Pro. (after a pause.) Maiden, thou’rt deceived!
I am as calm as that dead pause of nature
Ere the full thunder bursts. A judge is not
Father or friend. Who calls this man my son?
—My son! Ay! thus his mother proudly smiled—
But she was noble! Traitors stand alone,
Loosed from all ties. Why should I trifle thus?
—Bear her away!
Raim. (starting forward.) And whither?
Mon. Unto death.
Why should she live, when all her race have perish’d?
Con. (sinking into the arms of Raimond.)
Raimond, farewell! Oh! when thy star hath risen
To its bright noon, forget not, best beloved!
I died for thee.
Raim. High Heaven! thou see’st these things,
And yet endurest them! Shalt thou die for me,
Purest and loveliest being?—but our fate

May not divide us long. Her cheek is cold—

Her deep blue eyes are closed: should this be death

—If thus, there yet were mercy! Father, father!

Is thy heart human?

Pro. Bear her hence, I say!

Why must my soul be torn?

Anselmo enters holding a Crucifix.

Ans. Now, by this sign

Of heaven's prevailing love! ye shall not harm

One ringlet of her head. How! is there not

Enough of blood upon your burthen'd souls?

Will not the visions of your midnight couch

Be wild and dark enough, but ye must heap

Crime upon crime? Be ye content: your dreams,

Your councils, and your banquetings, will yet

Be haunted by the voice which doth not sleep,

E'en though this maid be spared! Constance, look up!

Thou shalt not die.

Raim. Oh! death e'en now hath veil'd

The light of her soft beauty. Wake my love!

Wake at my voice!

Pro. Anselmo, lead her hence,

And let her live, but never meet my sight.

—Begone! my heart will burst.

Raim. One last embrace!

—Again life’s rose is opening on her cheek;

Yet must we part. So love is crush’d on earth!

But there are brighter worlds!—Farewell, farewell!

[He gives her to the care of Anselmo.

Con. (slowly recovering.)

There was a voice which call’d me. Am I not

A spirit freed from earth? Have I not pass’d

The bitterness of death?

Ans. Oh, haste away!

Con. Yes! Raimond calls me. He too is released

From his cold bondage. We are free at last,

And all is well. Away!

[She is led out by Anselmo.

Raim. The pang is o’er,

And I have but to die.

Mon. Now, Procida,

Comes thy great task. Wake! summon to thine aid

All thy deep soul’s commanding energies;

For thou—a chief among us—must pronounce

The sentence of thy son. It rests with thee.

Pro. Ha! ha! Men’s hearts should be of softer mould

Than in the elder time. Fathers could doom

Their children then with an unfaltering voice,

And we must tremble thus! Is it not said
That nature grows degenerate, earth being now
So full of days?
Mon. Rouse up thy mighty heart.
Pro. Ay, thou say’st right. There yet are souls which tower
As landmarks to mankind. Well, what’s the task?
—There is a man to be condemn’d, you say?
Is he then guilty?
All. Thus we deem of him,
With one accord.
Pro. And hath he naught to plead?
Raim. Naught but a soul unstain’d.
Pro. Why, that is little.
Stains on the soul are but as conscience deems them,
And conscience may be sear’d. But for this sentence!
—Was’t not the penalty imposed on man,
E’en from creation’s dawn, that he must die?
—It was: thus making guilt a sacrifice
Unto eternal justice; and we but
Obey heaven’s mandate when we cast dark souls
To th’ elements from among us. Be it so!
Such be his doom! I have said. Ay, now my heart
Is girt with adamant, whose cold weight doth press
Its gaspings down. Off! let me breathe in freedom!

—Mountains are on my breast!

[He sinks back.

Mon. Guards, bear the prisoner

Back to his dungeon.

Raim. Father! oh, look up;

Thou art my father still!

Gui. (leaving the tribunal, throws himself on the neck of Raimond.)

Oh! Raimond, Raimond!

If it should be that I have wrong'd thee, say

Thou dost forgive me.

Raim. Friend of my young days,

So may all-pitying heaven!

[Raimond is led out.

Pro. Whose voice was that?

Where is he?—gone? Now I may breathe once more

In the free air of heaven. Let us away.

[Exeunt omnes.

ACT V.

Scene I.—A Prison dimly lighted.

Raimond sleeping. Procida enters.

Pro. (gazing upon him earnestly.) Can he

Then sleep? Th' overshadowing night hath wrapt

Earth at her stated hours; the stars have set

Their burning watch; and all things hold their course

Of wakefulness and rest; yet hath not sleep
Sat on mine eyelids since—but this avails not!
And thus he slumbers! “Why, this mien doth seem
As if its soul were but one lofty thought
Of an immortal destiny!”—his brow
Is calm as waves whereon the midnight heavens
Are imaged silently. Wake, Raimond! wake!
Thy rest is deep.
Raim. (starting up.) My father! Wherefore here?
I am prepared to die, yet would I not
Fall by thy hand.
Pro. ’Twas not for this I came.
Raim. Then wherefore? and upon thy lofty brow
Why burns the troubled flush?
Pro. Perchance ’tis shame.
Yes, it may well be shame!—for I have striven
With nature’s feebleness, and been o’erpower’d.
—Howe’er it be, ’tis not for thee to gaze,
Noting it thus. Rise, let me loose thy chains.
Arise, and follow me; but let thy step
Fall without sound on earth: I have prepared
The means for thy escape.
Raim. What! thou! the austere,
The inflexible Procida! hast thou done this,

Deeming me guilty still!

Pro. Upbraid me not!

It is even so. There have been nobler deeds

By Roman fathers done,—but I am weak.

Therefore, again I say, arise! and haste,

For the night wanes. Thy fugitive course must be

To realms beyond the deep; so let us part

In silence, and for ever.

Raim. Let him fly

Who holds no deep asylum in his breast

Wherein to shelter from the scoffs of men;

—I can sleep calmly here.

Pro. Art thou in love

With death and infamy, that so thy choice

Is made, lost boy! when freedom courts thy grasp?

Raim. Father! to set th’ irrevocable seal

Upon that shame wherewith ye have branded me,

There needs but flight. What should I bear from this,

My native land?—A blighted name, to rise

And part me, with its dark remembrances,

For ever from the sunshine! O’er my soul

Bright shadowings of a nobler destiny

Float in dim beauty through the gloom; but here

On earth, my hopes are closed.

Pro. Thy hopes are closed!
And what were they to mine?—Thou wilt not fly!
Why, let all traitors flock to thee, and learn
How proudly guilt can talk! Let fathers rear
Their offspring henceforth, as the free wild birds
Foster their young: when these can mount alone,
Dissolving nature’s bonds, why should it not
Be so with us?
Raim. O father! now I feel
What high prerogatives belong to Death.
He hath a deep though voiceless eloquence,
To which I leave my cause. “His solemn veil
Doth with mysterious beauty clothe our virtues,
And in its vast oblivious folds, for ever
Give shelter to our faults.” When I am gone,
The mists of passion which have dimm’d my name
Will melt like day-dreams; and my memory then
Will be—not what it should have been—for I
Must pass without my fame—but yet unstain’d
As a clear morning dewdrop. Oh! the grave
Hath rights inviolate as a sanctuary’s,
And they should be my own!
Pro. Now, by just Heaven,
I will not thus be tortured!—Were my heart

But of thy guilt or innocence assured,
I could be calm again. “But in this wild
Suspense—this conflict and vicissitude
Of opposite feelings and convictions——What!
Hath it been mine to temper and to bend
All spirits to my purpose? have I raised
With a severe and passionless energy,
From the dread mingling of their elements,
Storms which have rock’d the earth?—and shall I now
Thus fluctuate as a feeble reed, the scorn
And plaything of the winds?” Look on me, boy!
Guilt never dared to meet these eyes, and keep
Its heart’s dark secret close.—O pitying Heaven!
Speak to my soul with some dread oracle,
And tell me which is truth.
Raim. I will not plead.
I will not call th’ Omnipotent to attest
My innocence. No, father! in thy heart
I know my birthright shall be soon restored;
Therefore I look to death, and bid thee speed
The great absolver.
Pro. O my son! my son!
We will not part in wrath! The sternest hearts,
Within their proud and guarded fastnesses,

Hide something still, round which their tendrils cling
With a close grasp, unknown to those who dress
Their love in smiles. And such wert thou to me!
The all which taught me that my soul was cast
In nature’s mould. And I must now hold on
My desolate course alone! Why, be it thus!
He that doth guide a nation’s star, should dwell
High o’er the clouds, in regal solitude,
Sufficient to himself.
Raim. Yet, on the summit,
When with her bright wings glory shadows thee,
Forget not him who coldly sleeps beneath,
Yet might have soar’d as high!
Pro. No, fear thou not!
Thou’lt be remember’d long. The canker-worm
O’ th’ heart is ne’er forgotten.
Raim. “Oh! not thus—
I would not thus be thought of.”
Pro. Let me deem
Again that thou art base!—for thy bright looks,
Thy glorious mien of fearlessness and truth,
Then would not haunt me as the avenging powers
Follow’d the parricide. Farewell, farewell!
I have no tears. Oh! thus thy mother look’d,

When, with a sad, yet half-triumphant smile,
All radiant with deep meaning, from her deathbed
She gave thee to my arms.
Raim. Now death has lost
His sting, since thou believ’st me innocent!
Pro. (wildly.) Thou innocent!—Am I thy murderer, then?
Away! I tell thee thou hast made my name
A scorn to men! No! I will not forgive thee;
A traitor! What! the blood of Procida
Filling a traitor’s veins? Let the earth drink it.
Thou wouldst receive our foes!—but they shall meet
From thy perfidious lips a welcome, cold
As death can make it. Go, prepare thy soul!
Raim. Father! yet hear me!
Pro. No! thou’rt skill’d to make
E’en shame look fair. Why should I linger thus?
[Going to leave the prison, he turns back for a moment.
If there be aught—if aught—for which thou need’st
Forgiveness—not of me, but that dread Power
From whom no heart is veil’d—delay thou not
Thy prayer,—time hurries on.
Raim. I am prepared.
Pro. ’Tis well.
[Exit Procida.

Raim. Men talk of torture!—Can they wreak
Upon the sensitive and shrinking frame,
Half the mind bears—and lives? My spirit feels
Bewilder’d; on its powers this twilight gloom
Hangs like a weight of earth.—It should be morn;
Why, then, perchance, a beam of heaven’s bright sun
Hath pierced, ere now, the grating of my dungeon,
Telling of hope and mercy!
[Exit into an inner cell.
Scene II.—A Street of Palermo.
Many Citizens assembled.
1st Cit. The morning breaks; his time is almost come:
Will he be led this way?
2d Cit. Ay, so ’tis said
To die before that gate through which he purposed
The foe should enter in!
3d Cit. ’Twas a vile plot!
And yet I would my hands were pure as his
From the deep stain of blood. Didst hear the sounds
I’ the air last night!
2d Cit. Since the great work of slaughter,
Who hath not heard them duly at those hours
Which should be silent?
3d Cit. Oh! the fearful mingling,

The terrible mimicry of human voices,
In every sound, which to the heart doth speak
Of woe and death.
2d Cit. Ay, there was woman's shrill
And piercing cry; and the low feeble wail
Of dying infants; and the half-suppress'd
Deep groan of man in his last agonies!
And, now and then, there swell'd upon the breeze
Strange, savage bursts of laughter, wilder far
Than all the rest.
1st Cit. Of our own fate, perchance,
These awful midnight wailings may be deem'd
An ominous prophecy. Should France regain
Her power among us, doubt not, we shall have
Stern reckoners to account with.—Hark!
[The sound of trumpets heard at a distance.
2d Cit. 'Twas but
A rushing of the breeze.
3d Cit. E'en now, 'tis said,
The hostile bands approach.
[The sound is heard gradually drawing nearer.
2d Cit. Again! that sound
Was no illusion. Nearer yet it swells—
They come, they come!

Procida enters.

Pro. The foe is at your gates;

But hearts and hands prepared shall meet his onset.

Why are ye loitering here?

Cit. My lord, we came—

Pro. Think ye I know not wherefore?—'twas to see

A fellow-being die! Ay, 'tis a sight

Man loves to look on; and the tenderest hearts

Recoil, and yet withdraw not from the scene.

For this ye came. What! is our nature fierce,

Or is there that in mortal agony

From which the soul, exulting in its strength,

Doth learn immortal lessons? Hence, and arm!

Ere the night-dews descend, ye will have seen

Enough of death—for this must be a day

Of battle! 'Tis the hour which troubled souls

Delight in, for its rushing storms are wings

Which bear them up! Arm! arm! 'tis for your homes,

And all that lends them loveliness—Away!

[Exeunt.

Scene III.—Prison of Raimond.

Raimond, Anselmo.

Raim. And Constance then is safe! Heaven bless thee, father!

Good angels bear such comfort.

Ans. I have found
A safe asylum for thine honour'd love,
Where she may dwell until serener days,
With Saint Rosalia's gentlest daughters—those
Whose hallow'd office is to tend the bed
Of pain and death, and soothe the parting soul
With their soft hymns: and therefore are they call'd
"Sisters of Mercy."
Raim. Oh! that name, my Constance!
Befits thee well. E'en in our happiest days,
There was a depth of tender pensiveness
Far in thine eyes' dark azure, speaking ever
Of pity and mild grief. Is she at peace?
Ans. Alas! what should I say?
Raim. Why did I ask,
Knowing the deep and full devotedness
Of her young heart's affections? Oh! the thought
Of my untimely fate will haunt her dreams,
Which should have been so tranquil!—and her soul,
Whose strength was but the lofty gift of love,
Even unto death will sicken.
Ans. All that faith
Can yield of comfort, shall assuage her woes;
And still, whate'er betide, the light of heaven

Rests on her gentle heart. But thou, my son!
Is thy young spirit master’d, and prepared
For nature’s fearful and mysterious change?
Raim. Ay, father! of my brief remaining task
The least part is to die! And yet the cup
Of life still mantled brightly to my lips,
Crown’d with that sparkling bubble, whose proud name
Is—glory! Oh! my soul, from boyhood’s morn,
Hath nursed such mighty dreams! It was my hope
To leave a name, whose echo from the abyss
Of time should rise, and float upon the winds
Into the far hereafter; there to be
A trumpet-sound, a voice from the deep tomb,
Murmuring—Awake!—Arise! But this is past!
Erewhile, and it had seem’d enough of shame
To sleep forgotten in the dust; but now—
Oh, God!—the undying record of my grave
Will be—Here sleeps a traitor!—One, whose crime,
Was—to deem brave men might find nobler weapons
Than the cold murderer’s dagger!
Ans. Oh! my son,
Subdue these troubled thoughts! Thou wouldst not change
Thy lot for theirs, o’er whose dark dreams will hang
The avenging shadows, which the blood-stain’d soul

Doth conjure from the dead!

Raim. Thou’rt right. I would not.

Yet ’tis a weary task to school the heart,

Ere years or griefs have tamed its fiery spirit

Into that still and passive fortitude,

Which is but learn’d from suffering. Would the hour

To hush these passionate throbbings were at hand!

Ans. It will not be to-day. Hast thou not heard

—But no—the rush, the trampling, and the stir

Of this great city, arming in her haste,

Pierce not these dungeon-depths. The foe hath reach’d

Our gates, and all Palermo’s youth, and all

Her warrior men, are marshall’d, and gone forth,

In that high hope which makes realities,

To the red field. Thy father leads them on.

Raim. (starting up.) They are gone forth! my father leads them on!

All—all Palermo’s youth! No! one is left,

Shut out from glory’s race! They are gone forth!

Ay, now the soul of battle is abroad—

It burns upon the air! The joyous winds

Are tossing warrior-plumes, the proud white foam

Of battle’s roaring billows! On my sight

The vision bursts—it maddens! ’tis the flash,

The lightning-shock of lances, and the cloud

Of rushing arrows, and the broad full blaze
Of helmets in the sun! The very steed
With his majestic rider glorying shares
The hour's stern joy, and waves his floating mane
As a triumphant banner! Such things are
Even now—and I am here!
Ans. Alas, be calm!
To the same grave ye press,—thou that dost pine
Beneath a weight of chains, and they that rule
The fortunes of the fight.
Raim. Ay! Thou canst feel
The calm thou wouldst impart; for unto thee
All men alike, the warrior and the slave,
Seem, as thou say'st, but pilgrims, pressing on
To the same bourne. Yet call it not the same:
Their graves who fall in this day's fight will be
As altars to their country, visited
By fathers with their children, bearing wreaths,
And chanting hymns in honour of the dead:
Will mine be such?
Vittoria rushes in wildly, as if pursued.
Vit. Anselmo! art thou found!
Haste, haste, or all is lost! Perchance thy voice,
Whereby they deem heaven speaks, thy lifted cross,

And prophet mien, may stay the fugitives,

Or shame them back to die.

Ans. The fugitives!

What words are these? The sons of Sicily

Fly not before the foe?

Vit. That I should say

It is too true!

Ans. And thou—thou bleedest, lady!

Vit. Peace! heed not me when Sicily is lost!

I stood upon the walls, and watch'd our bands,

As, with their ancient royal banner spread,

Onward they march'd. The combat was begun,

The fiery impulse given, and valiant men

Had seal'd their freedom with their blood—when, lo!

That false Alberti led his recreant vassals

To join th' invader's host.

Raim. His country's curse

Rest on the slave for ever!

Vit. Then distrust,

E'en of their noble leaders, and dismay,

That swift contagion, on Palermo's bands

Came like a deadly blight. They fled!—Oh shame!

E'en now they fly! Ay, through the city gates

They rush, as if all Etna's burning streams

Pursued their wingèd steps!

Raim. Thou hast not named

Their chief—Di Procida—he doth not fly?

Vit. No! like a kingly lion in the toils,

Daring the hunters yet, he proudly strives:

But all in vain! The few that breast the storm,

With Guido and Montalba, by his side,

Fight but for graves upon the battle-field.

Raim. And I am here! Shall there be power, O God!

In the roused energies of fierce despair,

To burst my heart—and not to rend my chains?

Oh, for one moment of the thunderbolt

To set the strong man free!

Vit. (after gazing upon him earnestly.) Why, ’twere a deed

Worthy the fane and blessing of all time,

To loose thy bonds, thou son of Procida!

Thou art no traitor!—from thy kindled brow

Looks out thy lofty soul! Arise! go forth!

And rouse the noble heart of Sicily

Unto high deeds again. Anselmo, haste;

Unbind him! Let my spirit still prevail,

Ere I depart—for the strong hand of death

Is on me now.

[She sinks back against a pillar.

Ans. Oh, heaven! the life-blood streams

Fast from thy heart—thy troubled eyes grow dim.

Who hath done this?

Vit. Before the gates I stood,

And in the name of him, the loved and lost,

With whom I soon shall be, all vainly strove

To stay the shameful flight. Then from the foe,

Fraught with my summons to his viewless home,

Came the fleet shaft which pierced me.

Ans. Yet, oh yet,

It may not be too late. Help, help!

Vit. (to Raimond.) Away!

Bright is the hour which brings thee liberty!

Attendants enter.

Haste, be those fetters riven! Unbar the gates,

And set the captive free!

(The Attendants seem to hesitate.) Know ye not her

Who should have worn your country's diadem?

Att. O lady! we obey.

[They take off Raimond's chains. He springs up exultingly.

Raim. Is this no dream?

Mount, eagle! thou art free! Shall I then die

Not midst the mockery of insulting crowds,

But on the field of banners, where the brave

Are striving for an immortality?

It is e’en so! Now for bright arms of proof,

A helm, a keen-edged falchion, and e’en yet

My father may be saved!

Vit. Away, be strong!

And let thy battle-word, to rule the storm,

Be—Conradin.

[He rushes out.

Oh! for one hour of life,

To hear that name blent with th’ exulting shout

Of victory! It will not be! A mightier power

Doth summon me away.

Ans. To purer worlds

Raise thy last thoughts in hope.

Vit. Yes! he is there,

All glorious in his beauty!—Conradin!

Death parted us, and death shall reunite!

He will not stay—it is all darkness now!

Night gathers o’er my spirit.

[She dies.

Ans. She is gone!

It is an awful hour which stills the heart

That beat so proudly once. Have mercy, heaven!

[He kneels beside her.

Scene IV.—Before the Gates of Palermo.

Sicilians flying tumultuously towards the Gates.

Voices, (without.) Montjoy! Montjoy! St Denis for Anjou!

Provençals, on!

Sicilians. Fly, fly, or all is lost!

Raimond appears in the gateway armed, and carrying a banner.

Raim. Back, back, I say! ye men of Sicily!

All is not lost! Oh! shame! A few brave hearts

In such a cause, ere now, have set their breasts

Against the rush of thousands, and sustain'd,

And made the shock recoil. Ay, man, free man,

Still to be call'd so, hath achieved such deeds

As heaven and earth have marvell'd at; and souls,

Whose spark yet slumbers with the days to come,

Shall burn to hear, transmitting brightly thus

Freedom from race to race! Back! or prepare

Amidst your hearths, your bowers, your very shrines,

To bleed and die in vain! Turn!—follow me!

"Conradin, Conradin!"—for Sicily

His spirit fights! Remember "Conradin!"

[They begin to rally round him.

Ay, this is well!—Now, follow me, and charge!

[The Provençals rush in, but are repulsed by the Sicilians.—Exeunt.

Scene V.—Part of the Field of Battle.

Montalba enters wounded, and supported by Raimond, whose face is concealed by his helmet.

Raim. Here rest thee, warrior.

Mon. Rest! ay, death is rest,

And such will soon be mine. But, thanks to thee,

I shall not die a captive. Brave Sicilian!

These lips are all unused to soothing words,

Or I should bless the valour which hath won,

For my last hour, the proud free solitude

Wherewith my soul would gird itself. Thy name?

Raim. ’Twill be no music to thine ear, Montalba.

Gaze—read it thus!

[He lifts the visor of his helmet.

Mon. Raimond di Procida!

Raim. Thou hast pursued me with a bitter hate:

But fare thee well! Heaven’s peace be with thy soul!

I must away. One glorious effort more,

And this proud field is won.

[Exit Raimond.

Mon. Am I thus humbled?

How my heart sinks within me! But ’tis Death

(And he can tame the mightiest) hath subdued

My towering nature thus. Yet is he welcome!

That youth—’twas in his pride he rescued me!

I was his deadliest foe, and thus he proved

His fearless scorn. Ha! ha! but he shall fail

To melt me into womanish feebleness.

There I still baffle him—the grave shall seal

My lips for ever—mortal shall not hear

Montalba say—"forgive!"

[He dies.

Scene VI.—Another part of the Field.

Procida, Guido, and other Sicilians.

Pro. The day is ours; but he, the brave unknown,

Who turn'd the tide of battle—he whose path

Was victory—who hath seen him?

Alberti is brought in wounded and fettered.

Alb. Procida!

Pro. Be silent, traitor! Bear him from my sight,

Unto your deepest dungeons.

Alb. In the grave

A nearer home awaits me. Yet one word

Ere my voice fail—thy son——

Pro. Speak, speak!

Alb. Thy son

Knows not a thought of guilt. That trait'rous plot

Was mine alone.

[He is led away.

Pro. Attest it, earth and heaven!

My son is guiltless! Hear it, Sicily!

The blood of Procida is noble still!

My son! He lives, he lives! His voice shall speak

Forgiveness to his sire! His name shall cast

Its brightness o’er my soul!

Gui. O day of joy!

The brother of my heart is worthy still

The lofty name he bears!

Anselmo enters.

Pro. Anselmo, welcome!

In a glad hour we meet; for know, my son

Is guiltless.

Ans. And victorious! By his arm

All hath been rescued.

Pro. How!—the unknown——

Ans. Was he!

Thy noble Raimond!—by Vittoria’s hand

Freed from his bondage, in that awful hour

When all was flight and terror.

Pro. Now my cup

Of joy too brightly mantles! Let me press

My warrior to a father’s heart—and die;

For life hath naught beyond. Why comes he not?

Anselmo, lead me to my valiant boy!

Ans. Temper this proud delight.

Pro. What means that look?

He hath not fallen?

Ans. He lives.

Pro. Away, away!

Bid the wide city with triumphal pomp

Prepare to greet her victor. Let this hour

Atone for all his wrongs!

[Exeunt.

Scene VII.—Garden of a Convent.

Raimond is led in wounded, leaning on Attendants.

Raim. Bear me to no dull couch, but let me die

In the bright face of nature! Lift my helm,

That I may look on heaven.

1st Att. (to 2d Attendant.) Lay him to rest

On this green sunny bank, and I will call

Some holy sister to his aid; but thou

Return unto the field, for high-born men

There need the peasant’s aid.

[Exit 2d Attendant.

(To Raim.) Here gentle hands

Shall tend thee, warrior; for, in these retreats,

They dwell, whose vows devote them to the care

Of all that suffer. May’st thou live to bless them!

[Exit 1st Attendant.

Raim. Thus have I wish’d to die! ’Twas a proud strife!

My father bless’d th’ unknown who rescued him,

(Bless’d him, alas, because unknown!) and Guido,

Beside him bravely struggling, call’d aloud,

“Noble Sicilian, on!” Oh! had they deem’d

’Twas I who led that rescue, they had spurn’d

Mine aid, though ’twas deliverance; and their looks

Had fallen like blights upon me. There is one,

Whose eye ne’er turn’d on mine but its blue light

Grew softer, trembling through the dewy mist

Raised by deep tenderness! Oh, might the soul,

Set in that eye, shine on me ere I perish!

—Is’t not her voice?

Constance enters speaking to a Nun, who turns into another path.

Con. Oh, happy they, kind sister!

Whom thus ye tend; for it is theirs to fall

With brave men side by side, when the roused heart

Beats proudly to the last! There are high souls

Whose hope was such a death, and ’tis denied!

[She approaches Raimond.

Young warrior, is there aught——Thou here, my Raimond!

Thou here—and thus! Oh! is this joy or woe?

Raim. Joy, be it joy! my own, my blessed love!
E’en on the grave’s dim verge. Yes! it is joy!
My Constance! victors have been crown’d ere now,
With the green shining laurel, when their brows
Wore death’s own impress—and it may be thus
E’en yet, with me! They freed me, when the foe
Had half prevail’d, and I have proudly earn’d,
With my heart’s dearest blood, the meed to die
Within thine arms.
Con. Oh! speak not thus—to die!
These wounds may yet be closed.
[She attempts to bind his wounds.
Look on me, love!
Why, there is more than life in thy glad mien—
’Tis full of hope! and from thy kindled eye
Breaks e’en unwonted light, whose ardent ray
Seems born to be immortal!
Raim. ’Tis e’en so!
The parting soul doth gather all her fires
Around her; all her glorious hopes, and dreams,
And burning aspirations, to illume
The shadowy dimness of the untrodden path
Which lies before her; and encircled thus,
Awhile she sits in dying eyes, and thence

Sends forth her bright farewell. Thy gentle cares

Are vain, and yet I bless them.

Con. Say not vain;

The dying look not thus. We shall not part!

Raim. I have seen death ere now, and known him wear

Full many a changeful aspect.

Con. Oh! but none

Radiant as thine, my warrior! Thou wilt live!

Look round thee! all is sunshine. Is not this

A smiling world?

Raim. Ay, gentlest love! a world

Of joyous beauty and magnificence,

Almost too fair to leave! Yet must we tame

Our ardent hearts to this! Oh, weep thou not!

There is no home for liberty, or love,

Beneath these festal skies! Be not deceived;

My way lies far beyond! I shall be soon

That viewless thing, which, with its mortal weeds

Casting off meaner passions, yet, we trust,

Forgets not how to love!

Con. And must this be?

Heaven, thou art merciful!—Oh! bid our souls

Depart together!

Raim. Constance! there is strength

Within thy gentle heart, which hath been proved
Nobly, for me: arouse it once again!
Thy grief unmans me—and I fain would meet
That which approaches, as a brave
man yields
With proud submission to a mightier foe.
—It is upon me now!
Con. I will be calm.
Let thy head rest upon my bosom, Raimond,
And I will so suppress its quick deep sobs,
They shall but rock thee to thy rest. There is
A world (ay, let us seek it!) where no blight
Falls on the beautiful rose of youth, and there
I shall be with thee soon!
Procida and Anselmo enter. Procida, on seeing Raimond, starts back.
Ans. Lift up thy head,
Brave youth, excitingly! for lo! thine hour
Of glory comes! Oh! doth it come too late?
E’en now the false Alberti hath confess’d
That guilty plot, for which thy life was doom’d
To be th’ atonement.
Raim. ’Tis enough! Rejoice,
Rejoice, my Constance! for I leave a name
O’er which thou may’st weep proudly!

[He sinks back.

To thy breast

Fold me yet closer, for an icy dart

Hath touch’d my veins.

Con. And must thou leave me, Raimond?

Alas! thine eye grows dim—its wandering glance

Is full of dreams.

Raim. Haste, haste, and tell my father

I was no traitor!

Pro. (rushing forward.) To thy father’s heart

Return, forgiving all thy wrongs—return!

Speak to me, Raimond!—thou wert ever kind,

And brave, and gentle! Say that all the past

Shall be forgiven! That word from none but thee

My lips e’er ask’d.—Speak to me once, my boy,

My pride, my hope! And it is with thee thus?

Look on me yet!—Oh! must this woe be borne?

Raim. Off with this weight of chains! it is not meet

For a crown’d conqueror!—Hark! the trumpet’s voice!

[A sound of triumphant music is heard gradually approaching.

Is’t not a thrilling call? What drowsy spell

Benumbs me thus?—Hence! I am free again!

Now swell your festal strains—the field is won!

Sing to me glorious dreams.

[He dies.

Ans. The strife is past;

There fled a noble spirit!

Con. Hush! he sleeps—

Disturb him not!

Ans. Alas! this is no sleep

From which the eye doth radiantly unclose:

Bow down thy soul, for earthly hope is o’er!

[The music continues approaching. Guido enters with Citizens and Soldiers.

Gui. The shrines are deck’d, the festive torches blaze—

Where is our brave deliverer? We are come

To crown Palermo’s victor!

Ans. Ye come too late.

The voice of human praise doth send no echo

Into the world of spirits.

[The music ceases.

Pro. (after a pause.) Is this dust

I look on—Raimond? ’Tis but a sleep!—a smile

On his pale cheek sits proudly. Raimond, wake!

Oh, God! and this was his triumphant day!

My son, my injured son!

Con. (starting.) Art thou his father!

I know thee now.—Hence! with thy dark stern eye

And thy cold heart! Thou canst not wake him now!

Away! he will not answer but to me—

For none like me hath loved him! He is mine!

Ye shall not rend him from me.

Pro. Oh! he knew

Thy love, poor maid! Shrink from me now no more!

He knew thy heart—but who shall tell him now

The depth, th’ intenseness, and the agony,

Of my suppress’d affection? I have learn’d

All his high worth in time to deck his grave.

Is there not power in the strong spirit’s woe

To force an answer from the viewless world

Of the departed? Raimond!—speak!—forgive!

Raimond! my victor, my deliverer! hear!

—Why, what a world is this! Truth ever bursts

On the dark soul too late: and glory crowns

Th’ unconscious dead. There comes an hour to break

The mightiest hearts!—My son! my son! is this

A day of triumph! Ay, for thee alone!

[He throws himself upon the body of Raimond.

Curtain falls.

ANNOTATIONS ON THE “VESPERS OF PALERMO.”

“The Vespers of Palermo was the earliest of the dramatic productions of our author. The period in which the scene is laid, is sufficiently known from the title of the play. The whole is full of life and action. The same high strain of moral propriety marks

this piece as all others of her writings. The hero is an enthusiast for glory, for liberty, and for virtue: and on his courage, his forbearance, the integrity of his love, making the firmness of his patriotism appear doubtful, rests the interest of the plot. It is worthy of remark, that some of its best parts have already found their way into an excellent selection of pieces for schools, and thus contribute to give lessons of morality to those who are most susceptible of the interest of tragedy.

"It may not be so generally remembered, that the same historical event was made the subject of a French tragedy, about the same time that the English one was written, and by a poet now of great popularity in France. We hesitate not to give the preference to Mrs Hemans, for invention and interest, accurate delineation of character, and adherence to probability. Both the tragedies are written in a style of finished elegance."—Professor Norton in North American Review, 1827.

It was in 1821, as mentioned in the prefatory note, that Mrs Hemans composed The Vespers of Palermo, and that the MS. was handed over to the Managing Committee of Covent Garden. Two years elapsed before her doubts regarding its fate were removed, and the result was as follows. In giving it here, let the reader remember, meanwhile, that we are carried forward, for the space of time mentioned, beyond the pale of our literary chronology:—

"After innumerable delays, uncertainties, and anxieties," writes her sister, "the fate of the tragedy, so long in abeyance, was now drawing to a crisis. Every thing connected with its approaching representation was calculated to raise the highest hopes of success. 'All is going on,' writes Mrs Hemans on the 27th November, 'as well as I could possibly desire. Only a short time will yet elapse before the ordeal is over. I received a message yesterday from Mr Kemble, informing me of the unanimous opinion of the green room conclave in favour of the piece, and exhorting me to "be of good courage." Murray has given me two hundred guineas for the copyright of the "tragedy, drama, poem, composition, or book," as it is called in the

articles which I signed yesterday. The managers made exceptions to the name of Procida—why or wherefore I know not; and out of several others which I proposed to them, The Vespers of Palermo has been finally chosen.'

"Under these apparently favourable auspices, the piece was produced at Covent Garden on the night of December 12, 1823, the principal characters being taken by Mr Young, Mr C. Kemble, Mr Yates, Mrs Bartley, and Miss F. H. Kelly. Two days had to elapse before the news of its reception could reach St Asaph. Not only Mrs Hemans's own family, but all her more immediate friends and neighbours, were wrought up to a pitch of intense expectation. Various newspapers were ordered expressly for the occasion, and the post-office was besieged at twelve o'clock at night, by some of the more zealous of her friends, eager to be the first heralds of the triumph so undoubtingly anticipated. The boys had worked themselves up into an uncontrollable state of excitement, and were all lying awake 'to hear about mamma's play;' and perhaps her bitterest moment of mortification was, when she went up to their bedsides, which she nerved herself to do almost immediately, to announce that all their bright visions were dashed to the ground, and that the performance had ended in all but a failure. The reports in the newspapers were strangely contradictory, and, in some instances, exceedingly illiberal: but all which were written in anything like an unbiassed tone, concurred entirely with the private accounts, not merely of partial friends, but of perfectly unprejudiced observers, in attributing this most unexpected result to the inefficiency of the actress who personated Constance, and who absolutely seemed to be under the influence of some infatuating spell, calling down hisses, and even laughter, on scenes the most pathetic and affecting, and, to crown all, dying gratuitously at the close of the piece. The acting of Young and Kemble in the two Procidi, was universally pronounced to have been beyond all praise, and their sustained exertions showed a determination to do all possible justice to the author. It was admitted that, at the fall of the curtain, applause decidedly predominated: still the marks of disapprobation were too strong

to be disregarded by the managers, who immediately decided upon withdrawing the piece, till another actress should have fitted herself to undertake the part of Constance, when they fully resolved to reproduce it. Mrs Hemans herself was very far from wishing that this fresh experiment should be made. ‘Mr Kemble,’ writes she to a friend, ‘will not hear of The Vespers being driven off the stage. It is to be reproduced as soon as Miss Foote, who is now unwell, shall be sufficiently recovered to learn her part; but I cannot tell you how I shrink, after the fiery ordeal through which I have passed, from such another trial. Mr Kemble attributes the failure, without the slightest hesitation, to what he delicately calls “a singularity of intonation in one of the actresses.” I have also heard from Mr Milman, Mr J. T. Coleridge, and several others, with whom there is but one opinion as to the cause of the disaster.’

“Few would, perhaps, have borne so unexpected a reverse with feelings so completely untinged with bitterness, or with greater readiness to turn for consolation to the kindness and sympathy which poured in upon her from every side. It would be doing her injustice to withhold her letter to Mr Milman, written in the first moments of disappointment.

‘Bronwylfa, Dec. 16, 1823.

“‘My dear Sir,—It is difficult to part with the hopes of three years, without some painful feelings; but your kind letter has been of more service to me than I can attempt to describe. I will not say that it revives my hopes of success, because I think it better that I should fix my mind to prevent those hopes from gaining any ascendency; but it sets in so clear a light the causes of failure, that my disappointment has been greatly softened by its perusal. The many friends from whom I have heard on this occasion, express but one opinion. As to Miss Kelly’s acting, and its fatal effect on the fortunes of the piece, I cannot help thinking that it will be impossible to counteract the unfavourable impression which this must have

produced, and I almost wish, as far as relates to my own private feelings, that the attempt may not be made. I shall not, however, interfere in any way on the subject. I have not heard from Mr Kemble; but I have written both to him and to Mr Young, to express my grateful sense of their splendid exertions in support of the piece. As a female, I cannot help feeling rather depressed by the extreme severity with which I have been treated in the morning papers. I know not why this should be, for I am sure I should not have attached the slightest value to their praise; but I suppose it is only a proper chastisement for my temerity—for a female who shrinks from such things has certainly no business to write tragedies.

"'For your support and assistance, as well as that of my other friends, I cannot be too grateful; nor can I ever consider any transaction of my life unfortunate, which has given me the privilege of calling you a friend, and afforded me the recollection of so much long-tried kindness.—Ever believe me, my dear sir, most faithfully, your obliged

"'F. Hemans.'

"Notwithstanding the determination of the managers again to bring forward The Vespers, a sort of fatality seemed to attend upon it, and some fresh obstacle was continually arising to prevent the luckless Constance from obtaining an efficient representative on the London stage. Under these circumstances, Mr Kemble at length confessed that he could not recommend the reproduction of the piece; and Mrs Hemans acquiesced in the decision, with feelings which partook rather of relief than of disappointment. She never ceased to speak in the warmest terms of Mr Kemble's liberal and gentlemanly conduct, both before and after the appearance of the piece, and of his surpassing exertions at the time of its representation.

"It was with no small degree of surprise that, in the course of the following February, she learned, through the medium of a letter from Mrs Joanna Baillie,[192] that the tragedy was shortly to be represented at the Edinburgh theatre—Mrs Henry

Siddons undertaking the part of Constance. The play was brought out on the 5th of April, and the following particulars of its reception, transmitted by one of the zealous friends who had been instrumental in this arrangement, will prove how well their kindly intentions were fulfilled:

"'The tragedy went off in a style which exceeded our most sanguine expectations, and was announced for repetition on Wednesday, amidst thunders of applause. The actors seem to have done wonders, and every one appeared to strain every nerve, as if all depended on his own exertions. Vandenhoff was the elder, and Calcraft the younger Procida. The first recognition between father and son, was acted by them to such perfection, that one of the most hearty and unanimous plaudits followed that ever was heard.

"'Every reappearance of the gentle Constance won the spectators more and more. The scene in the judgment-hall carried off the audience into perfect illusion, and handkerchiefs were out in every quarter. Mrs Siddons's searching the faces of the judges, which she did in a wild manner, as if to find Raimond's father was to save him, was perfect. She flew round the circle—went, as if distracted, close up to judge after judge—paused before Procida, and fell prostrate at his feet. The effect was magical, and was manifested by three repeated bursts of applause.'

"A neatly turned and witty epilogue, surmised, though not declared, to be the production of Sir Walter Scott, was recited by Mrs H. Siddons. When deference to a female was there laid claim to, loud bursts of applause ensued; but when generosity to a stranger was bespoken, the house absolutely rang with huzzas."

"'I knew how much you would rejoice,' wrote Mrs Hemans to a warm-hearted friend, 'in the issue of my Edinburgh trial; it has, indeed, been most gratifying, and I think, amongst the pleasantest of its results I may reckon a letter from Sir Walter Scott, of which it has put me in possession. I had written to thank him for the kindness he had shown with regard to the play, and hardly expected an answer; but it

came, and you would be delighted with its frank and unaffected kindliness. He acknowledges the epilogue, “stuffed,” as he says it was, “with parish jokes, and bad puns;” and courteously says, that his country folks have done more credit to themselves than to me, by their reception of The Vespers.’

“To another uncompromising champion she wrote:—‘I must beg you will “bear our faculties meekly:” you really seem to be rather in an intoxicated state; and if we indulge ourselves in this way, I am afraid we shall have something to sober us. I dare say I must expect some sharp criticism from Edinburgh ere all this is over; but any thing which deserves the name of criticism I can bear. I believe I could point out more faults in The Vespers myself than any one has done yet.’”—Memoir, pp. 69-76.

[192] Though Mrs Hemans had never the advantage of being personally known to this gifted and excellent lady, the occasional interchange of letters which, from this time forward, was kept up between them, was regarded as one of the most valuable privileges she possessed. It was always delightful to her when she could love the character, as well as admire the talents, of a celebrated author; and never, surely, was there an example better fitted to call forth the willing tribute of veneration, both towards the woman and the poetess. In one of her letters to Mrs Baillie, Mrs Hemans thus apologised for indulging in a strain of egotism, which the nature of their acquaintance might scarcely seem to justify,—“The kindly warmth of heart which seems to breathe over all your writings, and the power of early association over my mind, make me feel, whenever I address you, as if I were writing to a friend.”

It would have been very dear to her could she have foreseen how graciously that “kindly warmth of heart” would be extended to those of her children, who are more fortunate than herself, in enjoying the personal intercourse she would have prized so highly.

STANZAS TO THE MEMORY OF GEORGE THE THIRD.

“Among many nations was there no King like him.”—Nehemiah.

“Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?”—Samuel.

Another warning sound! The funeral bell,
Startling the cities of the isle once more
With measured tones of melancholy swell,
Strikes on th’ awaken’d heart from shore to shore.
He at whose coming monarchs sink to dust,
The chambers of our palaces hath trod;
And the long-suffering spirit of the just,
Pure from its ruins, hath return’d to God!
Yet may not England o’er her father weep:
Thoughts to her bosom crowd, too many, and too deep.
Vain voice of Reason, hush!—they yet must flow,
The unrestrain’d, involuntary tears;
A thousand feelings sanctify the woe,
Roused by the glorious shades of vanish’d years.
Tell us no more ’tis not the time for grief,
Now that the exile of the soul is past,
And Death, blest messenger of heaven’s relief,
Hath borne the wanderer to his rest at last;
For him, eternity hath tenfold day:

We feel, we know, ’tis thus—yet nature will have way.
What though amidst us, like a blasted oak,
Sadd’ning the scene where once it nobly reign’d,
A dread memorial of the lightning stroke,
Stamp’d with its fiery record, he remain’d;
Around that shatter’d tree still fondly clung
Th’ undying tendrils of our love, which drew
Fresh nurture from its deep decay, and sprung
Luxuriant thence, to Glory’s ruin true;
While England hung her trophies on the stem,
That desolately stood, unconscious e’en of them.
Of them unconscious! Oh, mysterious doom!
Who shall unfold the counsels of the skies?
His was the voice which roused, as from the tomb,
The realm’s high soul to loftiest energies!
His was the spirit o’er the isles which threw
The mantle of its fortitude; and wrought
In every bosom, powerful to renew
Each dying spark of pure and generous thought;
The star of tempests! beaming on the mast,[193]
The seaman’s torch of Hope, midst perils deepening fast.
Then from th’ unslumbering influence of his worth,
Strength, as of inspiration, fill’d the land;
A young but quenchless flame went brightly forth,

Kindled by him—who saw it not expand!
Such was the will of heaven. The gifted seer,
Who with his God had communed, face to face,
And from the house of bondage and of fear,
In faith victorious, led the Chosen Race;
He through the desert and the waste their guide,
Saw dimly from afar the promised land—and died.
O full of days and virtues! on thy head
Centred the woes of many a bitter lot;
Fathers have sorrow'd o'er their beauteous dead,
Eyes, quench'd in night, the sunbeam have forgot;
Minds have striven buoyantly with evil years,
And sunk beneath their gathering weight at length;
But Pain for thee had fill'd a cup of tears,
Where every anguish mingled all its strength;
By thy lost child we saw thee weeping stand,
And shadows deep around fell from th' Eternal's hand.
Then came the noon of glory, which thy dreams
Perchance of yore had faintly prophesied;
But what to thee the splendour of its beams?
The ice-rock glows not midst the summer's pride!
Nations leap'd up to joy—as streams that burst,
At the warm touch of spring, their frozen chain,
And o'er the plains, whose verdure once thy nursed,

Roll in exulting melody again;
And bright o’er earth the long majestic line
Of England’s triumphs swept, to rouse all hearts—but thine.
Oh! what a dazzling vision, by the veil
That o’er thy spirit hung, was shut from thee,
When sceptred chieftains throng’d with palms to hail
The crowning isle, th’ anointed of the sea!
Within thy palaces the lords of earth
Met to rejoice—rich pageants glitter’d by,
And stately revels imaged, in their mirth,
The old magnificence of chivalry.
They reach’d not thee—amidst them, yet alone,
Stillness and gloom begirt one dim and shadowy throne.
Yet there was mercy still! If joy no more
Within that blasted circle might intrude,
Earth had no grief, whose footstep might pass o’er
The silent limits of its solitude!
If all unheard the bridal song awoke
Our hearts’ full echoes, as it swell’d on high;
Alike unheard the sudden dirge, that broke
On the glad strain, with dread solemnity!
If the land’s rose unheeded wore its bloom,
Alike unfelt the storm that swept it to the tomb.
And she who, tried through all the stormy past—

Severely, deeply proved, in many an hour—
Watch'd o'er thee, firm and faithful to the last,
Sustain'd, inspired, by strong affection's power;
If to thy soul her voice no music bore—
If thy closed eye and wandering spirit caught
No light from looks, that fondly would explore
Thy mien, for traces of responsive thought;
Oh! thou wert spared the pang, that would have thrill'd
Thine inmost heart, when death that anxious bosom still'd.
Thy loved ones fell around thee. Manhood's prime,
Youth with its glory—in its fulness, age—
All, at the gates of their eternal clime
Lay down, and closed their mortal pilgrimage;
The land wore ashes for its perish'd flowers,
The grave's imperial harvest. Thou meanwhile
Didst walk unconscious through thy royal towers,
The one that wept not in the tearful isle!
As a tired warrior, on his battle-plain,
Breathes deep in dreams amidst the mourners and the slain.
And who can tell what visions might be thine?
The stream of thought, though broken, still was pure!
Still o'er that wave the stars of heaven might shine
Where earthly image would no more endure!
Though many a step, of once familiar sound,

Came as a stranger’s o’er thy closing ear,
And voices breathed forgotten tones around,
Which that paternal heart once thrill’d to hear:
The mind hath senses of its own, and powers
To people boundless worlds, in its most wandering hours.
Nor might the phantoms to thy spirit known
Be dark or wild, creations of remorse;
Unstain’d by thee, the blameless past had thrown
No fearful shadows o’er the future’s course:
For thee no cloud, from memory’s dread abyss,
Might shape such forms as haunt the tyrant’s eye;
And, closing up each avenue of bliss,
Murmur their summons, to “despair and die!”
No! e’en though joy depart, though reason cease,
Still virtue’s ruin’d home is redolent of peace.
They might be with thee still—the loved, the tried,
The fair, the lost—they might be with thee still!
More softly seen, in radiance purified
From each dim vapour of terrestrial ill.
Long after earth received them, and the note
Of the last requiem o’er their dust was pour’d,
As passing sunbeams o’er thy soul might float
Those forms, from us withdrawn—to thee restored!
Spirits of holiness, in light reveal’d,

To commune with a mind whose source of tears was seal’d.
Came they with tidings from the worlds above,
Those viewless regions where the weary rest?
Sever’d from earth, estranged from mortal love,
Was thy mysterious converse with the blest?
Or shone their visionary presence bright
With human beauty?—did their smiles renew
Those days of sacred and serene delight,
When fairest beings in thy pathway grew?
Oh! heaven hath balm for every wound it makes,
Healing the broken heart; it smites, but ne’er forsakes.
These may be fantasies—and this alone,
Of all we picture in our dreams, is sure;
That rest, made perfect, is at length thine own,
Rest, in thy God immortally secure!
Enough for tranquil faith; released from all
The woes that graved heaven’s lessons on thy brow,
No cloud to dim, no fetter to enthrall,
Haply thine eye is on thy people now;
Whose love around thee still its offerings shed,
Though vainly sweet, as flowers, grief’s tribute to the dead.
But if th’ ascending, disembodied mind,
Borne on the wings of morning to the skies,
May cast one glance of tenderness behind

On scenes once hallow’d by its mortal ties,
How much hast thou to gaze on! All that lay
By the dark mantle of thy soul conceal’d—
The might, the majesty, the proud array
Of England’s march o’er many a noble field—
All spread beneath thee, in a blaze of light,
Shine like some glorious land view’d from an Alpine height.
Away, presumptuous thought! Departed saint!
To thy freed vision what can earth display
Of pomp, of royalty, that is not faint,
Seen from the birth-place of celestial day?
Oh! pale and weak the sun’s reflected rays,
E’en in their fervour of meridian heat,
To him who in the sanctuary may gaze
On the bright cloud that fills the mercy-seat!
And thou may’st view, from thy divine abode,
The dust of empires flit before a breath of God.
And yet we mourn thee! Yes, thy place is void
Within our hearts! there veil’d thine image dwelt,
But cherish’d still; and o’er that tie destroy’d,
Though faith rejoice, fond nature still must melt.
Beneath the long-loved sceptre of thy sway,
Thousands were born, who now in dust repose;
And many a head, with years and sorrows gray,

Wore youth’s bright tresses when thy star arose;
And many a glorious mind, since that fair dawn,
Hath fill’d our sphere with light, now to its source withdrawn.
Earthquakes have rock’d the nations: things revered,
Th’ ancestral fabrics of the world, went down
In ruins, from whose stones Ambition rear’d
His lonely pyramid of dread renown.
But when the fires that long had slumber’d, pent
Deep in men’s bosoms, with volcanic force,
Bursting their prison-house, each bulwark rent,
And swept each holy barrier from their course,
Firm and unmoved, amidst that lava-flood,
Still, by thine arm upheld, our ancient landmarks stood.
Be they eternal!—be thy children found
Still to their country’s altars true like thee!
And while “the name of Briton” is a sound
Of rallying music to the brave and free,
With the high feelings at the word which swell,
To make the breast a shrine for Freedom’s flame,
Be mingled thoughts of him who loved so well,
Who left so pure, its heritage of fame!
Let earth with trophies guard the conqueror’s dust,
Heaven in our souls embalms the memory of the just.
All else shall pass away!—the thrones of kings,

The very traces of their tombs depart;

But number not with perishable things

The holy records Virtue leaves the heart,

Heir-looms from race to race! And oh! in days

When, by the yet unborn, thy deeds are blest,

When our sons learn “as household words” thy praise,

Still on thine offspring may thy spirit rest!

And many a name of that imperial line,

Father and patriot! blend, in England’s songs, with thine!

[193] The glittering meteor, like a star, which often appears about a ship during tempests; if seen upon the main-mast, is considered by the sailors as an omen of good weather.—See Dampier’s Voyages.

[“The last poem is to the memory of his late Majesty: unlike courtly themes in general, this is one of the deepest and most lasting interest. Buried as the King had long been in mental and visual darkness, and dead to the common joys of the world, his death, perhaps, did not occasion the shock, or the piercing sorrow which we have felt on some other public losses; but the heart must be cold indeed that could, on reflection, regard the whole fortune and fate of that venerable, gallant, tender-hearted, and pious man, without a more than common sympathy. There was something in his character so truly national—his very errors were of so amiable a kind, his excellences bore so high a stamp, his nature was so genuine and unsophisticated, he stood in his splendid court, amidst his large and fine family, so true a husband, so good a father, so safe an example—he so thoroughly understood the feelings, and so duly appreciated the virtues, even the uncourtly virtues of his subjects—and, with all this, the sorrows from heaven rained down upon his head in so ‘pitiless and pelting a storm:’ all these—his high qualities and unparalleled

sufferings—form such a subject for poetry, as nothing, we should imagine, but its difficulty and the expectation attending it, would prevent from being seized upon by the greatest poets of the day. We will not say that Mrs Hemans has filled the whole canvass as it might have been filled, but unquestionably her poem is beyond all comparison with any which we have seen on the subject; it is full of fine and pathetic passages, and it leads us up through all the dismal colourings of the foreground to that bright and consoling prospect which should close every Christian's reflections on such a matter. An analysis of so short a poem is wholly unnecessary, and we have already transgressed our limits; we will, therefore, give but one extract of that soothing nature alluded to, and release our readers:—

'Yet was there mercy still! If joy no more,' etc.

"It is time to close this article.[194] Our readers will have seen, and we do not deny, that we have been much interested by our subject. Who or what Mrs Hemans is, we know not: we have been told that, like a poet of antiquity—

——'Tristia vitæ

Solatur cantu,'——

If it be so, (and the most sensible hearts are not uncommonly nor unnaturally the most bitterly wounded,) she seems, from the tenor of her writings, to bear about her a higher and a surer balsam than the praises of men, or even the 'sacred muse' herself can impart. Still there is a pleasure, an innocent and an honest pleasure, even to a wounded spirit, in fame fairly earned; and such fame as may wait upon our decision, we freely and conscientiously bestow. In our opinion, all her poems are elegant and pure in thought and language; her later poems are of higher promise, they are vigorous, picturesque, and pathetic."—Quarterly Review, vol. xxiv.]

[194] This critique, from the pen of the venerable and distinguished Editor, William Gifford, Esq., comprehended strictures on "The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy,"—"Tales and Historic Scenes in Verse,"—"Translations from Camoens,"

etc.,—“The Sceptic,” and “Stanzas to the Memory of the late King.”

TALES AND HISTORIC SCENES.

SECOND SERIES.

[After the first collection of her Tales and Historic Scenes, it is pretty evident that Mrs Hemans contemplated a second series, although her design was never so extensively carried out as to induce the publication of another volume under the same title. But, as the compositions we refer to all belong to this period of our author’s literary progress, we have ventured not only so to class, but so to christen them, as Malachi Malgrowther would say, “for uniformity’s sake.”

THE MAREMMA.

[“Nello della Pietra had espoused a lady of noble family at Sienna, named Madonna Pia. Her beauty was the admiration of Tuscany, and excited in the heart of her husband a jealousy, which, exasperated by false reports and groundless suspicions, at length drove him to the desperate resolution of Othello. It is difficult to decide whether the lady was quite innocent, but so Dante represents her. Her husband brought her into the Maremma, which, then as now, was a district destructive of health. He never told his unfortunate wife the reason of her banishment to so dangerous a country. He did not deign to utter complaint or accusation. He lived with her alone, in cold silence, without answering her questions, or listening to her remonstrances. He patiently waited till the pestilential air should destroy the health of this young lady. In a few months she died. Some chronicles, indeed, tell us that Nello used the dagger to hasten her death. It is certain that he survived her, plunged in sadness and perpetual silence. Dante had, in this incident, all the materials of an ample and very poetical narrative. But he bestows on it only four verses. He meets in Purgatory three spirits. One was a captain who fell fighting on the same side with

him in the battle of Campaldino; the second, a gentleman assassinated by the treachery of the House of Este; the third was a woman unknown to the poet, and who, after the others had spoken, turned towards him with these words:—

Recorditi di me; che son la Pia,

Sienna mi fe, disfecerni Maremma,

Salsi colui che inanellata pria

Disposando m' avea con la sua gemma.'"

Purgatorio, cant. v.

—Edinburgh Review, No. lvii.]

There are bright scenes beneath Italian skies,

Where glowing suns there purest light diffuse,

Uncultured flowers in wild profusion rise,

And nature lavishes her warmest hues;

But trust thou not her smile, her balmy breath—

Away! her charms are but the pomp of Death!

He in the vine-clad bowers, unseen, is dwelling,

Where the cool shade its freshness round thee throws;

His voice, in every perfumed zephyr swelling,

With gentlest whisper lures thee to repose;

And the soft sounds that through the foliage sigh

But woo thee still to slumber and to die.

Mysterious danger lurks, a syren there,

Not robed in terrors, or announced in gloom,

But stealing o'er thee in the scented air,

And veil’d in flowers, that smile to deck thy tomb;
How may we deem, amidst their deep array,
That heaven and earth but flatter to betray?
Sunshine, and bloom, and verdure! Can it be
That these but charm us with destructive wiles?
Where shall we turn, O Nature, if in thee
Danger is mask’d in beauty—death in smiles?
Oh! still the Circe of that fatal shore,
Where she, the Sun’s bright daughter, dwelt of yore!
There, year by year, that secret peril spreads,
Disguised in loveliness, its baleful reign,
And viewless blights o’er many a landscape sheds,
Gay with the riches of the south, in vain;
O’er fairy bowers and palaces of state
Passing unseen, to leave them desolate.
And pillar’d halls, whose airy colonnades
Were form’d to echo music’s choral tone,
Are silent now, amidst deserted shades,
Peopled by sculpture’s graceful forms alone;
And fountains dash unheard, by lone alcoves,
Neglected temples, and forsaken groves.
And there, where marble nymphs, in beauty gleaming,
Midst the deep shades of plane and cypress rise.
By wave or grot might Fancy linger, dreaming

Of old Arcadia’s woodland deities.
Wild visions!—there no sylvan powers convene:
Death reigns the genius of th’ Elysian scene.
Ye, too, illustrious hills of Rome! that bear
Traces of mightier beings on your brow,
O’er you that subtle spirit of the air
Extends the desert of his empire now;
Broods o’er the wrecks of altar, fane, and dome,
And makes the Cæsars’ ruin’d halls his home.
Youth, valour, beauty, oft have felt his power.
His crown’d and chosen victims: o’er their lot
Hath fond affection wept—each blighted flower
In turn was loved and mourn’d, and is forgot.
But one who perish’d, left a tale of woe,
Meet for as deep a sigh as pity can bestow.
A voice of music, from Sienna’s walls,
Is floating joyous on the summer air;
And there are banquets in her stately halls,
And graceful revels of the gay and fair,
And brilliant wreaths the altar have array’d,
Where meet her noblest youth and loveliest maid.
To that young bride each grace hath Nature given
Which glows on Art’s divinest dream: her eye
Hath a pure sunbeam of her native heaven—

Her cheek a tinge of morning's richest dye;
Fair as that daughter of the south, whose form
Still breathes and charms, in Vinci's colours warm.[195]
But is she blest?—for sometimes o'er her smile
A soft sweet shade of pensiveness is cast;
And in her liquid glance there seems awhile
To dwell some thought whose soul is with the past;
Yet soon it flies—a cloud that leaves no trace,
On the sky's azure, of its dwelling-place.
Perchance, at times, within her heart may rise
Remembrance of some early love or woe,
Faded, yet scarce forgotten—in her eyes
Wakening the half-formed tear that may not flow,
Yet radiant seems her lot as aught on earth,
Where still some pining thought comes darkly o'er our mirth.
The world before her smiles—its changeful gaze
She hath not proved as yet; her path seems gay
With flowers and sunshine, and the voice of praise
Is still the joyous herald of her way;
And beauty's light around her dwells, to throw
O'er every scene its own resplendent glow.
Such is the young Bianca—graced with all
That nature, fortune, youth, at once can give;
Pure in their loveliness, her looks recall

Such dreams as ne’er life’s early bloom survive;
And when she speaks, each thrilling tone is fraught
With sweetness, born of high and heavenly thought.
And he to whom are breathed her vows of faith
Is brave and noble—child of high descent,
He hath stood fearless in the ranks of death,
Mid slaughter’d heaps, the warrior’s monument;
And proudly marshall’d his carroccio’s[196] way
Amidst the wildest wreck of war’s array.
And his the chivalrous commanding mien,
Where high-born grandeur blends with courtly grace;
Yet may a lightning glance at times be seen,
Of fiery passions, darting o’er his face,
And fierce the spirit kindling in his eye—
But e’en while yet we gaze, its quick wild flashes die.
And calmly can Pietra smile, concealing,
As if forgotten, vengeance, hate, remorse;
And veil the workings of each darker feeling,
Deep in his soul concentrating its force;
But yet he loves—Oh! who hath loved, nor known
Affection’s power exalt the bosom all its own?
The days roll on—and still Bianca’s lot
Seems as a path of Eden. Thou mightst deem
That grief, the mighty chastener, had forgot

To wake her soul from life’s enchanted dream;
And, if her brow a moment’s sadness wear,
It sheds but grace more intellectual there.
A few short years, and all is changed; her fate
Seems with some deep mysterious cloud o’ercast.
Have jealous doubts transform’d to wrath and hate,
The love whose glow expression’s power surpass’d?
Lo! on Pietra’s brow a sullen gloom
Is gathering day by day, prophetic of her doom.
Oh! can he meet that eye, of light serene,
Whence the pure spirit looks in radiance forth,
And view that bright intelligence of mien
Form’d to express but thoughts of loftiest worth,
Yet deem that vice within that heart can reign?
—How shall he e’er confide in aught on earth again?
In silence oft, with strange vindictive gaze.
Transient, yet fill’d with meaning, stern and wild,
Her features, calm in beauty, he surveys,
Then turns away, and fixes on her child
So dark a glance as thrills a mother’s mind
With some vague fear scarce own’d, and undefined.
There stands a lonely dwelling, by the wave
Of the blue deep which bathes Italia’s shore,
Far from all sounds, but rippling seas that lave

Gray rocks with foliage richly shadow’d o’er,
And sighing winds, that murmur through the wood,
Fringing the beach of that Hesperian flood.
Fair is that house of solitude—and fair
The green Maremma, far around it spread,
A sun-bright waste of beauty; yet an air
Of brooding sadness o’er the scene is shed,
No human footstep tracks the lone domain,
The desert of luxuriance glows in vain.
And silent are the marble halls that rise
’Mid founts, and cypress walks and olive groves:
All sleep in sunshine, ’neath cerulean skies,
And still around the sea-breeze lightly roves;
Yet every trace of man reveals alone,
That there life once hath flourish’d—and is gone.
There, till around them slowly, softly stealing,
The summer air, deceit in every sigh,
Came fraught with death, its power no sign revealing,
Thy sires, Pietra, dwelt in days gone by;
And strains of mirth and melody have flow’d
Where stands, all voiceless now, the still abode.
And thither doth her Lord remorseless bear
Bianca with her child. His alter’d eye
And brow a stern and fearful calmness wear,

While his dark spirit seals their doom—to die;
And the deep bodings of his victim's heart
Tell her from fruitless hope at once to part.
It is the summer's glorious prime—and blending
Its blue transparence with the skies, the deep,
Each tint of heaven upon its breast descending,
Scarce murmurs as it heaves in glassy sleep,
And on its wave reflects, more softly bright,
That lovely shore of solitude and light.
Fragrance in each warm southern gale is breathing,
Deck'd with young flowers the rich Maremma glows,
Neglected vines the trees are wildly wreathing,
And the fresh myrtle in exuberance blows,
And, far around, a deep and sunny bloom
Mantles the scene, as garlands robe the tomb.
Yes! 'tis thy tomb, Bianca! fairest flower!
The voice that calls thee speaks in every gale,
Which, o'er thee breathing with insidious power,
Bids the young roses of thy cheek turn pale;
And fatal in its softness, day by day,
Steals from that eye some trembling spark away.
But sink not yet; for there are darker woes,
Daughter of Beauty! in thy spring-morn fading—
Sufferings more keen for thee reserved, than those

Of lingering death, which thus thine eye are shading!
Nerve then thy heart to meet that bitter lot:
’Tis agony—but soon to be forgot!
What deeper pangs maternal hearts can wring,
Than hourly to behold the spoiler’s breath
Shedding, as mildews on the bloom of spring,
O’er Infancy’s fair cheek the blight of death?
To gaze and shrink, as gathering shades o’ercast
The pale smooth brow, yet watch it to the last!
Such pangs were thine, young mother! Thou didst bend
O’er thy fair boy, and raise his drooping head;
And faint and hopeless, far from every friend,
Keep thy sad midnight vigils near his bed,
And watch his patient, supplicating eye
Fix’d upon thee—on thee!—who couldst no aid supply!
There was no voice to cheer thy lonely woe
Through those dark hours: to thee the wind’s low sigh,
And the faint murmur of the ocean’s flow,
Came like some spirit whispering—“He must die!”
And thou didst vainly clasp him to the breast,
His young and sunny smile so oft with hope had blest.
’Tis past—that fearful trial!—he is gone!
But thou, sad mourner! hast not long to weep;
The hour of nature’s charter’d peace comes on,

And thou shalt share thine infant’s holy sleep.
A few short sufferings yet—and death shall be
As a bright messenger from heaven to thee.
But ask not—hope not—one relenting thought
From him who doom’d thee thus to waste away,
Whose heart, with sullen, speechless vengeance fraught,
Broods in dark triumph o’er thy slow decay;
And coldly, sternly, silently can trace
The gradual withering of each youthful grace.
And yet the day of vain remorse shall come,
When thou, bright victim! on his dreams shalt rise
As an accusing angel—and thy tomb,
A martyr’s shrine, be hallow’d in his eyes!
Then shall thine innocence his bosom wring,
More than thy fancied guilt with jealous pangs could sting.
Lift thy meek eyes to heaven—for all on earth,
Young sufferer! fades before thee. Thou art lone:
Hope, Fortune, Love, smiled brightly on thy birth,
Thine hour of death is all Affliction’s own!
It is our task to suffer—and our fate
To learn that mighty lesson, soon or late.
The season’s glory fades—the vintage lay
Through joyous Italy resounds no more;
But mortal loveliness hath pass’d away,

Fairer than aught in summer’s glowing store.

Beauty and youth are gone—behold them such

As death hath made them with his blighting touch!

The summer’s breath came o’er them—and they died!

Softly it came to give luxuriance birth,

Call’d forth young nature in her festal pride,

But bore to them their summons from the earth!

Again shall blow that mild, delicious breeze,

And wake to life and light all flowers—but these.

No sculptured urn, nor verse thy virtues telling,

O lost and loveliest one! adorns thy grave;

But o’er that humble cypress-shaded dwelling

The dew-drops glisten and the wild-flowers wave—

Emblems more meet, in transient light and bloom,

For thee, who thus didst pass in brightness to the tomb!

[195] An allusion to Leonardo da Vinci’s picture of his wife Mona Lisa, supposed to be the most perfect imitation of nature ever exhibited in painting.

[196] A sort of consecrated war-chariot.

A TALE OF THE SECRET TRIBUNAL.

[The Secret Tribunal,[197] which attained such formidable power towards the close of the fourteenth century, is mentioned in history as an institution publicly known so early as in the year 1211. Its members, who were called Free Judges, were unknown to the people, and were bound by a tremendous oath, to deliver up their dearest friends and relatives, without exception, if they had committed any offence

cognisable by the tribunal. They were also under an obligation to relate all they knew concerning the affair, to cite the accused, and, in case of his condemnation, to pursue and put him to death wherever he might be met with. The proceedings of this tribunal were carried on at night, and with the greatest mystery; and though it was usual to summon a culprit three times before sentence was passed, yet persons obnoxious to it were sometimes accused and condemned without any citation. After condemnation, it was almost impossible for any one to escape the vengeance of the Free Judges, for their commands set thousands of assassins in motion, who had sworn not to spare the life of their nearest relation, if required to sacrifice it, but to execute the decrees of the Order with the most devoted obedience, even should they consider the object of their pursuit as the most innocent of men. Almost all persons of rank and fortune sought admission into the society; there were Free Judges even amongst the magistrates of the imperial cities, and every prince had some of their Order in his council. When a member of this tribunal was not of himself strong enough to seize and put to death a criminal, he was not to lose sight of him until he met with a sufficient number of his comrades for the purpose, and these were obliged, upon his making certain signs, to lend him immediate assistance, without asking any questions. It was usual to hang up the person condemned, with a willow branch, to the first tree; but if circumstances obliged them to despatch him with a poniard, they left it in his body, that it might be known he had not been assassinated, but executed by a Free Judge. All the transactions of the Sages or Seers (as they called themselves) were enveloped in mystery, and it is even now unknown by what signs they revealed themselves to each other. At length their power became so extensive and redoubtable, that the Princes of the Empire found it necessary to unite their exertions for its suppression, in which they were at length successful.

The following account of this extraordinary association is given by Madame de Staël:—“Des juges mystérieux, inconnus l’un à l’autre, toujours masqués, et se rassemblant pendant la nuit, punissoient dans le silence, et gravoient seulement sur

le poignard qu'ils enfoncoient dans le sein du coupable ce mot terrible: Tribunal Secret. Ils prévenoient le condamne, en faisant crier trois fois sous les fenêtres de sa maison, Malheur, Malheur, Malheur! Alors l'infortuné savoit que par-tout, dans l'étranger, dans son concitoyen, dans son parent même, il pouvoit trouver son meurtrier. La solitude, la foule, les villes, les campagnes, tout étoit rempli par la présence invisible de cette conscience armée qui poursuivoit les criminels. On concoit comment cette terrible institution pouvoit être nécessaire, dans un temps où chaque homme étoit fort contre tous, au lieu que tous doivent être forts contre chacun. Il falloit que la justice surprit le criminel avant qu'il pût s'en défendre; mais cette punition qui planoit dans les airs comme une ombre vengeresse, cette sentence mortelle qui pouvoit receler le sein même d'un ami, frappoit d'une invincible terreur."—L'Allemagne, vol. ii.]

[197] See the works of Baron Bock, and Professor Kramer.

Night veil'd the mountains of the vine,
And storms had roused the foaming Rhine,
And, mingling with the pinewood's roar,
Its billows hoarsely chafed the shore,
While glen and cavern, to their moans
Gave answer with a thousand tones:
Then, as the voice of storms appall'd
The peasant of the Odenwald,[198]
Shuddering he deem'd, that, far on high,
'Twas the wild huntsman rushing by,
Riding the blast with phantom speed,
With cry of hound and tramp of steed,
While his fierce train, as on they flew,

Their horns in savage chorus blew,
Till rock, and tower, and convent round,
Rang to the shrill unearthly sound.
Vain dreams! far other footsteps traced
The forest paths, in secret haste;
Far other sounds were on the night,
Though lost amidst the tempest's might,
That fill'd the echoing earth and sky
With its own awful harmony.
There stood a lone and ruin'd fane,
Far in the Odenwald's domain,
Midst wood and rock, a deep recess
Of still and shadowy loneliness.
Long grass its pavement had o'ergrown,
The wild-flower waved o'er the altar stone,
The night-wind rock'd the tottering pile,
As it swept along the roofless aisle,
For the forest boughs and the stormy sky
Were all that minster's canopy.
Many a broken image lay
In the mossy mantle of decay,
And partial light the moonbeams darted
O'er trophies of the long-departed;
For there the chiefs of other days,

The mighty, slumber’d, with their praise:
’Twas long since aught but the dews of heaven
A tribute to their bier had given,
Long since a sound but the moaning blast
Above their voiceless home had pass’d.
—So slept the proud, and with them all
The records of their fame and fall;
Helmet and shield, and sculptured crest,
Adorn’d the dwelling of their rest,
And emblems of the Holy Land
Were carved by some forgotten hand.
But the helm was broke, the shield defaced,
And the crest through weeds might scarce be traced;
And the scatter’d leaves of the northern pine
Half hid the palm of Palestine.
So slept the glorious—lowly laid,
As the peasant in his native shade;
Some hermit’s tale, some shepherd’s rhyme,
All that high deeds could win from time!
What footsteps move, with measured tread,
Amid those chambers of the dead?
What silent, shadowy beings glide
Low tombs and mouldering shrines beside,
Peopling the wild and solemn scene

With forms well suited to its mien?
Wanderer, away! let none intrude
On their mysterious solitude!
Lo! these are they, that awful band,
The secret Watchers of the land,
They that, unknown and uncontroll'd,
Their dark and dread tribunal hold.
They meet not in the monarch's dome,
They meet not in the chieftain's home;
But where, unbounded o'er their heads,
All heaven magnificently spreads,
And from its depths of cloudless blue
The eternal stars their deeds may view!
Where'er the flowers of the mountain sod
By roving foot are seldom trod;
Where'er the pathless forest waves,
Or the ivy clothes forsaken graves;
Where'er wild legends mark a spot,
By mortals shunn'd, but unforgot,
There, circled by the shades of night,
They judge of crimes that shrink from light;
And guilt, that deems its secret known
To the One unslumbering eye alone,
Yet hears their name with a sudden start,

As an icy touch had chill’d its heart,
For the shadow of th’ avenger’s hand
Rests dark and heavy on the land.
There rose a voice from the ruin’s gloom,
And woke the echoes of the tomb,
As if the noble hearts beneath
Sent forth deep answers to its breath.
“When the midnight stars are burning,
And the dead to earth returning;
When the spirits of the blest
Rise upon the good man’s rest;
When each whisper of the gale
Bids the cheek of guilt turn pale;
In the shadow of the hour
That o’er the soul hath deepest power,
Why thus meet we, but to call
For judgment on the criminal?
Why, but the doom of guilt to seal,
And point th’ avenger’s holy steel?
A fearful oath has bound our souls,
A fearful power our arm controls!
There is an ear awake on high
E’en to thought’s whispers ere they die;
There is an eye whose beam pervades

All depths, all deserts, and all shades:
That ear hath heard our awful vow,
That searching eye is on us now!
Let him whose heart is unprofaned,
Whose hand no blameless blood hath stain’d—
Let him, whose thoughts no record keep
Of crimes in silence buried deep,
Here, in the face of heaven, accuse
The guilty whom its wrath pursues!”
’Twas hush’d—that voice of thrilling sound!
And a dead silence reign’d around.
Then stood forth one, whose dim-seen form
Tower’d like a phantom in the storm;
Gathering his mantle, as a cloud,
With its dark folds his face to shroud,
Through pillar’d arches on he pass’d,
With stately step, and paused at last,
Where, on the altar’s mouldering stone,
The fitful moonbeam brightly shone;
Then on the fearful stillness broke
Low, solemn tones, as thus he spoke:
“Before that eye whose glance pervades
All depths, all deserts, and all shades;
Heard by that ear awake on high

E’en to thought’s whispers ere they die—
With all a mortal’s awe I stand,
Yet with pure heart and stainless hand.
To heaven I lift that hand, and call
For judgment on the criminal;
The earth is dyed with bloodshed’s hues—
It cries for vengeance. I accuse!”
“Name thou the guilty! say for whom
Thou claim’st th’ inevitable doom!
“Albert of Lindheim—to the skies
The voice of blood against him cries;
A brother’s blood—his hand is dyed
With the deep stain of fratricide.
One hour, one moment, hath reveal’d
What years in darkness had conceal’d,
But all in vain—the gulf of time
Refused to close upon his crime;
And guilt that slept on flowers shall know
The earthquake was but hush’d below!
—Here, where amidst the noble dead,
Awed by their fame, he dare not tread;
Where, left by him to dark decay,
Their trophies moulder fast away,
Around us and beneath us lie

The relics of his ancestry—
The chiefs of Lindheim’s ancient race,
Each in his last low dwelling-place.
But one is absent—o’er his grave
The palmy shades of Syria wave;
Far distant from his native Rhine,
He died unmourn’d, in Palestine!
The Pilgrim sought the Holy Land,
To perish by a brother’s hand!
Peace to his soul! though o’er his bed
No dirge be pour’d, no tear be shed,
Though all he loved his name forget,
They live who shall avenge him yet!”
“Accuser! how to thee alone
Became the fearful secret known?”
“There is an hour when vain remorse
First wakes in her eternal force;
When pardon may not be retrieved,
When conscience will not be deceived.
He that beheld the victim bleed,
Beheld, and aided in the deed—
When earthly fears had lost their power
Reveal’d the tale in such an hour,
Unfolding, with his latest breath,

All that gave keener pangs to death.”

“By Him, th’ All-seeing and Unseen,

Who is for ever, and hath been,

And by th’ Atoner’s cross adored,

And by th’ avenger’s holy sword,

By truth eternal and divine,

Accuser! wilt thou swear to thine?”

—“The cross upon my heart is prest,

I hold the dagger to my breast;

If false the tale whose truth I swear,

Be mine the murderer’s doom to bear!”

Then sternly rose the dread reply—

“His days are number’d—he must die!

There is no shadow of the night

So deep as to conceal his flight;

Earth doth not hold so lone a waste

But there his footsteps shall be traced;

Devotion hath no shrine so blest

That there in safety he may rest.

Where’er he treads, let Vengeance there

Around him spread her secret snare!

In the busy haunts of men,

In the still and shadowy glen,

When the social board is crown’d,

When the wine-cup sparkles round;
When his couch of sleep is prest,
And a dream his spirit’s guest;
When his bosom knows no fear,
Let the dagger still be near,
Till, sudden as the lightning’s dart,
Silent and swift it reach his heart!
One warning voice, one fearful word,
Ere morn beneath his towers be heard,
Then vainly may the guilty fly,
Unseen, unaided,—he must die!
Let those he loves prepare his tomb,
Let friendship lure him to his doom!
Perish his deeds, his name, his race,
Without a record or a trace!
Away! be watchful, swift, and free,
To wreak th’ invisible’s decree.
’Tis pass’d—th’ avenger claims his prey:
On to the chase of death—away!”
And all was still. The sweeping blast
Caught not a whisper as it pass’d;
The shadowy forms were seen no more,
The tombs deserted as before;
And the wide forest waved immense

In dark and lone magnificence.
In Lindheim’s towers the feast had closed
The song was hush’d, the bard reposed;
Sleep settled on the weary guest,
And the castle’s lord retired to rest.
To rest! The captive doom’d to die
May slumber, when his hour is nigh;
The seaman, when the billows foam,
Rock’d on the mast, may dream of home;
The warrior, on the battle’s eve,
May win from care a short reprieve:
But earth and heaven alike deny
Their peace to guilt’s o’erwearied eye;
And night, that brings to grief a calm,
To toil a pause, to pain a balm,
Hath spells terrific in her course,
Dread sounds and shadows, for remorse—
Voices, that long from earth had fled,
And steps and echoes from the dead;
And many a dream whose forms arise
Like a darker world’s realities!
Call them not vain illusions—born,
But for the wise and brave to scorn!
Heaven, that the penal doom defers,

Hath yet its thousand ministers,
To scourge the heart, unseen, unknown,
In shade, in silence, and alone,
Concentrating in one brief hour
Ages of retribution's power!
—If thou wouldst know the lot of those,
Whose souls are dark with guilty woes,
Ah! seek them not where pleasure's throng
Are listening to the voice of song;
Seek them not where the banquet glows,
And the red vineyard's nectar flows:
There, mirth may flush the hollow cheek,
The eye of feverish joy may speak,
And smiles, the ready mask of pride,
The canker-worm within may hide.
Heed not those signs! they but delude;
Follow, and mark their solitude!
The song is hush'd, the feast is done,
And Lindheim's lord remains alone—
Alone in silence and unrest,
With the dread secret of his breast;
Alone with anguish and with fear,
—There needs not an avenger here!
Behold him!—Why that sudden start?

Thou hear’st the beating of thy heart!
Thou hear’st the night-wind’s hollow sigh,
Thou hear’st the rustling tapestry!
No sound but these may near thee be;
Sleep! all things earthly sleep—but thee.
No! there are murmurs on the air,
And a voice is heard that cries—“Despair!”
And he who trembles fain would deem
’Twas the whisper of a waking dream.
Was it but this? Again, ’tis there:
Again is heard—“Despair! Despair!”
’Tis past—its tones have slowly died
In echoes on the mountain side;
Heard but by him, they rose, they fell.
He knew their fearful meaning well,
And shrinking from the midnight gloom,
As from the shadow of the tomb,
Yet shuddering, turn’d in pale dismay,
When broke the dawn’s first kindling ray,
And sought, amidst the forest wild,
Some shade where sunbeam never smiled.
Yes! hide thee, guilt! The laughing morn
Wakes in a heaven of splendour born!
The storms that shook the mountain crest

Have sought their viewless world of rest.
High from his cliffs, with ardent gaze,
Soars the young eagle in the blaze,
Exulting, as he wings his way,
To revel in the fount of day;
And brightly past his banks of vine,
In glory, flows the monarch Rhine;
And joyous peals the vintage song
His wild luxuriant shores along,
As peasant bands, from rock and dell,
Their strains of choral transport swell;
And cliffs of bold fantastic forms,
Aspiring to the realm of storms,
And woods around, and waves below,
Catch the red Orient's deepening glow,
That lends each tower, and convent spire,
A tinge of its ethereal fire.
Swell high the song of festal hours!
Deck ye the shrine with living flowers!
Let music o'er the waters breathe!
Let beauty twine the bridal wreath!
While she, whose blue eye laughs in light,
Whose cheek with love's own hue is bright,
The fair-hair'd maid of Lindheim's hall,

Wakes to her nuptial festival.

Oh! who hath seen, in dreams that soar

To worlds the soul would fain explore,

When, for her own blest country pining,

Its beauty o’er her thought is shining,

Some form of heaven, whose cloudless eye

Was all one beam of ecstasy!

Whose glorious brow no traces wore

Of guilt, or sorrow known before!

Whose smile, undimm’d by aught of earth,

A sunbeam of immortal birth,

Spoke of bright realms, far distant lying,

Where love and joy are both undying!

E’en thus—a vision of delight,

A beam to gladden mortal sight,

A flower whose head no storm had bow’d,

Whose leaves ne’er droop’d beneath a cloud,—

Thus, by the world unstain’d, untried,

Seem’d that beloved and lovely bride;

A being all too soft and fair

One breath of earthly woe to bear!

Yet lives there many a lofty mind,

In light and fragile form enshrined;

And oft smooth cheek and smiling eye

Hide strength to suffer and to die!
Judge not of woman’s heart in hours
That strew her path with summer flowers,
When joy’s full cup is mantling high,
When flattery’s blandishments are nigh;
Judge her not then! within her breast
Are energies unseen, that rest!
They wait their call—and grief alone
May make the soul’s deep secrets known.
Yes! let her smile midst pleasure’s train,
Leading the reckless and the vain!
Firm on the scaffold she hath stood,
Besprinkled with the martyr’s blood;
Her voice the patriot’s heart hath steel’d,
Her spirit glow’d on battle-field;
Her courage freed from dungeon’s gloom
The captive brooding o’er his doom;
Her faith the fallen monarch saved,
Her love the tyrant’s fury braved;
No scene of danger or despair,
But she hath won her triumph there!
Away! nor cloud the festal morn
With thoughts of boding sadness born!
Far other, lovelier dreams are thine,

Fair daughter of a noble line!
Young Ella! from thy tower, whose height
Hath caught the flush of Eastern light,
Watching, while soft the morning air
Parts on thy brow the sunny hair,
Yon bark, that o’er the calm blue tide
Bears thy loved warrior to his bride—
Him, whose high deeds romantic praise
Hath hallow’d with a thousand lays.
He came—that youthful chief,—he came
That favour’d lord of love and fame!
His step was hurried—as if one
Who seeks a voice within to shun;
His cheek was varying, and express’d
The conflict of a troubled breast;
His eye was anxious—doubt, and dread,
And a stem grief, might there be read:
Yet all that mark’d his alter’d mien
Seem’d struggling to be still unseen.
—With shrinking heart, with nameless fear,
Young Ella met the brow austere,
And the wild look, which seem’d to fly
The timid welcome of her eye.
Was that a lover’s gaze, which chill’d

The soul, its awful sadness thrill’d?
A lover’s brow, so darkly fraught
With all the heaviest gloom of thought?
She trembled—ne’er to grief inured,
By its dread lessons ne’er matured,
Unused to meet a glance of less
Than all a parent’s tenderness,
Shuddering she felt, through every sense,
The deathlike faintness of suspense.
High o’er the windings of the flood,
On Lindheim’s terraced rocks they stood,
Whence the free sight afar might stray
O’er that imperial river’s way,
Which, rushing from its Alpine source,
Makes one long triumph of its course,
Rolling in tranquil grandeur by,
Midst Nature’s noblest pageantry.
But they, o’er that majestic scene,
With clouded brow and anxious mien,
In silence gazed!—for Ella’s heart
Fear’d its own terrors to impart;
And he, who vainly strove to hide
His pangs, with all a warrior’s pride,
Seem’d gathering courage to unfold

Some fearful tale, that must be told.
At length his mien, his voice, obtain’d
A calm, that seem’d by conflicts gain’d,
As thus he spoke—“Yes! gaze a while
On the bright scenes that round thee smile;
For, if thy love be firm and true,
Soon must thou bid their charms adieu!
A fate hangs o’er us, whose decree
Must bear me far from them or thee;
Our path is one of snares and fear,
I lose thee, if I linger here!
Droop not, beloved! thy home shall rise
As fair, beneath far-distant skies;
As fondly tenderness and truth
Shall cherish there thy rose of youth.
But speak! and, when yon hallow’d shrine
Hath heard the vows which make thee mine,
Say, wilt thou fly with me, no more
To tread thine own loved mountain shore,
But share and soothe, repining not,
The bitterness of exile’s lot?”
“Ulric! thou know’st how dearly loved
The scenes where first my childhood roved;
The woods, the rocks, that tower supreme

Above our own majestic stream,
The halls where first my heart beat high
To the proud songs of chivalry.
All, all are dear—yet these are ties
Affection well may sacrifice;
Loved though they be, where'er thou art,
There is the country of my heart!
Yet is there one, who, reft of me,
Were lonely as a blasted tree;
One, who still hoped my hand should close
His eyes, in Nature's last repose;
Eve gathers round him—on his brow
Already rests the wintry snow;
His form is bent, his features wear
The deepening lines of age and care;
His faded eye hath lost its fire;—
Thou wouldst not tear me from my sire?
Yet tell me all—thy woes impart,
My Ulric! to a faithful heart,
Which sooner far—oh! doubt not this—
Would share thy pangs, than others' bliss!"
"Ella, what wouldst thou?—'tis a tale
Will make that cheek as marble pale!
Yet what avails it to conceal

All thou too soon must know and feel?
It must, it must be told—prepare,
And nerve that gentle heart to bear.
But I—oh, was it then for me
The herald of thy woes to be!
Thy soul's bright calmness to destroy,
And wake thee first from dreams of joy?
Forgive!—I would not ruder tone
Should make the fearful tidings known,
I would not that unpitying eyes
Should coldly watch thine agonies!
Better 'twere mine—that task severe,
To cloud thy breast with grief and fear.
"Hast thou not heard, in legends old,
Wild tales that turn the life-blood cold,
Of those who meet in cave or glen,
Far from the busy walks of men;
Those who mysterious vigils keep,
When earth is wrapt in shades and sleep,
To judge of crimes, like Him on high,
In stillness and in secrecy?
Th' unknown avengers, whose decree
'Tis fruitless to resist or flee?
Whose name hath cast a spell of power

O’er peasant’s cot and chieftain’s tower?
Thy sire—oh, Ella! hope is fled!
Think of him, mourn him, as the dead!
Their sentence, theirs, hath seal’d his doom,
And thou may’st weep as o’er his tomb!
Yes, weep!—relieve thy heart oppress’d,
Pour forth thy sorrows on my breast!
Thy cheek is cold—thy tearless eye
Seems fix’d in frozen vacancy.
Oh, gaze not thus!—thy silence break:
Speak! if ’tis but in anguish, speak!”
She spoke at length, in accents low,
Of wild and half-indignant woe:
—“He doom’d to perish! he decreed
By their avenging arm to bleed!
He, the renown’d in holy fight,
The Paynim’s scourge, the Christian’s might!
Ulric! what mean’st thou?—not a thought
Of that high mind with guilt is fraught!
Say, for which glorious trophy won,
Which deed of martial prowess done,
Which battle-field, in days gone by,
Gain’d by his valour, must he die?
Away! ’tis not his lofty name

Their sentence hath consign’d to shame—
’Tis not his life they seek. Recall
Thy words, or say he shall not fall!”
Then sprung forth tears, whose blest relief
Gave pleading softness to her grief:
“And wilt thou not, by all the ties
Of our affianced love,” she cries,
“By all my soul hath fix’d on thee,
Of cherish’d hope for years to be,
Wilt thou not aid him? wilt not thou
Shield his gray head from danger now?
And didst thou not, in childhood’s morn,
That saw our young affection born,
Hang round his neck, and climb his knee,
Sharing his parent smile with me?
Kind, gentle Ulric! best beloved!
Now be thy faith in danger proved!
Though snares and terrors round him wait,
Thou wilt not leave him to his fate!
Turn not away in cold disdain!
—Shall thine own Ella plead in vain?
How art thou changed! and must I bear
That frown, that stern, averted air?
What mean they?”

“Maiden, need’st thou ask?
These features wear no specious mask.
Doth sorrow mark this brow and eye
With characters of mystery?
This—this is anguish! Can it be!
And plead’st thou for my sire to me?
Know, though thy prayers a death-pang give,
He must not meet my sight—and live!
Well may’st thou shudder! Of the band
Who watch in secret o’er the land,
Whose thousand swords ’tis vain to shun,
Th’ unknown, th’ unslumbering—I am one!
My arm defend him! What were then
Each vow that binds the souls of men,
Sworn on the cross, and deeply seal’d
By rites that may not be reveal’d?
—A breeze’s breath, an echo’s tone,
A passing sound, forgot when gone!
Nay, shrink not from me—I would fly,
That he by other hands may die!
What! think’st thou I would live to trace
Abhorrence in that angel face?
Beside thee should the lover stand,
The father’s life-blood on his brand?

No! I have bade my home adieu,
For other scenes mine eyes must view.
Look on me, love! Now all is known,
O Ella! must I fly alone?”
But she was changed. Scarce heaved breath;
She stood like one prepared for death,
And wept no more; then, casting down
From her fair brows the nuptial crown,
As joy’s last vision from her heart,
Cried, with sad firmness, “We must part!
’Tis past! These bridal flowers, so frail
They may not brook one stormy gale,
Survive—too dear as still thou art—
Each hope they imaged;—we must part!
One struggle yet—and all is o’er:
We love—and may we meet no more!
Oh! little know’st thou of the power
Affection lends in danger’s hour,
To deem that fate should thus divide
My footsteps from a father’s side!
Speed thou to other shores—I go
To share his wanderings and his woe.
Where’er his path of thorns may lead,
Whate’er his doom, by heaven decreed,

If there be guardian powers above
To nerve the heart of filial love,
If courage may be won by prayer,
Or strength by duty—I can bear!
Farewell!—though in that sound be years
Of blighted hopes and fruitless tears,
Though the soul vibrate to its knell
Of joys departed—yet, farewell!
Was this the maid who seem’d, erewhile,
Born but to meet life’s vernal smile?
A being, almost on the wing,
As an embodied breeze of spring?
A child of beauty and of bliss,
Sent from some purer sphere to this—
Not, in her exile, to sustain
The trial of one earthly pain;
But, as a sunbeam, on to move,
Wakening all hearts to joy and love?
That airy form, with footsteps free,
And radiant glance—could this be she?
From her fair cheek the rose was gone,
Her eye’s blue sparkle thence had flown;
Of all its vivid glow bereft,
Each playful charm her lip had left.

But what were these? on that young face,
Far nobler beauty fill’d their place!
’Twas not the pride that scorns to bend,
Though all the bolts of heaven descend;
Not the fierce grandeur of despair,
That half exults its fate to dare;
Nor that wild energy which leads
Th’ enthusiast to fanatic deeds:
Her mien, by sorrow unsubdued,
Was fix’d in silent fortitude;
Not in its haughty strength elate,
But calmly, mournfully sedate.
’Twas strange, yet lovely to behold
That spirit in so fair a mould,
As if a rose-tree’s tender form,
Unbent, unbroke, should meet the storm.
One look she cast, where firmness strove
With the deep pangs of parting love;
One tear a moment in her eye
Dimm’d the pure light of constancy;
And pressing, as to still her heart,
She turn’d in silence to depart.
But Ulric, as to frenzy wrought,
Then started from his trance of thought:

“Stay thee! oh, stay!—It must not be—
All, all were well resign’d for thee!
Stay! till my soul each vow disown,
But those which make me thine alone!
If there be guilt—there is no shrine
More holy than that heart of thine:
There be my crime absolved—I take
The cup of shame for thy dear sake.
Of shame!—oh no! to virtue true,
Where thou art, there is glory too!
Go now! and to thy sire impart,
He hath a shield in Ulric’s heart,
And thou a home! Remain, or flee,
In life, in death—I follow thee!”
“There shall not rest one cloud of shame,
O Ulric! on thy lofty name;
There shall not one accusing word
Against thy spotless faith be heard!
Thy path is where the brave rush on,
Thy course must be where palms are won:
Where banners wave, and falchions glare,
Son of the mighty! be thou there!
Think on the glorious names that shine
Along thy sire’s majestic line;

Oh, last of that illustrious race!
Thou wert not born to meet disgrace!
Well, well I know each grief, each pain,
Thy spirit nobly could sustain;
E’en I unshrinking see them near,
And what hast thou to do with fear?
But when have warriors calmly borne
The cold and bitter smile of scorn?
’Tis not for thee! thy soul hath force
To cope with all things—but remorse;
And this my brightest thought shall be,
Thou hast not braved its pangs for me.
Go! break thou not one solemn vow;
Closed be the fearful conflict now;
Go! but forget not how my heart
Still at thy name will proudly start,
When chieftains hear, and minstrels tell,
Thy deeds of glory. Fare thee well!”
—And thus they parted. Why recall
The scene of anguish known to all?
The burst of tears, the blush of pride,
That fain those fruitless tear’s would hide;
The lingering look, the last embrace,
Oh! what avails it to retrace?

They parted—in that bitter word
A thousand tones of grief are heard,
Whose deeply-seated echoes rest
In the fair cells of every breast.
Who hath not known, who shall not know,
That keen yet most familiar woe?
Where’er affection’s home is found,
It meets her on the holy ground;
The cloud of every summer hour,
The canker-worm of every flower.
“Who but hath proved, or yet shall prove,
That mortal agony of love?
The autumn moon slept bright and still
On fading wood and purple hill;
The vintager had hush’d his lay,
The fisher shunn’d the blaze of day,
And silence, o’er each green recess,
Brooded in misty sultriness.
But soon a low and measured sound
Broke on the deep repose around;
From Lindheim’s tower a glancing oar
Bade the stream ripple to the shore.
Sweet was that sound of waves which parted
The fond, the true, the noble-hearted;

And smoothly seem’d the bark to glide,

And brightly flow’d the reckless tide,

Though, mingling with its current, fell

The last warm tears of love’s farewell.

[198] The Odenwald, a forest district near the Rhine, adjoining the territories of Darmstadt.

PART II.

Sweet is the gloom of forest shades,

Their pillar’d walks and dim arcades,

With all the thousand flowers that blow,

A waste of loveliness, below.

To him whose soul the world would fly,

For nature’s lonely majesty:

To bard, when wrapt in mighty themes,

To lover, lost in fairy dreams,

To hermit, whose prophetic thought

By fits a gleam of heaven hath caught,

And, in the visions of his rest,

Held bright communion with the blest:

’Tis sweet, but solemn! There alike

Silence and sound with awe can strike.

The deep Eolian murmur made

By sighing breeze and rustling shade,

And cavern’d fountain gushing nigh,

And wild-bee’s plaintive lullaby:
Or the dead stillness of the bowers,
When dark the summer-tempest lowers;
When silent nature seems to wait
The gathering thunder’s voice of fate;
When the aspen scarcely waves in air,
And the clouds collect for the lightning’s glare—
Each, each alike is awful there,
And thrills the soul with feelings high,
As some majestic harmony.
But she, the maid, whose footsteps traced
Each green retreat in breathless haste—
Young Ella—linger’d not to hear
The wood-notes, lost on mourner’s ear.
The shivering leaf, the breeze’s play,
The fountain’s gush, the wild-bird’s lay—
These charm not now; her sire she sought,
With trembling frame, with anxious thought,
And, starting if a forest deer
But moved the rustling branches near,
First felt that innocence may fear.
She reach’d a lone and shadowy dell,
Where the free sunbeam never fell;
’Twas twilight there at summer noon,

Deep night beneath the harvest moon,
And scarce might one bright star be seen
Gleaming the tangled boughs between;
For many a giant rock around
Dark in terrific grandeur frown'd,
And the ancient oaks, that waved on high,
Shut out each glimpse of the blessèd sky.
There the cold spring, in its shadowy cave,
Ne'er to heaven's beam one sparkle gave,
And the wild flower, on its brink that grew,
Caught not from day one glowing hue.
'Twas said, some fearful deed untold
Had stain'd that scene in days of old;
Tradition o'er the haunt had thrown
A shade yet deeper than its own;
And still, amidst th' umbrageous gloom,
Perchance above some victim's tomb,
O'ergrown with ivy and with moss,
There stood a rudely-sculptured Cross,
Which, haply, silent record bore
Of guilt and penitence of yore.
Who by that holy sign was kneeling,
With brow unutter'd pangs revealing,
Hands clasp'd convulsively in prayer,

And lifted eyes and streaming hair,
And cheek, all pale as marble mould,
Seen by the moonbeam's radiance cold?
Was it some image of despair
Still fix'd that stamp of woe to bear?
—Oh! ne'er could Art her forms have wrought
To speak such agonies of thought!
Those deathlike features gave to view
A mortal's pangs too deep and true!
Starting he rose, with frenzied eye,
As Ella's hurried step drew nigh;
He turn'd, with aspect darkly wild,
Trembling he stood—before his child!
On, with a burst of tears, she sprung,
And to her father's bosom clung.
"Away! what seek'st thou here?" he cried,
"Art thou not now thine Ulric's bride?
Hence, leave me—leave me to await,
In solitude, the storm of Fate;
Thou know'st not what my doom may be,
Ere evening comes in peace to thee."
"My father! shall the joyous throng
Swell high for me the bridal song?
Shall the gay nuptial board be spread,

The festal garland bind my head,
And thou in grief, in peril, roam,
And make the wilderness thy home?
No! I am here with thee to share
All suffering mortal strength may bear;
And, oh! whate’er thy foes decree,
In life, in death, in chains, or free—
Well, well I feel, in thee secure;
Thy heart and hand alike are pure!”
Then was there meaning in his look,
Which deep that trusting spirit shook;
So wildly did each glance express
The strife of shame and bitterness,—
As thus he spoke: “Fond dreams, oh hence!
Is this the mien of Innocence?
This furrow’d brow, this restless eye—
Read thou this fearful tale, and fly!
Is it enough? or must I seek
For words, the tale of guilt to speak?
Then be it so—I will not doom
Thy youth to wither in its bloom;
I will not see thy tender frame
Bow’d to the earth with fear and shame.
No! though I teach thee to abhor

The sire so fondly loved before;
Though the dread effort rend my breast,
Yet shalt thou leave me and be blest!
Oh! bitter penance! thou wilt turn
Away in horror and in scorn;
Thy looks, that still through all the past
Affection’s gentlest beams have cast,
As lightning on my heart will fall,
And I must mark and bear it all!
Yet though of life’s best ties bereaved,
Thou shalt not, must not, be deceived!
“I linger—let me speed the tale
Ere voice, and thought, and memory fail.
Why should I falter thus to tell
What heaven so long hath known too well?
Yes! though from mortal sight conceal’d,
There hath a brother’s blood appeal’d!
He died—’twas not where banners wave,
And war-steeds trample on the brave;
He died—it was in Holy Land—
Yet fell he not by Paynim hand;
He sleeps not with his sires at rest,
With trophied shield and knightly crest;
Unknown his grave to kindred eyes,

—But I can tell thee where he lies!
It was a wild and savage spot,
But once beheld—and ne’er forgot!
I see it now—that haunted scene
My spirit’s dwelling still hath been;
And he is there—I see him laid
Beneath that palm-tree’s lonely shade.
The fountain-wave that sparkles nigh
Bears witness with its crimson dye!
I see th’ accusing glance he raised,
Ere that dim eye by death was glazed;
—Ne’er will that parting look forgive!
I still behold it—and I live!
I live! from hope, from mercy driven,
A mark for all the shafts of heaven!
“Yet had I wrongs. By fraud he won
My birth-right; and my child, my son,
Heir to high name, high fortune born,
Was doom’d to penury and scorn,
An alien midst his fathers’ halls,
An exile from his native walls.
Could I bear this? The rankling thought,
Deep, dark, within my bosom wrought;
Some serpent, kindling hate and guile,

Lurk’d in my infant’s rosy smile,
And when his accents lisp’d my name,
They woke my inmost heart to flame!
I struggled—are there evil powers
That claim their own ascendant hours?
—Oh! what should thine unspotted soul
Or know or fear of their control?
Why on the fearful conflict dwell?
Vainly I struggled, and I fell—
Cast down from every hope of bliss—
Too well thou know’st to what abyss!
“’Twas done!—that moment hurried by
To darken all eternity.
Years roll’d away, long evil years,
Of woes, of fetters, and of fears;
Nor aught but vain remorse I gain’d
By the deep guilt my soul which stain’d.
For, long a captive in the lands
Where Arabs tread their burning sands,
The haunted midnight of the mind
Was round me while in chains I pined,
By all forgotten, save by one
Dread presence—which I could not shun.
—How oft, when o’er the silent waste

Nor path nor landmark might be traced,
When slumbering by the watch-fire's ray,
The Wanderers of the Desert lay,
And stars, as o'er an ocean shone,
Vigil I kept—but not alone!
That form, that image, from the dead,
Still walk'd the wild with soundless tread!
I've seen it in the fiery blast,
I've seen it where the sand-storms pass'd;
Beside the Desert's fount it stood,
Tinging the clear cold wave with blood;
And e'en when viewless, by the fear
Curdling my veins, I knew 'twas near!
—Was near!—I feel th' unearthly thrill,
Its power is on my spirit still!
A mystic influence, undefined,
The spell, the shadow of my mind!
"Wilt thou yet linger? Time speeds on;
One last farewell, and then begone!
Unclasp the hands that shade thy brow,
And let me read thine aspect now!
No! stay thee yet, and learn the meed
Heaven's justice to my crime decreed.
Slow came the day that broke my chain,

But I at length was free again;
And freedom brings a burst of joy,
E’en guilt itself can scarce destroy.
I thought upon my own fair towers,
My native Rhine’s gay vineyard bowers,
And in a father’s visions, press’d
Thee and thy brother to my breast.
—’Twas but in visions. Canst thou yet
Recall the moment when we met?
Thy step to greet me lightly sprung,
Thy arms around me fondly clung;
Scarce aught than infant seraph less
Seem’d thy pure childhood’s loveliness.
But he was gone—that son for whom
I rush’d on guilt’s eternal doom;
He for whose sake alone were given
My peace on earth, my hope in heaven—
He met me not. A ruthless band,
Whose name with terror fill’d the land,
Fierce outlaws of the wood and wild
Had reft the father of his child.
Foes to my race, the hate they nursed,
Full on that cherish’d scion burst.
Unknown his fate.—No parent nigh,

My boy! my first-born! didst thou die?
Or did they spare thee for a life
Of shame, of rapine, and of strife?
Livest thou, unfriended, unallied,
A wanderer lost, without a guide?
Oh! to thy fate's mysterious gloom
Blest were the darkness of the tomb!
"Ella! 'tis done—my guilty heart
Before thee all unveil'd—depart!
Few pangs 'twill cost thee now to fly
From one so stain'd, so lost as I;
Yet peace to thine untainted breast,
E'en though it hate me!—be thou blest!
Farewell! thou shalt not linger here—
E'en now th' avenger may be near:
Where'er I turn, the foe, the snare,
The dagger, may be ambush'd there;
One hour—and haply all is o'er,
And we must meet on earth no more.
No, nor beyond!—to those pure skies
Where thou shalt be, I may not rise;
Heaven's will for ever parts our lot,
Yet, oh! my child! abhor me not!
Speak once! to soothe this broken heart,

Speak to me once! and then depart!”
But still—as if each pulse were dead,
Mute—as the power of speech were fled,
Pale—as if life-blood ceased to warm
The marble beauty of her form;
On the dark rock she lean’d her head,
That seem’d as there ’twere riveted,
And dropt the hands, till then which press’d
Her burning brow, or throbbing breast.
There beam’d no tear-drop in her eye,
And from her lip there breathed no sigh,
And on her brow no trace there dwelt
That told she suffer’d or she felt.
All that once glow’d, or smiled, or beam’d,
Now fix’d, and quench’d, and frozen seem’d;
And long her sire, in wild dismay,
Deem’d her pure spirit pass’d away.
But life return’d. O’er that cold frame
One deep convulsive shudder came;
And a faint light her eye relumed,
And sad resolve her mien assumed.
But there was horror in the gaze,
Which yet to his she dared not raise;
And her sad accents, wild and low,

As rising from a depth of woe,
At first with hurried trembling broke,
But gather’d firmness as she spoke.
—“I leave thee not—whate’er betide,
My footsteps shall not quit thy side;
Pangs, keen as death my soul may thrill,
But yet thou art my father still!
And, oh! if stain’d by guilty deed,
For some kind spirit, tenfold need,
To speak of heaven’s absolving love,
And waft desponding thought above.
Is there not power in mercy’s wave
The blood-stain from thy soul to lave?
Is there not balm to heal despair,
In tears, in penitence, in prayer?
My father! kneel at His pure shrine
Who died to expiate guilt like thine,
Weep—and my tears with thine shall blend,
Pray—while my prayers with thine ascend,
And, as our mingling sorrows rise,
Heaven will relent, though earth despise!”
“My child, my child! these bursting tears,
The first mine eyes have shed for years,
Though deepest conflicts they express,

Yet flow not all in bitterness!
Oh! thou hast bid a wither’d heart
From desolation’s slumber start;
Thy voice of pity and of love
Seems o’er its icy depths to move
E’en as a breeze of health, which brings
Life, hope, and healing, on its wings.
And there is mercy yet! I feel
Its influence o’er my spirit steal;
How welcome were each pang below,
If guilt might be atoned by woe!
Think’st thou I yet may be forgiven?
Shall prayers unclose the gate of heaven?
Oh! if it yet avail to plead,
If judgment be not yet decreed,
Our hearts shall blend their suppliant cry,
Till pardon shall be seal’d on high!
Yet, yet I shrink!—Will Mercy shed
Her dews upon this fallen head?
—Kneel, Ella, kneel! till full and free
Descend forgiveness, won by thee!”
They knelt—before the Cross, that sign
Of love eternal and divine;
That symbol, which so long hath stood

A rock of strength, on time’s dark flood,
Clasp’d by despairing hands, and laved
By the warm tears of nations saved.
In one deep prayer their spirits blent,
The guilty and the innocent;
Youth, pure as if from heaven its birth,
Age, soil’d with every stain of earth,
Knelt, offering up one heart, one cry,
One sacrifice of agony.
—Oh! blest, though bitter be their source—
Though dark the fountain of remorse,
Blest are the tears which pour from thence,
Th’ atoning stream of penitence!
And let not pity check the tide
By which the heart is purified;
Let not vain comfort turn its course,
Or timid love repress its force!
Go! bind the flood, whose waves expand,
To bear luxuriance o’er the land;
Forbid the life-restoring rains
To fall on Afric’s burning plains;
Close up the fount that gush’d to cheer
The pilgrim o’er the waste who trode;
But check thou not one holy tear

Which Penitence devotes to God!
Through scenes so lone the wild-deer ne’er
Was roused by huntsman’s bugle there—
So rude, that scarce might human eye
Sustain their dread sublimity—
So awful, that the timid swain,
Nurtured amidst their dark domain,
Had peopled with unearthly forms
Their mists, their forests, and their storms,—
She, whose blue eye of laughing light
Once made each festal scene more bright;
Whose voice in song of joy was sweetest,
Whose step in dance of mirth was fleetest,
By torrent wave and mountain brow,
Is wandering as an outcast now,
To share with Lindheim’s fallen chief
His shame, his terror, and his grief.
Hast thou not mark’d the ruin’s flower,
That blooms in solitary grace,
And, faithful to its mouldering tower,
Waves in the banner’s place?
From those gray haunts renown hath pass’d,
Time wins his heritage at last;
The day of glory hath gone by,

With all its pomp and minstrelsy:
Yet still the flower of golden hues
There loves its fragrance to diffuse,
To fallen and forsaken things
With constancy unalter’d clings,
And, smiling o’er the wreck of state,
With beauty clothes the desolate.
—E’en such was she, the fair-hair’d maid,
In all her light of youth array’d,
Forsaking every joy below
To soothe a guilty parent’s woe,
And clinging thus, in beauty’s prime,
To the dark ruin made by crime.
Oh! ne’er did heaven’s propitious eyes
Smile on a purer sacrifice;
Ne’er did young love, at duty’s shrine,
More nobly brighter hopes resign!
O’er her own pangs she brooded not,
Nor sank beneath her bitter lot;
No! that pure spirit’s lofty worth
Still rose more buoyantly from earth,
And drew from an eternal source
Its gentle, yet triumphant force:
Roused by affliction’s chastening might

To energies more calmly bright,
Like the wild harp of airy sigh,
Woke by the storm to harmony!
He that in mountain-holds hath sought
A refuge for unconquer’d thought,
A charter’d home, where Freedom’s child
Might rear her altars in the wild,
And fix her quenchless torch on high,
A beacon for Eternity;
Or they, whose martyr spirits wage
Proud war with Persecution’s rage,
And to the deserts bear the faith
That bids them smile on chains and death;
Well may they draw, from all around,
Of grandeur clothed in form and sound,
From the deep power of earth and sky,
Wild nature’s might of majesty,
Strong energies, immortal fires,
High hopes, magnificent desires!
But dark, terrific, and austere,
To him doth nature’s mien appear,
Who midst her wilds would seek repose
From guilty pangs and vengeful foes!
For him the wind hath music dread,

A dirge-like voice that mourns the dead;
The forest’s whisper breathes a tone
Appalling, as from worlds unknown;
The mystic gloom of wood and cave
Is fill’d with shadow’s of the grave;
In noon’s deep calm the sunbeams dart
A blaze that seems to search his heart;
The pure, eternal stars of night
Upbraid him with their silent light;
And the dread spirit, which pervades
And hallows earth’s most lonely shades,
In every scene, in every hour,
Surrounds him with chastising power—
With nameless fear his soul to thrill,
Heard, felt, acknowledged, present still!
’Twas the chilly close of an autumn day,
And the leaves fell thick o’er the wanderers’ way;
The rustling pines, with a hollow sound,
Foretold the tempest gathering round;
And the skirts of the western clouds were spread
With a tinge of wild and stormy red,
That seem’d, through the twilight forest bowers
Like the glare of a city’s blazing towers.
But they, who far from cities fled,

And shrunk from the print of human tread,
Had reach’d a desert scene unknown,
So strangely wild, so deeply lone,
That a nameless feeling, unconfess’d
And undefined, their souls oppress’d.
Rocks piled on rocks, around them hurl’d,
Lay like the ruins of a world,
Left by an earthquake’s final throes
In deep and desolate repose—
Things of eternity whose forms
Bore record of ten thousand storms!
While, rearing its colossal crest
In sullen grandeur o’er the rest,
One, like a pillar, vast and rude,
Stood monarch of the solitude.
Perchance by Roman conqueror’s hand
Th’ enduring monument was plann’d;
Or Odin’s sons, in days gone by,
Had shaped its rough immensity,
To rear, midst mountain, rock, and wood,
A temple meet for rites of blood.
But they were gone, who might have told
That secret of the times of old;
And there, in silent scorn it frown’d,

O’er all its vast coevals round.
Darkly those giant masses lower’d,
Countless and motionless they tower’d;
No wild-flower o’er their summits hung,
No fountain from their caverns sprung;
Yet ever on the wanderers’ ear
Murmur’d a sound of waters near,
With music deep of lulling falls,
And louder gush, at intervals.
Unknown its source—nor spring nor stream
Caught the red sunset’s lingering gleam,
But ceaseless, from its hidden caves,
Arose that mystic voice of waves.[199]
Yet bosom’d midst that savage scene,
One chosen spot of gentler mien
Gave promise to the pilgrim’s eye
Of shelter from the tempest nigh.
Glad sight! the ivied cross it bore,
The sculptured saint that crown’d its door:
Less welcome now were monarch’s dome,
Than that low cell, some hermit’s home.
Thither the outcasts bent their way,
By the last lingering gleam of day;
When from a cavern’d rock, which cast

Deep shadows o’er them as they pass’d,
A form, a warrior form of might,
As from earth’s bosom, sprang to sight.
His port was lofty—yet the heart
Shrunk from him with recoiling start;
His mien was youthful—yet his face
Had nought of youth’s ingenuous grace;
Nor chivalrous nor tender thought
Its traces on his brow had wrought
Yet dwelt no fierceness in his eye,
But calm and cold severity,
A spirit haughtily austere,
Stranger to pity as to fear.
It seem’d as pride had thrown a veil
O’er that dark brow and visage pale,
Leaving the searcher nought to guess,
All was so fix’d and passionless.
He spoke—and they who heard the tone
Felt, deeply felt, all hope was flown.
“I’ve sought thee far in forest bowers,
I’ve sought thee long in peopled towers,
I’ve borne th’ dagger of th’ Unknown
Through scenes explored by me alone;
My search is closed—nor toils nor fears

Repel the servant of the Seers;
We meet—’tis vain to strive or fly:
Albert of Lindheim, thou must die!”
Then with clasp’d hands the fair-hair’d maid
Sank at his feet, and wildly pray’d:—
“Stay, stay thee! sheath that lifted steel!
Oh! thou art human, and canst feel!
Hear me! if e’er ’twas thine to prove
The blessing of a parent’s love;
By thine own father’s hoary hair,
By her who gave thee being, spare!
Did they not, o’er thy infant years,
Keep watch, in sleepless hopes and fears!
Young warrior! thou wilt heed my prayers,
As thou wouldst hope for grace to theirs!”
But cold th’ Avenger’s look remain’d,
His brow its rigid calm maintain’d:
“Maiden! ’tis vain—my bosom ne’er
Was conscious of a parent’s care;
The nurture of my infant years
Froze in my soul the source of tears;
’Tis not for me to pause or melt,
Or feel as happier hearts have felt.
Away! the hour of fate goes by:

Thy prayers are fruitless—he must die!”
“Rise, Ella! rise!” with steadfast brow
The father spoke—unshrinking now,
As if from heaven a martyr’s strength
Had settled on his soul at length:
“Kneel thou no more, my noble child,
Thou by no taint of guilt defiled;
Kneel not to man!—for mortal prayer,
Oh! when did mortal vengeance spare?
Since hope of earthly aid is flown,
Lift thy pure hands to heaven alone,
And know, to calm thy suffering heart,
My spirit is resign’d to part.
Trusting in Him who reads and knows
This guilty breast, with all its woes.
Rise! I would bless thee once again,
Be still, be firm—for all is vain!”
And she was still. She heard him not—
Her prayers were hush’d, her pangs forgot;
All thought, all memory pass’d away,
Silent and motionless she lay,
In a brief death, a blest suspense
Alike of agony and sense.
She saw not when the dagger gleam’d

In the last red light from the west that stream’d;
She mark’d not when the life-blood’s flow
Came rushing to the mortal blow;
While, unresisting, sank her sire,
Yet gather’d firmness to expire,
Mingling a warrior’s courage high
With a penitent’s humility.
And o’er him there th’ Avenger stood,
And watch’d the victim’s ebbing blood,
Still calm, as if his faithful hand
Had but obey’d some just command,
Some power whose stern, yet righteous will
He deem’d it virtue to fulfil,
And triumph’d, when the palm was won,
For duty’s task austerely done.
But a feeling dread and undefined,
A mystic presage of the mind,
With strange and sudden impulse ran
Chill through the heart of the dying man;
And his thoughts found voice, and his bosom breath,
And it seem’d as fear suspended death,
And nature from her terrors drew
Fresh energy and vigour new.
“Thou saidst thy lonely bosom ne’er

Was conscious of a parent’s care;
Thou saidst thy lot, in childhood’s years,
Froze in thy soul the source of tears:
The time will come, when thou, with me,
The judgment throne of God wilt see—
Oh! by thy hopes of mercy, then,
By His blest love who died for men,
By each dread rite, and shrine, and vow,
Avenger! I adjure thee now!
To him who bleeds beneath thy steel,
Thy lineage and thy name reveal.
And haste thee! for his closing ear
Hath little more on earth to hear—
Haste! for the spirit, almost flown,
Is lingering for thy words alone.”
Then first a shade, resembling fear,
Pass’d o’er th’ Avenger’s mien austere;
A nameless awe his features cross’d,
Soon in their haughty coldness lost.
“What wouldst thou? Ask the rock and wild,
And bid them tell thee of their child!
Ask the rude winds, and angry skies,
Whose tempests were his lullabies!
His chambers were the cave and wood,

His fosterers men of wrath and blood;
Outcasts alike of earth and heaven,
By wrongs to desperation driven!
Who, in their pupil, now could trace
The features of a nobler race?
Yet such was mine!—if one who cast
A look of anguish o’er the past,
Bore faithful record on the day
When penitent in death he lay.
But still deep shades my prospects veil;
He died—and told but half the tale.
With him it sleeps—I only know
Enough for stern and silent woe,
For vain ambition’s deep regret,
For hopes deceived, deceiving yet,
For dreams of pride, that vainly tell
How high a lot had suited well
The heir of some illustrious line,
Heroes and chieftains of the Rhine!”
Then swift through Albert’s bosom pass’d
One pang, the keenest and the last,
Ere with his spirit fled the fears,
The sorrows, and the pangs of years;
And, while his gray hairs swept the dust,

Faltering he murmur’d, “Heaven is just!
For thee that deed of guilt was done,
By thee avenged, my son! my son!”
—The day was closed—the moonbeam shed
Light on the living and the dead,
And as through rolling clouds it broke,
Young Ella from her trance awoke—
Awoke to bear, to feel, to know
E’en more than all an orphan’s woe.
Oh! ne’er did moonbeam’s light serene
With beauty clothe a sadder scene!
There, cold in death, the father slept—
There, pale in woe, the daughter wept!
Yes! she might weep—but one stood nigh,
With horror in his tearless eye,
That eye which ne’er again shall close
In the deep quiet of repose;
No more on earth beholding aught
Save one dread vision, stamp’d on thought.
But, lost in grief, the Orphan Maid
His deeper woe had scarce survey’d,
Till his wild voice reveal’d a tale
Which seem’d to bid the heavens turn pale!
He call’d her, “Sister!” and the word

In anguish breathed, in terror heard,
Reveal’d enough: all else were weak—
That sound a thousand pangs could speak.
He knelt beside that breathless clay,
Which, fix’d in utter stillness, lay—
Knelt till his soul imbibed each trace,
Each line of that unconscious face;
Knelt, till his eye could bear no more
Those marble features to explore;
Then, starting, turning, as to shun
The image thus by Memory won,
A wild farewell to her he bade,
Who by the dead in silence pray’d;
And, frenzied by his bitter doom,
Fled thence—to find all earth a tomb!
Days pass’d away—and Rhine’s fair shore
In the light of summer smiled once more;
The vines were purpling on the hill,
And the corn-fields waved in the sunshine still.
There came a bark up the noble stream,
With pennons that shed a golden gleam,
With the flash of arms, and the voice of song,
Gliding triumphantly along;
For warrior-forms were glittering there,

Whose plumes waved light in the whispering air;
And as the tones of oar and wave
Their measured cadence mingling gave,
’Twas thus th’ exulting chorus rose,
While many an echo swell’d the close:—
“From the fields where dead and dying
On their battle-bier are lying,
Where the blood unstanch’d is gushing,
Where the steed uncheck’d is rushing,
Trampling o’er the noble-hearted,
Ere the spirit yet be parted;
Where each breath of heaven is swaying
Knightly plumes and banners playing,
And the clarion’s music swelling
Calls the vulture from his dwelling;
He comes, with trophies worthy of his line,
The son of heroes, Ulric of the Rhine!
To his own fair woods, enclosing
Vales in sunny peace reposing,
Where his native stream is laving
Banks, with golden harvests waving,
And the summer light is sleeping
On the grape, through tendrils peeping;
To the halls where harps are ringing,

Bards the praise of warriors singing,
Graceful footsteps bounding fleetly,
Joyous voices mingling sweetly;
Where the cheek of mirth is glowing,
And the wine-cup brightly flowing,
He comes, with trophies worthy of his line,
The son of heroes, Ulric of the Rhine!”
He came—he sought his Ella’s bowers,
He traversed Lindheim’s lonely towers;
But voice and footstep thence had fled,
As from the dwellings of the dead,
And the sounds of human joy and woe
Gave place to the moan of the wave below.
The banner still the rampart crown’d,
But the tall rank grass waved thick around
Still hung the arms of a race gone by
In the blazon’d halls of their ancestry,
But they caught no more, at fall of night,
The wavering flash of the torch’s light,
And they sent their echoes forth no more
To the Minnesinger’s[200] tuneful lore,
For the hands that touch’d the harp were gone,
And the hearts were cold that loved its tone;
And the soul of the chord lay mute and still,

Save when the wild wind bade it thrill,
And woke from its depths a dream-like moan,
For life, and power, and beauty gone.
The warrior turn’d from that silent scene,
Where a voice of woe had welcome been;
And his heart was heavy with boding thought,
As the forest-paths alone he sought.
He reach’d a convent’s fane, that stood
Deep bosom’d in luxuriant wood;
Still, solemn, fair—it seem’d a spot
Where earthly care might be all forgot,
And sounds and dreams of heaven alone
To musing spirit might be known.
And sweet e’en then were the sounds that rose
On the holy and profound repose.
Oh! they came o’er the warrior’s breast
Like a glorious anthem of the blest;
And fear and sorrow died away
Before the full majestic lay.
He enter’d the secluded fane,
Which sent forth that inspiring strain;
He gazed—the hallow’d pile’s array
Was that of some high festal day;
Wreaths of all hues its pillars bound,

Flowers of all scents were strew’d around;
The rose exhaled its fragrant sigh,
Blest on the altar to smile and die;
And a fragrant cloud from the censer’s breath
Half hid the sacred pomp beneath;
And still the peal of choral song
Swell’d the resounding aisles along;
Wakening, in its triumphant flow,
Deep echoes from the graves below.
Why, from its woodland birthplace torn,
Doth summer’s rose that scene adorn?
Why breathes the incense to the sky?
Why swells th’ exulting harmony?
—And see’st thou not yon form, so light
It seems half floating on the sight,
As if the whisper of a gale,
That did but wave its snowy veil,
Might bear it from the earth afar,
A lovely but receding star?
Know that devotion’s shrine e’en now
Receives that youthful vestal’s vow—
For this, high hymns, sweet odours rise,
A jubilee of sacrifice!
Mark yet a moment! from her brow

Yon priest shall lift the veil of snow,
Ere yet a darker mantle hide
The charms to heaven thus sanctified:
Stay thee! and catch their parting gleam,
That ne’er shall fade from memory’s dream.
A moment! oh! to Ulric’s soul,
Poised between hope and fear’s control,
What slow, unmeasured hours went by,
Ere yet suspense grew certainty.
It came at length. Once more that face
Reveal’d to man its mournful grace;
A sunbeam on its features fell,
As if to bear the world’s farewell;
And doubt was o’er. His heart grew chill:
’Twas she—though changed—’twas Ella still!
Though now her once-rejoicing mien
Was deeply, mournfully serene;
Though clouds her eye’s blue lustre shaded,
And the young cheek beneath had faded,
Well, well he knew the form, which cast
Light on his soul through all the past!
’Twas with him on the battle-plain,
’Twas with him on the stormy main:
’Twas in his visions, when the shield

Pillow’d his head on tented field;
’Twas a bright beam that led him on
Where’er a triumph might be won—
In danger as in glory nigh,
An angel-guide to victory!
She caught his pale bewilder’d gaze
Of grief half lost in fix’d amaze.
Was it some vain illusion, wrought
By frenzy of impassion’d thought?
Some phantom, such as Grief hath power
To summon in her wandering hour?
No! it was he! the lost, the mourn’d—
Too deeply loved, too late return’d!
—A fever’d blush, a sudden start,
Spoke the last weakness of her heart;
’Twas vanquish’d soon—the hectic red
A moment flush’d her check, and fled.
Once more serene—her steadfast eye
Look’d up as to Eternity;
Then gazed on Ulric with an air,
That said—the home of Love is there!
Yes! there alone it smiled for him,
Whose eye before that look grew dim.
Not long ’twas his e’en thus to view

The beauty of its calm adieu;

Soon o’er those features, brightly pale,

Was cast th’ impenetrable veil;

And, if one human sigh were given

By the pure bosom vow’d to heaven,

’Twas lost, as many a murmur’d sound

Of grief, “not loud, but deep,” is drown’d,

In hymns of joy, which proudly rise

To tell the calm untroubled skies

That earth hath banish’d care and woe,

And man holds festivals below!

[199] The original of the scene here described is presented by the mountain called the Feldberg, in the Bergstrasse:—“Des masses énormes de rochers, entassées l’une sur l’autre depuis le sommet de la montagne jusqu’à son pied, viennent y présenter un aspect superbe qu’ aucune description ne saurait rendre. Ce furent, dit-on, des géans, qui en se livrant un combat du haut des montagnes, lancèrent les uns sur les autres ces énormes masses de rochers. On arrive, avec beaucoup de peine, jusqu’au sommet du Feldberg, en suivant un sentier qui passe à côté de cette chaine de rochers. On entend continuellement un bruit sourd, qui parait venir d’un ruisseau au dessous des rochers; mais on a beau descendre, on se glissant à travers les ouvertures qui s’y trouvent, on ne découvrira jamais le ruisseau. La colonne, dite Riesensäule, se trouve un peu plus haut qu’à la moitié de la montagne; c’est un bloc de granit taillé, d’une longueur de 30 pieds et d’un diamétre de 4 pieds. Il y a plus de probabilité de croire que les anciens Germains voulaient faire de ce bloc une colonne pour l’ériger en l’honneur de leur dieu Odin, que de prétendre, comme le fort plusieurs auteurs, que les Romains aient eu le dessein de la transporter dans leur

capitale. On voit un peu plus haut un autre bloc d’une forme presque carrée, qu’ on appelle Riesenaltar, (autel du géant,) qui, à en juger par sa grosseur et sa forme, était destiné à servir de piédestal à la colonnade susdite.”—Manuel pour les Voyageurs sur le Rhin.

[200] Minnesingers, (bards of love,) the appellation of the German minstrels in the Middle Ages.

THE CARAVAN IN THE DESERTS.

Call it not loneliness to dwell
In woodland shade or hermit dell,
Or the deep forest to explore,
Or wander Alpine regions o’er;
For nature there all joyous reigns,
And fills with life her wild domains:—
A bird’s light wing may break the air,
A wave, a leaf, may murmur there;
A bee the mountain flowers may seek,
A chamois bound from peak to peak;
An eagle, rushing to the sky,
Wake the deep echoes with his cry;
And still some sound, thy heart to cheer,
Some voice though not of man is near.
But he, whose weary step hath traced
Mysterious Afric’s awful waste—
Whose eye Arabia’s wilds hath view’d,

Can tell thee what is solitude!
It is to traverse lifeless plains,
Where everlasting stillness reigns,
And billowy sands and dazzling sky
Seem boundless as infinity!
It is to sink, with speechless dread,
In scenes unmeet for mortal tread,
Sever’d from earthly being’s trace,
Alone amidst eternal space!
’Tis noon—and fearfully profound,
Silence is on the desert round;
Alone she reigns, above, beneath,
With all the attributes of death!
No bird the blazing heaven may dare,
No insect bide the scorching air;
The ostrich, though of sunborn race,
Seeks a more shelter’d dwelling-place;
The lion slumbers in his lair,
The serpent shuns the noontide glare.
But slowly wind the patient train
Of camels o’er the blasted plain,
Where they and man may brave alone
The terrors of the burning zone.
—Faint not, O pilgrims! though on high,

As a volcano, flame the sky;
Shrink not, though as a furnace glow
The dark-red seas of sand below;
Though not a shadow, save your own,
Across the dread expanse is thrown.
Mark! where your feverish lips to lave,
Wide-spreads the fresh transparent wave!
Urge your tired camels on, and take
Your rest beside yon glistening lake;
Thence, haply, cooler gales may spring,
And fan your brows with lighter wing.
Lo! nearer now, its glassy tide,
Reflects the date-tree on its side—
Speed on! pure draughts and genial air,
And verdant shade, await you there.
Oh, glimpse of heaven! to him unknown
That hath not trod the burning zone!
Forward they press—they gaze dismay'd—
The waters of the desert fade!
Melting to vapours that elude
The eye, the lip, they vainly woo'd.[201]
What meteor comes? A purple haze
Hath half obscured the noontide rays:[202]
Onward it moves in swift career,

A blush upon the atmosphere.

Haste, haste! avert th’ impending doom,

Fall prostrate! ’tis the dread Simoom!

Bow down your faces—till the blast

On its red wing of flame hath pass’d,

Far bearing o’er the sandy wave

The viewless Angel of the Grave.

It came—’tis vanish’d—but hath left

The wanderers e’en of hope bereft;

The ardent heart, the vigorous frame,

Pride, courage, strength, its power could tame.

Faint with despondence, worn with toil,

They sink upon the burning soil,

Resign’d, amidst those realms of gloom,

To find their deathbed and their tomb.[203]

But onward still!—yon distant spot

Of verdure can deceive you not;

Yon palms, which tremulously seem’d

Reflected as the waters gleam’d,

Along th’ horizon’s verge display’d,

Still rear their slender colonnade—

A landmark, guiding o’er the plain

The Caravan’s exhausted train.

Fair is that little Isle of Bliss

The desert’s emerald oasis!
A rainbow on the torrent’s wave,
A gem embosom’d in the grave,
A sunbeam on a stormy day
Its beauty’s image might convey!
Beauty, in horror’s lap that sleeps,
While silence round her vigil keeps.
Rest, weary pilgrims! calmly laid
To slumber in th’ acacia shade:
Rest, where the shrubs your camels bruise
Their aromatic breath diffuse;
Where softer light the sunbeams pour
Through the tall palm and sycamore;
And the rich date luxuriant spreads
Its pendant clusters o’er your heads.
Nature once more, to seal your eyes,
Murmurs her sweetest lullabies;
Again each heart the music hails
Of rustling leaves and sighing gales:
And oh! to Afric’s child how dear
The voice of fountains gushing near!
Sweet be your slumbers! and your dreams
Of waving groves and rippling streams!
Far be the serpent’s venom’d coil

From the brief respite won by toil;
Far be the awful shades of those
Who deep beneath the sands repose—
The hosts, to whom the desert's breath
Bore swift and stern the call of death.
Sleep! nor may scorching blast invade
The freshness of the acacia shade,
But gales of heaven your spirits bless,
With life's best balm—Forgetfulness!
Till night from many an urn diffuse
The treasures of her world of dews.
The day hath closed—the moon on high
Walks in her cloudless majesty.
A thousand stars to Afric's heaven
Serene magnificence have given—
Pure beacons of the sky, whose flame
Shines forth eternally the same.
Blest be their beams, whose holy light
Shall guide the camel's footsteps right,
And lead, as with a track divine,
The pilgrim to his prophet's shrine!
—Rise! bid your Isle of Palms adieu!
Again your lonely march pursue,
While airs of night are freshly blowing,

And heavens with softer beauty glowing.

’Tis silence all: the solemn scene

Wears, at each step, a ruder mien;

For giant-rocks, at distance piled,

Cast their deep shadows o’er the wild.

Darkly they rise—what eye hath view’d

The caverns of their solitude?

Away! within those awful cells

The savage lord of Afric dwells!

Heard ye his voice?—the lion’s roar

Swells as when billows break on shore.

Well may the camel shake with fear,

And the steed pant—his foe is near.

Haste! light the torch, bid watchfires throw

Far o’er the waste, a ruddy glow;

Keep vigil—guard the bright array

Of flames that scare him from his prey;

Within their magic circle press,

O wanderers of the wilderness!

Heap high the pile, and by its blaze,

Tell the wild tales of elder days,—

Arabia’s wond’rous lore, that dwells

On warrior deeds and wizard spells;

Enchanted domes, mid scenes like these,

Rising to vanish with the breeze;
Gardens, whose fruits are gems, that shed
Their light where mortal may not tread;
And spirits, o’er whose pearly halls
Th’ eternal billow heaves and falls.
—With charms like these, of mystic power,
Watchers! beguile the midnight hour.
Slowly that hour hath roll’d away,
And star by star withdraws its ray.
Dark children of the sun! again
Your own rich orient hails his reign.
He comes, but veil’d—with sanguine glare
Tinging the mists that load the air;
Sounds of dismay, and signs of flame,
Th’ approaching hurricane proclaim.
’Tis death’s red banner streams on high—
Fly to the rocks for shelter!—fly!
Lo! dark’ning o’er the fiery skies,
The pillars of the desert rise!
On, in terrific grandeur wheeling,
A giant-host, the heavens concealing,
They move, like mighty genii-forms,
Towering immense midst clouds and storms.
Who shall escape!—with awful force

The whirlwind bears them on their course;

They join, they rush resistless on—

The landmarks of the plain are gone;

The steps, the forms, from earth effaced,

Of those who trod the burning waste!

All whelm’d, all hush’d!—none left to bear

Sad record how they perish’d there!

No stone their tale of death shall tell—

The desert guards its mysteries well;

And o’er th’ unfathom’d sandy deep,

Where low their nameless relics sleep,

Oft shall the future pilgrim tread,

Nor know his steps are on the dead.

[201] The mirage, or vapour assuming the appearance of water.

[202] See the description of the Simoom in Bruce’s Travels.

[203] The extreme languor and despondence produced by the Simoom, even when its effects are not fatal, have been described by many travellers.

MARIUS AMONGST THE RUINS OF CARTHAGE.

[“Marius, during the time of his exile, seeking refuge in Africa, had landed at Carthage, when an officer, sent by the Roman governor of Africa, came and thus addressed him:—“Marius, I come from the Prætor Sextilius, to tell you that he forbids you to set foot in Africa. If you obey not, he will support the Senate’s decree, and treat you as a public enemy.” Marius, upon hearing this, was struck dumb with grief and indignation. He uttered not a word for some time, but regarded the officer with a menacing aspect. At length the officer inquired what answer he

should carry to the governor. “Go and tell him,” said the unfortunate man, with a sigh, “that thou hast seen the exiled Marius sitting on the ruins of Carthage.”—Plutarch.]

’Twas noon, and Afric’s dazzling sun on high
With fierce resplendence fill’d th’ unclouded sky;
No zephyr waved the palm’s majestic head,
And smooth alike the seas and deserts spread;
While desolate, beneath a blaze of light,
Silent and lonely, as at dead of night,
The wreck of Carthage lay. Her prostrate fanes
Had strew’d their precious marble o’er the plains;
Dark weeds and grass the column had o’ergrown,
The lizard bask’d upon the altar stone;
Whelm’d by the ruins of their own abodes,
Had sunk the forms of heroes and of gods;
While near—dread offspring of the burning day!
Coil’d midst forsaken halls the serpent lay.
There came an exile, long by fate pursued,
To shelter in that awful solitude.
Well did that wanderer’s high yet faded mien
Suit the sad grandeur of the desert scene:—
Shadow’d, not veil’d, by locks of wintry snow,
Pride sat, still mighty, on his furrow’d brow;
Time had not quench’d the terrors of his eye,

Nor tamed his glance of fierce ascendency;
While the deep meaning of his features told
Ages of thought had o’er his spirit roll’d,
Nor dimm’d the fire that might not be controll’d;
And still did power invest his stately form,
Shatter’d, but yet unconquer’d, by the storm.
—But slow his step—and where, not yet o’erthrown,
Still tower’d a pillar midst the waste alone,
Faint with long toil, his weary limbs he laid,
To slumber in its solitary shade.
He slept—and darkly, on his brief repose,
Th’ indignant genius of the scene arose.
Clouds robed his dim unearthly form, and spread
Mysterious gloom around his crownless head,
Crownless, but regal still. With stern disdain,
The kingly shadow seem’d to lift his chain,
Gazed on the palm, his ancient sceptre torn,
And his eye kindled with immortal scorn!
“And sleep’st thou, Roman?” cried his voice austere;
“Shall son of Latium find a refuge here?
Awake! arise! to speed the hour of Fate,
When Rome shall fall, as Carthage desolate!
Go! with her children’s flower, the free, the brave,
People the silent chambers of the grave:

So shall the course of ages yet to be,
More swiftly waft the day, avenging me!
“Yes, from the awful gulf of years to come,
I hear a voice that prophesies her doom;
I see the trophies of her pride decay,
And her long line of triumphs pass away,
Lost in the depths of time—while sinks the star
That led her march of heroes from afar!
Lo! from the frozen forests of the North,
The sons of slaughter pour in myriads forth!
Who shall awake the mighty?—will thy woe,
City of thrones! disturb the realms below?
Call on the dead to hear thee! let thy cries
Summon their shadowy legions to arise,
Array the ghosts of conquerors on thy walls!
—Barbarians revel in their ancient halls,
And their lost children bend the subject knee,
Midst the proud tombs and trophies of the free.
Bird of the sun! dread eagle! born on high,
A creature of the empyreal—thou, whose eye
Was lightning to the earth—whose pinion waved
In haughty triumph o’er a world enslaved;
Sink from thy heavens! for glory’s noon is o’er,
And rushing storms shall bear thee on no more!

Closed is thy regal course—thy crest is torn,
And thy plume banish'd from the realms of morn.
The shaft hath reach'd thee!—rest with chiefs and kings,
Who conquer'd in the shadow of thy wings;
Sleep! while thy foes exult around their prey,
And share thy glorious heritage of day!
But darker years shall mingle with the past,
And deeper vengeance shall be mine at last.
O'er the seven hills I see destruction spread,
And Empire's widow veils with dust her head.
Her gods forsake each desolated shrine,
Her temples moulder to the earth, like mine:
Midst fallen palaces she sits alone,
Calling heroic shades from ages gone,
Or bids the nations midst her deserts wait
To learn the fearful oracles of Fate!
"Still sleep'st thou, Roman? Son of Victory, rise!
Wake to obey th' avenging Destinies!
Shed by thy mandate, soon thy country's blood
Shall swell and darken Tiber's yellow flood!
My children's manès call—awake! prepare
The feast they claim!—exult in Rome's despair!
Be thine ear closed against her suppliant cries,
Bid thy soul triumph in her agonies;

Let carnage revel e’en her shrines among,
Spare not the valiant, pity not the young!
Haste! o’er her hills the sword’s libation shed,
And wreak the curse of Carthage on her head!”
The vision flies—a mortal step is near,
Whose echoes vibrate on the slumberer’s ear;
He starts, he wakes to woe—before him stands
Th’ unwelcome messenger of harsh commands,
Whose faltering accents tell the exiled chief
To seek on other shores a home for grief.
—Silent the wanderer sat—but on his cheek
The burning glow far more than words might speak;
And, from the kindling of his eye, there broke
Language where all th’ indignant soul awoke,
Till his deep thought found voice: then, calmly stern,
And sovereign in despair, he cried, “Return!
Tell him who sent thee hither, thou hast seen
Marius, the exile, rest where Carthage once hath been!”

A TALE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

A FRAGMENT.

The moonbeam, quivering o’er the wave,
Sleeps in pale gold on wood and hill,
The wild wind slumbers in its cave,
And heaven is cloudless—earth is still!

The pile that crowns yon savage height
With battlements of Gothic might,
Rises in softer pomp array’d,
Its massy towers half lost in shade,
Half touch’d with mellowing light!
The rays of night, the tints of time,
Soft-mingling on its dark-gray stone,
O’er its rude strength and mien sublime,
A placid smile have thrown.
And far beyond, where wild and high,
Bounding the pale blue summer sky,
A mountain vista meets the eye,
Its dark, luxuriant woods assume
A pencil’d shade, a softer gloom:
Its jutting cliffs have caught the light,
Its torrents glitter through the night,
While every cave and deep recess
Frowns in more shadowy awfulness.
Scarce moving on the glassy deep
Yon gallant vessel seems to sleep;
But darting from its side,
How swiftly does its boat design
A slender, silvery, waving line
Of radiance o’er the tide!

No sound is on the summer seas,
But the low dashing of the oar,
And faintly sighs the midnight breeze
Through woods that fringe the rocky shore.
That boat has reach’d the silent bay—
The dashing oar has ceased to play;
The breeze has murmur’d and has died
In forest shades, on ocean’s tide.
No step, no tone, no breath of sound
Disturbs the loneliness profound;
And midnight spreads o’er earth and main
A calm so holy and so deep,
That voice of mortal were profane
To break on nature’s sleep!
It is the hour for thought to soar
High o’er the cloud of earthly woes;
For rapt devotion to adore—
For passion to repose;
And virtue to forget her tears,
In visions of sublimer spheres!
For oh! those transient gleams of heaven,
To calmer, purer spirits given,
Children of hallow’d peace, are known
In solitude and shade alone!

Like flowers that shun the blaze of noon,
To blow beneath the midnight moon,
The garish world they will not bless,
But only live in loneliness!
Hark! did some note of plaintive swell
Melt on the stillness of the air?
Or was it fancy's powerful spell
That woke such sweetness there?
For wild and distant it arose,
Like sounds that bless the bard's repose,
When in lone wood, or mossy cave,
He dreams beside some fountain wave,
And fairy worlds delight the eyes
Wearied with life's realities.
Was it illusion? Yet again
Rises and falls th' enchanted strain,
Mellow, and sweet, and faint—
As if some spirit's touch had given
The soul of sound to harp of heaven
To soothe a dying saint!
Is it the mermaid's distant shell,
Warbling beneath the moonlit wave?
—Such witching tones might lure full well
The seaman to his grave!

Sure from no mortal touch ye rise,
Wild, soft, aërial melodies!
—Is it the song of woodland-fay
From sparry grot, or haunted bower?
Hark! floating on, the magic lay
Draws near yon ivied tower!
Now nearer still, the listening ear
May catch sweet harp-notes, faint yet clear;
And accents low, as if in fear,
Thus murmur, half suppress’d:—
“Awake! the moon is bright on high,
The sea is calm, the bark is nigh,
The world is hush’d to rest!”
Then sinks the voice—the strain is o’er,
Its last low cadence dies along the shore.
Fair Bertha hears th’ expected song,
Swift from her tower she glides along;
No echo to her tread awakes,
Her fairy step no slumber breaks;
And, in that hour of silence deep,
While all around the dews of sleep
O’erpower each sense, each eyelid steep,
Quick throbs her heart with hope and fear,
Her dark eye glistens with a tear.

Half-wavering now, the varying cheek
And sudden pause her doubts bespeak,
The lip now flush’d, now pale as death,
The trembling frame, the fluttering breath!
Oh! in that moment, o’er her soul
What struggling passions claim control!
Fear, duty, love, in conflict high,
By turns have won th’ ascendency;
And as, all tremulously bright,
Streams o’er her face the beam of night,
What thousand mix’d emotions play
O’er that fair face, and melt away.
Like forms whose quick succession gleams
O’er fancy’s rainbow-tinted dreams;
Like the swift glancing lights that rise
Midst the wild cloud of stormy skies,
And traverse ocean o’er;
So in that full, impassion’d eye
The changeful meanings rise and die,
Just seen—and then no more!
But oh! too short that pause. Again
Thrills to her heart that witching strain:—
“Awake! the midnight moon is bright:
Awake! the moments wing their flight;

Haste! or they speed in vain!”——
O call of Love! thy potent spell
O’er that weak heart prevails too well;
The “still small voice” is heard no more
That pleaded duty’s cause before,
And fear is hush’d, and doubt is gone,
And pride forgot, and reason flown!
Her cheek, whose colour came and fled,
Resumes its warmest, brightest red,
Her step its quick elastic tread,
Her eye its beaming smile!
Through lonely court and silent hall,
Flits her light shadow o’er the wall;
And still that low, harmonious call
Melts on her ear the while!
Though love’s quick ear alone could tell
The words its accents faintly swell:—
“Awake! while yet the lingering night
And stars and seas befriend our flight:
Oh! haste, while all is well!”——
The halls, the courts, the gates, are past,
She gains the moonlit beach at last.
Who waits to guide her trembling feet?
Who flies the fugitive to greet?

He, to her youthful heart endear'd
By all it e'er had hoped and fear'd,
Twined with each wish, with every thought
Each day-dream fancy e'er had wrought,
Whose tints portray with flattering skill
What brighter worlds alone fulfil!
—Alas! that aught so fair should fly
Thy blighting wand, Reality!
A chieftain's mien her Osbert bore,
A pilgrim's lowly robes he wore—
Disguise that vainly strove to hide
Bearing and glance of martial pride;
For he in many a battle-scene,
On many a rampart breach had been;
Had sternly smiled at danger nigh,
Had seen the valiant bleed and die,
And proudly rear'd on hostile tower,
Midst falchion clash and arrowy shower,
Britannia's banner high!
And though some ancient feud had taught
His Bertha's sire to loathe his name,
More noble warrior never fought
For glory's prize or England's fame.
And well his dark, commanding eye,

And form and step of stately grace,
Accorded with achievements high,
Soul of emprise and chivalry,
Bright name, and generous race!
His cheek, embrown’d by many a sun,
Tells a proud tale of glory won,
Of vigil, march, and combat rude,
Valour, and toil, and fortitude!
E’en while youth’s earliest blushes threw
Warm o’er that cheek their vivid hue,
His gallant soul, his stripling form,
Had braved the battle’s rudest storm;
When England’s conquering archers stood,
And dyed thy plain, Poitiers! with blood,
When shiver’d axe, and cloven shield,
And shatter’d helmet, strew’d the field,
And France around her king in vain
Had marshall’d valour’s noblest train—
In that dread strife his lightning eye
Had flash’d with transport keen and high,
And midst the battle’s wildest tide,
Throbb’d his young heart with hope and pride.
Alike that fearless heart could brave
Death on the war-field or the wave;

Alike in tournament or fight,
That ardent spirit found delight!
Yet oft, midst hostile scenes afar,
Bright o’er his soul a vision came,
Rising like some benignant star,
On stormy seas or plains of war,
To soothe, with hopes more dear than fame,
The heart that throbb’d to Bertha’s name!
And midst the wildest rage of fight,
And in the deepest calm of night,
To her his thoughts would wing their flight
With fond devotion warm;
Oft would those glowing thoughts portray
Some home, from tumults far away,
Graced with that angel form!
And now his spirit fondly deems
Fulfill’d its loveliest, dearest dreams!
Who, with pale cheek, and locks of snow,
In minstrel garb attends the chief?
The moonbeam on his thoughtful brow
Reveals a shade of grief.
Sorrow and time have touch’d his face
With mournful yet majestic grace,
Soft as the melancholy smile

Of sunset on some ruin’d pile!
—It is the bard, whose song had power
To lure the maiden from her tower—
The bard, whose wild inspiring lays,
E’en in gay childhood’s earliest days,
First woke, in Osbert’s kindling breast,
The flame that will not be represt,
The pulse that throbs for praise!
Those lays had banish’d from his eye
The bright soft tears of infancy,
Had soothed the boy to calm repose,
Had hush’d his bosom’s earliest woes;
And when the light of thought awoke,
When first young reason’s day-spring broke,
More powerful still, they bade arise
His spirit’s burning energies!
Then the bright dream of glory warm’d,
Then the loud pealing war-song charm’d,
The legends of each martial line,
The battle-tales of Palestine:
And oft, since then, his deeds had proved
Themes of the lofty lays he loved!
Now, at triumphant love’s command,
Since Osbert leaves his native land,

Forsaking glory's high career
For her than glory far more dear;
Since hope's gay dream and meteor ray
To distant regions point his way,
That there Affection's hands may dress
A fairy bower for happiness;
That fond devoted bard, though now
Time's wintery garland wreathes his brow,
Though quench'd the sunbeam of his eye,
And fled his spirit's buoyancy,
And strength and enterprise are past,
Still follows constant to the last!
Though his sole wish was but to die
Midst the calm scenes of days gone by,
And all that hallows and endears
The memory of departed years—
Sorrow, and joy, and time, have twined
To those loved scenes his pensive mind;
Ah! what can tear the links apart
That bind his chieftain to his heart?
What smile but his with joy can light
The eye obscured by age's night?
Last of a loved and honour'd line,
Last tie to earth in life's decline,

Till death its lingering spark shall dim,
That faithful eye must gaze on him!
Silent and swift, with footstep light,
Haste on those fugitives of night.
They reach the boat—the rapid oar
Soon wafts them from the wooded shore:
The bark is gain’d! A gallant few,
Vassals of Osbert, form its crew;
The pennant, in the moonlight beam,
With soft suffusion glows;
From the white sail a silvery gleam
Falls on the wave’s repose;
Long shadows undulating play,
From mast and streamer, o’er the bay;
But still so hush’d the summer air,
They tremble, midst that scene so fair,
Lest morn’s first beam behold them there.
—Wake, viewless wanderer! breeze of night!
From river wave, or mountain height,
Or dew-bright couch of moss and flowers,
By haunted spring in forest bowers;
Or dost thou lurk in pearly cell,
In amber grot, where mermaids dwell,
And cavern’d gems their lustre throw

O’er the red sea-flowers’ vivid glow?
Where treasures, not for mortal gaze,
In solitary splendour blaze,
And sounds, ne’er heard by mortal ear,
Swell through the deep’s unfathom’d sphere?
What grove of that mysterious world
Holds thy light wing in slumber furl’d?
Awake! o’er glittering seas to rove:
Awake! to guide the bark of love!
Swift fly the midnight hours, and soon
Shall fade the bright propitious moon;
Soon shall the waning stars grow pale,
E’en now—but lo! the rustling sail
Swells to the new-sprung ocean gale!
The bark glides on—their fears are o’er;
Recedes the bold romantic shore,
Its features mingling fast.
Gaze, Bertha! gaze: thy lingering eye
May still each lovely scene descry
Of years for ever past!
There wave the woods, beneath whose shade
With bounding step thy childhood play’d,
Midst ferny glades and mossy lawns,
Free as their native birds and fawns;

Listening the sylvan sounds, that float
On each low breeze, midst dells remote—
The ringdove’s deep melodious moan,
The rustling deer in thickets lone;
The wild-bee’s hum, the aspen’s sigh,
The wood-stream’s plaintive harmony.
Dear scenes of many a sportive hour,
There thy own mountains darkly tower!
Midst their gray rocks no glen so rude
But thou hast loved its solitude!
No path so wild but thou hast known,
And traced its rugged course alone!
The earliest wreath that bound thy hair
Was twined of glowing heath-flowers there.
There in the day-spring of thy years,
Undimm’d by passions or by tears,
Oft, while thy bright, enraptured eye
Wander’d o’er ocean, earth, or sky,
While the wild breeze that round thee blew,
Tinged thy warm cheek with richer hue.
Pure as the skies that o’er thy head
Their clear and cloudless azure spread,
Pure as that gale whose light wing drew
Its freshness from the mountain dew,

Glow’d thy young heart with feelings high,
A heaven of hallow’d ecstasy!
Such days were thine! ere love had drawn
A cloud o’er that celestial dawn!
As the clear dews in morning’s beam
With soft reflected colouring stream,
Catch every tint of eastern gem
To form the rose’s diadem,
But vanish when the noontide hour
Glows fiercely on the shrinking flower—
Thus in thy soul each calm delight,
Like morn’s first dew-drops, pure and bright,
Fled swift from passion’s blighting fire,
Or linger’d only to expire!
Spring on thy native hills again
Shall bid neglected wild-flowers rise,
And call forth, in each grassy glen,
Her brightest emerald dyes!
There shall the lonely mountain rose,
Wreath of the cliffs, again disclose;
Midst rocky dells, each well-known stream
Shall sparkle in the summer beam;
The birch, o’er precipice and cave,
Its feathery foliage still shall wave,

The ash midst rugged clefts unveil
Its coral clusters to the gale,
And autumn shed a warmer bloom
O’er the rich heath and glowing broom.
But thy light footstep there no more
Each path, each dingle shall explore.
In vain may smile each green recess,
—Who now shall pierce its loneliness?
The stream through shadowy glens may stray,
—Who now shall trace its glistening way?
In solitude, in silence deep,
Shrined midst her rocks, shall Echo sleep,
No lute’s wild swell again shall rise
To wake her mystic melodies.
All soft may blow the mountain air,
—It will not wave thy graceful hair!
The mountain rose may bloom and die,
—It will not meet thy smiling eye!
But like those scenes of vanish’d days,
Shall others ne’er delight;
Far lovelier lands shall meet thy gaze,
Yet seem not half so bright!
O’er the dim woodlands’ fading hue
Still gleams yon Gothic pile on high;

Gaze on, while yet ’tis thine to view
That home of infancy!
Heed not the night-dew’s chilling power,
Heed not the sea-wind’s coldest hour,
But pause and linger on the deck,
Till of those towers no trace, no speck,
Is gleaming o’er the main;
For when the mist of morn shall rise,
Blending the sea, the shore, the skies,
That home, once vanish’d from thine eyes,
Shall bless them ne’er again!
There the dark tales and songs of yore
First with strange transport thrill’d thy soul,
E’en while their fearful mystic lore
From thy warm cheek the life-bloom stole.
There, while thy father’s raptured ear
Dwelt fondly on a strain so dear,
And in his eye the trembling tear
Reveal’d his spirit’s trance;
How oft, those echoing halls along,
Thy thrilling voice has swell’d the song—
Tradition wild of other days,
Or troubadour’s heroic lays,
Or legend of romance!

Oh! many an hour has there been thine,
That memory’s pencil oft shall dress
In softer shades, and tints that shine
In mellow’d loveliness!
While thy sick heart, and fruitless tears,
Shall mourn, with fond and deep regret,
The sunshine of thine early years,
Scarce deem’d so radiant—till it set!
The cloudless peace, unprized till gone,
The bliss, till vanish’d hardly known!
On rock and turret, wood and hill,
The fading moonbeams linger still,
Still, Bertha! gaze on yon gray tower,
At evening’s last and sweetest hour,
While varying still, the western skies
Flush’d the clear seas with rainbow dyes,
Whose warm suffusions glow’d and pass’d,
Each richer, lovelier, than the last.
How oft, while gazing on the deep,
That seem’d a heaven of peace to sleep,
As if its wave, so still, so fair,
More frowning mien might never wear,
The twilight calm of mental rest
Would steal in silence o’er thy breast,

And wake that dear and balmy sigh
That softly breathes the spirit’s harmony!
—Ah! ne’er again shall hours to thee be given
Of joy on earth—so near allied to heaven!
Why starts the tear to Bertha’s eye?
Is not her long-loved Osbert nigh?
Is there a grief his voice, his smile,
His words, are fruitless to beguile?
—Oh! bitter to the youthful heart,
That scarce a pang, a care has known,
The hour when first from scenes we part,
Where life’s bright spring has flown!
Forsaking, o’er the world to roam,
That little shrine of peace—our home!
E’en if delighted fancy throw
O’er that cold world, her brightest glow,
Painting its untried paths with flowers,
That will not live in earthly bowers,
(Too frail, too exquisite, to bear
One breath of life’s ungenial air;)
E’en if such dreams of hope arise
As heaven alone can realise,
Cold were the breast that would not heave
One sigh, the home of youth to leave;

Stern were the heart that would not swell
To breathe life’s saddest word—farewell!
Though earth has many a deeper woe,
Though tears more bitter far must flow,
That hour, whate’er our future lot,
That first fond grief, is ne’er forgot!
Such was the pang of Bertha’s heart,
The thought, that bade the tear-drop start;
And Osbert by her side
Heard the deep sigh, whose bursting swell
Nature’s fond struggle told too well;
And days of future bliss portray’d,
And love’s own eloquence essay’d,
To soothe his plighted bride!
Of bright Arcadian scenes he tells,
In that sweet land to which they fly;
The vine-clad rocks, the fragrant dells
Of blooming Italy.
For he had roved a pilgrim there,
And gazed on many a spot so fair
It seem’d like some enchanted grove,
Where only peace, and joy, and love,
Those exiles of the world, might rove,
And breathe its heavenly air;

And, all unmix’d with ruder tone,
Their “wood-notes wild” be heard alone!
Far from the frown of stern control,
That vainly would subdue the soul,
There shall their long-affianced hands
Be join’d in consecrated bands.
And in some rich, romantic vale,
Circled with heights of Alpine snow,
Where citron-woods enrich the gale,
And scented shrubs their balm exhale,
And flowering myrtles blow;
And midst the mulberry boughs on high
Weaves the wild vine her tapestry;
On some bright streamlet’s emerald side,
Where cedars wave in graceful pride,
Bosom’d in groves, their home shall rise,
A shelter’d bower of paradise!
Thus would the lover soothe to rest
With tales of hope her anxious breast;
Nor vain that dear enchanting lore
Her soul’s bright visions to restore,
And bid gay phantoms of delight
Float in soft colouring o’er her sight.
——O Youth! sweet May-morn, fled so soon,

Far brighter than life’s loveliest noon,
How oft thy spirit’s buoyant power
Will triumph, e’en in sorrow’s hour
Prevailing o’er regret!
As rears its head th’ elastic flower
Though the dark tempest’s recent shower
Hang on its petals yet!
Ah! not so soon can hope’s gay smile
The aged bard to joy beguile;
Those silent years that steal away
The cheek’s warm rose, the eye’s bright ray,
Win from the mind a nobler prize,
E’en all its buoyant energies!
For him the April days are past,
When grief was but a fleeting cloud;
No transient shade will sorrow cast,
When age the spirit’s might has bow’d!
And, as he sees the land grow dim,
That native land now lost to him,
Fix’d are his eyes, and clasp’d his hands,
And long in speechless grief he stands:
So desolately calm his air,
He seems an image wrought to bear
The stamp of deep, though hush’d despair.

Motion and life no sign bespeaks,
Save that the night-breeze, o’er his cheeks,
Just waves his silvery hair!
Nought else could teach the eye to know
He was no sculptured form of woe!
Long gazing o’er the dark’ning flood,
Pale in that silent grief he stood,
Till the cold moon was waning fast,
And many a lovely star had died,
And the gray heavens deep shadows cast
Far o’er the slumbering tide;
And, robed in one dark solemn hue,
Arose the distant shore to view.
Then, starting from his trance of woe,
Tears, long suppress’d, in freedom flow,
While thus his wild and plaintive strain
Blends with the murmur of the main.

THE BARD’S FAREWELL.

“Thou setting moon! when next thy rays
Are trembling on the shadowy deep,
The land, now fading from thy gaze,
These eyes in vain shall weep;
And wander o’er the lonely sea,
And fix their tearful glance on thee—

On thee! whose light so softly gleams
Through the green oaks that fringe my native streams.
“But midst those ancient groves, no more
Shall I thy quivering lustre hail;
Its plaintive strain my harp must pour
To swell a foreign gale.
The rocks, the woods, whose echoes woke
When its full tones their stillness broke,
Deserted now, shall hear alone
The brook’s wild voice, the wind’s mysterious moan.
“And oh! ye fair, forsaken halls,
Left by your lord to slow decay,
Soon shall the trophies on your walls
Be mouldering fast away!
There shall no choral songs resound,
There shall no festal board be crown’d;
But ivy wreathe the silent gate,
And all be hush’d, and cold, and desolate.
“No banner from the stately tower
Shall spread its blazon’d folds on high;
There the wild brier and summer flower,
Unmark’d, shall wave and die.
Home of the mighty! thou art lone,
The noonday of thy pride is gone,

And, midst thy solitude profound,
A step shall echo like unearthly sound!
“From thy cold hearths no festal blaze
Shall fill the hall with ruddy light,
Nor welcome with convivial rays
Some pilgrim of the night.
But there shall grass luxuriant spread,
As o’er the dwellings of the dead;
And the deep swell of every blast
Seem a wild dirge for years of grandeur past.
“And I—my joy of life is fled,
My spirit’s power, my bosom’s glow;
The raven locks that graced my head,
Wave in a wreath of snow!
And where the star of youth arose
I deem’d life’s lingering ray should close,
And those loved trees my tomb o’ershade,
Beneath whose arching bowers my childhood play’d.
“Vain dream! that tomb in distant earth
Shall rise, forsaken and forgot;
And thou, sweet land that gavest me birth!
A grave must yield me not.
Yet, haply, he for whom I leave
Thy shores, in life’s dark winter eve,

When cold the hand, and closed the lays,
And mute the voice he loved to praise,
O’er the hush’d harp one tear may shed,
And one frail garland o’er the minstrel’s bed!”

BELSHAZZAR’S FEAST.

Twas night in Babylon: yet many a beam,
Of lamps far glittering from her domes on high,
Shone, brightly mingling in Euphrates’ stream
With the clear stars of that Chaldean sky,
Whose azure knows no cloud: each whisper’d sigh
Of the soft night-breeze through her terrace bowers,
Bore deepening tones of joy and melody,
O’er an illumined wilderness of flowers;
And the glad city’s voice went up from all her towers.
But prouder mirth was in the kingly hall,
Where midst adoring slaves, a gorgeous band,
High at the stately midnight festival,
Belshazzar sat enthroned. There luxury’s hand
Had shower’d around all treasures that expand
Beneath the burning East; all gems that pour
The sunbeams back; all sweets of many a land
Whose gales waft incense from their spicy shore
—But mortal pride look’d on, and still demanded more.
With richer zest the banquet may be fraught,

A loftier theme may swell the exulting strain!
The lord of nations spoke,—and forth were brought
The spoils of Salem’s devastated fane.
Thrice-holy vessels!—pure from earthly stain,
And set apart, and sanctified to Him
Who deign’d within the oracle to reign,
Reveal’d yet shadow’d; making noonday dim,
To that most glorious cloud between the cherubim.
They came, and louder peal’d the voice of song,
And pride flash’d brighter from the kindling eye;
And He who sleeps not heard the elated throng,
In mirth that plays with thunderbolts, defy
The Rock of Zion! Fill the nectar high,
High in the cups of consecrated gold!
And crown the bowl with garlands, ere they die,
And bid the censers of the temple hold
Offerings to Babel’s gods, the mighty ones of old!
Peace!—is it but a phantom of the brain,
Thus shadow’d forth, the senses to appall,
Yon fearful vision? Who shall gaze again
To search its cause? Along the illumined wall,
Startling yet riveting the eyes of all,
Darkly it moves,—a hand, a human hand,
O’er the bright lamps of that resplendent hall,

In silence tracing, as a mystic wand,
Words all unknown, the tongue of some far-distant land!
There are pale cheeks around the regal board,
And quivering limbs, and whispers deep and low,
And fitful starts!—the wine, in triumph pour'd,
Untasted foams, the song hath ceased to flow,
The waving censer drops to earth—and lo!
The king of men, the ruler, girt with mirth,
Trembles before a shadow! Say not so!
—The child of dust, with guilt's foreboding sight,
Shrinks from the dread Unknown, the avenging Infinite!
"But haste ye!—bring Chaldea's gifted seers,
The men of prescience! Haply to their eyes,
Which track the future through the rolling spheres,
Yon mystic sign may speak in prophecies."
They come—the readers of the midnight skies,
They that gave voice to visions—but in vain!
Still wrapt in clouds the awful secret lies,
It hath no language midst the starry train,
Earth has no gifted tongue heaven's mysteries to explain.
Then stood forth one, a child of other sires,
And other inspiration!—one of those
Who on the willows hung their captive lyres,
And sat and wept, where Babel's river flows.

His eye was bright, and yet the pale repose
Of his pure features half o'erawed the mind;
Telling of inward mysteries—joys and woes
In lone recesses of the soul enshrined;
Depths of a being seal'd and sever'd from mankind.
Yes!—what was earth to him, whose spirit pass'd
Time's utmost bounds? on whose unshrinking sight
Ten thousand shapes of burning glory cast
Their full resplendence? Majesty and might
Were in his dreams; for him the veil of light
Shrouding heaven's inmost sanctuary and throne,
The curtain of th' unutterably bright,
Was raised!—to him, in fearful splendour shown,
Ancient of Days! e'en Thou madest thy dread presence known.
He spoke—the shadows of the things to come
Pass'd o'er his soul:—"O King, elate in pride!
God hath sent forth the writing of thy doom—
The one, the living God, by thee defied!
He, in whose balance earthly lords are tried,
Hath weigh'd, and found thee wanting. 'Tis decreed
The conqueror's hands thy kingdom shall divide,
The stranger to thy throne of power succeed!
Thy days are full: they come,—the Persian and the Mede!"
There fell a moment's thrilling silence round—

A breathless pause!—the hush of hearts that beat,
And limbs that quiver. Is there not a sound,
A gathering-cry, a tread of hurrying feet?
—’Twas but some echo in the crowded street,
Of far-heard revelry; the shout, the song,
The measured dance to music wildly sweet,
That speeds the stars their joyous course along—
Away! nor let a dream disturb the festal throng!
Peace yet again! Hark! steps in tumult flying,
Steeds rushing on, as o’er a battle-field!
The shouts of hosts exulting or defying,
The press of multitudes that strive or yield!
And the loud startling clash of spear and shield,
Sudden as earthquake’s burst; and, blent with these,
The last wild shriek of those whose doom is seal’d
In their full mirth!—all deepening on the breeze,
As the long stormy roll of far-advancing seas!
And nearer yet the trumpet’s blast is swelling,
Loud, shrill, and savage, drowning every cry;
And, lo! the spoiler in the regal dwelling,
Death—bursting on the halls of revelry!
Ere on their brows one fragile rose-leaf die,
The sword hath raged through joy’s devoted train;
Ere one bright star be faded from the sky,

Red flames, like banners, wave from dome and fane;

Empire is lost and won—Belshazzar with the slain.[204]

[Belshazzar's Feast had previously been published in the Collection of Poems from Living Authors, edited for a benevolent purpose by Mrs Joanna Baillie.—Memoir, p. 68.

"Miss Baillie's volume contained several poems by Mrs Hemans; some jeux d'esprit, by the late Miss Catherine Fanshawe, a woman of rare wit and genius, in whose society Scott greatly delighted; and, inter alia, Mr William Howison's early ballad of Polydore, which had been originally published under Scott's auspices, in the Edinburgh Register for 1810."—Lockhart's Life of Scott, vol. v. p. 287.

It is worthy of remembrance that Sir Walter's own "Macduff's Cross," and Southey's lively and eccentric nursery rhymes on the "Cataract of Lodoar," first made their appearance in the collection referred to.]

[204] As originally written, the following additional stanzas (afterwards omitted) concluded this poem:—

Fallen is the golden city! In the dust,

Spoil'd of her crown, dismantled of her state,

She that hath made the strength of towers her trust

Weeps by her dead, supremely desolate!

She that beheld the nations at her gate,

Thronging in homage, shall be call'd no more

Lady of kingdoms! Who shall mourn her fate?

Her guilt is full, her march of triumph o'er—

What widow'd land shall now her widowhood deplore?

Sit thou in silence! Thou that wert enthroned

On many waters!—thou, whose augurs read
The language of the planets, and disown’d
The mighty Name it blazons!—veil thy head,
Daughter of Babylon! The sword is red
From thy destroyer’s harvest, and the yoke
Is on thee, O most proud!—for thou hast said,
“I am, and none beside!” Th’ Eternal spoke;
Thy glory was a spoil, thine idol-gods were broke!
But go thou forth, O Israel!—wake! rejoice!
Be clothed with strength, as in thine ancient day!
Renew the sound of harps, th’ exulting voice,
The mirth of timbrels!—loose the chain, and say
God hath redeem’d his people!—from decay
The silent and the trampled shall arise!
Awake!—put on thy beautiful array,
O long-forsaken Zion!—to the skies
Send up on every wind thy choral melodies!
And lift thy head!—Behold thy sons returning
Redeem’d from exile, ransom’d from the chain,
Light hath revisited the house of mourning:
She that on Judah’s mountains wept in vain,
Because her children were not, dwells again
Girt with the lovely! Through thy streets once more,
City of God! shall pass the bridal train,

And the bright lamps their festive radiance pour,

And the triumphal hymns thy joy of youth restore.

THE LAST CONSTANTINE.

... “Thou strivest nobly,

When hearts of sterner stuff perhaps had sunk;

And o’er thy fall, if it be so decreed,

Good men will mourn, and brave men will shed tears

...

... Fame I look not for;

But to sustain, in Heaven’s all-seeing eye,

Before my fellow men, in mine own sight,

With graceful virtue and becoming pride,

The dignity and honour of a man,

Thus station’d as I am, I will do all

That man may do.”

Miss Baillie’s “Constantine Palæologus.”

I.

The fires grew pale on Rome’s deserted shrines,

In the dim grot the Pythia’s voice had died;

—Shout for the City of the Constantines,

The rising city of the billow-side,

The City of the Cross!—great ocean’s bride,

Crown’d with her birth she sprung! Long ages past,

And still she look’d in glory o’er the tide,

Which at her feet barbaric riches cast,

Pour’d by the burning East, all joyously and fast.

II.

Long ages past!—they left her porphyry halls

Still trod by kingly footsteps. Gems and gold

Broider’d her mantle, and her castled walls

Frown’d in their strength; yet there were signs which told

The days were full. The pure high faith of old

Was changed; and on her silken couch of sleep

She lay, and murmur’d if a rose-leaf’s fold

Disturb’d her dreams; and call’d her slaves to keep

Their watch, that no rude sound might reach her o’er the deep.

III.

But there are sounds that from the regal dwelling

Free hearts and fearless only may exclude;

’Tis not alone the wind at midnight swelling,

Breaks on the soft repose by luxury woo’d!

There are unbidden footsteps, which intrude

Where the lamps glitter and the wine-cup flows;

And darker hues have stain’d the marble, strew’d

With the fresh myrtle and the short-lived rose;

And Parian walls have rung to the dread march of foes.

IV.

A voice of multitudes is on the breeze,

Remote, yet solemn as the night-storm’s roar
Through Ida’s giant-pines! Across the seas
A murmur comes, like that the deep winds bore
From Tempe’s haunted river to the shore
Of the reed-crown’d Eurotas; when, of old,
Dark Asia sent her battle-myriads o’er
Th’ indignant wave, which would not be controll’d,
But past the Persian’s chain in boundless freedom roll’d.

V.

And it is thus again! Swift oars are dashing
The parted waters, and a light is cast
On their white foam-wreaths, from the sudden flashing
Of Tartar spears, whose ranks are thickening fast.
There swells a savage trumpet on the blast,
A music of the deserts, wild and deep,
Wakening strange echoes, as the shores are pass’d
Where low midst Ilion’s dust her conquerors sleep,
O’ershadowing with high names each rude sepulchral heap.

VI.

War from the West!—the snows on Thracian hills
Are loosed by Spring’s warm breath; yet o’er the lands
Which Hæmus girds, the chainless mountain-rills
Pour down less swiftly than the Moslem bands.
War from the East!—midst Araby’s lone sands,

More lonely now the few bright founts may be,
While Ismael’s bow is bent in warrior-hands
Against the Golden City of the sea.[205]
—Oh! for a soul to fire thy dust, Thermopylæ!

VII.

Hear yet again, ye mighty!—Where are they
Who, with their green Olympic garlands crown’d,
Leap’d up in proudly beautiful array,
As to a banquet gathering, at the sound
Of Persia’s clarion? Far and joyous round,
From the pine forests, and the mountain snows,
And the low sylvan valleys, to the bound
Of the bright waves, at freedom’s voice they rose!
—Hath it no thrilling tone to break the tomb’s repose?

VIII.

They slumber with their swords!—the olive shades
In vain are whispering their immortal tale!
In vain the spirit of the past pervades
The soft winds, breathing through each Grecian vale.
Yet must thou wake, though all unarm’d and pale,
Devoted City! Lo! the Moslem’s spear,
Red from its vintage, at thy gates; his sail
Upon thy waves, his trumpet in thine ear!
—Awake! and summon those, who yet perchance may hear!

IX.

Be hush’d, thou faint and feeble voice of weeping!
Lift ye the banner of the Cross on high,
And call on chiefs, whose noble sires are sleeping
In their proud graves of sainted chivalry,
Beneath the palms and cedars, where they sigh
To Syrian gales! The sons of each brave line
From their baronial halls shall hear your cry,
And seize the arms which flash’d round Salem’s shrine,
And wield for you the swords once waved for Palestine!

X.

All still, all voiceless!—and the billow’s roar
Alone replies! Alike their soul is gone
Who shared the funeral-feast on Œta’s shore,
And theirs that o’er the field of Ascalon
Swell’d the crusaders’ hymn! Then gird thou on
Thine armour, Eastern Queen! and meet the hour
Which waits thee ere the day’s fierce work is done
With a strong heart: so may thy helmet tower
Unshiver’d through the storm, for generous hope is power!

XI.

But linger not,—array thy men of might!
The shores, the seas, are peopled with thy foes.
Arms through thy cypress groves are gleaming bright,

And the dark huntsmen of the wild, repose
Beneath the shadowy marble porticoes
Of thy proud villas. Nearer and more near,
Around thy walls the sons of battle close;
Each hour, each moment, hath its sound of fear,
Which the deep grave alone is charter'd not to hear!

XII.

Away! bring wine, bring odours, to the shade[206]
Where the tall pine and poplar blend on high!
Bring roses, exquisite, but soon to fade!
Snatch every brief delight,—since we must die!—
Yet is the hour, degenerate Greeks! gone by,
For feast in vine-wreath'd bower or pillar'd hall;
Dim gleams the torch beneath yon fiery sky,
And deep and hollow is the tambour's call,
And from the startled hand th' untasted cup will fall.

XIII.

The night—the glorious oriental night,
Hath lost the silence of her purple heaven,
With its clear stars! The red artillery's light,
Athwart her worlds of tranquil splendour driven,
To the still firmament's expanse hath given
Its own fierce glare, wherein each cliff and tower
Starts wildly forth; and now the air is riven

With thunder-bursts, and now dull smoke-clouds lower,
Veiling the gentle moon, in her most hallow'd hour.

XIV.

Sounds from the waters, sounds upon the earth,
Sounds in the air, of battle! Yet with these
A voice is mingling, whose deep tones give birth
To faith and courage! From luxurious ease
A gallant few have started! O'er the seas,
From the Seven Towers,[207] their banner waves its sign;
And Hope is whispering in the joyous breeze,
Which plays amidst its folds. That voice was thine;
Thy soul was on that band, devoted Constantine.

XV.

Was Rome thy parent? Didst thou catch from her
The fire that lives in thine undaunted eye?
—That city of the throne and sepulchre
Hath given proud lessons how to reign and die!
Heir of the Cæsars! did that lineage high,
Which, as a triumph to the grave, hath pass'd
With its long march of spectred imagery,[208]
Th' heroic mantle o'er thy spirit cast?
Thou! of an eagle-race the noblest and the last!

XVI.

Vain dreams! Upon that spirit hath descended

Light from the living Fountain, whence each thought
Springs pure and holy! In that eye is blended
A spark, with earth's triumphal memories fraught,
And, far within, a deeper meaning, caught
From worlds unseen. A hope, a lofty trust,
Whose resting-place on buoyant wing is sought
(Though through its veil seen darkly from the dust)
In realms where Time no more hath power upon the just.

XVII.

Those were proud days, when on the battle-plain,
And in the sun's bright face, and midst th' array
Of awe-struck hosts, and circled by the slain,
The Roman cast his glittering mail away,[209]
And while a silence, as of midnight, lay
O'er breathless thousands at his voice who started,
Call'd on the unseen terrific powers that sway
The heights, the depths, the shades; then, fearless-hearted,
Girt on his robe of death, and for the grave departed!

XVIII.

But then, around him as the javelins rush'd,
From earth to heaven swell'd up the loud acclaim;
And, ere his heart's last free libation gush'd,
With a bright smile, the warrior caught his name
Far-floating on the winds! And Victory came,

And made the hour of that immortal deed
A life, in fiery feeling! Valour's aim
Had sought no loftier guerdon. Thus to bleed
Was to be Rome's high star!—He died—and had his meed.

XIX.

But praise—and dearer, holier praise be theirs,
Who, in the stillness and the solitude
Of hearts press'd earthwards by a weight of cares,
Uncheer'd by Fame's proud hope, th' ethereal food
Of restless energies, and only view'd
By Him whose eye, from his eternal throne,
Is on the soul's dark places; have subdued
And vow'd themselves with strength till then unknown,
To some high martyr-task, in secret and alone.

XX.

Theirs be the bright and sacred names, enshrined
Far in the bosom! for their deeds belong,
Not to the gorgeous faith which charm'd mankind
With its rich pomp of festival and song,
Garland, and shrine, and incense-bearing throng;
But to that Spirit, hallowing, as it tries
Man's hidden soul in whispers, yet more strong
Than storm or earthquake's voice; for thence arise
All that mysterious world's unseen sublimities.

XXI.

Well might thy name, brave Constantine! awake
Such thought, such feeling!—But the scene again
Bursts on my vision, as the day-beams break
Through the red sulphurous mists: the camp, the plain,
The terraced palaces, the dome-capt fane,
With its bright cross fix'd high in crowning grace;
Spears on the ramparts, galleys on the main,
And, circling all with arms, that turban'd race—
The sun, the desert, stamp'd in each dark haughty face.

XXII.

Shout, ye seven hills! Lo! Christian pennons streaming
Red o'er the waters![210] Hail, deliverers, hail!
Along your billowy wake the radiance gleaming,
Is Hope's own smile! They crowd the swelling sail,
On, with the foam, the sunbeam and the gale,
Borne, as a victor's car! The batteries pour
Their clouds and thunders; but the rolling veil
Of smoke floats up the exulting winds before!
—And oh! the glorious burst of that bright sea and shore!

XXIII.

The rocks, waves, ramparts, Europe's, Asia's coast,
All throng'd! one theatre for kingly war!
A monarch, girt with his barbaric host,

Points o’er the beach his flashing scimitar!
Dark tribes are tossing javelins from afar,
Hands waving banners o’er each battlement,
Decks, with their serried guns, array’d to bar
The promised aid: but hark! a shout is sent
Up from the noble barks!—the Moslem line is rent!

XXIV.

On, on through rushing flame and arrowy shower,
The welcome prows have cleft their rapid way;
And, with the shadows of the vesper hour,
Furl’d their white sails, and anchor’d in the bay.
Then were the streets with song and torch-fire gay,
Then the Greek wines flow’d mantling in the light
Of festal halls; and there was joy!—the ray
Of dying eyes, a moment wildly bright—
The sunset of the soul, ere lost to mortal sight.

XXV.

For vain that feeble succour! Day by day
Th’ imperial towers are crumbling, and the sweep
Of the vast engines, in their ceaseless play,
Comes powerful, as when heaven unbinds the deep!
—Man’s heart is mightier than the castled steep,
Yet will it sink when earthly hope is fled;
Man’s thoughts work darkly in such hours, and sleep

Flies far; and in their mien, the walls who tread,
Things by the brave untold may fearfully be read!

XXVI.

It was a sad and solemn task, to hold
Their midnight-watch on that beleaguer'd wall!
As the sea-wave beneath the bastions roll'd,
A sound of fate was in its rise and fall;
The heavy clouds were as an empire's pall,
The giant shadows of each tower and fane
Lay like the grave's; a low mysterious call
Breathed in the wind, and, from the tented plain,
A voice of omens rose with each wild martial strain.

XXVII.

For they might catch the Arab chargers neighing,
The Thracian drum, the Tartar's drowsy song;
Might almost hear the soldan's banner swaying,
The watchword mutter'd in some eastern tongue.
Then flash'd the gun's terrific light along
The marble streets, all stillness—not repose;
And boding thoughts came o'er them, dark and strong;
For heaven, earth, air, speak auguries to those
Who see their number'd hours fast pressing to the close.

XXVIII.

But strength is from the Mightiest! There is one

Still in the breach and on the rampart seen,
Whose cheek shows paler with each morning sun,
And tells in silence how the night hath been
In kingly halls a vigil: yet serene
The ray set deep within his thoughtful eye;
And there is that in his collected mien,
To which the hearts of noble men reply
With fires, partaking not this frame's mortality!

XXIX.

Yes! call it not of lofty minds the fate
To pass o'er earth in brightness but alone;
High power was made their birthright, to create
A thousand thoughts responsive to their own!
A thousand echoes of their spirit's tone
Start into life, where'er their path may be,
Still following fast; as when the wind hath blown
O'er Indian groves,[211] a wanderer wild and free,
Kindling and bearing flames afar from tree to tree!

XXX.

And it is thus with thee! thy lot is cast
On evil days, thou Cæsar!—yet the few,
That set their generous bosom to the blast
Which rocks thy throne—the fearless and the true,
Bear hearts wherein thy glance can still renew

The free devotion of the years gone by,
When from bright dreams th’ ascendant Roman drew
Enduring strength! States vanish—ages fly—
But leave one task unchanged—to suffer and to die!

XXXI.

These are our nature’s heritage. But thou,
The crown’d with empire! thou wert call’d to share
A cup more bitter. On thy fever’d brow
The semblance of that buoyant hope to wear,
Which long had pass’d away; alone to bear
The rush and pressure of dark thoughts, that came
As a strong billow in their weight of care,
And with all this to smile! For earth-born frame
These are stern conflicts, yet they pass, unknown to fame!

XXXII.

Her glance is on the triumph, on the field,
On the red scaffold; and where’er, in sight
Of human eyes, the human soul is steel’d
To deeds that seem as of immortal might,
Yet are proud Nature’s! But her meteor-light
Can pierce no depths, no clouds; it falls not where
In silence, and in secret, and in night,
The noble heart doth wrestle with despair,
And rise more strong than death from its unwitness’d prayer.

XXXIII.

Men have been firm in battle; they have stood
With a prevailing hope on ravaged plains,
And won the birthright of their hearths with blood,
And died rejoicing, midst their ancient fanes,
That so their children, undefiled with chains,
Might worship there in peace. But they that stand
When not a beacon o’er the wave remains,
Link’d but to perish with a ruin’d land,
Where Freedom dies with them—call these a martyr-band!

XXXIV.

But the world heeds them not. Or if, perchance,
Upon their strife it bend a careless eye,
It is but as the Roman’s stoic glance
Fell on that stage, where man’s last agony
Was made his sport, who, knowing one must die,
Reck’d not which champion; but prepared the strain,
And bound the bloody wreath of victory,
To greet the conqueror; while, with calm disdain,
The vanquish’d proudly met the doom he met in vain.

XXXV.

The hour of Fate comes on! and it is fraught
With this of Liberty, that now the need
Is past to veil the brow of anxious thought,

And clothe the heart, which still beneath must bleed,
With Hope’s fair-seeming drapery. We are freed
From tasks like these by misery: one alone
Is left the brave, and rest shall be thy meed,
Prince, watcher, wearied one! when thou hast shown
How brief the cloudy space which parts the grave and throne.

XXXVI.

The signs are full. They are not in the sky,
Nor in the many voices of the air,
Nor the swift clouds. No fiery hosts on high
Toss their wild spears: no meteor banners glare,
No comet fiercely shakes its blazing hair;
And yet the signs are full: too truly seen
In the thinn’d ramparts, in the pale despair
Which lends one language to a people’s mien,
And in the ruin’d heaps where wall and towers have been!

XXXVII.

It is a night of beauty: such a night
As, from the sparry grot or laurel-shade,
Or wave in marbled cavern rippling bright,
Might woo the nymphs of Grecian fount and glade
To sport beneath its moonbeams, which pervade
Their forest haunts; a night to rove alone
Where the young leaves by vernal winds are sway’d,

And the reeds whisper with a dreamy tone

Of melody that seems to breathe from worlds unknown;

XXXVIII.

A night to call from green Elysium's bowers

The shades of elder bards; a night to hold

Unseen communion with th' inspiring powers

That made deep groves their dwelling-place of old;

A night for mourners, o'er the hallow'd mould,

To strew sweet flowers—for revellers to fill

And wreathe the cup—for sorrows to be told

Which love hath cherish'd long. Vain thoughts! be still!

It is a night of fate, stamp'd with Almighty Will!

XXXIX.

It should come sweeping in the storm, and rending

The ancient summits in its dread career!

And with vast billows wrathfully contending,

And with dark clouds o'ershadowing every sphere!

But He, whose footstep shakes the earth with fear,

Passing to lay the sovereign cities low,

Alike in His omnipotence is near,

When the soft winds o'er spring's green pathway blow,

And when His thunders cleave the monarch mountain's brow.

XL.

The heavens in still magnificence look down

On the hush'd Bosphorus, whose ocean stream
Sleeps with its paler stars: the snowy crown
Of far Olympus,[212] in the moonlight gleam,
Towers radiantly, as when the Pagan's dream
Throng'd it with gods, and bent th' adoring knee;
—But that is past—and now the One Supreme
Fills not alone those haunts, but earth, air, sea,
And Time, which presses on to finish his decree.

XLI.

Olympus, Ida, Delphi! ye, the thrones
And temples of a visionary might,
Brooding in clouds above your forest zones,
And mantling thence the realms beneath with night:
Ye have look'd down on battles—Fear and Flight,
And arm'd Revenge, all hurrying past below!—
But there is yet a more appalling sight
For earth prepared than e'er, with tranquil brow,
Ye gazed on from your world of solitude and snow!

XLII.

Last night a sound was in the Moslem camp,
And Asia's hills re-echo'd to a cry
Of savage mirth! Wild horn and war-steeds' tramp
Blent with the shout of barbarous revelry,
The clash of desert-spears! Last night the sky

A hue of menace and of wrath put on,
Caught from red watch-fires, blazing far and high,
And countless as the flames in ages gone,
Streaming to heaven’s bright queen from shadowy Lebanon!

XLIII.

But all is stillness now. May this be sleep
Which wraps those Eastern thousands? Yes! perchance
Along yon moonlit shore and dark-blue deep,
Bright are their visions with the Houri’s glance,
And they behold the sparkling fountains dance
Beneath the bowers of paradise that shed
Rich odours o’er the faithful; but the lance,
The bow, the spear, now round the slumberers spread,
Ere Fate fulfil such dreams, must rest beside the dead.

XLIV.

May this be sleep, this hush?—A sleepless eye
Doth hold its vigil midst that dusky race!
One that would scan th’ abyss of destiny
E’en now is gazing on the skies to trace,
In those bright worlds, the burning isles of space,
Fate’s mystic pathway: they the while, serene,
Walk in their beauty; but Mohammed’s face
Kindles beneath their aspect,[213] and his mien,
All fired with stormy joy, by that soft light is seen.

XLV.

Oh! wild presumption of a conqueror’s dream,
To gaze on those pure altar-fires, enshrined
In depths of blue infinitude, and deem
They shine to guide the spoiler of mankind
O’er fields of blood! But with the restless mind
It hath been ever thus! and they that weep
For worlds to conquer, o’er the bounds assign’d
To human search, in daring pride would sweep,
As o’er the trampled dust wherein they soon must sleep.

XLVI.

But ye! that beam’d on Fate’s tremendous night,
When the storm burst o’er golden Babylon;
And ye, that sparkled with your wonted light
O’er burning Salem, by the Roman won;
And ye, that calmly view’d the slaughter done
In Rome’s own streets, when Alaric’s trumpet-blast
Rang through the Capitol: bright spheres! roll on!
Still bright, though empires fall; and bid man cast
His humbled eyes to earth, and commune with the past.

XLVII.

For it hath mighty lessons! from the tomb,
And from the ruins of the tomb, and where,
Midst the wreck’d cities in the desert’s gloom,

All tameless creatures make their savage lair,
Thence comes its voice, that shakes the midnight air,
And calls up clouds to dim the laughing day,
And thrills the soul;—yet bids us not despair,
But make one Rock our shelter and our stay,
Beneath whose shade all else is passing to decay!

XLVIII.

The hours move on. I see a wavering gleam
O’er the hush’d waters tremulously fall,
Pour’d from the Cæsars’ palace; now the beam
Of many lamps is brightening in the hall,
And from its long arcades and pillars tall
Soft graceful shadows undulating lie
On the wave’s heaving bosom, and recall
A thought of Venice, with her moonlight sky,
And festal seas and domes, and fairy pageantry.

XLIX.

But from that dwelling floats no mirthful sound!
The swell of flute and Grecian lyre no more,
Wafting an atmosphere of music round,
Tells the hush’d seaman, gliding past the shore,
How monarchs revel there! Its feasts are o’er—
Why gleam the lights along its colonnade?
—I see a train of guests in silence pour

Through its long avenues of terraced shade,

Whose stately founts and bowers for joy alone were made!

L.

In silence, and in arms! With helm—with sword—

These are no marriage garments! Yet e'en now

Thy nuptial feast should grace the regal board,

Thy Georgian bride should wreathe her lovely brow

With an imperial diadem![214]—but thou,

O fated prince! art call'd, and these with thee,

To darker scenes; and thou hast learn'd to bow

Thine Eastern sceptre to the dread decree,

And count it joy enough to perish—being free!

LI.

On through long vestibules, with solemn tread,

As men, that in some time of fear and woe,

Bear darkly to their rest the noble dead,

O'er whom by day their sorrows may not flow,

The warriors pass: their measured steps are slow,

And hollow echoes fill the marble halls,

Whose long-drawn vistas open as they go

In desolate pomp; and from the pictured walls,

Sad seems the light itself which on their armour falls!

LII.

And they have reach'd a gorgeous chamber, bright

With all we dream of splendour; yet a gloom
Seems gather'd o'er it to the boding sight,
A shadow that anticipates the tomb!
Still from its fretted roof the lamps illume
A purple canopy, a golden throne;
But it is empty!—hath the stroke of doom
Fallen there already? Where is He, the One,
Born that high seat to fill, supremely and alone?

LIII.

Oh! there are times whose pleasure doth efface
Earth's vain distinctions! When the storm beats loud,
When the strong towers are tottering to their base,
And the streets rock,—who mingle in the crowd?
—Peasant and chief, the lowly and the proud,
Are in that throng! Yes, life hath many an hour
Which makes us kindred, by one chast'ning bow'd,
And feeling but, as from the storm we cower,
What shrinking weakness feels before unbounded power!

LIV.

Yet then that Power, whose dwelling is on high,
Its loftiest marvels doth reveal, and speak,
In the deep human heart more gloriously,
Than in the bursting thunder! Thence the weak,
They that seem'd form'd, as flower-stems, but to break

With the first wind, have risen to deeds whose name
Still calls up thoughts that mantle to the cheek,
And thrill the pulse!—Ay, strength no pangs could tame
Hath look’d from woman’s eye upon the sword and flame!

LV.

And this is of such hours!—That throne is void,
And its lord comes uncrown’d. Behold him stand,
With a calm brow, where woes have not destroy’d
The Greek’s heroic beauty, midst his band,
The gather’d virtue of a sinking land—
Alas! how scanty! Now is cast aside
All form of princely state; each noble hand
Is press’d by turns in his: for earthly pride
There is no room in hearts where earthly hope hath died!

LVI.

A moment’s hush—and then he speaks—he speaks!
But not of hope! that dream hath long gone by:
His words are full of memory—as he seeks,
By the strong names of Rome and Liberty,
Which yet are living powers that fire the eye,
And rouse the heart of manhood; and by all
The sad yet grand remembrances, that lie
Deep with earth’s buried heroes; to recall
The soul of other years, if but to grace their fall!

LVII.

His words are full of faith!—and thoughts, more high
Than Rome e’er knew, now fill his glance with light;
Thoughts which give nobler lessons how to die,
Than e’er were drawn from Nature’s haughty might!
And to that eye, with all the spirit bright,
Have theirs replied in tears, which may not shame
The bravest in such moments! ’Tis a sight
To make all earthly splendours cold and tame,
—That generous burst of soul, with its electric flame!

LVIII.

They weep—those champions of the Cross—they weep,
Yet vow themselves to death! Ay, midst that train,
Are martyrs, privileged in tears to steep
Their lofty sacrifice! The pang is vain,
And yet its gush of sorrow shall not stain
A warrior’s sword. Those men are strangers here:[215]
The homes they never may behold again,
Lie far away, with all things blest and dear,
On laughing shores, to which their barks no more shall steer!

LIX.

Know’st thou the land where bloom the orange bowers?[216]
Where, through dark foliage, gleam the citron’s dyes?
—It is their own. They see their fathers’ towers

Midst its Hesperian groves in sunlight rise:
They meet, in soul, the bright Italian eyes
Which long and vainly shall explore the main
For their white sails' return: the melodies
Of that sweet land are floating o'er their brain—
Oh! what a crowded world one moment may contain!

LX.

Such moments come to thousands!—few may die
Amidst their native shades. The young, the brave,
The beautiful, whose gladdening voice and eye
Made summer in a parent's heart, and gave
Light to their peopled homes; o'er land and wave
Are scatter'd fast and far, as rose-leaves fall
From the deserted stem. They find a grave
Far from the shadow of th' ancestral hall,
A lonely bed is theirs, whose smiles were hope to all!

LXI.

But life flows on, and bears us with its tide,
Nor may we, lingering, by the slumberers dwell,
Though they were those once blooming at our side
In youth's gay home! Away! what sound's deep swell
Comes on the wind?—It is an empire's knell,
Slow, sad, majestic, pealing through the night!
For the last time speaks forth the solemn bell

Which calls the Christians to their holiest rite,

With a funereal voice of solitary might.

LXII.

Again, and yet again! A startling power

In sounds like these lives ever; for they bear,

Full on remembrance, each eventful hour

Checkering life’s crowded path. They fill the air

When conquerors pass, and fearful cities wear

A mien like joy’s; and when your brides are led

From their paternal homes; and when the glare

Of burning streets on midnight’s cloud waves red,

And when the silent house receives its guest—the dead.[217]

LXIII.

But to those tones what thrilling soul was given

On that last night of empire! As a spell

Whereby the life-blood to its source is driven,

On the chill’d heart of multitudes they fell.

Each cadence seem’d a prophecy, to tell

Of sceptres passing from their line away,

An angel-watcher’s long and sad farewell,

The requiem of a faith’s departing sway,

A throne’s, a nation’s dirge, a wail for earth’s decay.

LXIV.

Again, and yet again!—from yon high dome,

Still the slow peal comes awfully; and they
Who never more, to rest in mortal home,
Shall throw the breastplate off at fall of day,
Th’ imperial band, in close and arm’d array,
As men that from the sword must part no more,
Take through the midnight streets their silent way,
Within their ancient temple to adore,
Ere yet its thousand years of Christian pomp are o’er.

LXV.

It is the hour of sleep: yet few the eyes
O’er which forgetfulness her balm hath shed
In the beleaguer’d city. Stillness lies,
With moonlight, o’er the hills and waters spread.
But not the less, with signs and sounds of dread,
The time speeds on. No voice is raised to greet
The last brave Constantine; and yet the tread
Of many steps is in the echoing street,
And pressure of pale crowds, scarce conscious why they meet.

LXVI.

Their homes are luxury’s yet; why pour they thence
With a dim terror in each restless eye?
Hath the dread car which bears the pestilence,
In darkness, with its heavy wheels roll’d by,
And rock’d their palaces, as if on high

The whirlwind pass'd? From couch and joyous board
Hath the fierce phantom beckon'd them to die![218]
—No!—what are these?—for them a cup is pour'd
More dark with wrath,—man comes—the spoiler and the sword.

LXVII.

Still, as the monarch and his chieftains pass
Through those pale throngs, the streaming torch-light throws
On some wild form, amidst the living mass,
Hues, deeply red like lava's, which disclose
What countless shapes are worn by mortal woes!
Lips bloodless, quivering limbs, hands clasp'd in prayer,
Starts, tremblings, hurryings, tears; all outward shows
Betokening inward agonies, were there:
Greeks! Romans! all but such as image brave despair!

LXVIII.

But high above that scene, in bright repose,
And beauty borrowing from the torches' gleams
A mien of life, yet where no life-blood flows,
But all instinct with loftier being seems,
Pale, grand, colossal: lo! th' embodied dreams
Of yore!—Gods, heroes, bards, in marble wrought,
Look down, as powers, upon the wild extremes
Of mortal passion! Yet 'twas man that caught,
And in each glorious form enshrined immortal thought!

LXIX.

Stood ye not thus amidst the streets of Rome?
That Rome which witness'd, in her sceptred days,
So much of noble death? When shrine and dome,
Midst clouds of incense, rang with choral lays,
As the long triumph pass'd, with all its blaze
Of regal spoil, were ye not proudly borne,
O sovereign forms! concentring all the rays
Of the soul's lightnings?—did ye not adorn
The pomp which earth stood still to gaze on, and to mourn?

LXX.

Hath it been thus?—Or did ye grace the halls,
Once peopled by the mighty? Haply there,
In your still grandeur, from the pillar'd walls
Serene ye smiled on banquets of despair,[219]
Where hopeless courage wrought itself to dare
The stroke of its deliverance, midst the glow
Of living wreaths, the sighs of perfumed air,
The sound of lyres, the flower-crown'd goblet's flow.
—Behold again!—high hearts make nobler offerings now!

LXXI.

The stately fane is reach'd—and at its gate
The warriors pause. On life's tumultuous tide
A stillness falls, while he whom regal state

Hath mark’d from all, to be more sternly tried
By suffering, speaks: each ruder voice hath died,
While his implores forgiveness!—“If there be
One midst your throngs, my people! whom, in pride
Or passion, I have wrong’d; such pardon free
As mortals hope from heaven, accord that man to me!”

LXXII.

But all is silence; and a gush of tears
Alone replies! He hath not been of those
Who, fear’d by many, pine in secret fears
Of all; th’ environ’d but by slaves and foes,
To whom day brings not safety, night repose,
For they have heard the voice cry, “Sleep no more!”
Of them he hath not been, nor such as close
Their hearts to misery, till the time is o’er,
When it speaks low and kneels th’ oppressor’s throne before!

LXXIII.

He hath been loved. But who may trust the love
Of a degenerate race?—in other mould
Are cast the free and lofty hearts that prove
Their faith through fiery trials. Yet behold,
And call him not forsaken!—thoughts untold
Have lent his aspect calmness, and his tread
Moves firmly to the shrine. What pomps unfold

Within its precincts! Isles and seas have shed
Their gorgeous treasures there, around th' imperial dead.

LXXIV.

'Tis a proud vision—that most regal pile
Of ancient days! The lamps are streaming bright
From its rich altar, down each pillar'd aisle,
Whose vista fades in dimness; but the sight
Is lost in splendours, as the wavering light
Develops on those walls the thousand dyes
Of the vein'd marbles, which array their height,
And from yon dome, the lode-star of all eyes,[220]
Pour such an iris-glow as emulates the skies.

LXXV.

But gaze thou not on these; though heaven's own hues
In their soft clouds and radiant tracery vie—
Though tints, of sun-born glory, may suffuse
Arch, column, rich mosaic—pass thou by
The stately tombs, where Eastern Cæsars lie,
Beneath their trophies: pause not here; for know,
A deeper source of all sublimity
Lives in man's bosom, than the world can show
In nature or in art—above, around, below.

LXXVI.

Turn thou to mark (though tears may dim thy gaze)

The steel-clad group before yon altar-stone:
Heed not though gems and gold around it blaze;
Those heads unhelm’d, those kneeling forms alone,
Thus bow’d, look glorious here. The light is thrown
Full from the shrine on one, a nation’s lord,
A sufferer! but his task shall soon be done—
E’en now, as Faith’s mysterious cup is pour’d,
See to that noble brow, peace, not of earth, restored!

LXXVII.

The rite is o’er. The band of brethren part,
Once—and but once—to meet on earth again!
Each, in the strength of a collected heart,
To dare what man may dare—and know ’tis vain!
The rite is o’er: and thou, majestic fane!
The glory is departed from thy brow!—
Be clothed with dust!—the Christian’s farewell strain
Hath died within these walls; thy Cross must bow,
Thy kingly tombs be spoil’d, the golden shrines laid low!

LXXVIII.

The streets grow still and lonely—and the star,
The last bright lingerer in the path of morn,
Gleams faint; and in the very lap of war,
As if young Hope with twilight’s ray were born,
Awhile the city sleeps: her throngs, o’erworn

With fears and watchings, to their homes retire.
Nor is the balmy air of dayspring torn
With battle-sounds;[221] the winds in sighs expire,
And quiet broods in mists that veil the sunbeam's fire.

LXXIX.

The city sleeps! Ay! on the combat's eve,
And by the scaffold's brink, and midst the swell
Of angry seas, hath Nature won reprieve
Thus from her cares. The brave have slumber'd well,
And e'en the fearful, in their dungeon cell,
Chain'd between life and death. Such rest be thine,
For conflicts wait thee still!—yet who can tell,
In that brief hour, how much of heaven may shine
Full on thy spirit's dream!—Sleep, weary Constantine!

LXXX.

Doth the blast rise?—the clouded east is red,
As if a storm were gathering; and I hear
What seems like heavy rain-drops, or the tread,
The soft and smother'd step of those that fear
Surprise from ambush'd foes. Hark! yet more near
It comes, a many-toned and mingled sound;
A rustling, as of winds, where boughs are sere—
A rolling, as of wheels that shake the ground
From far; a heavy rush, like seas that burst their bound!

LXXXI.

Wake! wake! They come from sea and shore ascending
In hosts your ramparts! Arm ye for the day!
Who now may sleep amidst the thunders rending,
Through tower and wall, a path for their array?
Hark! how the trumpet cheers them to the prey,
With its wild voice, to which the seas reply;
And the earth rocks beneath their engines' sway,
And the far hills repeat their battle-cry,
Till that fierce tumult seems to shake the vaulted sky!

LXXXII.

They fail not now, the generous band, that long
Have ranged their swords around a falling throne;
Still in those fearless men the walls are strong,
Hearts, such as rescue empires, are their own!
—Shall those high energies be vainly shown?
No! from their towers th' invading tide is driven
Back, like the Red Sea waves, when God had blown
With his strong winds! The dark-brow'd ranks are riven:[222]
Shout, warriors of the Cross!—for victory is of Heaven!

LXXXIII.

Stand firm! Again the Crescent host is rushing,
And the waves foam, as on the galleys sweep,
With all their fires and darts, though blood is gushing

Fast o’er their sides, as rivers to the deep.
Stand firm!—there yet is hope; th’ ascent is steep,
And from on high no shaft descends in vain.
—But those that fall swell up the mangled heap,
In the red moat, the dying and the slain,
And o’er that fearful bridge the assailants mount again!

LXXXIV.

Oh! the dread mingling, in that awful hour,
Of all terrific sounds!—the savage tone
Of the wild horn, the cannon’s peal, the shower
Of hissing darts, the crash of walls o’erthrown,
The deep dull tambour’s beat—man’s voice alone
Is there unheard! Ye may not catch the cry
Of trampled thousands—prayer, and shriek, and moan,
All drown’d, as that fierce hurricane sweeps by,
But swell the unheeded sum earth pays for victory.

LXXXV.

War-clouds have wrapt the city!—through their dun
O’erloaded canopy, at times a blaze
As of an angry storm-presaging sun,
From the Greek fire shoots up![223] and lightning rays
Flash, from the shock of sabres, through the haze,
And glancing arrows cleave the dusky air!
—Ay! this is in the compass of our gaze,

But fearful things unknown, untold, are there—

Workings of wrath and death, and anguish, and despair!

LXXXVI.

Woe, shame and woe!—A chief, a warrior flies,

A red-cross champion, bleeding, wild, and pale!

—Oh God! that Nature's passing agonies

Thus, o'er the spark which dies not, should prevail!

Yes! rend the arrow from thy shatter'd mail,

And stanch the blood-drops, Genoa's fallen son![224]

Fly swifter yet! the javelins pour as hail!

—But there are tortures which thou canst not shun:

The spirit is their prey—thy pangs are but begun!

LXXXVII.

Oh, happy in their homes, the noble dead!

The seal is set on their majestic fame;

Earth has drunk deep the generous blood they shed,

Fate has no power to dim their stainless name!

They may not, in one bitter moment, shame

Long glorious years. From many a lofty stem

Fall graceful flowers, and eagle hearts grow tame,

And stars drop, fading from the diadem;

But the bright past is theirs—there is no change for them!

LXXXVIII.

Where art thou, Constantine?—where death is reaping

His sevenfold harvest!—where the stormy light,
Fast as th’ artillery’s thunderbolts are sweeping,
Throws meteor-bursts o’er battle’s noonday-night!
Where the towers rock and crumble from their height,
As to the earthquake, and the engines ply
Like red Vesuvio; and where human might
Confronts all this, and still brave hearts beat high,
While scimitars ring loud on shivering panoply.

LXXXIX.

Where art thou, Constantine?—where Christian blood
Hath bathed the walls in torrents, and in vain!
Where faith and valour perish in the flood,
Whose billows, rising o’er their bosoms, gain
Dark strength each moment; where the gallant slain
Around the banner of the Cross lie strew’d
Thick as the vine-leaves on th’ autumnal plain;
Where all, save one high spirit, is subdued,
And through the breach press on th’ o’erwhelming
multitude.

XC.

Now is he battling midst a host alone,
As the last cedar stems awhile the sway
Of mountain storms, whose fury hath o’erthrown
Its forest-brethren in their green array!

And he hath cast his purple robe away,
With its imperial bearings, that his sword
An iron ransom from the chain may pay,
And win, what haply fate may yet accord,
A soldier's death—the all now left an empire's lord!

XCI.

Search for him now where bloodiest lie the files
Which once were men, the faithful and the brave!
Search for him now where loftiest rise the piles
Of shatter'd helms and shields which could not save,
And crests and banners never more to wave
In the free winds of heaven! He is of those
O'er whom the host may rush, the tempest rave,
And the steeds trample, and the spearmen close,
Yet wake them not!—so deep their long and last repose!

XCII.

Woe to the vanquish'd!—thus it hath been still
Since Time's first march! Hark, hark, a people's cry!
Ay, now the conquerors in the streets fulfil
Their task of wrath! In vain the victims fly;
Hark! now each piercing tone of agony
Blends in the city's shriek! The lot is cast.
Slaves! 'twas your choice thus, rather thus, to die,
Than where the warrior's blood flows warm and fast,

And roused and mighty hearts beat proudly to the last!

XCIII.

Oh! well doth freedom battle! Men have made,
E’en midst their blazing roofs, a noble stand,
And on the floors, where once their children play’d,
And by the hearths, round which their household band
At evening met; ay, struggling hand to hand,
Within the very chambers of their sleep,
There have they taught the spoilers of the land
In chainless hearts what fiery strength lies deep,
To guard free homes! But ye!—kneel, tremblers! kneel, and weep!

XCIV.

’Tis eve—the storm hath died, the valiant rest
Low on their shields; the days fierce work is done,
And blood-stain’d seas and burning towers attest
Its fearful deeds. An empire’s race is run!
Sad, midst his glory, looks the parting sun
Upon the captive city. Hark! a swell
(Meet to proclaim barbaric war-fields won)
Of fierce triumphal sounds, that wildly tell
The Soldan comes within the Cæsars’ halls to dwell!

XCV.

Yes! with the peal of cymbal and of gong,
He comes: the Moslem treads those ancient halls!

But all is stillness there, as death had long
Been lord alone within those gorgeous walls.
And half that silence of the grave appals
The conqueror’s heart. Ay! thus, with triumph’s hour,
Still comes the boding whisper, which recalls
A thought of those impervious clouds that lower
O’er grandeur’s path, a sense of some far mightier Power!

XCVI.

“The owl upon Afrasiab’s towers hath sung
Her watch-song,[225] and around th’ imperial throne
The spider weaves his web!”—Still darkly hung
That verse of omen, as a prophet’s tone,
O’er his flush’d spirit. Years on years have flown
To prove its truth: kings pile their domes in air,
That the coil’d snake may bask on sculptured stone,
And nations clear the forest, to prepare
For the wild fox and wolf more stately dwellings there!

XCVII.

But thou! that on thy ramparts proudly dying,
As a crown’d leader in such hours should die,
Upon thy pyre of shiver’d spears art lying,
With the heavens o’er thee for a canopy,
And banners for thy shroud! No tear, no sigh,
Shall mingle with thy dirge; for thou art now

Beyond vicissitude! Lo! rear'd on high,
The Crescent blazes, while the Cross must bow—
But where no change can reach, there, Constantine, art thou!

XCVIII.

"After life's fitful fever thou sleep'st well!"
We may not mourn thee! Sceptred chiefs, from whom
The earth received her destiny, and fell
Before them trembling—to a sterner doom
Have oft been call'd. For them the dungeon's gloom,
With its cold starless midnight, hath been made
More fearful darkness, where, as in a tomb,
Without a tomb's repose, the chain hath weigh'd
Their very soul to dust, with each high power decay'd.

XCIX.

Or in the eye of thousands they have stood,
To meet the stroke of death; but not like thee!
From bonds and scaffolds hath appeal'd their blood,
But thou didst fall unfetter'd, arm'd, and free,
And kingly to the last! And if it be,
That from the viewless world, whose marvels none
Return to tell, a spirit's eye can see
The things of earth: still may'st thou hail the sun,
Which o'er thy land shall dawn, when freedom's fight is won!

C.

And the hour comes, in storm! A light is glancing
Far through the forest god’s Arcadian shades!
—’Tis not the moonbeam, tremulously dancing,
Where lone Alpheus bathes his haunted glades.
A murmur, gathering power, the air pervades,
Round dark Cithæron and by Delphi’s steep;
—’Tis not the song and lyre of Grecian maids,
Nor pastoral reed that lulls the vales to sleep,
Nor yet the rustling pines, nor yet the sounding deep!

CI.

Arms glitter on the mountains, which of old
Awoke to freedom’s first heroic strain,
And by the streams, once crimson, as they roll’d
The Persian helm and standard to the main;
And the blue waves of Salamis again
Thrill to the trumpet; and the tombs reply,
With their ten thousand echoes, from each plain,
Far as Platæa’s, where the mighty lie,
Who crown’d so proudly there the bowl of liberty![226]

CII.

Bright land, with glory mantled o’er by song!
Land of the vision-peopled hills, and streams,
And fountains, whose deserted banks along
Still the soft air with inspiration teems;

Land of the graves, whose dwellers shall be themes
To verse for ever; and of ruin'd shrines,
That scarce look desolate beneath such beams,
As bathe in gold thine ancient rocks and pines?
—When shall thy sons repose in peace beneath their vines?

CIII.

Thou wert not made for bonds, nor shame, nor fear!
—Do the hoar oaks and dark-green laurels wave
O'er Mantinea's earth?—doth Pindus rear
His snows, the sunbeam and the storm to brave?
And is there yet on Marathon a grave?
And doth Eurotas lead his silvery line
By Sparta's ruins? And shall man, a slave,
Bow'd to the dust, amid such scenes repine?
—If e'er a soil was mark'd for freedom's step, 'tis thine!

CIV.

Wash from that soil the stains with battle-showers.
—Beneath Sophia's dome the Moslem prays,
The Crescent gleams amidst the olive-bowers,
In the Comneni's halls the Tartar sways:[227]
But not for long!—the spirit of those days,
When the three hundred made their funeral pile
Of Asia's dead, is kindling, like the rays
Of thy rejoicing sun, when first his smile

Warms the Parnassian rock, and gilds the Delian isle.

CV.

If then ’tis given thee to arise in might,

Trampling the scourge, and dashing down the chain,

Pure be thy triumphs, as thy name is bright!

The cross of victory should not know a stain!

So may that faith once more supremely reign,

Through which we lift our spirits from the dust!

And deem not, e’en when virtue dies in vain,

She dies forsaken; but repose our trust

On Him whose ways are dark, unsearchable—but just.

[205] The army of Mohammed the Second, at the siege of Constantinople, was thronged with fanatics of all sects and nations, who were not enrolled amongst the regular troops.

The Sultan himself marched upon the city from Adrianople; but his army must have been principally collected in the Asiatic provinces, which he had previously visited.

[206]

“Huc vina, et unguenta, et nimium breves

Flores amœnæ ferre jube rosæ.”—Horace.

[207] The castle of the Seven Towers is mentioned in the Byzantine history, as early as the sixth century of the Christian era, as an edifice which contributed materially to the defence of Constantinople; and it was the principal bulwark of the town on the coast of the Propontis, in the later periods of the empire. For a description of this building, see Pouqueville’s Travels.

[208] An allusion to the Roman custom of carrying in procession, at the funerals of

their great men, the images of their ancestors.

[209] The following was the ceremony of consecration with which Decius devoted himself in battle:—He was ordered by Valerius, the Pontifex Maximus, to quit his military habit, and put on the robe he wore in the senate. Valerius then covered his head with a veil, commanded him to put forth his hand under his robe to his chin, and, standing with both feet upon a javelin, to repeat these words:—"O Janus, Jupiter, Mars, Romulus, Bellona! and ye, Lares and Novensiles! All you heroes who dwell in heaven! and all ye gods who rule over us and our enemies—especially ye gods of hell!—I honour you, invoke you, and humbly entreat you to prosper the arms of the Romans, and to transfer all fear and terror from them to their enemies; and I do, for the safety of the Roman people, and their legions, devote myself, and with myself the army and auxiliaries of the enemy, to the infernal gods, and the goddess of the earth." Decius then, girding his robe around them, mounted his horse, and rode full speed into the thickest of the enemy's battalions. The Latins were, for a while, thunderstruck at this spectacle; but at length recovering themselves, they discharged a shower of darts, under which the Consul fell.

[210] See Gibbon's animated description of the arrival of five Christian ships, with men and provisions, for the succour of the besieged, not many days before the fall of Constantinople.—Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. xii. p. 215.

[211] "The summits of the lofty rocks in the Carnatic, particularly about the Ghauts, are sometimes covered with the bamboo tree, which grows in thick clumps, and is of such uncommon aridity that, in the sultry season of the year, the friction occasioned by a strong dry wind will literally produce sparks of fire, which, frequently setting the woods in a blaze, exhibit to the spectator stationed in a valley surrounded by rocks, a magnificent though imperfect circle of fire."—Notes to Kindersley's Specimens of Hindoo Literature.

[212] Those who steer their westward course through the middle of the Propontis

may at once descry the high lands of Thrace and Bithynia, and never lose sight of the lofty summit of Mount Olympus, covered with eternal snows.—Decline and Fall, &c. vol. iii. p. 8.

[213] Mohammed II. was greatly addicted to the study of astrology. His calculations in this science led him to fix upon the morning of the 29th of May, as the fortunate hour for a general attack upon the city.

[214] Constantine Palæologus was betrothed to a Georgian princess, and the very spring which witnessed the fall of Constantinople had been fixed upon as the time for conveying the imperial bride to that city.

[215] Many of the adherents of Constantine, in his last noble stand for the liberties, or rather the honour, of a falling empire, were foreigners, and chiefly Italians.

[216] This and the next line are an almost literal translation from a beautiful song of Goethe's:—

"Kennst du das land, wo die zitronen bluhn

Mit dunkeln laub die gold orangen gluhn?" etc.

[217] The idea expressed in this stanza is beautifully amplified in Schiller's poem, "Das Lied der Glocke."

[218] It is said to be a Greek superstition that the plague is announced by the heavy rolling of an invisible chariot, heard in the streets at midnight; and also by the appearance of a gigantic spectre, who summons the devoted person by name.

[219] Many instances of such banquets, given and shared by persons resolved upon death, might be adduced from ancient history. That of Vibius Virius, at Capua, is amongst the most memorable.

[220] For a minute description of the marbles, jaspers, and porphyries, employed in the construction of St Sophia, see The Decline and Fall, &c., vol. vii. p. 120.

[221] The assault of the city took place at daybreak, and the Turks were strictly

enjoined to advance in silence, which had also been commanded, on pain of death, during the preceding night. This circumstance is finely alluded to by Miss Baillie, in her tragedy of Constantine Palæologus:—

“Silent shall be the march; nor drum, nor trump, Nor clash of arms, shall to the watchful foe Our near approach betray: silent and soft As the pard’s velvet foot on Libya’s sands, Slow stealing with crouch’d shoulders on her prey.” Constantine Palæologus, act iv.

“The march and labour of thousands” must, however, as Gibbon observes, “have inevitably produced a strange confusion of discordant clamours, which reached the ears of the watchmen on the towers.”

[222] “After a conflict of two hours, the Greeks still maintained and preserved their advantage,” says Gibbon. The strenuous exertions of the janizaries first turned the fortune of the day.

[223] “A circumstance that distinguishes the siege of Constantinople is the union of the ancient and modern artillery. The bullet and the battering-ram were directed against the same wall; nor had the discovery of gunpowder superseded the use of the liquid and inextinguishable fire.”—Decline and Fall, &c., vol. xii., p. 213.

[224] “The immediate loss of Constantinople may be ascribed to the bullet, or arrow, which pierced the gauntlet of John Justiniani, (a Genoese chief.) The sight of his blood and exquisite pain appalled the courage of the chief, whose arms and counsels were the firmest rampart of the city.”—Decline and Fall, &c., vol. xii. p. 229.

[225] Mohammed II., on entering, after his victory, the palace of the Byzantine emperors, was strongly impressed with the silence and desolation which reigned within its precincts. “A melancholy reflection on the vicissitudes of human greatness forced itself on his mind, and he repeated an elegant distich of Persian poetry: ‘The spider has wove his web in the imperial palace, and the owl hath sung her

watch-song on the towers of Afrasiab.’”—Decline and Fall, &c., vol. xii. p. 240.

[226] One of the ceremonies by which the battle of Platæa was annually commemorated was, to crown with wine a cup called the Bowl of Liberty, which was afterwards poured forth in libation.

[227] The Comneni were amongst the most distinguished of the families who filled the Byzantine throne in the declining years of the Eastern Empire.

ANNOTATION ON “THE LAST CONSTANTINE.”

[It may seem necessary to mention that “The Last Constantine” first appeared in a volume (Murray, 1823) along with “Belshazzar’s Feast,” the “Siege of Valencia,” and some lyrical miscellanies.

“The present publication appears to us, (Dr Morehead in Constable’s Magazine, Sept. 1823,) in every respect superior to any thing Mrs Hemans has yet written: more powerful in particular passages—more interesting in the narrative part—as pathetic and delicate in the reflective—as elaborately faultless in its versification—as copious in imagery. Of the longer poems, ‘The Last Constantine’ is our favourite.... The leading features of Constantine’s character seem to be taken from the unequal, but, on the whole, admirable play of Constantine Palæologus, by the gifted rival of our authoress, Joanna Baillie; and the picture of that enduring and Christian courage which, in the midst of a ruined city and a fallen state, sustained the last of the Cæsars, when all earthly hope and help had failed him, is eminently touching and poetical. The following stanzas appear to us particularly beautiful:—

‘Sounds from the waters, sounds upon the earth,

Sounds in the air, of battle,’ etc.

The following stanzas, too, in which the leading idea of Constantine’s character is still more fully brought out, are likewise excellent:—

‘It was a sad and solemn task to hold

Their midnight watch on that beleaguer'd wall,' etc.

These are splendid passages, justly conceived, admirably expressed, full of eloquence and melody; and the poem contains many others equally beautiful. As we have already hinted, the story might have been better told—or rather, there is scarcely any story at all; but the reader is borne down the stream of pensive reflection so gently, and so easily, that he scarcely perceives the want of it."]

THE LEAGUE OF THE ALPS;

OR, THE MEETING ON THE FIELD OF GRUTLI.

[It was in the year 1308 that the Swiss rose against the tyranny of the bailiffs appointed over them by Albert of Austria. The field called the Grutli, at the foot of the Seelisberg, and near the boundaries of Uri and Unterwalden, was fixed upon by three spirited yeomen, Walter Furst, (the father-in-law of William Tell,) Werner Stauffacher, and Erni (or Arnold) Melchthal, as their place of meeting to deliberate on the accomplishment of their projects.

"Hither came Furst and Melchthal, along secret paths over the heights, and Stauffacher in his boat across the Lake of the Four Cantons. On the night preceding the 11th of November 1307, they met here, each with ten associates, men of approved worth; and while at this solemn hour they were wrapt in the contemplation that on their success depended the fate of their whole posterity, Werner, Walter, and Arnold held up their hands to heaven, and in the name of the Almighty, who has created man to an inalienable degree of freedom, swore jointly and strenuously to defend that freedom. The thirty associates heard the oath with awe; and with uplifted hands attested the same God, and all his saints, that they were firmly bent on offering up their lives for the defence of their injured liberty. They then calmly agreed on their future proceedings, and for the present each returned to his hamlet."—Planta's History of the Helvetic Confederacy.

On the first day of the year 1308, they succeeded in throwing off the Austrian yoke, and “it is well attested,” says the same author, “that not one drop of blood was shed on this memorable occasion, nor had one proprietor to lament the loss of a claim, a privilege, or an inch of land. The Swiss met on the succeeding Sabbath, and once more confirmed by oath their ancient, and (as they fondly named it) their perpetual league.”]

I.

’Twas night upon the Alps. The Senn’s wild horn,[228]
Like a wind’s voice, had pour’d its last long tone,
Whose pealing echoes, through the larch-woods borne,
To the low cabins of the glens made known
That welcome steps were nigh. The flocks had gone
By cliff and pine bridge to their place of rest;
The chamois slumber’d, for the chase was done;
His cavern-bed of moss the hunter press’d,
And the rock-eagle couch’d high on his cloudy nest.

II.

Did the land sleep? The woodman’s axe had ceased
Its ringing notes upon the beech and plane;
The grapes were gather’d in; the vintage feast
Was closed upon the hills, the reaper’s strain
Hush’d by the streams; the year was in its wane,
The night in its mid watch—it was a time
E’en mark’d and hallow’d unto slumber’s reign;
But thoughts were stirring, restless and sublime,

And o’er his white Alps moved the spirit of the clime.

III.

For there, where snows, in crowning glory spread,
High and unmark’d by mortal footstep lay;
And there, where torrents, mid the ice-caves fed,
Burst in their joy of light and sound away;
And there, where freedom, as in scornful play,
Had hung man’s dwellings midst the realms of air,
O’er cliffs the very birthplace of the day—
Oh! who would dream that tyranny could dare
To lay her withering hand on God’s bright works e’en there?

IV.

Yet thus it was. Amidst the fleet streams gushing
To bring down rainbows o’er their sparry cell,
And the glad heights, through mist and tempest rushing
Up where the sun’s red fire-glance earliest fell,
And the fresh pastures where the herd’s sweet bell
Recall’d such life as Eastern patriarchs led;
There peasant men their free thoughts might not tell
Save in the hour of shadows and of dread,
And hollow sounds that wake to Guilt’s dull stealthy tread.

V.

But in a land of happy shepherd homes,
On its green hills in quiet joy reclining,

With their bright hearth-fires, midst the twilight glooms,
From bowery lattice through the fir-woods shining—
A land of legends and wild songs, entwining
Their memory with all memories loved and blest—
In such a land there dwells a power, combining
The strength of many a calm but fearless breast;
And woe to him who breaks the Sabbath of its rest!

VI.

A sound went up—the wave's dark sleep was broken—
On Uri's lake was heard a midnight oar—
Of man's brief course a troubled moment's token
Th' eternal waters to their barriers bore;
And then their gloom a flashing image wore
Of torch-fires streaming out o'er crag and wood,
And the wild falcon's wing was heard to soar
In startled haste—and by that moonlight flood,
A band of patriot men on Grutli's verdure stood.

VII.

They stood in arms: the wolf-spear and the bow
Had waged their war on things of mountain race;
Might not their swift stroke reach a mail-clad foe?
—Strong hands in harvest, daring feet in chase,
True hearts in fight, were gather'd on that place
Of secret council. Not for fame or spoil

So met those men in Heaven’s majestic face:

To guard free hearths they rose, the sons of toil,

The hunter of the rocks, the tiller of the soil.

VIII.

O’er their low pastoral valleys might the tide

Of years have flow’d, and still, from sire to son,

Their names and records on the green earth died,

As cottage lamps, expiring one by one

In the dim glades, when midnight hath begun

To hush all sound. But silent on its height,

The snow mass, full of death, while ages run

Their course, may slumber, bathed in rosy light,

Till some rash voice or step disturb its brooding might.

IX.

So were they roused. Th’ invading step had pass’d

Their cabin thresholds, and the lowly door,

Which well had stood against the Fohnwind’s blast,[229]

Could bar Oppression from their home no more.

Why, what had she to do where all things wore

Wild grandeur’s impress? In the storm’s free way,

How dared she lift her pageant crest before

Th’ enduring and magnificent array

Of sovereign Alps, that wing’d their eagles with the day?

X.

This might not long be borne: the tameless hills
Have voices from the cave and cataract swelling,
Fraught with His name whose awful presence fills
Their deep lone places, and for ever telling
That He hath made man free! and they, whose dwelling
Was in those ancient fastnesses, gave ear;
The weight of sufferance from their hearts repelling,
They rose—the forester—the mountaineer—
Oh! what hath earth more strong than the good peasant spear?

XI.

Sacred be Grutli's field! Their vigil keeping
Through many a blue and starry summer night—
There, while the sons of happier lands were sleeping,
Had those brave Switzers met; and in the sight
Of the just God, who pours forth burning might
To gird the oppress'd, had given their deep thoughts way,
And braced their spirits for the patriot fight,
With lovely images of homes that lay
Bower'd midst the rustling pines, or by the torrent spray.

XII.

Now had endurance reach'd its bounds! They came
With courage set in each bright earnest eye,
The day, the signal, and the hour to name,
When they should gather on their hills to die,

Or shake the glaciers with their joyous cry
For the land’s freedom. ’Twas a scene combining
All glory in itself—the solemn sky,
The stars, the waves their soften’d light enshrining,
And man’s high soul supreme o’er mighty Nature shining.

XIII.

Calmly they stood, and with collected mien,
Breathing their souls in voices firm but low—
As if the spirit of the hour and scene,
With the woods’ whisper and the waves’ sweet flow,
Had temper’d in their thoughtful hearts the glow
Of all indignant feeling. To the breath
Of Dorian flute, and lyre-note soft and slow,
E’en thus of old, the Spartan from its sheath
Drew his devoted sword, and girt himself for death.

XIV.

And three, that seem’d as chieftains of the band,
Were gather’d in the midst on that lone shore
By Uri’s lake. A father of the land,[230]
One on his brow the silent record wore
Of many days, whose shadows had pass’d o’er
His path among the hills, and quench’d the dreams
Of youth with sorrow. Yet from memory’s lore
Still his life’s evening drew its loveliest gleams,

For he had walk’d with God, beside the mountain streams.

XV.

And his gray hairs, in happier times, might well
To their last pillow silently have gone,
As melts a wreath of snow. But who shall tell
How life may task the spirit? He was one
Who from its morn a freeman’s work had done,
And reap’d his harvest, and his vintage press’d,
Fearless of wrong; and now, at set of sun,
He bow’d not to his years, for on the breast
Of a still chainless land he deem’d it much to rest.

XVI.

But for such holy rest strong hands must toil,
Strong hearts endure! By that pale elder’s side,
Stood one that seem’d a monarch of the soil,
Serene and stately in his manhood’s pride—
Werner,[231] the brave and true! If men have died
Their hearths and shrines inviolate to keep,
He was a mate for such. The voice that cried
Within his breast, “Arise!” came still and deep
From his far home, that smiled e’en then in moonlight sleep.

XVII.

It was a home to die for! As it rose
Through its vine foliage, sending forth a sound

Of mirthful childhood, o’er the green repose
And laughing sunshine of the pastures round;
And he, whose life to that sweet spot was bound,
Raised unto Heaven a glad yet thoughtful eye,
And set his free step firmer on the ground,
When o’er his soul its melodies went by,
As, through some Alpine pass, a breeze of Italy.

XVIII.

But who was he that on his hunting-spear
Lean’d, with a prouder and more fiery bearing?
His was a brow for tyrant hearts to fear,
Within the shadow of its dark locks wearing
That which they may not tame—a soul declaring
War against earth’s oppressors. Midst that throng
Of other mould he seem’d, and loftier daring,
One whose blood swept high impulses along,
One that should pass, and leave a name for warlike song—

XIX.

A memory on the mountains!—one to stand,
When the hills echo’d with the deepening swell
Of hostile trumpets, foremost for the land,
And in some rock defile, or savage dell,
Array her peasant children to repel
Th’ invader, sending arrows for his chains!

Ay, one to fold around him, as he fell,
Her banner with a smile—for through his veins
The joy of danger flow'd, as torrents to the plains.

XX.

There was at times a wildness in the light
Of his quick-flashing eye; a something born
Of the free Alps, and beautifully bright,
And proud, and tameless, laughing fear to scorn!
It well might be!—Young Erni's step had worn[232]
The mantling snows on their most regal steeps,
And track'd the lynx above the clouds of morn,
And follow'd where the flying chamois leaps
Across the dark blue rifts, th' unfathom'd glacier deeps.

XXI.

He was a creature of the Alpine sky,
A being whose bright spirit had been fed
Midst the crown'd heights of joy and liberty,
And thoughts of power. He knew each path which led
To the rock's treasure caves, whose crystal shed
Soft light o'er secret fountains. At the tone
Of his loud horn the Lammer-Geyer[233] had spread
A startled wing—for oft that peal had blown
Where the free cataract's voice was wont to sound alone.

XXII.

His step had track’d the waste, his soul had stirr’d
The ancient solitudes—his voice had told
Of wrongs to call down heaven.[234] That tale was heard
In Hasli’s dales, and where the shepherds’ fold
Their flocks in dark ravine and craggy hold
On the bleak Oberland; and where the light
Of day’s last footsteps bathes in burning gold
Great Righi’s cliffs; and where Mount Pilate’s height
Casts o’er his glassy lake the darkness of his might.

XXIII.

Nor was it heard in vain. There all things press
High thoughts on man. The fearless hunter pass’d,
And, from the bosom of the wilderness,
There leapt a spirit and a power to cast
The weight of bondage down—and bright and fast,
As the clear waters, joyously and free,
Burst from the desert rock, it rush’d at last,
Through the far valleys; till the patriot three
Thus with their brethren stood, beside the Forest-Sea.[235]

XXIV.

They link’d their hands, they pledged their stainless faith
In the dread presence of attesting Heaven,
They bound their hearts to suffering and to death,
With the severe and solemn transport given

To bless such vows. How nobly man had striven,
How man might strive, and vainly strive, they knew,
And call’d upon their God, whose arm had riven
The crest of many a tyrant, since He blew
The foaming sea-wave on, and Egypt’s might o’erthrew.

XXV.

They knelt, and rose in strength. The valleys lay
Still in their dimness, but the peaks which darted
Into the bright mid air, had caught from day
A flush of fire, when those true Switzers parted,
Each to his glen or forest, steadfast-hearted,
And full of hope. Not many suns had worn
Their setting glory, ere from slumber started
Ten thousand voices, of the mountains born—
So far was heard the blast of freedom’s echoing horn!

XXVI.

The ice-vaults trembled, when that peal came rending
The frozen stillness which around them hung;
From cliff to cliff the avalanche descending
Gave answer, till the sky’s blue hollow rung;
And the flame-signals through the midnight sprung
From the Surennen rocks, like banners streaming
To the far Seelisberg; whence light was flung
On Grutli’s field, till all the red lake gleaming

Shone out, a meteor-heaven in its wild splendour seeming.

XXVII.

And the winds toss’d each summit’s blazing crest,

As a host’s plumage; and the giant pines,

Fell’d where they waved o’er crag and eagle’s nest,

Heap’d up the flames. The clouds grew fiery signs,

As o’er a city’s burning towers and shrines,

Reddening the distance. Wine-cups, crown’d and bright,

In Werner’s dwelling flow’d; through leafless vines

From Walter’s hearth stream’d forth the festive light,

And Erni’s blind old sire gave thanks to heaven that night.

XXVIII.

Then on the silence of the snows there lay

A Sabbath’s quiet sunshine—and its bell

Fill’d the hush’d air awhile, with lonely sway;

For the stream’s voice was chain’d by winter’s spell,

The deep wood-sounds had ceased. But rock and dell

Rang forth, ere long, when strains of jubilee

Peal’d from the mountain churches, with a swell

Of praise to Him who stills the raging sea—

For now the strife was closed, the glorious Alps were free!

[228] Senn, the name given to a herdsman among the Swiss Alps.

[229] Fohnwind, the south-east wind, which frequently lays waste the country before it.

[230] Walter Furst, the father-in-law of Tell.

[231] Werner Stauffacher, who had been urged by his wife to rouse and unite his countrymen for the deliverance of Switzerland.

[232] Erni, Arnold Melchthal.

[233] The Lammer-Geyer, the largest kind of Alpine eagle.

[234] The eyes of his aged father had been put out by the orders of the Austrian governor.

[235] Forest-Sea—the lake of the Four Cantons is frequently so called.

SONGS OF THE CID.[236]

THE CID'S DEPARTURE INTO EXILE.

With sixty knights in his gallant train,
Went forth the Campeador of Spain;
For wild sierras and plains afar,
He left the lands of his own Bivar.[237]
To march o'er field, and to watch in tent,
From his home in good Castile he went;
To the wasting siege and the battle's van,
—For the noble Cid was a banish'd man!
Through his olive-woods the morn-breeze play'd,
And his native streams wild music made,
And clear in the sunshine his vineyards lay,
When for march and combat he took his way.
With a thoughtful spirit his way he took,

And he turn’d his steed for a parting look,

For a parting look at his own fair towers,

—Oh! the exile’s heart hath weary hours!

The pennons were spread, and the band array’d,

But the Cid at the threshold a moment stay’d—

It was but a moment; the halls were lone,

And the gates of his dwelling all open thrown.

There was not a steed in the empty stall,

Nor a spear nor a cloak on the naked wall,

Nor a hawk on the perch, nor a seat at the door,

Nor the sound of a step on the hollow floor.[238]

Then a dim tear swell’d to the warrior’s eye,

As the voice of his native groves went by;

And he said—“My foemen their wish have won:

Now the will of God be in all things done!”

But the trumpet blew, with its note of cheer,

And the winds of the morning swept off the tear,

And the fields of his glory lay distant far,

—He is gone from the towers of his own Bivar!

[236] These ballads are not translations from the Spanish, but are founded upon some of the “wild and wonderful” traditions preserved in the romances of that language, and the ancient poem of the Cid.

[237] Bivar, the supposed birthplace of the Cid, was a castle, about two leagues from Burgos.

[238]

“Tornaba la cabeza, e estabalos catando:

Vio puertas abiertas, e uzos sin cañados,

Alcandaras vacias, sin pielles e sin mantos:

E sin falcones, e sin adtores mudados.

Sospirò mio Cid.” Poem of the Cid.

THE CID’S DEATHBED.

It was an hour of grief and fear

Within Valencia’s walls,

When the blue spring-heaven lay still and clear

Above her marble halls.

There were pale cheeks and troubled eyes,

And steps of hurrying feet,

Where the Zambra’s[239] notes were wont to rise,

Along the sunny street.

It was an hour of fear and grief

On bright Valencia’s shore,

For Death was busy with her chief,

The noble Campeador.

The Moor-king’s barks were on the deep,

With sounds and signs of war;

But the Cid was passing to his sleep,

In the silent Alcazar.

No moan was heard through the towers of state,

No weeper’s aspect seen,

But by the couch Ximena sate,

With pale yet steadfast mien.[240]

Stillness was round the leader’s bed,

Warriors stood mournful nigh,

And banners, o’er his glorious head,

Were drooping heavily.

And feeble grew the conquering hand,

And cold the valiant breast;

He had fought the battles of the land,

And his hour was come to rest.

What said the Ruler of the field?

—His voice is faint and low;

The breeze that creeps o’er his lance and shield

Hath louder accents now.

“Raise ye no cry, and let no moan

Be made when I depart;

The Moor must hear no dirge’s tone;

Be ye of mighty heart!

“Let the cymbal-clash and the trumpet-strain

From your walls ring far and shrill;

And fear ye not, for the saints of Spain

Shall grant you victory still.

“And gird my form with mail-array,

And set me on my steed;
So go ye forth on your funeral-way,
And God shall give you speed.
“Go with the dead in the front of war,
All arm’d with sword and helm,[241]
And march by the camp of King Bucar,
For the good Castilian realm.
“And let me slumber in the soil
Which gave my fathers birth;
I have closed my day of battle-toil,
And my course is done on earth.”
—Now wave, ye glorious banners! wave!
Through the lattice a wind sweeps by,
And the arms, o’er the deathbed of the brave,
Send forth a hollow sigh.
Now wave, ye banners of many a fight!
As the fresh wind o’er you sweeps;
The wind and the banners fall hush’d as night;
The Campeador—he sleeps!
Sound the battle-horn on the breeze of morn,
And swell out the trumpet’s blast,
Till the notes prevail o’er the voice of wail,
For the noble Cid hath pass’d!

[239] The Zambra, a Moorish dance. When Valencia was taken by the Cid, many of

the Moorish families chose to remain there, and reside under his government.

[240] The calm fortitude of Ximena is frequently alluded to in the romances.

[241]

“Banderas antiguas, tristes

Be victorias un tiempo amadas,

Tremolando estan al viento

Y lloran aunque no hablan,” &c.

Herder’s translation of these romances (Der Cid, nach Spanischen Romanzen besungen) are remarkable for their spirit and scrupulous fidelity.

THE CID’S FUNERAL PROCESSION.

The Moor had beleaguer’d Valencia’s towers,

And lances gleam’d up through her citron bowers,

And the tents of the desert had girt her plain,

And camels were trampling the vines of Spain;

For the Cid was gone to rest.

There were men from wilds where the death-wind sweeps,

There were spears from hills where the lion sleeps,

There were bows from sands where the ostrich runs,

For the shrill horn of Afric had call’d her sons

To the battles of the West.

The midnight bell, o’er the dim seas heard,

Like the roar of waters, the air had stirr’d;

The stars were shining o’er tower and wave,

And the camp lay hush’d as a wizard’s cave;

But the Christians woke that night.
They rear'd the Cid on his barded steed,
Like a warrior mail'd for the hour of need,
And they fix'd the sword in the cold right hand
Which had fought so well for his father's land,
And the shield from his neck hung bright.
There was arming heard in Valencia's halls,
There was vigil kept on the rampart walls;
Stars had not faded nor clouds turn'd red,
When the knights had girded the noble dead,
And the burial train moved out.
With a measured pace, as the pace of one,
Was the still death-march of the host begun;
With a silent step went the cuirass'd bands,
Like a lion's tread on the burning sands;
And they gave no battle-shout.
When the first went forth, it was midnight deep,
In heaven was the moon, in the camp was sleep;
When the last through the city's gates had gone,
O'er tent and rampart the bright day shone,
With a sun-burst from the sea.
There were knights five hundred went arm'd before,
And Bermudez the Cid's green standard bore;[242]
To its last fair field, with the break of morn,

Was the glorious banner in silence borne,
On the glad wind streaming free.
And the Campeador came stately then,
Like a leader circled with steel-clad men!
The helmet was down o’er the face of the dead,
But his steed went proud, by a warrior led,
For he knew that the Cid was there.
He was there, the Cid, with his own good sword,
And Ximena following her noble lord;
Her eye was solemn, her step was slow,
But there rose not a sound of war or woe,
Not a whisper on the air.
The halls in Valencia were still and lone,
The churches were empty, the masses done;
There was not a voice through the wide streets far,
Nor a footfall heard in the Alcazar,
—So the burial-train moved out.
With a measured pace, as the pace of one,
Was the still death-march of the host begun;
With a silent step went the cuirass’d bands,
Like a lion’s tread on the burning sands;
And they gave no battle-shout.
But the deep hills peal’d with a cry ere long,
When the Christians burst on the Paynim throng!

—With a sudden flash of the lance and spear,
And a charge of the war-steed in full career,
It was Alvar Fañez came![243]
He that was wrapt with no funeral shroud,
Had pass'd before like a threatening cloud!
And the storm rush'd down on the tented plain,
And the Archer-Queen,[244] with her bands, lay slain;
For the Cid upheld his fame.
Then a terror fell on the King Bucar,
And the Libyan kings who had join'd his war;
And their hearts grew heavy, and died away,
And their hands could not wield an assagay,
For the dreadful things they saw!
For it seem'd where Minaya his onset made,
There were seventy thousand knights array'd,
All white as the snow on Nevada's steep,
And they came like the foam of a roaring deep
—'Twas a sight of fear and awe!
And the crested form of a warrior tall,
With a sword of fire, went before them all;
With a sword of fire and a banner pale,
And a blood-red cross on his shadowy mail;
He rode in the battle's van!
There was fear in the path of his dim white horse,

There was death in the giant-warrior’s course!

Where his banner stream’d with its ghostly light,

Where his sword blazed out, there was hurrying flight—

For it seem’d not the sword of man!

The field and the river grew darkly red,

As the kings and leaders of Afric fled;

There was work for the men of the Cid that day!

—They were weary at eve, when they ceased to slay,

As reapers whose task is done!

The kings and the leaders of Afric fled!

The sails of their galleys in haste were spread;

But the sea had its share of the Paynim slain,

And the bow of the desert was broke in Spain.

—So the Cid to his grave pass’d on!

[242] “And while they stood there, they saw the Cid Ruy Diez coming up with three hundred knights; for he had not been in the battle, and they knew his green pennon.”—Southey’s Chronicle of the Cid.

[243] Alvar Fañez Minaya, one of the Cid’s most distinguished warriors.

[244] A Moorish Amazon, who, with a band of female warriors, accompanied King Bucar from Africa. Her arrows were so unerring, that she obtained the name of the Star of Archers.

“Una Mora muy gallarda,

Gran maestra en el tirar,

Con Saetas del Aljava,

De los arcos de Turquia

Estrella era nombrada,

Por la destreza que avia

En el herir de la Xara.”

THE CID’S RISING.

’Twas the deep mid-watch of the silent night,

And Leon in slumber lay,

When a sound went forth in rushing might,

Like an army on its way![245]

In the stillness of the hour

When the dreams of sleep have power,

And men forget the day.

Through the dark and lonely streets it went,

Till the slumberers woke in dread;—

The sound of a passing armament,

With the charger’s stony tread.

There was heard no trumpet’s peal,

But the heavy tramp of steel,

As a host’s to combat led.

Through the dark and lonely streets it pass’d,

And the hollow pavement rang,

And the towers, as with a sweeping blast,

Rock’d to the stormy clang!

But the march of the viewless train

Went on to a royal fane,

Where a priest his night-hymn sang.
There was knocking that shook the marble floor,
And a voice at the gate, which said—
“That the Cid Ruy Diez, the Campeador,
Was there in his arms array’d;
And that with him, from the tomb,
Had the Count Gonzalez come
With a host, uprisen to aid!
“And they came for the buried king that lay
At rest in that ancient fane;
For he must be arm’d on the battle-day,
With them to deliver Spain!”
—Then the march went sounding on,
And the Moors by noontide sun
Were dust on Tolosa’s plain.

[245] See Southey’s Chronicle of the Cid, p. 352.

GREEK SONGS

THE STORM OF DELPHI.[246]

Far through the Delphian shades
An Eastern trumpet rung!
And the startled eagle rush’d on high,
With a sounding flight through the fiery sky;
And banners, o’er the shadowy glades,

To the sweeping winds were flung.

Banners, with deep-red gold

All waving as a flame,

And a fitful glance from the bright spear-head

On the dim wood-paths of the mountain shed,

And a peal of Asia’s war-notes told

That in arms the Persian came.

He came with starry gems

On his quiver and his crest;

With starry gems, at whose heart the day

Of the cloudless Orient burning lay,

And they cast a gleam on the laurel-stems,

As onward his thousands press’d.

But a gloom fell o’er their way,

And a heavy moan went by!

A moan, yet not like the wind’s low swell,

When its voice grows wild amidst cave and dell,

But a mortal murmur of dismay,

Or a warrior’s dying sigh!

A gloom fell o’er their way!

’Twas not the shadow cast

By the dark pine-boughs, as they cross’d the blue

Of the Grecian heavens with their solemn hue;

The air was fill’d with a mightier sway—

But on the spearmen pass’d!
And hollow to their tread
Came the echoes of the ground;
And banners droop’d, as with dews o’erborne,
And the wailing blast of the battle-horn
Had an alter’d cadence, dull and dead,
Of strange foreboding sound.
But they blew a louder strain,
When the steep defiles were pass’d!
And afar the crown’d Parnassus rose,
To shine through heaven with his radiant snows,
And in golden light the Delphian fane
Before them stood at last!
In golden light it stood,
Midst the laurels gleaming lone;
For the Sun-god yet, with a lovely smile,
O’er its graceful pillars look’d awhile,
Though the stormy shade on cliff and wood
Grew deep round its mountain-throne.
And the Persians gave a shout!
But the marble walls replied
With a clash of steel and a sullen roar
Like heavy wheels on the ocean-shore,
And a savage trumpet’s note peal’d out,

Till their hearts for terror died!
On the armour of the god
Then a viewless hand was laid;
There were helm and spear, with a clanging din,
And corslet brought from the shrine within,
From the inmost shrine of the dread abode,
And before its front array’d.
And a sudden silence fell
Through the dim and loaded air!
On the wild-bird’s wing and the myrtle spray,
And the very founts in their silvery way:
With a weight of sleep came down the spell,
Till man grew breathless there.
But the pause was broken soon!
’Twas not by song or lyre;
For the Delphian maids had left their bowers,
And the hearths were lone in the city’s towers,
But there burst a sound through the misty noon—
That battle-noon of fire!
It burst from earth and heaven!
It roll’d from crag and cloud!
For a moment on the mountain-blast
With a thousand stormy voices pass’d;
And the purple gloom of the sky was riven,

When the thunder peal’d aloud.
And the lightnings in their play
Flash’d forth, like javelins thrown:
Like sun-darts wing’d from the silver bow,
They smote the spear and the turban’d brow;
And the bright gems flew from the crests like spray,
And the banners were struck down!
And the massy oak-boughs crash’d
To the fire-bolts from on high,
And the forest lent its billowy roar,
While the glorious tempest onward bore,
And lit the streams, as they foam’d and dash’d,
With the fierce rain sweeping by.
Then rush’d the Delphian men
On the pale and scatter’d host.
Like the joyous burst of a flashing wave,
They rush’d from the dim Corycian cave;
And the singing blast o’er wood and glen
Roll’d on, with the spears they toss’d.
There were cries of wild dismay,
There were shouts of warrior-glee,
There were savage sounds of the tempest’s mirth,
That shook the realm of their eagle-birth;
But the mount of song, when they died away,

Still rose, with its temple, free!

And the Pæan swell’d ere long,

Io Pæan! from the fane;

Io Pæan! for the war-array

On the crown’d Parnassus riven that day!

—Thou shalt rise as free, thou mount of song!

With thy bounding streams again.

[246] See the account cited from Herodotus, in Mitford’s Greece.

THE BOWL OF LIBERTY.[247]

Before the fiery sun—

The sun that looks on Greece with cloudless eye,

In the free air, and on the war-field won—

Our fathers crown’d the Bowl of Liberty.

Amidst the tombs they stood,

The tombs of heroes! with the solemn skies,

And the wide plain around, where patriot-blood

Had steep’d the soil in hues of sacrifice.

They call’d the glorious dead,

In the strong faith which brings the viewless nigh,

And pour’d rich odours o’er their battle-bed,

And bade them to their rite of Liberty.

They call’d them from the shades—

The golden-fruited shades, where minstrels tell

How softer light th’ immortal clime pervades,

And music floats o’er meads of asphodel.

Then fast the bright-red wine

Flow’d to their names who taught the world to die,

And made the land’s green turf a living shrine,

Meet for the wreath and Bowl of Liberty.[248]

So the rejoicing earth

Took from her vines again the blood she gave,

And richer flowers to deck the tomb drew birth

From the free soil, thus hallow’d to the brave.

We have the battle-fields,

The tombs, the names, the blue majestic sky,

We have the founts the purple vintage yields;

—When shall we crown the Bowl of Liberty?

[247] This and the following piece appeared originally in the New Monthly Magazine.

[248] For an account of this ceremony, anciently performed in commemoration of the battle of Platæa, see Potter’s Antiquities of Greece, vol. i. p. 389.

THE VOICE OF SCIO.

A voice from Scio’s isle—

A voice of song, a voice of old

Swept far as cloud or billow roll’d,

And earth was hush’d the while—

The souls of nations woke!

Where lies the land whose hills among

That voice of victory hath not rung,
As if a trumpet spoke?
To sky, and sea, and shore,
Of those whose blood on Ilion's plain
Swept from the rivers to the main,
A glorious tale it bore.
Still by our sun-bright deep,
With all the fame that fiery lay
Threw round them, in its rushing way,
The sons of battle sleep.
And kings their turf have crown'd!
And pilgrims o'er the foaming wave
Brought garlands there: so rest the brave,
Who thus their bard have found!
A voice from Scio's isle,
A voice as deep hath risen again;
As far shall peal its thrilling strain,
Where'er our sun may smile!
Let not its tones expire!
Such power to waken earth and heaven,
And might and vengeance, ne'er was given
To mortal song or lyre!
Know ye not whence it comes?
—From ruin'd hearths, from burning fanes,

From kindred blood on yon red plains,

From desolated homes!

’Tis with us through the night!

’Tis on our hills, ’tis in our sky—

Hear it, ye heavens! when swords flash high

O’er the mid-waves of fight!

THE SPARTANS’ MARCH.[249]

[“The Spartans used not the trumpet in their march into battle, says Thucydides, because they wished not to excite the rage of their warriors. Their charging-step was made to the ‘Dorian mood of flutes and soft recorders.’ The valour of a Spartan was too highly tempered to require a stunning or a rousing impulse. His spirit was like a steed too proud for the spur.”—Campbell, On the Elegiac Poetry of the Greeks.]

’Twas morn upon the Grecian hills,

Where peasants dress’d the vines;

Sunlight was on Cithæron’s rills,

Arcadia’s rocks and pines.

And brightly, through his reeds and flowers,

Eurotas wander’d by,

When a sound arose from Sparta’s towers

Of solemn harmony.

Was it the hunters’ choral strain

To the woodland-goddess pour’d?

Did virgin hands in Pallas’ fane

Strike the full-sounding chord?

But helms were glancing on the stream,
Spears ranged in close array,
And shields flung back a glorious beam
To the morn of a fearful day!
And the mountain-echoes of the land
Swell’d through the deep blue sky;
While to soft strains moved forth a band
Of men that moved to die.
They march’d not with the trumpet’s blast,
Nor bade the horn peal out;
And the laurel groves, as on they pass’d,
Rang with no battle-shout!
They ask’d no clarion’s voice to fire
Their souls with an impulse high;
But the Dorian reed and the Spartan lyre
For the sons of liberty!
And still sweet flutes their path around
Sent forth Æolian breath;
They needed not a sterner sound
To marshal them for death!
So moved they calmly to their field,
Thence never to return,
Save bearing back the Spartan shield,
Or on it proudly borne!

[249] Originally published in the Edinburgh Magazine.

THE URN AND SWORD.

They sought for treasures in the tomb,
Where gentler hands were wont to spread
Fresh boughs and flowers of purple bloom,
And sunny ringlets, for the dead.[250]
They scatter'd far the greensward heap,
Where once those hands the bright wine pour'd;
—What found they in the home of sleep?—
A mouldering urn, a shiver'd sword!
An urn, which held the dust of one
Who died when hearths and shrines were free;
A sword, whose work was proudly done
Between our mountains and the sea.
And these are treasures!—undismay'd,
Still for their suffering land we trust,
Wherein the past its fame hath laid
With freedom's sword and valour's dust.

[250] See Potter's Grecian Antiquities, vol. ii. p. 234.

THE MYRTLE BOUGH.

Still green, along our sunny shore,
The flowering myrtle waves,
As when its fragrant boughs of yore

Were offer’d on the graves—
The graves wherein our mighty men
Had rest, unviolated then.
Still green it waves! as when the hearth
Was sacred through the land;
And fearless was the banquet’s mirth,
And free the minstrel’s hand;
And guests, with shining myrtle crown’d,
Sent the wreath’d lyre and wine-cup round.
Still green! as when on holy ground
The tyrant’s blood was pour’d:
Forget ye not what garlands bound
The young deliverer’s sword!
Though earth may shroud Harmodius now,
We still have sword and myrtle bough!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

ON A FLOWER FROM THE FIELD OF GRÜTLI.

Whence art thou, flower? From holy ground,
Where freedom’s foot hath been!
Yet bugle-blast or trumpet-sound
Ne’er shook that solemn scene.
Flower of a noble field! thy birth
Was not where spears have cross’d,

And shiver’d helms have strewn the earth,
Midst banners won and lost.
But where the sunny hues and showers
Unto thy cup were given,
There met high hearts at midnight hours,
Pure hands were raised to heaven;
And vows were pledged that man should roam
Through every Alpine dell
Free as the wind, the torrent’s foam,
The shaft of William Tell.
And prayer, the full deep flow of prayer,
Hallow’d the pastoral sod;
And souls grew strong for battle there,
Nerved with the peace of God.
Before the Alps and stars they knelt,
That calm devoted band,
And rose, and made their spirits felt
Through all the mountain-land.
Then welcome, Grütli’s free-born flower!
Even in thy pale decay
There dwells a breath, a tone, a power,
Which all high thoughts obey.

ON A LEAF FROM THE TOMB OF VIRGIL.

And was thy home, pale wither’d thing,

Beneath the rich blue southern sky?
Wert thou a nursling of the spring,
The winds and suns of glorious Italy?
Those suns in golden light e’en now
Look o’er the poet’s lovely grave;
Those winds are breathing soft, but thou
Answering their whisper, there no more shalt wave.
The flowers o’er Posilippo’s brow
May cluster in their purple bloom,
But on th’ o’ershadowing ilex-bough,
Thy breezy place is void by Virgil’s tomb.
Thy place is void; oh! none on earth,
This crowded earth, may so remain,
Save that which souls of loftiest birth
Leave when they part, their brighter home to gain.
Another leaf, ere now, hath sprung
On the green stem which once was thine;
When shall another strain be sung
Like his whose dust hath made that spot a shrine?

THE CHIEFTAIN’S SON.

Yes, it is ours!—the field is won,
A dark and evil field!
Lift from the ground my noble son,
And bear him homewards on his bloody shield.

Let me not hear your trumpets ring,
Swell not the battle-horn!
Thoughts far too sad those notes will bring,
When to the grave my glorious flower is borne!
Speak not of victory!—in the name
There is too much of woe!
Hush’d be the empty voice of Fame—
Call me back his whose graceful head is low.
Speak not of victory!—from my halls
The sunny hour is gone!
The ancient banner on my walls
Must sink ere long; I had but him—but one!
Within the dwelling of my sires
The hearths will soon be cold,
With me must die the beacon-fires
That stream’d at midnight from the mountain-hold.
And let them fade, since this must be,
My lovely and my brave!
Was thy bright blood pour’d forth for me?
And is there but for stately youth a grave?
Speak to me once again, my boy!
Wilt thou not hear my call?
Thou wert so full of life and joy,
I had not dreamt of this—that thou couldst fall!

Thy mother watches from the steep
For thy returning plume;
How shall I tell her that thy sleep
Is of the silent house, th’ untimely tomb?
Thou didst not seem as one to die,
With all thy young renown!
—Ye saw his falchion’s flash on high,
In the mid-fight, when spears and crests went down!
Slow be your march! the field is won!
A dark and evil field!
Lift from the ground my noble son,
And bear him homewards on his bloody shield.

A FRAGMENT.

Rest on your battle-fields, ye brave!
Let the pines murmur o’er your grave,
Your dirge be in the moaning wave—
We call you back no more!
Oh! there was mourning when ye fell,
In your own vales a deep-toned knell,
An agony, a wild farewell—
But that hath long been o’er.
Rest with your still and solemn fame;
The hills keep record of your name,
And never can a touch of shame

Darken the buried brow.

But we on changeful days are cast,

When bright names from their place fall fast;

And ye that with your glory pass’d,

We cannot mourn you now.

ENGLAND’S DEAD.

Son of the Ocean Isle!

Where sleep your mighty dead?

Show me what high and stately pile

Is rear’d o’er Glory’s bed.

Go, stranger! track the deep—

Free, free the white sail spread!

Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep,

Where rest not England’s dead.

On Egypt’s burning plains,

By the pyramid o’ersway’d,

With fearful power the noonday reigns,

And the palm-trees yield no shade;—

But let the angry sun

From heaven look fiercely red,

Unfelt by those whose task is done!—

There slumber England’s dead.

The hurricane hath might

Along the Indian shore,

And far by Ganges’ banks at night
Is heard the tiger’s roar;—
But let the sound roll on!
It hath no tone of dread
For those that from their toils are gone,—
There slumber England’s dead.
Loud rush the torrent-floods
The Western wilds among,
And free, in green Columbia’s woods,
The hunter’s bow is strung;—
But let the floods rush on!
Let the arrow’s flight be sped!
Why should they reck whose task is done?—
There slumber England’s dead!
The mountain storms rise high
In the snowy Pyrenees,
And toss the pine-boughs through the sky
Like rose-leaves on the breeze;—
But let the storm rage on!
Let the fresh wreaths be shed!
For the Roncesvalles’ field is won,—
There slumber England’s dead.
On the frozen deep’s repose
’Tis a dark and dreadful hour,

When round the ship the ice-fields close,

And the northern night-clouds lower;—

But let the ice drift on!

Let the cold-blue desert spread!

Their course with mast and flag is done,—

Even there sleep England’s dead.

The warlike of the isles,

The men of field and wave!

Are not the rocks their funeral piles,

The seas and shores their grave?

Go, stranger! track the deep—

Free, free the white sail spread!

Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep,

Where rest not England’s dead.

THE MEETING OF THE BARDS.

WRITTEN FOR AN EISTEDDVOD, OR MEETING OF WELSH BARDS, HELD IN LONDON, MAY 22, 1822.

[The Gorseddau, or meetings of the British bards, were anciently ordained to be held in the open air, on some conspicuous situation, whilst the sun was above the horizon; or, according to the expression employed on these occasions, “in the face of the sun, and in the eye of light.” The places set apart for this purpose were marked out by a circle of stones, called the circle of federation. The presiding bard stood on a large stone (Maen Gorsedd, or the stone of assembly) in the centre. The sheathing of a sword upon this stone was the ceremony which announced the opening of a Gorsedd, or meeting. The bards always stood in their uni-coloured robes, with their

heads and feet uncovered, within the circle of federation.—See Owen's Translation of the Heroic Elegies of Llywarch Hen.]

Where met our bards of old?—the glorious throng,
They of the mountain and the battle-song?
They met—oh! not in kingly hall or bower,
But where wild Nature girt herself with power:
They met where streams flash'd bright from rocky caves;
They met where woods made moan o'er warriors' graves,
And where the torrent's rainbow spray was cast,
And where dark lakes were heaving to the blast,
And midst the eternal cliffs, whose strength defied
The crested Roman, in his hour of pride;
And where the Carnedd,[251] on its lonely hill,
Bore silent record of the mighty still;
And where the Druid's ancient Cromlech[252] frown'd,
And the oaks breathed mysterious murmurs round.
There throng'd th' inspired of yore!—on plain or height,
In the sun's face, beneath the eye of light,
And, baring unto heaven each noble head,
Stood in the circle, where none else might tread.
Well might their lays be lofty!—soaring thought
From Nature's presence tenfold grandeur caught:
Well might bold freedom's soul pervade the strains
Which startled eagles from their lone domains,

And, like a breeze in chainless triumph, went
Up through the blue resounding firmament.
Whence came the echoes to those numbers high?
’Twas from the battle-fields of days gone by,
And from the tombs of heroes, laid to rest
With their good swords, upon the mountain’s breast;
And from the watch-towers on the heights of snow,
Sever’d by cloud and storm from all below;
And the turf-mounds,[253] once girt by ruddy spears,
And the rock-altars of departed years.
—Thence, deeply mingling with the torrent’s roar,
The winds a thousand wild responses bore;
And the green land, whose every vale and glen
Doth shrine the memory of heroic men,
On all her hills awakening to rejoice,
Sent forth proud answers to her children’s voice.
For us, not ours the festival to hold,
Midst the stone circles hallow’d thus of old;
Not where great Nature’s majesty and might
First broke all glorious on our infant sight;
Not near the tombs, where sleep our free and brave,
Not by the mountain-llyn,[254] the ocean-wave,
In these late days we meet—dark Mona’s shore,
Eryri’s[255] cliffs resound with harps no more!

But as the stream, (though time or art may turn
The current, bursting from its cavern'd urn,
From Alpine glens or ancient forest bowers,
To bathe soft vales of pasture and of flowers,)
Alike in rushing strength or sunny sleep,
Holds on its course, to mingle with the deep;
Thus, though our paths be changed, still warm and free,
Land of the bard! our spirit flies to thee!
To thee our thoughts, our hopes, our hearts belong,
Our dreams are haunted by thy voice of song!
Nor yield our souls one patriot-feeling less
To the green memory of thy loveliness,
Than theirs, whose harp-notes peal'd from every height,
In the sun's face, beneath the eye of light!

[251] Carnedd, a stone-barrow, or cairn.

[252] Cromlech, a Druidical monument or altar. The word means a stone of covenant.

[253] The ancient British chiefs frequently harangued their followers from small artificial mounts of turf.—Pennant.

[254] Llyn, a lake or pool.

[255] Eryri, Snowdon.

THE VOICE OF SPRING.[256]

I come, I come! ye have call'd me long—
I come o'er the mountains with light and song!

Ye may trace my step o’er the wakening earth
By the winds which tell of the violet’s birth,
By the primrose-stars in the shadowy grass,
By the green leaves opening as I pass.
I have breathed on the South, and the chestnut flowers
By thousands have burst from the forest-bowers,
And the ancient graves and the fallen fanes
Are veil’d with wreaths on Italian plains;—
But it is not for me, in my hour of bloom,
To speak of the ruin or the tomb!
I have look’d on the hills of the stormy North,
And the larch has hung all his tassels forth,
The fisher is out on the sunny sea,
And the reindeer bounds o’er the pastures free,
And the pine has a hinge of softer green,
And the moss looks bright where my foot hath been.
I have sent through the wood-paths a glowing sigh,
And call’d out each voice of the deep blue sky;
From the night-bird’s lay through the starry time,
In the groves of the soft Hesperian clime,
To the swan’s wild note by the Iceland lakes,
When the dark fir-branch into verdure breaks.
From the streams and founts I have loosed the chain,
They are sweeping on to the silvery main,

They are flashing down from the mountain brows,
They are flinging spray o’er the forest boughs,
They are bursting fresh from their sparry caves,
And the earth resounds with the joy of waves!
Come forth, O ye children of gladness! come!
Where the violets lie may be now your home.
Ye of the rose-lip and dew-bright eye,
And the bounding footstep, to meet me fly!
With the lyre, and the wreath, and the joyous lay,
Come forth to the sunshine—I may not stay.
Away from the dwellings of care-worn men,
The waters are sparkling in grove and glen!
Away from the chamber and sullen hearth,
The young leaves are dancing in breezy mirth!
Their light stems thrill to the wild-wood strains,
And youth is abroad in my green domains.
But ye!—ye are changed since ye met me last!
There is something bright from your features pass’d!
There is that come over your brow and eye
Which speaks of a world where the flowers must die!
—Ye smile! but your smile hath a dimness yet:
Oh! what have you look’d on since last we met?
Ye are changed, ye are changed!—and I see not
here

All whom I saw in the vanish’d year!
There were graceful heads, with their ringlets
bright,
Which toss’d in the breeze with a play of light;
There were eyes in whose glistening laughter lay
No faint remembrance of dull decay!
There were steps that flew o’er the cowslip’s head,
As if for a banquet all earth were spread;
There were voices that rang through the sapphire sky,
And had not a sound of mortality!
Are they gone? is their mirth from the mountains pass’d?
Ye have look’d on death since ye met me last!
I know whence the shadow comes o’er you now—
Ye have strewn the dust on the sunny brow!
Ye have given the lovely to earth’s embrace—
She hath taken the fairest of beauty’s race,
With their laughing eyes and their festal crown:
They are gone from amongst you in silence down!
They are gone from amongst you, the young and fair,
Ye have lost the gleam of their shining hair!
But I know of a land where there falls no blight—
I shall find them there, with their eyes of light!
Where Death midst the blooms of the morn may dwell,
I tarry no longer—farewell, farewell!

The summer is coming, on soft winds borne—

Ye may press the grape, ye may bind the corn!

For me, I depart to a brighter shore—

Ye are mark'd by care, ye are mine no more;

I go where the loved who have left you dwell,

And the flowers are not Death's. Fare ye well, farewell!

[256] Originally published in the New Monthly Magazine.

["'The Voice of Spring,' perhaps the best known and best loved of all Mrs Hemans' lyrics, was written early in the year 1823; and is thus alluded to in a letter to a friend, who had lately suffered a severe and sudden bereavement:—'The Voice of Spring' expresses some peculiar feelings of my own. Although my life has yet been unvisited by any affliction so deeply impressive, in all its circumstances, as the one you have been called upon to sustain; yet I cannot but feel every year, with the return of the violet, how much the shadows of my mind have deepened since its last appearance; and to me the spring, with all its joy and beauty, is generally a time of thoughtfulness rather than mirth. I think the most delightful poetry I know upon the subject of this season, is contained in the works of Tieck, a German poet, with whom you are perhaps acquainted; but the feelings he expresses are of a very different character from those I have described to you, seeming all to proceed from an overflowing sense of life and joy.'

"This indefinable feeling of languor and depression produced by the influence of spring, will be well understood by many a gentle heart. Never do the

'Fond strange yearnings from the soul's deep cell

Gush for the faces we no more shall see,'

with such uncontrollable power, as when all external nature breathes of life and gladness. Amidst all the bright and joyous things around us, we are haunted with

images of death and the grave. The force of contrast, not less strong than that of analogy, is unceasingly reminding us of the great gulf that divides us from those who are now ‘gone down in silence.’ Some unforgotten voice is ever whispering—‘And I too in Arcadia!’ We remember how we were wont to rejoice in the soft air and pleasant sunshine; and these things can charm us no longer, ‘because they are not.’ The farewell sadness of autumn, on the contrary—its falling leaves, and universal imagery of decay, by bringing more home to us the sense of our own mortality, identifies us more closely with those who are gone before, and the veil of separation becomes, as it were, more transparent. We are impressed with a more pervading conviction that ‘we shall go to them;’ while, in spring, every thing seems mournfully to echo, ‘they will not return to us!’

“These peculiar associations may be traced in many of Mrs Hemans’ writings, deepening with the influence of years and of sorrows, and more particularly developed in the poem called ‘Breathings of Spring.’ And when it is remembered that it was at this season her own earthly course was finished, the following passage from a letter, written in the month of May, some years after the one last quoted, cannot be read without emotion:—‘Poor A. H. is to be buried to-morrow. With the bright sunshine laughing around, it seems more sad to think of; yet, if I could choose when I would wish to die, it should be in spring—the influence of that season is so strangely depressing to my heart and frame.’”—Memoir, p. 66-68.

“‘The Voice of Spring,’ one of the first of what may be called Mrs Hemans’ fanciful lyrics, which presently became as familiar as the music of some popular composer when brought to our doors by wandering minstrels.”—Chorley’s Memorials, vol. i. p. 113.

“But it is time Mrs Hemans’ poetry were allowed to speak for itself; in making our extracts from it, we have really been as much puzzled as a child gathering flowers in a lovely garden—now attracted by a rose—straightway allured by a lily—now

tempted by a stately tulip—and again unsettled by a breathing violet, or ‘well-attired woodbine.’ We do think, however, that the ‘Voice of Spring’ is the pride of Mrs H.’s parterre—the rose of her poetry.”—(A. A. Watts.)—Literary Magnet, 1826.]

ELYSIUM.

[“In the Elysium of the ancients, we find none but heroes and persons who had either been fortunate or distinguished on earth; the children, and apparently the slaves and lower classes—that is to say, Poverty, Misfortune, and Innocence—were banished to the infernal Regions.”—Chateaubriand, Génie du Christianisme.]

Fair wert thou in the dreams
Of elder time, thou land of glorious flowers
And summer winds and low-toned silvery streams,
Dim with the shadows of thy laurel bowers,
Where, as they pass’d, bright hours
Left no faint sense of parting, such as clings
To earthly love, and joy in loveliest things!
Fair wert thou, with the light
On thy blue hills and sleepy waters cast
From purple skies ne’er deep’ning into night,
Yet soft, as if each moment were their last
Of glory, fading fast
Along the mountains!—but thy golden day
Was not as those that warn us of decay.
And ever, through thy shades,
A swell of deep Æolian sound went by

From fountain-voices in their secret glades,
And low reed-whispers, making sweet reply
To summer’s breezy sigh,
And young leaves trembling to the wind’s light breath,
Which ne’er had touch’d them with a hue of death!
And the transparent sky
Rang as a dome, all thrilling to the strain
Of harps that midst the woods made harmony,
Solemn and sweet; yet troubling not the brain
With dreams and yearnings vain,
And dim remembrances, that still draw birth
From the bewildering music of the earth.
And who, with silent tread,
Moved o’er the plains of waving asphodel?
Call’d from the dim procession of the dead,
Who midst the shadowy amaranth-bowers might dwell,
And listen to the swell
Of those majestic hymn-notes, and inhale
The spirit wandering in the immortal gale?
They of the sword, whose praise,
With the bright wine, at nations’ feasts went round!
They of the lyre, whose unforgotten lays
Forth on the winds had sent their mighty sound,
And in all regions found

Their echoes midst the mountains!—and become
In man’s deep heart as voices of his home!
They of the daring thought!
Daring and powerful, yet to dust allied—
Whose flight through stars, and seas, and depths, had sought
The soul’s far birthplace—but without a guide!
Sages and seers, who died,
And left the world their high mysterious dreams,
born midst the olive woods by Grecian streams.
But the most loved are they
Of whom fame speaks not with her clarion voice,
In regal halls! The shades o’erhang their way;
The vale, with its deep fountains, is their choice,
And gentle hearts rejoice
Around their steps; till silently they die,
As a stream shrinks from summer’s burning eye.
And these—of whose abode,
Midst her green valleys, earth retain’d no trace,
Save a flower springing from their burial-sod,
A shade of sadness on some kindred face,
A dim and vacant place
In some sweet home;—thou hadst no wreaths for these,
Thou sunny land! with all thy deathless trees!
The peasant at his door

Might sink to die when vintage-feasts were spread,
And songs on every wind! From thy bright shore
No lovelier vision floated round his head—
Thou wert for nobler dead!
He heard the bounding steps which round him fell,
And sigh'd to bid the festal sun farewell!
The slave, whose very tears
Were a forbidden luxury, and whose breast
Kept the mute woes and burning thoughts of years,
As embers in a burial-urn compress'd;
He might not be thy guest!
No gentle breathings from thy distant sky
Came o'er his path, and whisper'd "Liberty!"
Calm, on its leaf-strewn bier,
Unlike a gift of Nature to Decay,
Too rose-like still, too beautiful, too dear,
The child at rest before the mother lay,
E'en so to pass away,
With its bright smile!—Elysium! what wert thou
To her, who wept o'er that young slumb'rer's brow?
Thou hadst no home, green land!
For the fair creature from her bosom gone,
With life's fresh flowers just opening in its hand,
And all the lovely thoughts and dreams unknown,

Which in its clear eye shone

Like spring’s first wakening! but that light was past—

Where went the dewdrop swept before the blast?

Not where thy soft winds play’d,

Not where thy waters lay in glassy sleep!

Fade with thy bowers, thou Land of Visions, fade!

From thee no voice came o’er the gloomy deep,

And bade man cease to weep!

Fade, with the amaranth plain, the myrtle grove,

Which could not yield one hope to sorrowing love![257]

[257] The form of this poem was a good deal altered by Mrs Hemans some years after its first publication, and, though done so perhaps to advantage, one verse was omitted. As originally written, the two following stanzas concluded the piece:—

For the most loved are they

Of whom Fame speaks not with her clarion voice,

In regal halls! The shades o’erhang their way;

The vale, with its deep fountains, is their choice,

And gentle hearts rejoice

Around their steps; till silently they die,

As a stream shrinks from summer’s burning eye.

And the world knows not then,

Not then, nor ever, what pure thoughts are fled!

Yet these are they, who on the souls of men

Come back, when night her folding veil hath spread,

The long-remember’d dead!

But not with thee might aught save glory dwell—

Fade, fade away, thou shore of asphodel!

THE FUNERAL GENIUS,

AN ANCIENT STATUE.

“Debout, couronné de fleurs, les bras élevés et posés sur sa tête, et le dos appuyé contre un pin, ce génie semble exprimer par son attitude le repos des morts. Les bas-reliefs des tombeaux offrent souvent des figures semblables.”—Visconti, Description des Antiques du Musée Royal.

Thou shouldst be look’d on when the starlight falls

Through the blue stillness of the summer air,

Not by the torch-fire wavering on the walls—

It hath too fitful and too wild a glare!

And thou!—thy rest, the soft, the lovely, seems

To ask light steps, that will not break its dreams.

Flowers are upon thy brow; for so the dead

Were crown’d of old, with pale spring-flowers like these:

Sleep on thine eye hath sunk; yet softly shed

As from the wing of some faint southern breeze:

And the pine-boughs o’ershadow thee with gloom,

Which of the grove seems breathing—not the tomb.

They fear’d not death, whose calm and gracious thought

Of the last hour hath settled thus in thee!

They who thy wreath of pallid roses wrought,

And laid thy head against the forest tree,
As that of one, by music's dreamy close,
On the wood-violets lull'd to deep repose.
They fear'd not death!—yet who shall say his touch
Thus lightly falls on gentle things and fair?
Doth he bestow, or will he leave so much
Of tender beauty as thy features wear?
Thou sleeper of the bower! on whose young eyes
So still a night, a night of summer, lies!
Had they seen aught like thee? Did some fair boy
Thus, with his graceful hair, before them rest?
—His graceful hair, no more to wave in joy,
But drooping, as with heavy dews oppress'd;
And his eye veil'd so softly by its fringe,
And his lip faded to the white-rose tinge?
Oh! happy, if to them the one dread hour
Made known its lessons from a brow like thine!
If all their knowledge of the spoiler's power
Came by a look so tranquilly divine!
—Let him who thus hath seen the lovely part,
Hold well that image to his thoughtful heart.
But thou, fair slumberer! was there less of woe,
Or love, or terror, in the days of old,
That men pour'd out their gladd'ning spirit's flow,

Like sunshine, on the desolate and cold,
And gave thy semblance to the shadowy king,
Who for deep souls had then a deeper sting?
In the dark bosom of the earth they laid
Far more than we—for loftier faith is ours!
Their gems were lost in ashes—yet they made
The grave a place of beauty and of flowers,
With fragrant wreaths, and summer boughs array'd,
And lovely sculpture gleaming through the shade.
Is it for us a darker gloom to shed
O'er its dim precincts?—do we not intrust
But for a time its chambers with our dead,
And strew immortal seed upon the dust?
Why should we dwell on that which lies beneath,
When living light hath touch'd the brow of death?

THE TOMBS OF PLATÆA.

FROM A PAINTING BY WILLIAMS.

And there they sleep!—the men who stood
In arms before th' exulting sun,
And bathed their spears in Persian blood,
And taught the earth how freedom might be won.
They sleep!—th' Olympic wreaths are dead,
Th' Athenian lyres are hush'd and gone;
The Dorian voice of song is fled—

Slumber, ye mighty! slumber deeply on.
They sleep—and seems not all around
As hallow’d unto glory’s tomb?
Silence is on the battle-ground,
The heavens are loaded with a breathless gloom.
And stars are watching on their height,
But dimly seen through mist and cloud;
And still and solemn is the light
Which folds the plain, as with a glimmering shroud.
And thou, pale Night-queen! here thy beams
Are not as those the shepherd loves,
Nor look they down on shining streams,
By Naiads haunted in their laurel groves.
Thou seest no pastoral hamlet sleep,
In shadowy quiet, midst its vines;
No temple gleaming from the steep,
Midst the gray olives or the mountain pines:
But o’er a dim and boundless waste,
Thy rays, e’en like a tomb-lamp’s, brood,
Where man’s departed steps are traced
But by his dust, amidst the solitude.
And be it thus!—What slave shall tread
O’er freedom’s ancient battle-plains?
Let deserts wrap the glorious dead

When their bright Land sits weeping o’er her chains.

Here, where the Persian clarion rung,

And where the Spartan sword flash’d high,

And where the pæan strains were sung,

From year to year swell’d on by liberty;

Here should no voice, no sound, be heard,

Until the bonds of Greece be riven,

Save of the leader’s charging-word,

Or the shrill trumpet, pealing up through heaven!

Rest in your silent homes, ye brave!

No vines festoon your lonely tree,[258]

No harvest o’er your war-field wave,

Till rushing winds proclaim—The land is free!

[258] A single tree appears in Mr Williams’ impressive picture.

THE VIEW FROM CASTRI.

FROM A PAINTING BY WILLIAMS.

There have been bright and glorious pageants here,

Where now gray stones and moss-grown columns lie;

There have been words, which earth grew pale to hear,

Breathed from the cavern’s misty chambers nigh:

There have been voices through the sunny sky,

And the pine-woods, their choral hymn-notes sending,

And reeds and lyres, their Dorian melody

With incense-clouds around the temple blending,

And throngs with laurel-boughs before the altar bending.
There have been treasures of the seas and isles
Brought to the Day-god's now-forsaken throne;
Thunders have peal'd along the rock-defiles,
When the far-echoing battle-horn made known
That foes were on their way! The deep wind's moan
Hath chill'd th' invader's heart with secret fear;
And from the Sibyl-grottoes, wild and lone,
Storms have gone forth, which, in their fierce career,
From his bold hand have struck the banner and the spear.
The shrine hath sunk!—but thou unchanged art there!
Mount of the voice and vision, robed with dreams!
Unchanged—and rising through the radiant air,
With thy dark waving pines, and flashing streams,
And all thy founts of song! Their bright course teems
With inspiration yet; and each dim haze,
Or golden cloud which floats around thee, seems
As with its mantle veiling from our gaze
The mysteries of the past, the gods of elder days!
Away, vain fantasies!—doth less of power
Dwell round thy summit, or thy cliffs invest,
Though, in deep stillness, now the ruin's flower
Wave o'er the pillars mouldering on thy breast?
—Lift through the free blue heavens thine arrowy crest!

Let the great rocks their solitude regain!

No Delphian lyres now break thy noontide rest

With their full chords:—but silent be the strain!

Thou hast a mightier voice to speak th’ Eternal’s reign![259]

[259] This, with the preceding, and several of the following pieces, first appeared in the Edinburgh Magazine.

THE FESTAL HOUR.

When are the lessons given

That shake the startled earth? When wakes the foe

While the friend sleeps? When falls the traitor’s blow?

When are proud sceptres riven,

High hopes o’erthrown?—It is when lands rejoice,

When cities blaze and lift th’ exulting voice,

And wave their banners to the kindling heaven!

Fear ye the festal hour!

When mirth o’erflows, then tremble!—’Twas a night

Of gorgeous revel, wreaths, and dance, and light,

When through the regal bower

The trumpet peal’d ere yet the song was done,

And there were shrieks in golden Babylon,

And trampling armies, ruthless in their power.

The marble shrines were crown’d:

Young voices, through the blue Athenian sky,

And Dorian reeds, made summer-melody,

And censers waved around;
And lyres were strung and bright libations pour'd!
When through the streets flash'd out the avenging sword,
Fearless and free, the sword with myrtles bound![260]
Through Rome a triumph pass'd.
Rich in her Sun-god's mantling beams went by
That long array of glorious pageantry,
With shout and trumpet-blast.
An empire's gems their starry splendour shed
O'er the proud march; a king in chains was led;
A stately victor, crown'd and robed, came last.[261]
And many a Dryad's bower
Had lent the laurels which, in waving play,
Stirr'd the warm air, and glisten'd round his way
As a quick-flashing shower.
—O'er his own porch, meantime, the cypress hung,
Through his fair halls a cry of anguish rung—
Woe for the dead!—the father's broken flower!
A sound of lyre and song,
In the still night, went floating o'er the Nile,
Whose waves, by many an old mysterious pile,
Swept with that voice along;
And lamps were shining o'er the red wine's foam
Where a chief revell'd in a monarch's dome,

And fresh rose-garlands deck’d a glittering throng.
’Twas Antony that bade
The joyous chords ring out! But strains arose
Of wilder omen at the banquet’s close!
Sounds, by no mortal made,[262]
Shook Alexandria through her streets that night,
And pass’d—and with another sunset’s light,
The kingly Roman on his bier was laid.
Bright midst its vineyards lay
The fair Campanian city,[263] with its towers
And temples gleaming through dark olive-bowers,
Clear in the golden day;
Joy was around it as the glowing sky,
And crowds had fill’d its halls of revelry,
And all the sunny air was music’s way.
A cloud came o’er the face
Of Italy’s rich heaven!—its crystal blue
Was changed, and deepen’d to a wrathful hue
Of night, o’ershadowing space
As with the wings of death!—in all his power
Vesuvius woke, and hurl’d the burning shower,
And who could tell the buried city’s place?
Such things have been of yore,
In the gay regions where the citrons blow,

And purple summers all their sleepy glow
On the grape-clusters pour;
And where the palms to spicy winds are waving,
Along clear seas of melting sapphire, laving,
As with a flow of light, their southern shore.
Turn we to other climes!—
Far in the Druid isle a feast was spread,
Midst the rock-altars of the warrior dead;[264]
And ancient battle-rhymes
Were chanted to the harp; and yellow mead
Went flowing round, and tales of martial deed
And lofty songs of Britain's elder time;—
But ere the giant-fane
Cast its broad shadows on the robe of even,
Hush'd were the bards, and in the face of heaven,
O'er that old burial-plain,
Flash'd the keen Saxon dagger!—blood was streaming
Where late the mead-cup to the sun was gleaming,
And Britain's hearths were heap'd that night in vain—
For they return'd no more!
They that went forth at morn, with reckless heart,
In that fierce banquet's mirth to bear their part:
And on the rushy floor,
And the bright spears and bucklers of the walls,

The high wood-fires were blazing in their halls;

But not for them—they slept—their feast was o’er!

Fear ye the festal hour!

Ay, tremble when the cup of joy o’erflows!

Tame down the swelling heart! The bridal rose,

And the rich myrtle’s flower,

Have veil’d the sword! Red wines have sparkled fast

From venom’d goblets, and soft breezes pass’d

With fatal perfume through the revel’s bower.

Twine the young glowing wreath!

But pour not all your spirit in the song,

Which through the sky’s deep azure floats along

Like summer’s quickening breath!

The ground is hollow in the path of mirth:

Oh! far too daring seems the joy of earth,

So darkly press’d and girdled in by death!

[“‘The Festal Hour’ certainly appears to us to be one of the noblest, regular, and classical odes in the English language—happy in the general idea, and rich in imagery and illustration.”—Dr Morehead in Constable’s Magazine, Sept. 1823.]

[260] The sword of Harmodius.

[261] Paulus Æmilius, one of whose sons died a few days before, and another shortly after, his triumph on the conquest of Macedon, when Perseus, king of that country, was led in chains.

[262] See the description given by Plutarch, in his life of Antony, of the supernatural sounds heard in the streets of Alexandria, the night before Antony’s death.

[263] Herculaneum, of which it is related, that all the inhabitants were assembled in the theatres, when the shower of ashes which overwhelmed the city descended.

[264] Stonehenge, said by some traditions to have been erected to the memory of Ambrosius, an early British king; and by others mentioned as a monumental record of the massacre of British chiefs here alluded to.

SONG OF THE BATTLE OF MORGARTEN.

["In the year 1315, Switzerland was invaded by Duke Leopold of Austria, with a formidable army. It is well attested that this prince repeatedly declared he 'would trample the audacious rustics under his feet;' and that he had procured a large stock of cordage, for the purpose of binding their chiefs, and putting them to death.

"The 15th October 1315 dawned. The sun darted its first rays on the shields and armour of the advancing host; and this being the first army ever known to have attempted the frontiers of the cantons, the Swiss viewed its long line with various emotions. Montfort de Tettnang led the cavalry into the narrow pass, and soon filled the whole space between the mountain (Mount Sattel) and the lake. The fifty men on the eminence (above Morgarten) raised a sudden shout, and rolled down heaps of rocks and stones among the crowded ranks. The confederates on the mountain, perceiving the impression made by this attack, rushed down in close array, and fell upon the flank of the disordered column. With massy clubs they dashed in pieces the armour of the enemy, and dealt their blows and thrusts with long pikes. The narrowness of the defile admitted of no evolutions, and a slight frost having injured the road, the horses were impeded in all their motions; many leaped into the lake; all were startled; and at last the whole column gave way, and fell suddenly back on the infantry; and these last, as the nature of the country did not allow them to open their files, were run over by the fugitives, and many of them trampled to death. A general rout ensued, and Duke Leopold was with much difficulty rescued by a peasant, who led him to Winterthur, where the historian of the times saw him arrive in the

evening, pale, sullen, and dismayed."—Planta's History of the Helvetic Confederacy.]

The wine-month[265] shone in its golden prime,
And the red grapes clustering hung,
But a deeper sound, through the Switzer's clime,
Than the vintage music, rung—
A sound through vaulted cave,
A sound through echoing glen,
Like the hollow swell of a rushing wave;
—'Twas the tread of steel-girt men.
And a trumpet, pealing wild and far,
Midst the ancient rocks was blown,
Till the Alps replied to that voice of war
With a thousand of their own.
And through the forest-glooms
Flash'd helmets to the day;
And the winds were tossing knightly plumes,
Like the larch-boughs in their play.
In Hasli's[266] wilds there was gleaming steel
As the host of the Austrian pass'd;
And the Schreckhorn's[267] rocks, with a savage peal,
Made mirth of his clarion's blast.
Up midst the Righi snows
The stormy march was heard,

With the charger’s tramp, whence fire-sparks rose,
And the leader’s gathering-word.
But a band, the noblest band of all,
Through the rude Morgarten strait,
With blazon’d streamers and lances tall,
Moved onwards in princely state.
They came with heavy chains
For the race despised so long—
But amidst his Alp-domains,
The herdsman’s arm is strong!
The sun was reddening the clouds of morn
When they enter’d the rock-defile,
And shrill as a joyous hunter’s horn
Their bugles rang the while.
But on the misty height
Where the mountain-people stood,
There was stillness as of night,
When storms at distance brood.
There was stillness as of deep, dead night,
And a pause—but not of fear,
While the Switzers gazed on the gathering might
Of the hostile shield and spear.
On wound those columns bright
Between the lake and wood,

But they look’d not to the misty height
Where the mountain-people stood.
The pass was fill’d with their serried power,
All helm’d and mail-array’d,
And their steps had sounds like a thunder-shower
In the rustling forest-shade.
There were prince and crested knight,
Hemm’d in by cliff and flood,
When a shout arose from the misty height
Where the mountain-people stood.
And the mighty rocks came bounding down
Their startled foes among,
With a joyous whirl from the summit thrown—
Oh! the herdsman’s arm is strong!—
They came like lauwine[268] hurl’d
From Alp to Alp in play,
When the echoes shout through the snowy world,
And the pines are borne away.
The fir-woods crash’d on the mountain-side,
And the Switzers rush’d from high,
With a sudden charge, on the flower and pride
Of the Austrian chivalry:
Like hunters of the deer,
They storm’d the narrow dell;

And first in the shock, with Uri’s spear,

Was the arm of William Tell.[269]

There was tumult in the crowded strait,

And a cry of wild dismay;

And many a warrior met his fate

From a peasant’s hand that day!

And the Empire’s banner then

From its place of waving free,

Went down before the shepherd-men,

The men of the Forest-Sea.

With their pikes and massy clubs they brake

The cuirass and the shield,

And the war-horse dash’d to the reddening lake

From the reapers of the field!

The field—but not of sheaves—

Proud crests and pennons lay,

Strewn o’er it thick as the birch-wood leaves

In the autumn tempest’s way.

Oh! the sun in heaven fierce havoc view’d

When the Austrian turn’d to fly,

And the brave, in the trampling multitude,

Had a fearful death to die!

And the leader of the war

At eve unhelm’d was seen,

With a hurrying step on the wilds afar,

And a pale and troubled mien.

But the sons of the land which the freeman tills

Went back from the battle-toil,

To their cabin homes midst the deep-green hills,

All burden’d with royal spoil.

There were songs and festal fires

On the soaring Alps that night,

When children sprang to greet their sires

From the wild Morgarten fight

[265] Wine-month, the German name for October.

[266] Hasli, a wild district in the canton of Berne.

[267] Schreckhorn, the peak of terror, a mountain in the canton of Berne.

[268] Lauwine, the Swiss name for the avalanche.

[269] William Tell’s name is particularly mentioned amongst the confederates at Morgarten.

ODE ON THE DEFEAT OF KING SEBASTIAN OF PORTUGAL, AND HIS ARMY, IN AFRICA.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH OF HERRERA.

[Ferdinand de Herrera, surnamed the Divine, was a Spanish poet who lived in the reign of Charles V., and is still considered by the Castilians as one of their classic writers. He aimed at the introduction of a new style into Spanish poetry, and his lyrics are distinguished by the sustained majesty of their language, the frequent recurrence of expressions and images derived apparently from a fervent study of the

prophetic books of Scripture, and the lofty tone of national pride maintained throughout, and justified indeed by the nature of the subjects to which some of these productions are devoted. This last characteristic is blended with a deep and enthusiastic feeling of religion, which rather exalts than tempers the haughty confidence of the poet in the high destinies of his country. Spain is to him what Judea was to the bards who sang beneath the shadow of her palm-trees—the chosen and favoured land, whose people, severed from all others by the purity and devotedness of their faith, are peculiarly called to wreak the vengeance of Heaven upon the infidel. This triumphant conviction is powerfully expressed in his magnificent Ode on the Battle of Lepanto.

The impression of deep solemnity left upon the mind of the Spanish reader, by another of Herrera's lyric compositions, will, it is feared, be very inadequately conveyed through the medium of the following translation.]

"Voz de dolor, y canto de gemido," etc.

A voice of woe, a murmur of lament,

A spirit of deep fear and mingled ire;

Let such record the day, the day of wail

For Lusitania's bitter chastening sent!

She who hath seen her power, her fame expire,

And mourns them in the dust, discrown'd and pale.

And let the awful tale

With grief and horror every realm o'ershade,

From Afric's burning main

To the far sea, in other hues array'd,

And the red limits of the Orient's reign,

Whose nations, haughty though subdued, behold

Christ’s glorious banner to the winds unfold.
Alas! for those that in embattled power,
And vain array of chariots and of horse,
O desert Libya! sought thy fatal coast!
And trusting not in Him, the eternal source
Of might and glory, but in earthly force,
Making the strength of multitudes their boast,
A flush’d and crested host,
Elate in lofty dreams of victory, trode
Their path of pride, as o’er a conquer’d land
Given for the spoil; nor raised their eyes to God:
And Israel’s Holy One withdrew his hand,
Their sole support;—and heavily and prone
They fell—the car, the steed, the rider, all o’erthrown!
It came, the hour of wrath, the hour of woe,
Which to deep solitude and tears consign’d
The peopled realm, the realm of joy and mirth.
A gloom was on the heavens, no mantling glow
Announced the morn—it seem’d as nature pined,
And boding clouds obscured the sunbeam’s birth;
While, startling the pale earth,
Bursting upon the mighty and the proud
With visitation dread,
Their crests the Eternal, in his anger, bow’d,

And raised barbarian nations o’er their head,
The inflexible, the fierce, who seek not gold,
But vengeance on their foes, relentless, uncontroll’d.
Then was the sword let loose, the flaming sword
Of the strong infidel’s ignoble hand,
Amidst that host, the pride, the flower, the crown
Of thy fair knighthood; and the insatiate horde,
Not with thy life content, O ruin’d land!
Sad Lusitania! even thy bright renown
Defaced and trampled down;
And scatter’d, rushing as a torrent-flood,
Thy pomp of arms and banners;—till the sands
Became a lake of blood—thy noblest blood!—
The plain a mountain of thy slaughter’d bands.
Strength on thy foes, resistless might was shed;
On thy devoted sons—amaze, and shame, and dread.
Are these the conquerors, these the lords of fight,
The warrior men, the invincible, the famed,
Who shook the earth with terror and dismay,
Whose spoils were empires?—They that in their might
The haughty strength of savage nations tamed,
And gave the spacious Orient realms of day
To desolation’s sway,
Making the cities of imperial name

E’en as the desert-place?
Where now the fearless heart, the soul of flame
Thus has their glory closed its dazzling race
In one brief hour? Is this their valour’s doom,
On distant shores to fall, and find not even a tomb?
Once were they, in their splendour and their pride,
As an imperial cedar on the brow
Of the great Lebanon! It rose, array’d
In its rich pomp of foliage, and of wide
Majestic branches, leaving far below
All children of the forest. To its shade
The waters tribute paid,
Fostering its beauty. Birds found shelter there
Whose flight is of the loftiest through the sky,
And the wild mountain-creatures made their lair
Beneath; and nations by its canopy
Were shadow’d o’er. Supreme it stood, and ne’er
Had earth beheld a tree so excellently fair.
But all elated, on its verdant stem,
Confiding solely in its regal height,
It soar’d presumptuous, as for empire born;
And God for this removed its diadem,
And cast it from its regions of delight,
Forth to the spoiler, as a prey and scorn,

By the deep roots uptorn!
And lo! encumbering the lone hills it lay,
Shorn of its leaves, dismantled of its state;
While, pale with fear, men hurried far away,
Who in its ample shade had found so late
Their bower of rest; and nature's savage race
Midst the great ruin sought their dwelling-place.
But thou, base Libya! thou whose arid sand
Hath been a kingdom's deathbed, where one fate
Closed her bright life and her majestic fame,—
Though to thy feeble and barbarian hand
Hath fall'n the victory, be not thou elate!
Boast not thyself, though thine that day of shame,
Unworthy of a name!
Know, if the Spaniard in his wrath advance,
Aroused to vengeance by a nation's cry,
Pierced by his searching lance,
Soon shalt thou expiate crime with agony,
And thine affrighted streams to ocean's flood
An ample tribute bear of Afric's Paynim blood.

SEBASTIAN OF PORTUGAL.

A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Sebastian. Gonzalez, his friend. Zamor, a young Arab. Sylveira.

Scene I. The sea-shore near Lisbon.

Sebastian, Gonzalez, Zamor.

Seb. With what young life and fragrance in its breath
My native air salutes me! From the groves
of citron, and the mountains of the vine,
And thy majestic tide thus foaming on
In power and freedom o’er its golden sands,
Fair stream, my Tajo! youth, with all its glow
And pride of feeling, through my soul and frame
Again seems rushing, as these noble waves
Past their bright shores flow joyously. Sweet land,
My own, my fathers’ land, of sunny skies
And orange bowers!—Oh! is it not a dream
That thus I tread thy soil? Or do I wake
From a dark dream but now! Gonzalez, say,
Doth it not bring the flush of early life
Back on th’ awakening spirit, thus to gaze
On the far-sweeping river, and the shades
Which, in their undulating motion, speak
Of gentle winds amidst bright waters born,
After the fiery skies and dark-red sands
Of the lone desert? Time and toil must needs

Have changed our mien; but this, our blessèd land,
Hath gain'd but richer beauty since we bade
Her glowing shores farewell. Seems it not thus?
Thy brow is clouded.
Gon. To mine eye the scene
Wears, amidst all its quiet loveliness,
A hue of desolation; and the calm,
The solitude and silence which pervade
Earth, air, and ocean, seem belonging less
To peace than sadness! We have proudly stood
Even on this shore, beside the Atlantic wave,
When it hath look'd not thus.
Seb. Ay, now thy soul
Is in the past! Oh no! it look'd not thus
When the morn smiled upon our thousand sails,
And the winds blew for Afric. How that hour,
With all its hues of glory, seems to burst
Again upon my vision! I behold
The stately barks, the arming, the array,
The crests, the banners of my chivalry,
Sway'd by the sea-breeze till their motion show'd
Like joyous life! How the proud billows foam'd!
And the oars flash'd like lightnings of the deep,
And the tall spears went glancing to the sun,

And scattering round quick rays, as if to guide
The valiant unto fame! Ay, the blue heaven
Seem’d for that noble scene a canopy
Scarce too majestic, while it rang afar
To peals of warlike sound! My gallant bands!
Where are you now?
Gon. Bid the wide desert tell
Where sleep its dead! To mightier hosts than them
Hath it lent graves ere now; and on its breast
Is room for nations yet!
Seb. It cannot be
That all have perish’d! Many a noble man,
Made captive on that war-field, may have burst
His bonds like ours. Cloud not this fleeting hour,
Which to my soul is as the fountain’s draught
To the parch’d lip of fever, with a thought
So darkly sad!
Gon. Oh never, never cast
That deep remembrance from you! When once more
Your place is midst earth’s rulers, let it dwell
Around you, as the shadow of your throne,
Wherein the land may rest. My king! this hour
(Solemn as that which to the voyager’s eye,
In far and dim perspective, doth unfold

A new and boundless world) may haply be
The last in which the courage and the power
Of truth's high voice may reach you. Who may stand
As man to man, as friend to friend, before
Th' ancestral throne of monarchs? Or perchance
Toils, such as tame the loftiest to endurance,
Henceforth may wait us here! But howsoe'er
This be, the lessons now from sufferings past
Befit all time, all change. Oh! by the blood,
The free, the generous blood of Portugal,
Shed on the sands of Afric—by the names
Which, with their centuries of high renown,
There died, extinct for ever—let not those
Who stood in hope and glory at our side
Here, on this very sea-beach, whence they pass'd
To fall, and leave no trophy—let them not
Be soon, be e'er forgotten! for their fate
Bears a deep warning in its awfulness,
Whence power might well learn wisdom!
Seb. Thinkst thou, then,
That years of sufferance and captivity,
Such as have bow'd down eagle hearts ere now,
And made high energies their spoil, have pass'd
So lightly o'er my spirit? It is not thus!

The things thou wouldst recall are not of those
To be forgotten! But my heart hath still
A sense, a bounding pulse for hope and joy,
And it is joy which whispers in the breeze
Sent from my own free mountains. Brave Gonzalez!
Thou'rt one to make thy fearless heart a shield
Unto thy friend, in the dark stormy hour
When knightly crests are trampled, and proud helms
Cleft, and strong breastplates shiver'd. Thou art one
To infuse the soul of gallant fortitude
Into the captive's bosom, and beguile
The long slow march beneath the burning noon
With lofty patience; but for those quick bursts,
Those buoyant efforts of the soul to cast
Her weight of care to earth, those brief delights
Whose source is in a sunbeam, or a sound
Which stirs the blood, or a young breeze, whose wing
Wanders in chainless joy; for things like these
Thou hast no sympathies! And thou, my Zamor,
Art wrapt in thought! I welcome thee to this,
The kingdom of my fathers. Is it not
A goodly heritage?
Zam. The land is fair;
But he, the archer of the wilderness,

Beholdeth not the palms beneath whose shade
His tents are scatter’d, and his camels rest;
And therefore is he sad!
Seb. Thou must not pine
With that sick yearning of th’ impatient heart,
Which makes the exile’s life one fever’d dream
Of skies, and hills, and voices far away,
And faces wearing the familiar hues
Lent by his native sunbeams. I have known
Too much of this, and would not see another
Thus daily die. If it be so with thee,
My gentle Zamor, speak. Behold, our bark
Yet, with her white sails catching sunset’s glow,
Lies within signal-reach. If it be thus,
Then fare thee well—farewell, thou brave, and true,
And generous friend! How often is our path
Cross’d by some being whose bright spirit sheds
A passing gladness o’er it, but whose course
Leads down another current, never more
To blend with ours! Yet far within our souls,
Amidst the rushing of the busy world,
Dwells many a secret thought, which lingers yet
Around that image. And e’en so, kind Zamor!
Shalt thou be long remember’d.

Zam. By the fame
Of my brave sire, whose deeds the warrior tribes
Tell round the desert's watchfire, at the hour
Of silence, and of coolness, and of stars,
I will not leave thee! 'Twas in such an hour
The dreams of rest were on me, and I lay
Shrouded in slumber's mantle, as within
The chambers of the dead. Who saved me then,
When the pard, soundless as the midnight, stole
Soft on the sleeper? Whose keen dart transfix'd
The monarch of the solitudes? I woke,
And saw thy javelin crimson'd with his blood,
Thou, my deliverer! and my heart e'en then
Call'd thee its brother.
Seb. For that gift of life
With one of tenfold price, even freedom's self,
Thou hast repaid me well.
Zam. Then bid me not
Forsake thee! Though my father's tents may rise
At times upon my spirit, yet my home
Shall be amidst thy mountains, prince! and thou
Shalt be my chief, until I see thee robed
With all thy power. When thou canst need no more
Thine Arab's faithful heart and vigorous arm,

From the green regions of the setting sun
Then shall the wanderer turn his steps, and seek
His Orient wilds again.
Seb. Be near me still,
And ever, O my warrior! I shall stand
Again amidst my hosts a mail-clad king,
Begirt with spears and banners, and the pomp
And the proud sounds of battle. Be thy place
Then at my side. When doth a monarch cease
To need true hearts, bold hands? Not in the field
Of arms, nor on the throne of power, nor yet
The couch of sleep. Be our friend, we will not part.
Gon. Be all thy friends thus faithful, for e'en yet
They may be fiercely tried.
Seb. I doubt them not.
Even now my heart beats high to meet their welcome.
Let us away!
Gon. Yet hear once more, my liege.
The humblest pilgrim, from his distant shrine
Returning, finds not e'en his peasant home
Unchanged amidst its vineyards. Some loved face,
Which made the sunlight of his lowly board,
Is touch'd by sickness; some familiar voice
Greets him no more; and shall not fate and time

Have done their work, since last we parted hence,
Upon an empire? Ay, within those years,
Hearts from their ancient worship have fall’n off,
And bow’d before new stars; high names have sunk
From their supremacy of place, and others
Gone forth, and made themselves the mighty sounds
At which thrones tremble. Oh! be slow to trust
E’en those to whom your smiles were wont to seem
As light is unto flowers. Search well the depths
Of bosoms in whose keeping you would shrine
The secret of your state. Storms pass not by
Leaving earth’s face unchanged.
Seb. Whence didst thou learn
The cold distrust which casts so deep a shadow
O’er a most noble nature?
Gon. Life hath been
My stern and only teacher. I have known
Vicissitudes in all things, but the most
In human hearts. Oh! yet awhile tame down
That royal spirit, till the hour be come
When it may burst its bondage! On thy brow
The suns of burning climes have set their seal,
And toil, and years, and perils, have not pass’d
O’er the bright aspect, and the ardent eye,

As doth a breeze of summer. Be that change
The mask beneath whose shelter thou may’st read
Men’s thoughts, and veil thine own.
Seb. Am I thus changed
From all I was? And yet it needs must be,
Since e’en my soul hath caught another hue
From its long sufferings. Did I not array
The gallant flower of Lusian chivalry,
And lead the mighty of the land, to pour
Destruction on the Moslem? I return,
And as a fearless and a trusted friend,
Bring, from the realms of my captivity,
An Arab of the desert!—But the sun
Hath sunk below th’ Atlantic. Let us hence—
Gonzalez, fear me not.
[Exeunt.

Scene II.—A Street in Lisbon illuminated.

Many Citizens.

1st Cit. In sooth our city wears a goodly mien,
With her far-blazing fanes, and festive lamps
Shining from all her marble palaces,
Countless as heaven’s fair stars. The humblest lattice
Sends forth its radiance. How the sparkling waves
Fling back the light!

2d Cit. Ay, ’tis a gallant show;

And one which serves, like others, to conceal

Things which must not be told.

3d Cit. What wouldst thou say?

2d Cit. That which may scarce, in perilous times like these,

Be said with safety. Hast thou look’d within

Those stately palaces? Were they but peopled

With the high race of warlike nobles, once

Their princely lords, think’st thou, good friend, that now

They would be glittering with this hollow pomp,

To greet a conqueror’s entrance?

3d Cit. Thou say’st well.

None but a land forsaken of its chiefs

Had been so lost and won.

4th Cit. The lot is cast;

We have but to yield. Hush! for some strangers come:

Now, friends, beware.

1st Cit. Did the king pass this way

At morning, with his train?

2d Cit. Ay: saw you not

The long and rich procession?

Sebastian enters with Gonzalez and Zamor.

Seb. to Gon. This should be

The night of some high festival. E’en thus

My royal city to the skies sent up,
From her illumined fanes and towers, a voice
Of gladness, welcoming our first return
From Afric's coast. Speak thou, Gonzalez! ask
The cause of this rejoicing. To my heart
Deep feelings rush, so mingling and so fast,
My voice perchance might tremble.
Gon. Citizen,
What festal night is this, that all your streets
Are throng'd and glittering thus?
1st Cit. Hast thou not heard
Of the king's entry, in triumphal pomp,
This very morn?
Gon. The king! triumphal pomp!—
Thy words are dark.
Seb. Speak yet again: mine ears
Ring with strange sounds. Again!
1st Cit. I said, the king,
Philip of Spain, and now of Portugal,
This morning enter'd with a conqueror's train
Our city's royal palace: and for this
We hold our festival.
Seb. (in a low voice.) Thou said'st—the king!
His name?—I heard it not.

1st Cit. Philip of Spain.

Seb. Philip of Spain! We slumber, till aroused

By th' earthquake's bursting shock. Hath there not fall'n

A sudden darkness? All things seem to float

Obscurely round me. Now 'tis past. The streets

Are blazing with strange fire. Go, quench those lamps;

They glare upon me till my very brain

Grows dizzy, and doth whirl. How dare ye thus

Light up your shrines for him?

Gon. Away, away!

This is no time, no scene——

Seb. Philip of Spain!

How name ye this fair land? Why, is it not

The free, the chivalrous Portugal?—the land

By the proud ransom of heroic blood

Won from the Moor of old? Did that red stream

Sink to the earth, and leave no fiery current

In the veins of noble men, that so its tide,

Full swelling at the sound of hostile steps,

Might be a kingdom's barrier?

2d Cit. That high blood

Which should have been our strength, profusely shed

By the rash King Sebastian, bathed the plains

Of fatal Alcazar. Our monarch's guilt

Hath brought this ruin down.

Seb. Must this be heard,

And borne, and unchastised? Man, darest thou stand

Before me face to face, and thus arraign

Thy sovereign?

Zam. (aside to Seb.) Shall I lift the sword, my prince,

Against thy foes?

Gon. Be still—or all is lost.

2d Cit. I dare speak that which all men think and know.

’Tis to Sebastian, and his waste of life,

And power, and treasure, that we owe these bonds.

3d Cit. Talk not of bonds. May our new monarch rule

The weary land in peace! But who art thou?

Whence com’st thou, haughty stranger, that these things,

Known to all nations, should be new to thee?

Seb. (wildly.) I come from regions where the cities lie

In ruins, not in chains!

Exit with Gonzalez and Zamor.

2d Cit. He wears the mien

Of one that hath commanded; yet his looks

And words were strangely wild.

1st Cit. Mark’d you his fierce

And haughty gesture, and the flash that broke

From his dark eye, when King Sebastian’s name

Became our theme?

2d Cit. Trust me, there's more in this

Than may be lightly said. These are no times

To breathe men's thoughts i' th' open face of heaven

And ear of multitudes. They that would speak

Of monarchs and their deeds, should keep within

Their quiet homes. Come, let us hence; and then

We'll commune of this stranger.

Scene III.—The Portico of a Palace.

Sebastian, Gonzalez, Zamor.

Seb. Withstand me not! I tell thee that my soul,

With all its passionate energies, is roused

Unto that fearful strength which must have way,

E'en like the elements in their hour of might

And mastery o'er creation.

Gon. But they wait

That hour in silence. Oh! be calm awhile—

Thine is not come. My king——

Seb. I am no king,

While in the very palace of my sires,

Ay, where mine eyes first drank the glorious light,

Where my soul's thrilling echoes first awoke

To the high sound of earth's immortal names,

Th' usurper lives and reigns. I am no king

Until I cast him thence.

Zam. Shall not thy voice

Be as a trumpet to th’ awak’ning land?

Will not the bright swords flash like sun-bursts forth,

When the brave hear their chief?

Gon. Peace, Zamor! peace!

Child of the desert, what hast thou to do

With the calm hour of counsel?

Monarch, pause:

A kingdom’s destiny should not be the sport

Of passion’s reckless winds. There is a time

When men, in very weariness of heart

And careless desolation, tamed to yield

By misery strong as death, will lay their souls

E’en at the conqueror’s feet—as nature sinks,

After long torture, into cold, and dull,

And heavy sleep. But comes there not an hour

Of fierce atonement? Ay! the slumberer wakes

With gather’d strength and vengeance; and the sense

And the remembrance of his agonies

Are in themselves a power, whose fearful path

Is like the path of ocean, when the heavens

Take off its interdict. Wait, then, the hour

Of that high impulse.

Seb. Is it not the sun
Whose radiant bursting through the embattled clouds
Doth make it morn? The hour of which thou speak’st,
Itself, with all its glory, is the work
Of some commanding nature, which doth bid
The sullen shades disperse. Away!—e’en now
The land’s high hearts, the fearless and the true,
Shall know they have a leader. Is not this
The mansion of mine own, mine earliest, friend
Sylveira?
Gon. Ay, its glittering lamps too well
Illume the stately vestibule to leave
Our sight a moment’s doubt. He ever loved
Such pageantries.
Seb. His dwelling thus adorn’d
On such a night! Yet will I seek him here.
He must be faithful, and to him the first
My tale shall be reveal’d. A sudden chill
Falls on my heart; and yet I will not wrong
My friend with dull suspicion. He hath been
Link’d all too closely with mine inmost soul.
And what have I to lose?
Gon. Is their blood naught
Who without hope will follow where thou lead’st,

E’en unto death?

Seb. Was that a brave man’s voice?

Warrior and friend! how long, then, hast thou learn’d

To hold thy blood thus dear?

Gon. Of mine, mine own

Think’st thou I spoke? When all is shed for thee

Thou’lt know me better.

Seb. (entering the palace.) For a while farewell.

[Exit.

Gon. Thus princes lead men’s hearts. Come, follow me;

And if a home is left me still, brave Zamor!

There will I bid thee welcome.

[Exeunt.

Scene IV.—A Hall within the Palace.

Sebastian, Sylveira.

Sylv. Whence art thou, stranger?—what wouldst thou with me?

There is a fiery wildness in thy mien

Startling and almost fearful.

Seb. From the stern,

And vast, and desolate wilderness, whose lord

Is the fierce lion, and whose gentlest wind

Breathes of the tomb, and whose dark children make

The bow and spear their law, men bear not back

That smilingness of aspect, wont to mask

The secrets of their spirits midst the stir
Of courts and cities. I have look’d on scenes
Boundless, and strange, and terrible; I have known
Sufferings which are not in the shadowy scope
Of wild imagination; and these things
Have stamp’d me with their impress. Man of peace,
Thou look’st on one familiar with th’ extremes
Of grandeur and of misery.
Sylv. Stranger, speak
Thy name and purpose briefly, for the time
Ill suits these mysteries. I must hence; to-night
I feast the lords of Spain.
Seb. Is that a task
For King Sebastian’s friend?
Sylv. Sebastian’s friend!
That name hath lost its meaning. Will the dead
Rise from their silent dwellings, to upbraid
The living for their mirth? The grave sets bounds
Unto all human friendship.
Seb. On the plain
Of Alcazar full many a stately flower,
The pride and crown of some high house, was laid
Low in the dust of Afric; but of these
Sebastian was not one.

Sylv. I am not skill’d

To deal with men of mystery. Take, then, off

The strange dark scrutiny of thine eye from mine

What mean’st thou?—Speak!

Seb. Sebastian died not there.——

I read no joy in that cold doubting mien.

Is not thy name Sylveira?

Sylv. Ay.

Seb. Why, then,

Be glad! I tell thee that Sebastian lives!

Think thou on this—he lives! Should he return—

For he may yet return—and find the friend

In whom he trusted with such perfect trust

As should be heaven’s alone—mark’st thou my words?—

Should he then find this man, not girt and arm’d,

And watching o’er the heritage of his lord,

But, reckless of high fame and loyal faith,

Holding luxurious revels with his foes,

How would thou meet his glance?

Sylv. As I do thine,

Keen though it be, and proud.

Seb. Why, thou dost quail

Before it! even as if the burning eye

Of the broad sun pursued thy shrinking soul

Through all its depths.

Sylv. Away! he died not there!

He should have died there, with the chivalry

And strength and honour of his kingdom, lost

By his impetuous rashness.

Seb. This from thee?

Who hath given power to falsehood, that one gaze

At its unmask’d and withering mien, should blight

High souls at once? I wake. And this from thee?

There are, whose eyes discern the secret springs

Which lie beneath the desert, and the gold

And gems within earth’s caverns, far below

The everlasting hills: but who hath dared

To dream that heaven’s most awful attribute

Invested his mortality, and to boast

That through its inmost folds his glance could read

One heart, one human heart? Why, then, to love

And trust is but to lend a traitor arms

Of keenest temper and unerring aim,

Wherewith to pierce our souls. But thou, beware!

Sebastian lives!

Sylv. If it be so, and thou

Art of his followers still, then bid him seek

Far in the wilds, which gave one sepulchre

To his proud hosts, a kingdom and a home,
For none is left him here.
Seb. This is to live
An age of wisdom in an hour! The man
Whose empire, as in scorn, o'erpass'd the bounds
E'en of the infinite deep; whose Orient realms
Lay bright beneath the morning, while the clouds
Were brooding in their sunset mantle still,
O'er his majestic regions of the West;
This heir of far dominion shall return,
And, in the very city of his birth,
Shall find no home! Ay, I will tell him this,
And he will answer that the tale is false,
False as a traitor's hollow words of love;
And that the stately dwelling, in whose halls
We commune now—a friend's, a monarch's gift,
Unto the chosen of his heart, Sylveira,
Should yield him still a welcome.
Sylv. Fare thee well!
I may not pause to hear thee, for thy words
Are full of danger, and of snares, perchance
Laid by some treacherous foe. But all in vain.
I mock thy wiles to scorn.
Seb. Ha! ha! The snake

Doth pride himself in his distorted cunning,
Deeming it wisdom. Nay, thou go’st not thus.
My heart is bursting, and I will be heard.
What! know’st thou not my spirit was born to hold
Dominion over thine? Thou shalt not cast
Those bonds thus lightly from thee. Stand thou there,
And tremble in the presence of thy lord!
Sylv. This is all madness.
Seb. Madness! no, I say—
’Tis Reason starting from her sleep, to feel,
And see, and know, in all their cold distinctness,
Things which come o’er her, as a sense of pain
O’ th’ sudden wakes the dreamer. Stay thee yet;
Be still. Thou’rt used to smile and to obey;
Ay, and to weep. I have seen thy tears flow fast,
As from the fulness of a heart o’ercharged
With loyal love. Oh! never, never more
Let tears or smiles be trusted! When thy king
Went forth on his disastrous enterprise,
Upon thy bed of sickness thou wast laid,
And he stood o’er thee with the look of one
Who leaves a dying brother, and his eyes
Were fill’d with tears like thine. No! not like thine:
His bosom knew no falsehood, and he deem’d

Thine clear and stainless as a warrior’s shield,
Wherein high deeds and noble forms alone
Are brightly imaged forth.
Sylv. What now avail
These recollections?
Seb. What! I have seen thee shrink,
As a murderer from the eye of light, before me:
I have earn’d (how dearly and how bitterly
It matters not, but I have earn’d at last)
Deep knowledge, fearful wisdom. Now, begone!
Hence to thy guests, and fear not, though arraign’d
E’en of Sebastian’s friendship. Make his scorn
(For he will scorn thee, as a crouching slave
By all high hearts is scorn’d) thy right, thy charter
Unto vile safety. Let the secret voice,
Whose low upbraidings will not sleep within thee,
Be as a sign, a token of thy claim
To all such guerdons as are shower’d on traitors,
When noble men are crush’d. And fear thou not:
’Tis but the kingly cedar which the storm
Hurls from his mountain throne—th’ ignoble shrub,
Grovelling beneath, may live.
Sylv. It is thy part
To tremble for thy life.

Seb. They that have look’d
Upon a heart like thine, should know too well
The worth of life to tremble. Such things make
Brave men, and reckless. Ay, and they whom fate
Would trample should be thus. It is enough—
Thou may’st depart.
Sylv. And thou, if thou dost prize
Thy safety, speed thee hence.
[Exit Sylveira.
Seb. (alone.) And this is he
Who was as mine own soul: whose image rose,
Shadowing my dreams of glory with the thought
That on the sick man’s weary couch he lay,
Pining to share my battles!
CHORUS.
Ye winds that sweep
The conquer’d billows of the western deep,
Or wander where the morn
Midst the resplendent Indian heavens is born,
Waft o’er bright isles and glorious worlds the fame
Of the crown’d Spaniard’s name:
Till in each glowing zone
Its might the nations own,
And bow to him the vassal knee

Whose sceptre shadows realms from sea to sea.

Seb. Away—away! this is no place for him

Whose name hath thus resounded, but is now

A word of desolation.

[Exit.

THE SIEGE OF VALENCIA.

A DRAMATIC POEM.[270]

“Judicio ha dado esta no vista hazanna

Del valor que en los siglos venideros

Tendrán los Hijos de la fuerte Espanna,

Hijos de tal padres herederos.

Hallò sola en Numancia todo quanto

Debe con justo titulo cantarse

Y lo que puede dar materia al canto.”

Cervantes, Numancia.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Alvar Gonzalez, Governor of Valencia. Alphonso, Carlos, his Sons. Hernandez, a Priest. Abdullah, a Moorish Prince, Chief of the Army besieging Valencia. Garcias, a Spanish Knight. Elmina, Wife to Gonzalez. Ximena, her Daughter. Theresa, an attendant. Citizens, Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

[270] Advertisement by the Author.—The history of Spain records two instances of the severe and self-devoting heroism which forms the subject of the following dramatic poem. The first of these occurred at the siege of Tarifa, which was

defended, in 1294, for Sancho King of Castile, during the rebellion of his brother Don Juan, by Guzman surnamed the Good.[271] The second is related of Alonso Lopez de Texeda, who, until his garrison had been utterly disabled by pestilence, maintained the city of Zamora for the children of Don Pedro the Cruel, against the forces of Henrique of Trastamara.[272]

Impressive as were the circumstances which distinguished both these memorable sieges, it appeared to the author of the following pages that a deeper interest, as well as a stronger colour of nationality, might be imparted to the scenes in which she has feebly attempted “to describe high passions and high actions,” by connecting a religious feeling with the patriotism and high-minded loyalty which had thus been proved “faithful unto death,” and by surrounding her ideal dramatis personæ with recollections derived from the heroic legends of Spanish chivalry. She has, for this reason, employed the agency of imaginary characters, and fixed upon Valencia del Cid as the scene to give them

“A local habitation and a name.”

[271] See Quintana’s “Vidas de Espanoles Celebres,” p. 53.

[272] See the Preface to Southey’s “Chronicle of the Cid.”

Scene I.—Room in a Palace of Valencia.—Ximena singing to a lute.

BALLAD.

“Thou hast not been with a festal throng

At the pouring of the wine;

Men bear not from the hall of song

A mien so dark as thine!

There’s blood upon thy shield,

There’s dust upon thy plume,

Thou hast brought from some disastrous field
That brow of wrath and gloom!”
“And is there blood upon my shield?
Maiden, it well may be!
We have sent the streams from our battle-field
All darken’d to the sea!
We have given the founts a stain,
Midst their woods of ancient pine;
And the ground is wet—but not with rain,
Deep dyed—but not with wine!
“The ground is wet—but not with rain—
We have been in war-array,
And the noblest blood of Christian Spain
Hath bathed her soil to-day.
I have seen the strong man die,
And the stripling meet his fate,
Where the mountain-winds go sounding by
In the Roncesvalles’ Strait.
“In the gloomy Roncesvalles’ Strait
There are helms and lances cleft;
And they that moved at morn elate
On a bed of heath are left!
There’s many a fair young face
Which the war-steed hath gone o’er;

At many a board there is kept a place
For those that come no more!”
“Alas! for love, for woman’s breast,
If woe like this must be!
Hast thou seen a youth with an eagle-crest,
And a white plume waving free?
With his proud quick-flashing eye,
And his mien of knightly state?
Doth he come from where the swords flash’d high
In the Roncesvalles’ Strait?”
“In the gloomy Roncesvalles’ Strait
I saw, and mark’d him well;
For nobly on his steed he sate,
When the pride of manhood fell!
But it is not youth which turns
From the field of spears again;
For the boy’s high heart too wildly burns,
Till it rests amidst the slain!”
“Thou canst not say that he lies low,
The lovely and the brave:
Oh! none could look on his joyous brow,
And think upon the grave!
Dark, dark perchance the day
Hath been with valour’s fate;

But he is on his homeward way
From the Roncesvalles' Strait!"
"There is dust upon his joyous brow,
And o'er his graceful head;
And the war-horse will not wake him now,
Though it browse his greensward bed!
I have seen the stripling die,
And the strong man meet his fate
Where the mountain-winds go sounding by
In the Roncesvalles' Strait!"

Elmina enters.

Elm. Your songs are not as those of other days,
Mine own Ximena! Where is now the young
And buoyant spirit of the morn, which once
Breathed in your spring-like melodies, and woke
Joy's echo from all hearts?
Xim. My mother, this
Is not the free air of our mountain-wilds;
And these are not the halls wherein my voice
First pour'd those gladd'ning strains.
Elm. Alas! thy heart
(I see it well) doth sicken for the pure
Free-wandering breezes of the joyous hills,
Where thy young brothers, o'er the rock and heath,

Bound in glad boyhood, e’en as torrent-streams
Leap brightly from the heights. Had we not been
Within these walls thus suddenly begirt,
Thou shouldst have track’d ere now, with step as light,
Their wild-wood paths.
Xim. I would not but have shared
These hours of woe and peril, though the deep
And solemn feelings wakening at their voice
Claim all the wrought-up spirit to themselves,
And will not blend with mirth. The storm doth hush
All floating whispery sounds, all bird-notes wild
O’ th’ summer-forest, filling earth and heaven
With its own awful music. And ’tis well!
Should not a hero’s child be train’d to hear
The trumpet’s blast unstartled, and to look
In the fix’d face of death without dismay?
Elm. Woe! woe! that aught so gentle and so young
Should thus be call’d to stand i’ the tempest’s path,
And bear the token and the hue of death
On a bright soul so soon! I had not shrunk
From mine own lot; but thou, my child, shouldst move
As a light breeze of heaven, through summer-bowers,
And not o’er foaming billows. We are fall’n
On dark and evil days!

Xim. Ay, days that wake
All to their tasks!—Youth may not loiter now
In the green walks of spring; and womanhood
Is summon’d unto conflicts, heretofore
The lot of warrior-spirits. Strength is born
In the deep silence of long-suffering hearts;
Not amidst joy.
Elm. Hast thou some secret woe
That thus thou speak’st?
Xim. What sorrow should be mine,
Unknown to thee?
Elm. Alas! the baleful air,
Wherewith the pestilence in darkness walks
Through the devoted city, like a blight
Amidst the rose-tints of thy cheek hath fall’n,
And wrought an early withering. Thou hast cross’d
The paths of death, and minister’d to those
O’er whom his shadow rested, till thine eye
Hath changed its glancing sunbeam for a still,
Deep, solemn radiance; and thy brow hath caught
A wild and high expression, which at times
Fades into desolate calmness, most unlike
What youth’s bright mien should wear. My gentle child!
I look on thee in fear!

Xim. Thou hast no cause
To fear for me. When the wild clash of steel,
And the deep tambour, and the heavy step
Of armèd men, break on our morning dreams—
When, hour by hour, the noble and the brave
Are falling round us, and we deem it much
To give them funeral-rites, and call them blest
If the good sword, in its own stormy hour,
Hath done its work upon them, ere disease
Had chill'd their fiery blood;—it is no time
For the light mien wherewith, in happier hours,
We trode the woodland mazes, when young leaves
Were whispering in the gale.—My father comes—
Oh! speak of me no more. I would not shade
His princely aspect with a thought less high
Than his proud duties claim.
Gonzalez enters.
Elm. My noble lord!
Welcome from this day's toil! It is the hour
Whose shadows, as they deepen, bring repose
Unto all weary men; and wilt not thou
Free thy mail'd bosom from the corslet's weight,
To rest at fall of eve?
Gon. There may be rest

For the tired peasant, when the vesper-bell
Doth send him to his cabin, and beneath
His vine and olive he may sit at eve,
Watching his children's sport: but unto him
Who keeps the watch-place on the mountain-height,
When heaven lets loose the storms that chasten realms
—Who speaks of rest?
Xim. My father, shall I fill
The wine-cup for thy lips, or bring the lute
Whose sounds thou lovest?
Gon. If there be strains of power
To rouse a spirit, which in triumphant scorn
May cast off nature's feebleness, and hold
Its proud career unshackled, dashing down
Tears and fond thoughts to earth; give voice to those!
I have need of such, Ximena!—we must hear
No melting music now!
Xim. I know all high
Heroic ditties of the elder-time,
Sung by the mountain-Christians,[273] in the holds
Of th' everlasting hills, whose snows yet bear
The print of Freedom's step; and all wild strains
Wherein the dark serranos[274] teach the rocks
And the pine-forests deeply to resound

The praise of later champions. Wouldst thou hear
The war-song of thine ancestor, the Cid?
Gon. Ay, speak of him; for in that name is power,
Such as might rescue kingdoms! Speak of him!
We are his children! They that can look back
I' th' annals of their house on such a name,
How should they take Dishonour by the hand,
And o'er the threshold of their fathers' halls
First lead her as a guest?
Elm. Oh, why is this?
How my heart sinks!
Gon. It must not fail thee yet,
Daughter of heroes!—thine inheritance
Is strength to meet all conflicts. Thou canst number
In thy long line of glorious ancestry
Men, the bright offering of whose blood hath made
The ground it bathed e'en as an altar, whence
High thoughts shall rise for ever. Bore they not,
Midst flame and sword, their witness of the Cross,
With its victorious inspiration girt
As with a conqueror's robe, till th' infidel,
O'erawed, shrank back before them? Ay, the earth
Doth call them martyrs; but their agonies
Were of a moment, tortures whose brief aim

Was to destroy, within whose powers and scope
Lay naught but dust. And earth doth call them martyrs!
Why, heaven but claim'd their blood, their lives, and not
The things which grew as tendrils round their hearts;
No, not their children!
Elm. Mean'st thou? know'st thou aught?—
I cannot utter it—my sons! my sons!
Is it of them? Oh! wouldst thou speak of them?
Gon. A mother's heart divineth but too well!
Elm. Speak, I adjure thee! I can bear it all.
Where are my children?
Gon. In the Moorish camp
Whose lines have girt the city.
Xim. But they live?
—All is not lost, my mother!
Elm. Say, they live.
Gon. Elmina, still they live.
Elm. But captives! They
Whom my fond heart had imaged to itself
Bounding from cliff to cliff, amidst the wilds
Where the rock-eagle seem'd not more secure
In its rejoicing freedom! And my boys
Are captives with the Moor!—oh! how was this?
Gon. Alas! our brave Alphonso, in the pride

Of boyish daring, left our mountain-halls,
With his young brother, eager to behold
The face of noble war. Thence on their way
Were the rash wanderers captured.
Elm. ’Tis enough.
—And when shall they be ransom’d?
Gon. There is ask’d
A ransom far too high.
Elm. What! have we wealth
Which might redeem a monarch, and our sons
The while wear fetters? Take thou all for them,
And we will cast our worthless grandeur from us
As ’twere a cumbrous robe! Why, thou art one,
To whose high nature pomp hath ever been
But as the plumage to a warrior’s helm,
Worn or thrown off as lightly. And for me,
Thou knowst not how serenely I could take
The peasant’s lot upon me, so my heart,
Amidst its deep affections undisturb’d,
May dwell in silence.
Xim. Father! doubt thou not
But we will bind ourselves to poverty,
With glad devotedness, if this, but this,
May win them back. Distrust us not, my father!

We can bear all things.

Gon. Can ye bear disgrace?

Xim. We were not born for this.

Gon. No, thou say’st well!

Hold to that lofty faith. My wife, my child!

Hath earth no treasures richer than the gems

Torn from her secret caverns? If by them

Chains may be riven, then let the captive spring

Rejoicing to the light! But he for whom

Freedom and life may but be won with shame,

Hath naught to do, save fearlessly to fix

His steadfast look on the majestic heavens,

And proudly die!

Elm. Gonzalez, who must die?

Gon. (hurriedly.) They on whose lives a fearful price is set,

But to be paid by treason! Is’t enough?

Or must I yet seek words?

Elm. That look saith more!

Thou canst not mean——

Gon. I do! why dwells there not

Power in a glance to speak it? They must die!

They—must their names be told?—our sons must die,

Unless I yield the city!

Xim. Oh, look up!

My mother, sink not thus! Until the grave
Shut from our sight its victims, there is hope.
Elm. (in a low voice.) Whose knell was in the breeze? No, no, not theirs!
Whose was the blessed voice that spoke of hope?
—And there is hope! I will not be subdued—
I will not hear a whisper of despair!
For nature is all-powerful, and her breath
Moves like a quickening spirit o’er the depths
Within a father’s heart. Thou too, Gonzalez,
Wilt tell me there is hope!
Gon. (solemnly.) Hope but in Him
Who bade the patriarch lay his fair young son
Bound on the shrine of sacrifice, and when
The bright steel quiver’d in the father’s hand
Just raised to strike, sent forth his awful voice
Through the still clouds and on the breathless air,
Commanding to withhold! Earth has no hope:
It rests with Him.
Elm. Thou canst not tell me this!
Thou, father of my sons, within whose hands
Doth lie thy children’s fate.
Gon. If there have been
Men in whose bosoms nature’s voice hath made
Its accents as the solitary sound

Of an o’erpowering torrent, silencing
Th’ austere and yet divine remonstrances
Whisper’d by faith and honour, lift thy hands;
And, to that Heaven which arms the brave with strength,
Pray that the father of thy sons may ne’er
Be thus found wanting!
Elm. Then their doom is seal’d!
Thou wilt not save thy children?
Gon. Hast thou cause,
Wife of my youth! to deem it lies within
The bounds of possible things, that I should link
My name to that word—traitor? They that sleep
On their proud battle-fields, thy sires and mine,
Died not for this!
Elm. Oh, cold and hard of heart!
Thou shouldst be born for empire, since thy soul
Thus lightly from all human bonds can free
Its haughty flight! Men! men! too much is yours
Of vantage; ye that with a sound, a breath,
A shadow, thus can fill the desolate space
Of rooted-up affections, o’er whose void
Our yearning hearts must wither! So it is,
Dominion must be won! Nay, leave me not—
My heart is bursting, and I must be heard!

Heaven hath given power to mortal agony,
As to the elements in their hour of might
And mastery o’er creation! Who shall dare
To mock that fearful strength! I must be heard!
Give me my sons.
Gon. That they may live to hide
With covering hands th’ indignant flush of shame
On their young brows, when men shall speak of him
They call’d their father! Was the oath whereby,
On th’ altar of my faith, I bound myself
With an unswerving spirit to maintain
This free and Christian city for my God
And for my king, a writing traced on sand?
That passionate tears should wash it from the earth,
Or e’en the life-drops of a bleeding heart
Efface it, as a billow sweeps away
The last light vessel’s wake? Then never more
Let man’s deep vows be trusted!—though enforced
By all th’ appeals of high remembrances,
And silent claims o’ th’ sepulchres wherein
His fathers with their stainless glory sleep,
On their good swords! Think’st thou I feel no pangs?
He that hath given me sons doth know the heart
Whose treasure he recalls. Of this no more:

’Tis vain. I tell thee that th’ inviolate Cross
Still from our ancient temples must look up
Through the blue heavens of Spain, though at its foot
I perish, with my race. Thou darest not ask
That I, the son of warriors—men who died
To fix it on that proud supremacy—
Should tear the sign of our victorious faith
From its high place of sunbeams, for the Moor
In impious joy to trample!
Elm. Scorn me not
In mine extreme of misery! Thou art strong—
Thy heart is not as mine. My brain grows wild;
I know not what I ask. And yet ’twere but
Anticipating fate—since it must fall,
That Cross must fall at last! There is no power,
No hope within this city of the grave,
To keep its place on high. Her sultry air
Breathes heavily of death, her warriors sink
Beneath their ancient banners, ere the Moor
Hath bent his bow against them; for the shaft
Of pestilence flies more swiftly to its mark,
Than th’ arrow of the desert. Even the skies
O’erhang the desolate splendour of her domes
With an ill omen’s aspect, shaping forth,

From the dull clouds, wild menacing forms and signs
Foreboding ruin. Man might be withstood,
But who shall cope with famine and disease
When leagued with armèd foes? Where now the aid,
Where the long-promised lances of Castile?
We are forsaken in our utmost need—
By heaven and earth forsaken!
Gon. If this be,
(And yet I will not deem it,) we must fall
As men that in severe devotedness
Have chosen their part, and bound themselves to death,
Through high conviction that their suffering land
By the free blood of martyrdom alone
Shall call deliverance down.
Elm. Oh! I have stood
Beside thee through the beating storms of life
With the true heart of unrepining love—
As the poor peasant’s mate doth cheerily,
In the parch’d vineyard, or the harvest field,
Bearing her part, sustain with him the heat
And burden of the day. But now the hour,
The heavy hour is come, when human strength
Sinks down, a toil-worn pilgrim, in the dust,
Owning that woe is mightier! Spare me yet

This bitter cup, my husband! Let not her,
The mother of the lovely, sit and mourn
In her unpeopled home—a broken stem,
O’er its fallen roses dying!
Gon. Urge me not,
Thou that through all sharp conflicts hast been found
Worthy a brave man’s love!—oh, urge me not
To guilt, which, through the midst of blinding tears,
In its own hues thou seest not! Death may scarce
Bring aught like this!
Elm. All, all thy gentle race,
The beautiful beings that around thee grew,
Creatures of sunshine! Wilt thou doom them all?
She, too, thy daughter—doth her smile unmark’d
Pass from thee, with its radiance, day by day?
Shadows are gathering round her: seest thou not
The misty dimness of the spoiler’s breath
Hangs o’er her beauty; and the face which made
The summer of our hearts, now doth but send,
With every glance, deep bodings through the soul,
Telling of early fate?
Gon. I see a change
Far nobler on her brow! She is as one,
Who, at the trumpet’s sudden call, hath risen

From the gay banquet, and in scorn cast down
The wine-cup, and the garland, and the lute
Of festal hours, for the good spear and helm,
Beseeming sterner tasks. Her eye hath lost
The beam which laugh'd upon th' awakening heart,
E'en as morn breaks o'er earth. But far within
Its full dark orb, a light hath sprung, whose source
Lies deeper in the soul. And let the torch,
Which but illumed the glittering pageant, fade!
The altar-flame, i' th' sanctuary's recess,
Burns quenchless, being of heaven! She hath put on
Courage, and faith, and generous constancy,
Even as a breastplate. Ay! men look on her,
As she goes forth serenely to her tasks,
Binding the warrior's wounds, and bearing fresh
Cool draughts to fever'd lips—they look on her,
Thus moving in her beautiful array
Of gentle fortitude, and bless the fair
Majestic vision, and unmurmuring turn
Unto their heavy toils.
Elm. And seest thou not
In that high faith and strong collectedness,
A fearful inspiration? They have cause
To tremble, who behold th' unearthly light

Of high and, it may be, prophetic thought
Investing youth with grandeur! From the grave
It rises, on whose shadowy brink thy child
Waits but a father’s hand to snatch her back
Into the laughing sunshine. Kneel with me;
Ximena! kneel beside me, and implore
That which a deeper, more prevailing voice
Than ours doth ask, and will not be denied,
—His children’s lives!
Xim. Alas! this may not be:
Mother!—I cannot.
[Exit Ximena.
Gon. My heroic child!
—A terrible sacrifice thou claim’st, O God!
From creatures in whose agonising hearts
Nature is strong as death!
Elm. Is ’t thus in thine?
Away! What time is given thee to resolve
On—what I cannot utter? Speak! thou know’st
Too well what I would say.
Gon. Until—ask not!
The time is brief.
Elm. Thou said’st—I heard not right——
Gon. The time is brief.

Elm. What! must we burst all ties
Wherewith the thrilling chords of life are twined!
And, for this task's fulfilment, can it be
That man in his cold heartlessness, hath dared,
To number and to mete us forth the sands
Of hours, nay, moments? Why, the sentenced wretch,
He on whose soul there rests a brother's blood
Pour'd forth in slumber, is allow'd more time
To wean his turbulent passions from the world
His presence doth pollute! It is not thus?
We must have time to school us.
Gon. We have but
To bow the head in silence, when heaven's voice
Calls back the things we love.
Elm. Love! love!—there are soft smiles and gentle words,
And there are faces, skilful to put on
The look we trust in—and 'tis mockery all!
—A faithless mist, a desert-vapour, wearing
The brightness of clear waters, thus to cheat
The thirst that semblance kindled! There is none,
In all this cold and hollow world—no fount
Of deep, strong, deathless love, save that within
A mother's heart. It is but pride, wherewith
To his fair son the father's eye doth turn,

Watching his growth. Ay, on the boy he looks,
The bright glad creature springing in his path,
But as the heir of his great name—the young
And stately tree, whose rising strength ere long
Shall bear his trophies well. And this is love!
This is man's love! What marvel!—you ne'er made
Your breast the pillow of his infancy,
While to the fulness of your heart's glad heavings
His fair cheek rose and fell; and his bright hair
Waved softly to your breath! You ne'er kept watch
Beside him, till the last pale star had set,
And morn, all dazzling, as in triumph, broke
On your dim weary eye; not yours the face
Which, early faded through fond care for him,
Hung o'er his sleep, and, duly as heaven's light,
Was there to greet his wak'ning! You ne'er smooth'd
His couch, ne'er sang him to his rosy rest;
Caught his least whisper, when his voice from yours
Had learn'd soft utterance; press'd your lip to his,
When fever parch'd it; hush'd his wayward cries,
With patient, vigilant, never-wearied love!
No! these are woman's tasks!—in these her youth,
And bloom of cheek, and buoyancy of heart,
Steal from her all unmark'd! My boys! my boys!

Hath vain affection borne with all for this?
—Why were ye given me?
Gon. Is there strength in man
Thus to endure? That thou couldst read, through all
Its depths of silent agony, the heart
Thy voice of woe doth rend!
Elm. Thy heart—thy heart! Away! it feels not now!
But an hour comes to tame the mighty man
Unto the infant's weakness; nor shall heaven
Spare you that bitter chastening! May you live
To be alone, when loneliness doth seem
Most heavy to sustain! For me, my voice
Of prayer and fruitless weeping shall be soon
With all forgotten sounds—my quiet place
Low with my lovely ones; and we shall sleep,
Though kings lead armies o'er us—we shall sleep,
Wrapt in earth's covering mantle! You the while
Shall sit within your vast forsaken halls,
And hear the wild and melancholy winds
Moan through their drooping banners, never more
To wave above your race. Ay, then call up
Shadows—dim phantoms from ancestral tombs,
But all, all—glorious,—conquerors, chieftains, kings,
To people that cold void! And when the strength

From your right arm hath melted, when the blast
Of the shrill clarion gives your heart no more
A fiery wakening,—if at last you pine
For the glad voices and the bounding steps
Once through your home re-echoing, and the clasp
Of twining arms, and all the joyous light
Of eyes that laugh'd with youth, and made your board
A place of sunshine,—when those days are come,
Then, in your utter desolation, turn
To the cold world—the smiling, faithless world,
Which hath swept past you long—and bid it quench
Your soul's deep thirst with fame! immortal fame!
Fame to the sick of heart!—a gorgeous robe,
A crown of victory, unto him that dies
I' th' burning waste, for water!
Gon. This from thee!
Now the last drop of bitterness is pour'd.
Elmina—I forgive thee!
[Exit Elmina.
Aid me, Heaven!
From whom alone is power! Oh! thou hast set
Duties so stern of aspect in my path,
They almost to my startled gaze assume
The hue of things less hallow'd! Men have sunk

Unblamed beneath such trials! Doth not He

Who made us know the limits of our strength?

My wife! my sons! Away! I must not pause

To give my heart one moment’s mastery thus!

[Exit Gonzalez.

[273] Mountain-Christians, those natives of Spain who, under their prince Pelayo, took refuge amongst the mountains of the northern provinces, where they maintained their religion and liberty, whilst the rest of their country was overrun by the Moors.

[274] Serranos, mountaineers.

Scene II.—The Aisle of a Gothic Church.

Hernandez, Garcias, and Others.

Her. The rites are closed. Now, valiant men! depart,

Each to his place—I may not say, of rest—

Your faithful vigils for your sons may win

What must not be your own. Ye are as those

Who sow, in peril and in care, the seed

Of the fair tree, beneath whose stately shade

They may not sit. But bless’d be those who toil

For after-days! All high and holy thoughts

Be with you, warriors! through the lingering hours

Of the night-watch.

Gar. Ay, father! we have need

Of high and holy thoughts, wherewith to fence

Our hearts against despair. Yet have I been
From youth a son of war. The stars have look’d
A thousand times upon my couch of heath,
Spread midst the wild sierras, by some stream
Whose dark-red waves look’d e’en as though their source
Lay not in rocky caverns, but the veins
Of noble hearts; while many a knightly crest
Roll’d with them to the deep. And, in the years
Of my long exile and captivity,
With the fierce Arab I have watch’d beneath
The still, pale shadow of some lonely palm,
At midnight in the desert; while the wind
Swell’d with the lion’s roar, and heavily
The fearfulness and might of solitude
Press’d on my weary heart.
Her. (thoughtfully.) Thou little know’st
Of what is solitude! I tell thee, those
For whom—in earth’s remotest nook, howe’er
Divided from their path by chain on chain
Of mighty mountains, and the amplitude
Of rolling seas—there beats one human heart,
Their breathes one being, unto whom their name
Comes with a thrilling and a gladd’ning sound
Heard o’er the din of life, are not alone!

Not on the deep, nor in the wild, alone;
For there is that on earth with which they hold
A brotherhood of soul! Call him alone,
Who stands shut out from this!—and let not those
Whose homes are bright with sunshine and with love,
Put on the insolence of happiness,
Glorying in that proud lot! A lonely hour
Is on its way to each, to all; for Death
Knows no companionship.
Gar. I have look'd on Death
In field, and storm, and flood. But never yet
Hath aught weigh'd down my spirit to a mood
Of sadness, dreaming o'er dark auguries,
Like this, our watch by midnight. Fearful things
Are gathering round us. Death upon the earth,
Omens in heaven! The summer skies put forth
No clear bright stars above us, but at times,
Catching some comet's fiery hue of wrath,
Marshal their clouds to armies, traversing
Heaven with the rush of meteor-steeds—th' array
Of spears and banners tossing like the pines
Of Pyrenean forests, when the storm
Doth sweep the mountains.
Her. Ay, last night I too

Kept vigil, gazing on the angry heavens;
And I beheld the meeting and the shock
Of those wild hosts i’ th’ air, when, as they closed,
A red and sultry mist, like that which mantles
The thunder’s path, fell o’er them. Then were flung
Through the dull glare, broad cloudy banners forth;
And chariots seem’d to whirl, and steeds to sink,
Bearing down crested warriors. But all this
Was dim and shadowy; then swift darkness rush’d
Down on th’ unearthly battle, as the deep
Swept o’er the Egyptian’s armament. I look’d,
And all that fiery field of plumes and spears
Was blotted from heaven’s face! I look’d again,
And from the brooding mass of cloud leap’d forth
One meteor-sword, which o’er the reddening sea
Shook with strange motion, such as earthquakes give
Unto a rocking citadel! I beheld,
And yet my spirit sank not.
Gar. Neither deem
That mine hath blench’d. But these are sights and sounds
To awe the firmest. Know’st thou what we hear
At midnight from the walls? Were’t but the deep
Barbaric horn, or Moorish tambour’s peal,
Thence might the warrior’s heart catch impulses

Quickening its fiery currents. But our ears
Are pierced by other tones. We hear the knell
For brave men in their noon of strength cut down,
And the shrill wail of woman, and the dirge
Faint swelling through the streets. Then e’en the air
Hath strange and fitful murmurs of lament,
As if the viewless watchers of the land
Sigh’d on its hollow breezes! To my soul
The torrent-rush of battle, with its din
Of trampling steeds and ringing panoply,
Were, after these faint sounds of drooping woe,
As the free sky’s glad music unto him
Who leaves a couch of sickness.
Her. (with solemnity.) If to plunge
In the mid waves of combat, as they bear
Chargers and spearmen onwards, and to make
A reckless bosom’s front the buoyant mark,
On that wild current, for ten thousand arrows—
If thus to dare were valour’s noblest aim,
Lightly might fame be won! But there are things,
Which ask a spirit of more exalted pitch,
And courage temper’d with a holier fire.
Well may’st thou say that these are fearful times;
Therefore, be firm, be patient! There is strength,

And a fierce instinct, e’en in common souls,
To bear up manhood with a stormy joy,
When red swords meet in lightning! But our task
Is more and nobler! We have to endure,
And to keep watch, and to arouse a land,
And to defend an altar! If we fall,
So that our blood make but the millionth part
Of Spain’s great ransom, we may count it joy
To die upon her bosom, and beneath
The banner of her faith! Think but on this,
And gird your hearts with silent fortitude,
Suffering, yet hoping all things. Fare ye well.
Gar. Father, farewell.
[Exeunt Garcias and his followers
.
Her. These men have earthly ties
And bondage on their natures! To the cause
Of God, and Spain’s revenge, they bring but half
Their energies and hopes. But he whom heaven
Hath call’d to be th’ awakener of a land,
Should have his soul’s affections all absorb’d
In that majestic purpose, and press on
To its fulfilment—as a mountain-born
And mighty stream, with all its vassal rills,

Sweeps proudly to the ocean, pausing not
To dally with the flowers. Hark! what quick step
Comes hurrying through the gloom, at this dead hour?
Elmina enters.
Elm. Are not all hours as one to misery? Why
Should she take note of time, for whom the day
And night have lost their blessed attributes
Of sunshine and repose?
Her. I know thy griefs;
But there are trials for the noble heart,
Wherein its own deep fountains must supply
All it can hope of comfort. Pity's voice
Comes with vain sweetness to th' unheeding ear
Of anguish, e'en as music heard afar
On the green shore, by him who perishes
Midst rocks and eddying waters.
Elm. Think thou not
I sought thee but for pity. I am come
For that which grief is privileged to demand
With an imperious claim, from all whose form—
Whose human form, doth seal them unto suffering!
Father! I ask thine aid.
Her. There is no aid
For thee or for thy children, but with Him

Whose presence is around us in the cloud,
As in the shining and the glorious light.
Elm. There is no aid! Art thou a man of God?
Art thou a man of sorrow?—for the world
Doth call thee such;—and hast thou not been taught
By God and sorrow—mighty as they are—
To own the claims of misery?
Her. Is there power
With me to save thy sons?—implore of heaven!
Elm. Doth not heaven work its purposes by man?
I tell thee thou canst save them! Art thou not
Gonsalez' counsellor? Unto him thy words
Are e'en as oracles——
Her. And therefore? Speak!—
The noble daughter of Pelayo's line
Hath naught to ask unworthy of the name
Which is a nation's heritage. Dost thou shrink?
Elm. Have pity on me, father! I must speak
That, from the thought of which but yesterday
I had recoil'd in scorn! But this is past
Oh! we grow humble in our agonies,
And to the dust—their birthplace—bow the heads
That wore the crown of glory! I am weak—
My chastening is far more than I can bear.

Her. These are no times for weakness. On our hills
The ancient cedars, in their gather’d might,
Are battling with the tempest, and the flower
Which cannot meet its driving blast must die.
But thou hast drawn thy nurture from a stem
Unwont to bend or break. Lift thy proud head,
Daughter of Spain!—what wouldst thou with thy lord?
Elm. Look not upon me thus! I have no power
To tell thee. Take thy keen disdainful eye
Off from my soul! What! am I sunk to this?
I, whose blood sprung from heroes! How my sons
Will scorn the mother that would bring disgrace
On their majestic line! My sons! my sons!
—Now is all else forgotten! I had once
A babe that in the early spring-time lay
Sickening upon my bosom, till at last,
When earth’s young flowers were opening to the sun,
Death sank on his meek eyelid, and I deem’d
All sorrow light to mine! But now the fate
Of all my children seems to brood above me
In the dark thunder-clouds! Oh! I have power
And voice unfaltering now to speak my prayer
And my last lingering hope, that thou shouldst win
The father to relent, to save his sons!

Her. By yielding up the city?

Elm. Rather say

By meeting that which gathers close upon us,

Perchance one day the sooner! Is’t not so?

Must we not yield at last? How long shall man

Array his single breast against disease,

And famine, and the sword?

Her. How long? While He

Who shadows forth his power more gloriously

In the high deeds and sufferings of the soul,

Than in the circling heavens with all their stars,

Or the far-sounding deep, doth send abroad

A spirit, which takes affliction for its mate,

In the good cause, with solemn joy! How long?

—And who art thou that, in the littleness

Of thine own selfish purpose, wouldst set bounds

To the free current of all noble thought

And generous action, bidding its bright waves

Be stay’d, and flow no farther? But the Power

Whose interdict is laid on seas and orbs,

To chain them in from wandering, hath assign’d

No limits unto that which man’s high strength

Shall, through its aid, achieve!

Elm. Oh! there are times,

When all that hopeless courage can achieve
But sheds a mournful beauty o’er the fate
Of those who die in vain.
Her. Who dies in vain
Upon his country’s war-fields, and within
The shadow of her altars? Feeble heart!
I tell thee that the voice of noble blood,
Thus pour’d for faith and freedom, hath a tone
Which, from the night of ages, from the gulf
Of death, shall burst, and make its high appeal
Sound unto earth and heaven! Ay, let the land,
Whose sons through centuries of woe have striven,
And perish’d by her temples, sink awhile,
Borne down in conflict! But immortal seed
Deep, by heroic suffering, hath been sown
On all her ancient hills, and generous hope
Knows that the soil, in its good time, shall yet
Bring forth a glorious harvest! Earth receives
Not one red drop from faithful hearts in vain.
Elm. Then it must be! And ye will make those lives,
Those young bright lives, an offering—to retard
Our doom one day!
Her. The mantle of that day
May wrap the fate of Spain!

Elm. What led me here?

Why did I turn to thee in my despair?

Love hath no ties upon thee; what had I

To hope from thee, thou lone and childless man?

Go to thy silent home!—there no young voice

Shall bid thee welcome, no light footstep spring

Forth at the sound of thine! What knows thy heart?

Her. Woman! how darest thou taunt me with my woes?

Thy children, too, shall perish, and I say

It shall be well! Why takest thou thought for them?

Wearing thy heart, and wasting down thy life

Unto its dregs, and making night thy time

Of care yet more intense, and casting health

Unprized to melt away i' th' bitter cup

Thou minglest for thyself? Why, what hath earth

To pay thee back for this? Shall they not live

(If the sword spare them now) to prove how soon

All love may be forgotten? Years of thought,

Long faithful watchings, looks of tenderness,

That changed not, though to change be this world's law—

Shall they not flush thy cheek with shame, whose blood

Marks e'en like branding iron? to thy sick heart

Make death a want, as sleep to weariness?

Doth not all hope end thus? or e'en at best,

Will they not leave thee? far from thee seek room
For the o’erflowings of their fiery souls
On life’s wide ocean? Give the bounding steed
Or the wing’d bark to youth, that his free course
May be o’er hills and seas; and weep thou not
In thy forsaken home, for the bright world
Lies all before him, and be sure he wastes
No thought on thee!
Elm. Not so! it is not so!
Thou dost but torture me! My sons are kind,
And brave, and gentle.
Her. Others, too, have worn
The semblance of all good. Nay, stay thee yet;
I will be calm, and thou shalt learn how earth,
The fruitful in all agonies, hath woes
Which far outweigh thine own.
Elm. It may not be!
Whose grief is like a mother’s for her sons?
Her. My son lay stretch’d upon his battle-bier,
And there were hands wrung o’er him which had caught
Their hue from his young blood!
Elm. What tale is this?
Her. Read you no records in this mien, of things
Whose traces on man’s aspect are not such

As the breeze leaves on water? Lofty birth,

War, peril, power? Affliction’s hand is strong,

If it erase the haughty characters

They grave so deep! I have not always been

That which I am. The name I bore is not

Of those which perish! I was once a chief—

A warrior—nor as now, a lonely man!

I was a father!

Elm. Then thy heart can feel!

Thou wilt have pity!

Her. Should I pity thee?

Thy sons will perish gloriously—their blood——

Elm. Their blood! my children’s blood! Thou speak’st as ’twere

Of casting down a wine-cup, in the mirth

And wantonness of feasting! My fair boys!

—Man! hast thou been a father?

Her. Let them die!

Let them die now, thy children! so thy heart

Shall wear their beautiful image all undimm’d

Within it, to the last! Nor shalt thou learn

The bitter lesson, of what worthless dust

Are framed the idols whose false glory binds

Earth’s fetter on our souls! Thou think’st it much

To mourn the early dead; but there are tear’s

Heavy with deeper anguish! We endow
Those whom we love, in our fond passionate blindness,
With power upon our souls, too absolute
To be a mortal’s trust! Within their hands
We lay the flaming sword, whose stroke alone
Can reach our hearts; and they are merciful,
As they are strong, that wield it not to pierce us!
Ay, fear them! fear the loved! Had I but wept
O’er my son’s grave, or o’er a babe’s, where tears
Are as spring dew-drops, glittering in the sun,
And brightening the young verdure, I might still
Have loved and trusted!
Elm. (disdainfully.) But he fell in war!
And hath not glory medicine in her cup
For the brief pangs of nature?
Her. Glory!—Peace,
And listen! By my side the stripling grew,
Last of my line. I rear’d him to take joy
I’ th’ blaze of arms, as eagles train their young
To look upon the day-king! His quick blood
Even to his boyish cheek would mantle up,
When the heavens rang with trumpets, and his eye
Flash with the spirit of a race whose deeds—
—But this availeth not! Yet he was brave.

I’ve seen him clear himself a path in fight
As lightning through a forest; and his plume
Waved like a torch above the battle-storm,
The soldier’s guide, when princely crests had sunk,
And banners were struck down. Around my steps
Floated his fame, like music, and I lived
But in the lofty sound. But when my heart
In one frail ark had ventured all, when most
He seem’d to stand between my soul and heaven,
—Then came the thunder-stroke!
Elm. ’Tis ever thus!
And the unquiet and foreboding sense
That thus ’twill ever be, doth link itself
Darkly with all deep love! He died?
Her. Not so!
—Death! Death! Why, earth should be a paradise,
To make that name so fearful! Had he died,
With his young fame about him for a shroud,
I had not learn’d the might of agony
To bring proud natures low! No! he fell off—
Why do I tell thee this? what right hast thou
To learn how pass’d the glory from my house?
Yet listen! He forsook me! He, that was
As mine own soul, forsook me! trampled o’er

The ashes of his sires! ay, leagued himself
E’en with the infidel, the curse of Spain;
And, for the dark eye of a Moorish maid,
Abjured his faith, his God! Now, talk of death!
Elm. Oh! I can pity thee——
Her. There’s more to hear.
I braced the corslet o’er my heart’s deep wound,
And cast my troubled spirit on the tide
Of war and high events, whose stormy waves
Might bear it up from sinking;——
Elm. And ye met
No more?
Her. Be still! We did! we met once more.
God had his own high purpose to fulfil,
Or think’st thou that the sun in his bright heaven
Had look’d upon such things? We met once more.
That was an hour to leave its lightning-mark
Sear’d upon brain and bosom! There had been
Combat on Ebro’s banks, and when the day
Sank in red clouds, it faded from a field
Still held by Moorish lances. Night closed round—
A night of sultry darkness, in the shadow
Of whose broad wing, e’en unto death, I strove
Long with a turban’d champion; but my sword

Was heavy with God’s vengeance—and prevail’d.
He fell—my heart exulted—and I stood
In gloomy triumph o’er him. Nature gave
No sign of horror, for ’twas Heaven’s decree!
He strove to speak—but I had done the work
Of wrath too well; yet in his last deep moan
A dreadful something of familiar sound
Came o’er my shuddering sense. The moon look’d forth,
And I beheld—speak not!—twas he—my son!
My boy lay dying there! He raised one glance
And knew me—for he sought with feeble hand
To cover his glazed eyes. A darker veil
Sank o’er them soon. I will not have thy look
Fix’d on me thus! Away!
Elm. Thou hast seen this,
Thou hast done this—and yet thou liv’st?
Her. I live!
And know’st thou wherefore? On my soul there fell
A horror of great darkness, which shut out
All earth, and heaven, and hope. I cast away
The spear and helm, and made the cloister’s shade
The home of my despair. But a deep voice
Came to me through the gloom, and sent its tones
Far through my bosom’s depths. And I awoke;

Ay, as the mountain-cedar doth shake off
Its weight of wintry snow, e’en so I shook
Despondence from my soul, and knew myself
Seal’d by that blood wherewith my hands were dyed,
And set apart, and fearfully mark’d out
Unto a mighty task! To rouse the soul
Of Spain as from the dead; and to lift up
The Cross, her sign of victory, on the hills,
Gathering her sons to battle! And my voice
Must be as freedom’s trumpet on the winds,
From Roncesvalles to the blue sea-waves
Where Calpe looks on Afric; till the land
Have fill’d her cup of vengeance! Ask me now
To yield the Christian city, that its fanes
May rear the minaret in the face of heaven!—
But death shall have a bloodier vintage-feast
Ere that day come!
Elm. I ask thee this no more,
For I am hopeless now. But yet one boon—
Hear me, by all thy woes! Thy voice hath power
Through the wide city: here I cannot rest—
Aid me to pass the gates!
Her. And wherefore?
Elm. Thou,

That wert a father, and art now—alone!
Canst thou ask “wherefore?” Ask the wretch whose sands
Have not an hour to run, whose failing limbs
Have but one earthly journey to perform,
Why, on his pathway to the place of death,
Ay, when the very axe is glistening cold
Upon his dizzy sight, his pale, parch’d lip
Implores a cup of water? Why, the stroke
Which trembles o’er him in itself shall bring
Oblivion of all wants, yet who denies
Nature’s last prayer? I tell thee that the thirst
Which burns my spirit up is agony
To be endured no more! And I must look
Upon my children’s faces, I must hear
Their voices, ere they perish! But hath heaven
Decreed that they must perish? Who shall say
If in yon Moslem camp there beats no heart
Which prayers and tears may melt?
Her. There!—with the Moor!
Let him fill up the measure of his guilt!
—’Tis madness all! How wouldst thou pass th’ array
Of armèd foes?
Elm. Oh! free doth sorrow pass,
Free and unquestion’d, through a suffering world![275]

Her. This must not be. Enough of woe is laid
E’en now upon thy lord’s heroic soul,
For man to bear, unsinking. Press thou not
Too heavily th’ o’erburthen’d heart. Away!
Bow down the knee, and send thy prayers for strength
Up to heaven’s gate. Farewell!
[Exit Hernandez.
Elm. Are all men thus?
—Why, were’t not better they should fall e’en now
Than live to shut their hearts, in haughty scorn,
Against the sufferer’s pleadings? But no, no!
Who can be like this man, that slew his son,
Yet wears his life still proudly, and a soul
Untamed upon his brow?
(After a pause.) There’s one, whose arms
Have borne my children in their infancy,
And on whose knees they sported, and whose hand
Hath led them oft—a vassal of their sire’s;
And I will seek him: he may lend me aid,
When all beside pass on.
DIRGE, (heard without.)
Thou to thy rest art gone,
High heart! and what are we,
While o’er our heads the storm sweeps on,

That we should mourn for thee?

Free grave and peaceful bier

To the buried son of Spain!

To those that live, the lance and spear,

And well if not the chain!

Be theirs to weep the dead,

As they sit beneath their vines,

Whose flowery land hath borne no tread

Of spoilers o’er its shrines!

Thou hast thrown off the load

Which we must yet sustain,

And pour our blood where thine hath flow’d,

Too blest if not in vain!

We give thee holy rite,

Slow knell, and chanted strain!

—For those that fall to-morrow night,

May be left no funeral-train.

Again, when trumpets wake,

We must brace our armour on;

But a deeper note thy sleep must break—

Thou to thy rest art gone!

Happier in this than all,

That, now thy race is run,

Upon thy name no stain may fall,

Thy work hath well been done!

Elm. “Thy work hath well been done!”—so thou may’st rest!

—There is a solemn lesson in those words—

But now I may not pause.

[Exit Elmina.

[275]

“Frey geht das Unglück durch die ganze Erde.”

Schiller’s Death of Wallenstein, act iv. sc. 2.

Scene III.—A Street in the City.

Hernandez, Gonzalez.

Her. Would they not hear?

Gon. They heard, as one that stands

By the cold grave, which hath but newly closed

O’er his last friend, doth hear some passer-by

Bid him be comforted! Their hearts have died

Within them! We must perish, not as those

That fall when battle’s voice doth shake the hills,

And peal through heaven’s great arch, but silently,

And with a wasting of the spirit down,

A quenching, day by day, of some bright spark,

Which lit us on our toils! Reproach me not;

My soul is darken’d with a heavy cloud—

Yet fear not I shall yield!

Her. Breathe not the word,

Save in proud scorn! Each bitter day o’erpass’d
By slow endurance, is a triumph won
For Spain’s red Cross. And be of trusting heart!
A few brief hours, and those that turn’d away
In cold despondence, shrinking from your voice,
May crowd around their leader, and demand
To be array’d for battle. We must watch
For the swift impulse, and await its time,
As the bark waits the ocean’s. You have chosen
To kindle up their souls, an hour, perchance,
When they were weary; they had cast aside
Their arms to slumber; or a knell, just then,
With its deep hollow tone, had made the blood
Creep shuddering through their veins; or they had caught
A glimpse of some new meteor, and shaped forth
Strange omens from its blaze.
Gon. Alas! the cause
Lies deeper, in their misery! I have seen,
In my night’s course through this beleaguer’d city,
Things whose remembrance doth not pass away
As vapours from the mountains. There were some,
That sat beside their dead, with eyes wherein
Grief had ta’en place of sight, and shut out all
But its own ghastly object. To my voice

Some answer’d with a fierce and bitter laugh,
As men whose agonies were made to pass
The bounds of sufferance, by some reckless word,
Dropt from the light of spirit. Others lay—
Why should I tell thee, father! how despair
Can bring the lofty brow of manhood down
Unto the very dust? And yet for this,
Fear not that I embrace my doom—O God!
That ’twere my doom alone!—with less of fix’d
And solemn fortitude. Lead on, prepare
The holiest rites of faith, that I by them
Once more may consecrate my sword, my life;
—But what are these? Who hath not dearer lives
Twined with his own! I shall be lonely soon—
Childless! Heaven wills it so. Let us begone.
Perchance before the shrine my heart may beat
With a less troubled motion.
[Exeunt Gonzalez and Hernandez.

Scene IV.—A Tent in the Moorish Camp.

Abdullah, Alphonso, Carlos.

Abd. These are bold words: but hast thou look’d on death,
Fair stripling? On thy cheek and sunny brow
Scarce fifteen summers of their laughing course
Have left light traces. If thy shaft hath pierced

The ibex of the mountains, if thy step
Hath climb’d some eagle’s nest, and thou hast made
His nest thy spoil, ’tis much! And fear’st thou not
The leader of the mighty?
Alph. I have been
Rear’d amongst fearless men, and midst the rocks
And the wild hills, whereon my fathers fought
And won their battles. There are glorious tales
Told of their deeds, and I have learn’d them all.
How should I fear thee, Moor?
Abd. So, thou hast seen
Fields, where the combat’s roar hath died away
Into the whispering breeze, and where wild flowers
Bloom o’er forgotten graves! But know’st thou aught
Of those, where sword from crossing sword strikes fire,
And leaders are borne down, and rushing steeds
Trample the life from out the mighty hearts
That ruled the storm so late?—Speak not of death
Till thou hast look’d on such.
Alph. I was not born
A shepherd’s son, to dwell with pipe and crook,
And peasant men, amidst the lowly vales;
Instead of ringing clarions, and bright spears,
And crested knights! I am of princely race;

And, if my father would have heard my suit.

I tell thee, infidel, that long ere now

I should have seen how lances meet, and swords

Do the field's work.

Abd. Boy!—know'st thou there are sights

A thousand times more fearful? Men may die

Full proudly, when the skies and mountains ring

To battle-horn and tecbir.[276] But not all

So pass away in glory. There are those,

Midst the dead silence of pale multitudes,

Led forth in fetters—dost thou mark me, boy?—

To take their last look of th' all-gladdening sun,

And bow, perchance, the stately head of youth

Unto the death of shame!—Hadst thou seen this——

Alph. (to Carlos.) Sweet brother, God is with us—fear thou not!

We have had heroes for our sires:—this man

Should not behold us tremble.

Abd. There are means

To tame the loftiest natures. Yet again

I ask thee, wilt thou, from beneath the walls,

Sue to thy sire for life!—or would'st thou die

With this thy brother?

Alph. Moslem! on the hills,

Around my father's castle, I have heard

The mountain-peasants, as they dress'd the vines,

Or drove the goats, by rock and torrent, home,

Singing their ancient songs; and these were all

Of the Cid Campeador; and how his sword

Tizona[277] clear'd its way through turban'd hosts,

And captured Afric's kings, and how he won

Valencia from the Moor.[278] I will not shame

The blood we draw from him!

[A Moorish soldier enters.

Sol. Valencia's lord

Sends messengers, my chief.

Abd. Conduct them hither.

[The soldier goes out and re-enters with Elmina, disguised, and an attendant.

Car. (springing forward to the attendant.)

Oh! take me hence, Diego! take me hence

With thee, that I may see my mother's face

At morning when I wake. Here dark-brow'd men

Frown strangely, with their cruel eyes, upon us.

Take me with thee, for thou art good and kind,

And well I know thou lov'st me, my Diego!

Abd. Peace, boy!—What tidings, Christian, from thy lord?

Is he grown humbler?—doth he set the lives

Of these fair nurslings at a city's worth?

Alph. (rushing forward impatiently.) Say not he doth!—Yet wherefore art thou here?

If it be so, I could weep burning tears
For very shame! If this can be, return!
Tell him, of all his wealth, his battle-spoils,
I will but ask a war-horse and a sword,
And that beside him in the mountain-chase,
And in his halls, and at his stately feasts,
My place shall be no more! But no!—I wrong,
I wrong my father! Moor, believe it not:
He is a champion of the Cross and Spain,
Sprung from the Cid!—and I, too, I can die
As a warrior's high-born child!
Elm. Alas, alas!
And wouldst thou die, thus early die, fair boy?
What hath life done to thee, that thou shouldst cast
Its flower away, in very scorn of heart,
Ere yet the blight be come?
Alph. That voice doth sound——
Abd. Stranger, who art thou?—this is mockery! speak!
Elm. (throwing off a mantle and helmet, and embracing her sons.)
My boys! whom I have rear'd through many hours
Of silent joys and sorrows, and deep thoughts
Untold and unimagined; let me die
With you, now I have held you to my heart,
And seen once more the faces, in whose light

My soul hath lived for years!

Car. Sweet mother! now

Thou shalt not leave us more.

Abd. Enough of this!

Woman! what seek’st thou here? How hast thou dared

To front the mighty thus amidst his hosts?

Elm. Think’st thou there dwells no courage but in breasts

That set their mail against the ringing spears,

When helmets are struck down? Thou little know’st

Of nature’s marvels. Chief! my heart is nerved

To make its way through things which warrior men,

Ay, they that master death by field or flood,

Would look on, ere they braved! I have no thought,

No sense of fear! Thou’rt mighty! but a soul

Wound up like mine is mightier, in the power

Of that one feeling pour’d through all its depths,

Than monarchs with their hosts? Am I not come

To die with these my children?

Abd. Doth thy faith

Bid thee do this, fond Christian? Hast thou not

The means to save them?

Elm. I have prayers, and tears,

And agonies!—and he, my God—the God

Whose hand, or soon or late, doth find its hour

To bow the crested head—hath made these things
Most powerful in a world where all must learn
That one deep language, by the storm call’d forth
From the bruised reeds of earth! For thee, perchance,
Affliction’s chastening lesson hath not yet
Been laid upon thy heart; and thou may’st love
To see the creatures, by its might brought low,
Humbled before thee.
[She throws herself at his feet.
Conqueror, I can kneel!
I, that drew birth from princes, bow myself
E’en to thy feet! Call in thy chiefs, thy slaves,
If this will swell thy triumph, to behold
The blood of kings, of heroes, thus abased!
Do this, but spare my sons!
Alph. (attempting to raise her.) Thou shouldst not kneel
Unto this infidel! Rise, rise, my mother!
This sight doth shame our house!
Abd. Thou daring boy!
They that in arms have taught thy father’s land
How chains are worn, shall school that haughty mien
Unto another language.
Elm. Peace, my son!
Have pity on my heart! Oh, pardon, chief!

He is of noble blood. Hear, hear me yet!
Are there no lives through which the shafts of heaven
May reach your soul? He that loves aught on earth,
Dares far too much, if he be merciless!
Is it for those, whose frail mortality
Must one day strive alone with God and death,
To shut their souls against th' appealing voice
Of nature, in her anguish? Warrior, man,
To you, too, ay, and haply with your hosts,
By thousands and ten thousands marshall'd round,
And your strong armour on, shall come that stroke
Which the lance wards not! Where shall your high heart
Find refuge then, if in the day of might
Woe hath lain prostrate, bleeding at your feet,
And you have pitied not?
Abd. These are vain words.
Elm. Have you no children?—fear ye not to bring
The lightning on their heads? In your own land
Doth no fond mother, from the tents beneath
Your native palms, look o'er the deserts out,
To greet your homeward step? You have not yet
Forgot so utterly her patient love—
For is not woman's in all climes the same?—
That you should scorn my prayer! Oh heaven! his eye

Doth wear no mercy!

Abd. Then it mocks you not.

I have swept o’er the mountains of your land,

Leaving my traces, as the visitings

Of storms upon them! Shall I now be stay’d?

Know, unto me it were as light a thing,

In this my course, to quench your children’s lives,

As, journeying through a forest, to break off

The young wild branches that obstruct the way

With their green sprays and leaves.

Elm. Are there such hearts

Amongst thy works, O God?

Abd. Kneel not to me.

Kneel to your lord! on his resolves doth hang

His children’s doom. He may be lightly won

By a few bursts of passionate tears and words.

Elm. (rising indignantly.) Speak not of noble men! He bears a soul

Stronger than love or death.

Alph. (with exultation.) I knew ’twas thus!

He could not fail!

Elm. There is no mercy, none,

On this cold earth! To strive with such a world,

Hearts should be void of love! We will go hence,

My children! we are summon’d. Lay your heads,

In their young radiant beauty, once again
To rest upon this bosom. He that dwells
Beyond the clouds which press us darkly round,
Will yet have pity, and before His face
We three will stand together! Moslem! now
Let the stroke fall at once!
Abd. ’Tis thine own will.
These might e’en yet be spared.
Elm. Thou wilt not spare!
And he beneath whose eye their childhood grew,
And in whose paths they sported, and whose ear
From their first lisping accents caught the sound
Of that word—Father—once a name of love—
Is——Men shall call him steadfast.
Abd. Hath the blast
Of sudden trumpets ne’er at dead of night,
When the land’s watchers fear’d no hostile step,
Startled the slumberers from their dreamy world,
In cities, whose heroic lords have been
Steadfast as thine?
Elm. There’s meaning in thine eye,
More than thy words.
Abd. (pointing to the city.) Look to yon towers and walls!
Think you no hearts within their limits pine,

Weary of hopeless warfare, and prepared
To burst the feeble links which bind them still
Unto endurance.
Elm. Thou hast said too well.
But what of this?
Abd. Then there are those, to whom
The Prophet's armies not as foes would pass
Yon gates, but as deliverers. Might they not
In some still hour, when weariness takes rest,
Be won to welcome us? Your children's steps
May yet bound lightly through their father's halls!
Alph. (indignantly.) Thou treacherous Moor!
Elm. Let me not thus be tried
Beyond all strength, O heaven!
Abd. Now, 'tis for thee,
Thou Christian mother! on thy sons to pass
The sentence—life or death! The price is set
On their young blood, and rests within thy hands.
Alph. Mother! thou tremblest!
Abd. Hath thy heart resolved?
Elm. (covering her face with her hands.)
My boy's proud eye is on me, and the things
Which rush in stormy darkness through my soul
Shrink from his glance. I cannot answer here.

Abd. Come forth. We'll commune elsewhere.

Car. (to his mother.) Wilt thou go?

Oh! let me follow thee!

Elm. Mine own fair child!

Now that thine eyes have pour'd once more on mine

The light of their young smile, and thy sweet voice

Hath sent its gentle music through my soul,

And I have felt the twining of thine arms—

How shall I leave thee?

Abd. Leave him, as 'twere but

For a brief slumber, to behold his face

At morning, with the sun's.

Alph. Thou hast no look

For me, my mother!

Elm. Oh! that I should live

To say, I dare not look on thee! Farewell,

My first-born, fare thee well!

Alph. Yet, yet beware!

It were a grief more heavy on thy soul,

That I should blush for thee, than o'er my grave

That thou shouldst proudly weep!

Abd. Away! we trifle here. The night wanes fast.

Come forth!

Elm. One more embrace! My sons, farewell!

[Exeunt Abdullah with Elmina and her Attendant.

Alph. Hear me yet once, my mother! Art thou gone?

But one word more!

[He rushes out, followed by Carlos.

[276] Tecbir, the war-cry of the Moors and Arabs.

[277] Tizona, the fire-brand. The name of the Cid's favourite sword, taken in battle from the Moorish king Bucar.

[278] Valencia, which has been repeatedly besieged and taken by the armies of different nations, remained in possession of the Moors for a hundred and seventy years after the Cid's death. It was regained from them by King Don Jayme of Aragon, surnamed the Conqueror; after whose success I have ventured to suppose it governed by a descendant of the Campeador.

Scene V.—The Garden of a Palace in Valencia.

Ximena, Theresa.

Ther. Stay yet awhile. A purer air doth rove

Here through the myrtles whispering, and the limes,

And shaking sweetness from the orange boughs,

Than waits you in the city.

Xim. There are those

In their last need, and on their bed of death,—

At which no hand doth minister but mine,—

That wait me in the city. Let us hence.

Ther. You have been wont to love the music made

By founts, and rustling foliage, and soft winds,

Breathing of citron-groves. And will you turn
From these to scenes of death?
Xim. To me the voice
Of summer, whispering through young flowers and leaves,
Now speaks too deep a language! and of all
Its dreamy and mysterious melodies,
The breathing soul is sadness! I have felt
That summons through my spirit, after which
The hues of earth are changed, and all her sounds
Seem fraught with secret warnings. There is cause
That I should bend my footsteps to the scenes
Where Death is busy, taming warrior-hearts,
And pouring winter through the fiery blood,
And fettering the strong arm! For now no sigh
In the dull air, nor floating cloud in heaven,
No, not the lightest murmur of a leaf,
But of his angel’s silent coming bears
Some token to my soul. But naught of this
Unto my mother! These are awful hours!
And on their heavy steps afflictions crowd
With such dark pressure, there is left no room
For one grief more.
Ther. Sweet lady, talk not thus!
Your eye this morn doth wear a calmer light,

There’s more of life in its clear tremulous ray
Than I have mark’d of late. Nay, go not yet;
Rest by this fountain, where the laurels dip
Their glossy leaves. A fresher gale doth spring
From the transparent waters, dashing round
Their silvery spray, with a sweet voice of coolness,
O’er the pale glistening marble. ’Twill call up
Faint bloom, if but a moment’s, to your cheek.
Rest here, ere you go forth, and I will sing
The melody you love.
Theresa sings.
Why is the Spanish maiden’s grave
So far from her own bright land?
The sunny flowers that o’er it wave
Were sown by no kindred hand.
’Tis not the orange-bough that sends
Its breath on the sultry air,
’Tis not the myrtle-stem that bends
To the breeze of evening there!
But the rose of Sharon’s eastern bloom
By the silent dwelling fades,
And none but strangers pass the tomb
Which the palm of Judah shades.
The lowly Cross, with flowers o’ergrown,

Marks well that place of rest;
But who hath graved, on its mossy stone,
A sword, a helm, a crest?
These are the trophies of a chief,
A lord of the axe and spear!
—Some blossom pluck’d, some faded leaf,
Should grace a maiden’s bier!
Scorn not her tomb—deny not her
The honours of the brave!
O’er that forsaken sepulchre
Banner and plume might wave.
She bound the steel, in battle tried,
Her fearless heart above,
And stood with brave men side by side,
In the strength and faith of love!
That strength prevail’d—that faith was bless’d!
True was the javelin thrown,
Yet pierced it not her warrior’s breast—
She met it with her own!
And nobly won, where heroes fell
In arms for the holy shrine,
A death which saved what she loved so well,
And a grave in Palestine.
Then let the rose of Sharon spread

Its breast to the glowing air,
And the palm of Judah lift its head,
Green and immortal there!
And let yon gray stone, undefaced,
With its trophy mark the scene,
Telling the pilgrim of the waste
Where Love and Death have been.

Xim. Those notes were wont to make my heart
beat quick,
As at a voice of victory; but to-day
The spirit of the song is changed, and seems
All mournful. Oh! that, ere my early grave
Shuts out the sunbeam, I might hear one peal
Of the Castilian trumpet, ringing forth
Beneath my father's banner! In that sound
Were life to you, sweet brothers!—But for me—
Come on—our tasks await us. They who know
Their hours are number'd out, have little time
To give the vague and slumberous languor way,
Which doth steal o'er them in the breath of flowers,
And whisper of soft winds.

[Elmina enters hurriedly.

Elm. The air will calm my spirit, ere yet I meet
His eye, which must be met.—Thou here, Ximena!

[She starts back on seeing Ximena.

Xim. Alas! my mother! in that hurrying step

And troubled glance I read——

Elm. (wildly.) Thou read'st it not!

Why, who would live, if unto mortal eye

The things lay glaring, which within our hearts

We treasure up for God's? Thou read'st it not!

I say, thou canst not! There's not one on earth

Shall know the thoughts, which for themselves have made

And kept dark places in the very breast

Whereon he hath laid his slumber, till the hour

When the graves open!

Xim. Mother! what is this!

Alas! your eye is wandering, and your cheek

Flush'd, as with fever! To your woes the night

Hath brought no rest.

Elm. Rest!—who should rest?—not he

That holds one earthly blessing to his heart

Nearer than life! No! if this world have aught

Of bright or precious, let not him, who calls

Such things his own, take rest!—Dark spirits keep watch;

And they to whom fair honour, chivalrous fame,

Were as heaven's air, the vital element

Wherein they breathed, may wake, and find their souls

Made marks for human scorn! Will they bear on
With life struck down, and thus disrobed of all
Its glorious drapery? Who shall tell us this?
—Will he so bear it?
Xim. Mother! let us kneel
And blend our hearts in prayer! What else is left
To mortals when the dark hour's might is on them?
—Leave us, Theresa.—Grief like this doth find
Its balm in solitude.
[Exit Theresa.
My mother! peace
Is heaven's benignant answer to the cry
Of wounded spirits. Wilt thou kneel with me?
Elm. Away! 'tis but for souls unstain'd, to wear
Heaven's tranquil image on their depths.—The stream
Of my dark thoughts, all broken by the storm,
Reflects but clouds and lightnings!—Didst thou speak
Of peace?—'tis fled from earth! But there is joy!
Wild, troubled joy! And who shall know, my child,
It is not happiness? Why, our own hearts
Will keep the secret close! Joy, joy! if but
To leave this desolate city, with its dull
Slow knells and dirges, and to breathe again
Th' untainted mountain-air!—But hush! the trees,

The flowers, the waters, must hear naught of this!

They are full of voices, and will whisper things——

—We'll speak of it no more.

Xim. O pitying heaven!

This grief doth shake her reason!

Elm. (starting.) Hark! a step!

'Tis—'tis thy father's! Come away—not now—

He must not see us now!

Xim. Why should this be?

[Gonzalez enters, and detains Elmina.

Gon. Elmina, dost thou shun me? Have we not

E'en from the hopeful and the sunny time

When youth was as a glory round our brows,

Held on through life together? And is this,

When eve is gathering round us, with the gloom

Of stormy clouds, a time to part our steps

Upon the darkening wild?

Elm. (coldly.) There needs not this.

Why shouldst thou think I shunn'd thee

Gon. Should the love

That shone o'er many years, th' unfading love,

Whose only change hath been from gladdening smiles

To mingling sorrows and sustaining strength,

Thus lightly be forgotten?

Elm. Speak’st thou thus?
—I have knelt before thee with that very plea,
When it avail’d me not! But there are things
Whose very breathings from the soul erase
All record of past love, save the chill sense,
Th’ unquiet memory of its wasted faith,
And vain devotedness! Ay! they that fix
Affection’s perfect trust on aught of earth,
Have many a dream to start from!
Gon. This is but
The wildness and the bitterness of grief,
Ere yet the unsettled heart hath closed its long
Impatient conflicts with a mightier power,
Which makes all conflict vain.
——Hark! was there not
A sound of distant trumpets, far beyond
The Moorish tents, and of another tone
Than th’ Afric horn, Ximena?
Xim. O my father!
I know that horn too well.—’Tis but the wind,
Which, with a sudden rising, bears its deep
And savage war-note from us, wafting it
O’er the far hills.
Gon. Alas! this woe must be!

I do not shake my spirit from its height,
So startling it with hope! But the dread hour
Shall be met bravely still. I can keep down
Yet for a little while—and heaven will ask
No more—the passionate workings of my heart
—And thine, Elmina?
Elm. ’Tis—I am prepared.
I have prepared for all.
Gon. Oh, well I knew
Thou wouldst not fail me! Not in vain my soul,
Upon thy faith and courage, hath built up
Unshaken trust.
Elm. (wildly.) Away!—thou know’st me not!
Man dares too far—his rashness would invest
This our mortality with an attribute
Too high and awful, boasting that he knows
One human heart!
Gon. These are wild words, but yet
I will not doubt thee! Hast thou not been found
Noble in all things, pouring thy soul’s light
Undimm’d o’er every trial? And, as our fates,
So must our names be, undivided!—Thine,
I’ th’ record of a warrior’s life, shall find
Its place of stainless honour. By his side——

Elm. May this be borne! How much of agony
Hath the heart room for? Speak to me in wrath
—I can endure it! But no gentle words!
No words of love! no praise! Thy sword might slay,
And be more merciful!
Gon. Wherefore art thou thus?
Elmina, my beloved!
Elm. No more of love!
—Have I not said there's that within my heart,
Whereon it falls as living fire would fall
Upon an unclosed wound?
Gon. Nay, lift thine eyes,
That I may read their meaning!
Elm. Never more
With a free soul. What have I said?—'twas naught!
Take thou no heed! The words of wretchedness
Admit not scrutiny. Wouldst thou mark the speech
Of troubled dreams?
Gon. I have seen thee in the hour
Of thy deep spirit's joy, and when the breath
Of grief hung chilling round thee; in all change,
Bright health and drooping sickness; hope and fear;
Youth and decline; but never yet, Elmina,
Ne'er hath thine eye till now shrunk back, perturb'd

With shame or dread, from mine!

Elm. Thy glance doth search

A wounded heart too deeply.

Gon. Hast thou there

Aught to conceal?

Elm. Who hath not?

Gon. Till this hour

Thou never hadst! Yet hear me!—by the free

And unattainted fame which wraps the dust

Of thine heroic fathers——

Elm. This to me!

—Bring your inspiring war-notes, and your sounds

Of festal music round a dying man!

Will his heart echo them? But if thy words

Were spells, to call up, with each lofty tone,

The grave's most awful spirits, they would stand

Powerless, before my anguish!

Gon. Then, by her,

Who there looks on thee in the purity

Of her devoted youth, and o'er whose name

No blight must fall, and whose pale cheek must ne'er

Burn with that deeper tinge, caught painfully

From the quick feeling of dishonour—Speak!

Unfold this mystery! By thy sons——

Elm. My sons!

And canst thou name them?

Gon. Proudly! Better far

They died with all the promise of their youth,

And the fair honour of their house upon them,

Than that, with manhood's high and passionate soul

To fearful strength unfolded, they should live,

Barr'd from the lists of crested chivalry,

And pining, in the silence of a woe,

Which from the heart shuts daylight—o'er the shame

Of those who gave them birth! But thou couldst ne'er

Forget their lofty claims!

Elm. (wildly.) 'Twas but for them!

'Twas for them only! Who shall dare arraign

Madness of crime? And He who made us, knows

There are dark moments of all hearts and lives,

Which bear down reason!

Gon. Thou, whom I have loved

With such high trust as o'er our nature threw

A glory scarce allow'd—what hast thou done?

—Ximena, go thou hence!

Elm. No, no! my child!

There's pity in thy look! All other eyes

Are full of wrath and scorn! Oh, leave me not!

Gon. That I should live to see thee thus abased!

—Yet speak! What hast thou done?

Elm. Look to the gate!

Thou’rt worn with toil—but take no rest to-night!

The western gate! Its watchers have been won—

The Christian city hath been bought and sold!—

They will admit the Moor!

Gon. They have been won!

Brave men and tried so long! Whose work was this?

Elm. Think’st thou all hearts like thine? Can mothers stand

To see their children perish?

Gon. Then the guilt

Was thine?

Elm. Shall mortal dare to call it guilt?

I tell thee, heaven, which made all holy things,

Made naught more holy than the boundless love

Which fills a mother’s heart! I say, ’tis woe

Enough, with such an aching tenderness,

To love aught earthly! and in vain! in vain!

—We are press’d down too sorely!

Gon. (in a low desponding voice.) Now my life

Is struck to worthless ashes!—In my soul

Suspicion hath ta’en root. The nobleness

Henceforth is blotted from all human brows;

And fearful power, a dark and troublous gift,
Almost like prophecy, is pour’d upon me,
To read the guilty secrets in each eye
That once look’d bright with truth!
Why, then, I have gain’d
What men call wisdom!—A new sense, to which
All tales that speak of high fidelity,
And holy courage, and proud honour, tried,
Search’d, and found steadfast, even to martyrdom,
Are food for mockery! Why should I not cast
From my thinn’d locks the wearing helm at once,
And in the heavy sickness of my soul
Throw the sword down for ever? Is there aught
In all this world of gilded hollowness,
Now the bright hues drop off its loveliest things,
Worth striving for again?
Xim. Father! look up!
Turn unto me, thy child!
Gon. Thy face is fair;
And hath been unto me, in other days,
As morning to the journeyer of the deep?
But now—’tis too like hers!
Elm. (falling at his feet.) Woe, shame and woe,
Are on me in their might! Forgive! forgive!

Gon. (starting up.) Doth the Moor deem that I have part or share

Or counsel in his vileness? Stay me not!

Let go thy hold—'tis powerless on me now:

I linger here, while treason is at work!

[Exit Gonzalez.

Elm. Ximena, dost thou scorn me?

Xim. I have found

In mine own heart too much of feebleness,

Hid, beneath many foldings, from all eyes

But His whom naught can blind, to dare do aught

But pity thee, dear mother!

Elm. Blessings light

On thy fair head, my gentle child, for this!

Thou kind and merciful! My soul is faint—

Worn with long strife! Is there aught else to do,

Or suffer, ere we die?—Oh God! my sons!

—I have betray'd them! All their innocent blood

Is on my soul!

Xim. How shall I comfort thee?

—Oh! hark! what sounds come deepening on the wind,

So full of solemn hope!

A procession of Nuns passes across the Scene, bearing relics, and chanting.

CHANT.

A sword is on the land!

He that bears down young tree and glorious flower,
Death is gone forth, he walks the wind in power!
Where is the warrior's hand?
Our steps are in the shadows of the grave:
Hear us, we perish!—Father, hear and save!
If, in the days of song,
The days of gladness, we have call'd on thee.
When mirthful voices rang from sea to sea,
And joyous hearts were strong;
Now that alike the feeble and the brave
Must cry, "We perish!"—Father, hear and save!
The days of song are fled!
The winds come loaded, wafting dirge-notes by;
But they that linger soon unmourn'd must die—
The dead weep not the dead!
Wilt thou forsake us midst the stormy wave?
We sink, we perish!—Father, hear and save!
Helmet and lance are dust!
Is not the strong man wither'd from our eye?
The arm struck down that held our banners high?—
Thine is our spirits' trust!
Look through the gathering shadows of the grave!
Do we not perish?—Father, hear and save!

Hernandez enters.

Elm. Why com’st thou, man of vengeance?—

What have I

To do with thee? Am I not bow’d enough?

Thou art no mourner’s comforter!

Her. Thy lord

Hath sent me unto thee. Till this day’s task

Be closed, thou daughter of the feeble heart!

He bids thee seek him not, but lay thy ways

Before heaven’s altar, and in penitence

Make thy soul’s peace with God.

Elm. Till this day’s task

Be closed!—There is strange triumph in thine eyes—

Is it that I have fall’n from that high place

Whereon I stood in fame? But I can feel

A wild and bitter pride in thus being past

The power of thy dark glance! My spirit now

Is wound about by one sole mighty grief;

Thy scorn hath lost its sting. Thou may’st reproach——

Her. I come not to reproach thee. Heaven doth work

By many agencies; and in its hour

There is no insect which the summer breeze

From the green leaf shakes trembling, but may serve

Its deep unsearchable purposes, as well

As the great ocean, or th’ eternal fires

Pent in earth’s caves. Thou hast but speeded that,
Which, in th’ infatuate blindness of thy heart,
Thou wouldst have trampled o’er all holy ties
But to avert one day!
Elm. My senses fail.
Thou said’st—speak yet again—I could not catch
The meaning of thy words.
Her. E’en now thy lord
Hath sent our foes defiance. On the walls
He stands in conference with the boastful Moor,
And awful strength is with him. Through the blood
Which this day must be pour’d in sacrifice
Shall Spain be free. On all her olive-hills
Shall men set up the battle-sign of fire,
And round its blaze, at midnight, keep the sense
Of vengeance wakeful in each other’s hearts
E’en with thy children’s tale!
Xim. Peace, father! peace!
Behold she sinks!—the storm hath done its work
Upon the broken reed. Oh! lend thine aid
To bear her hence.
[They lead her away.

Scene VI.—A Street in Valencia. Several Groups of Citizens and Soldiers,

many of them lying on the steps of a church. Arms scattered on the ground around them.

An Old Cit. The air is sultry, as with thunder-clouds.
I left my desolate home, that I might breathe
More freely in heaven's face, but my heart feels
With this hot gloom o'erburden'd. I have now
No sons to tend me. Which of you, kind friends,
Will bring the old man water from the fount,
To moisten his parch'd lip?
[A citizen goes out.
2d Cit. This wasting siege,
Good Father Lopez, hath gone hard with you!
'Tis sad to hear no voices through the house,
Once peopled with fair sons!
3d Cit. Why, better thus,
Than to be haunted with their famish'd cries,
E'en in your very dreams!
Old Cit. Heaven's will be done!
These are dark times! I have not been alone
In my affliction.
3d Cit. (with bitterness.) Why, we have but this thought
Left for our gloomy comfort!—And 'tis well!
Ay, let the balance be awhile struck even
Between the noble's palace and the hut,

Where the worn peasant sickens! They that bear
The humble dead unhonour’d to their homes,
Pass now i’ th’ streets no lordly bridal train
With its exulting music; and the wretch
Who on the marble steps of some proud hall
Flings himself down to die, in his last need
And agony of famine, doth behold
No scornful guests, with their long purple robes,
To the banquet sweeping by. Why, this is just!
These are the days when pomp is made to feel
Its human mould!
4th Cit. Heard you last night the sound
Of Saint Iago’s bell?—How sullenly
From the great tower it peal’d!
5th Cit. Ay, and ’tis said
No mortal hand was near when so it seem’d
To shake the midnight streets.
Old Cit. Too well I know
The sound of coming fate!—’Tis ever thus
When Death is on his way to make it night
In the Cid’s ancient house.[279] Oh! there are things
In this strange world of which we’ve all to learn
When its dark bounds are pass’d. Yon bell, untouch’d,
(Save by the hands we see not,) still doth speak—

When of that line some stately head is mark’d—
With a wild hollow peal, at dead of night,
Rocking Valencia’s towers. I’ve heard it oft,
Nor know its warning false.
4th Cit. And will our chief
Buy with the price of his fair children’s blood
A few more days of pining wretchedness
For this forsaken city?
Old Cit. Doubt it not!
—But with that ransom he may purchase still
Deliverance for the land! And yet ’tis sad
To think that such a race, with all its fame,
Should pass away! For she, his daughter too,
Moves upon earth as some bright thing whose time
To sojourn there is short.
5th Cit. Then woe for us
When she is gone! Her voice, the very sound
Of her soft step, was comfort, as she moved
Through the still house of mourning! Who like her
Shall give us hope again?
Old Cit. Be still!—she comes,
And with a mien how changed! A hurrying step,
And a flush’d cheek! What may this bode?—
Be still!

Ximena enters, with Attendants carrying a Banner.

Xim. Men of Valencia! in an hour like this,

What do ye here?

A Cit. We die!

Xim. Brave men die now

Girt for the toil, as travellers suddenly

By the dark night o’ertaken on their way!

These days require such death! It is too much

Of luxury for our wild and angry times,

To fold the mantle round us, and to sink

From life, as flowers that shut up silently,

When the sun’s heat doth scorch them! Hear ye not?

A Cit. Lady! what wouldst thou with us?

Xim. Rise and arm!

E’en now the children of your chief are led

Forth by the Moor to perish! Shall this be—

Shall the high sound of such a name be hush’d,

I’ th’ land to which for ages it hath been

A battle-word, as ’twere some passing note

Of shepherd-music? Must this work be done,

And ye lie pining here, as men in whom

The pulse which God hath made for noble thought

Can so be thrill’d no longer?

A Cit. ’Tis e’en so!

Sickness, and toil, and grief, have breathed upon us,
Our hearts beat faint and low.
Xim. Are ye so poor
Of soul, my countrymen! that ye can draw
Strength from no deeper source than that which sends
The red blood mantling through the joyous veins,
And gives the fleet step wings? Why, how have age
And sensitive womanhood ere now endured,
Through pangs of searching fire, in some proud cause,
Blessing that agony? Think ye the Power
Which bore them nobly up, as if to teach
The torturer where eternal heaven had set
Bounds to his sway, was earthy, of this earth—
This dull mortality? Nay, then look on me!
Death's touch hath mark'd me, and I stand amongst you,
As one whose place, i' th' sunshine of your world,
Shall soon be left to fill!—I say, the breath
Of th' incense, floating through yon fane, shall scarce
Pass from your path before me! But even now
I've that within me, kindling through the dust,
Which from all time hath made high deeds its voice
And token to the nations. Look on me!
Why hath heaven pour'd forth courage, as a flame
Wasting the womanish heart, which must be still'd

Yet sooner for its swift consuming brightness,
If not to shame your doubt, and your despair,
And your soul’s torpor? Yet, arise and arm!
It may not be too late.
A Cit. Why, what are we,
To cope with hosts? Thus faint, and worn, and few,
O’ernumber’d and forsaken, is’t for us
To stand against the mighty?
Xim. And for whom
Hath He, who shakes the mighty with a breath
From their high places, made the fearfulness,
And ever-wakeful presence of his power
To the pale startled earth most manifest,
But for the weak? Was’t for the helm’d and crown’d
That suns were stay’d at noonday?—stormy seas
As a rill parted?—mail’d archangels sent
To wither up the strength of kings with death?
—I tell you, if these marvels have been done,
’Twas for the wearied and th’ oppress’d of men.
They needed such! And generous faith hath power
By her prevailing spirit, e’en yet to work
Deliverances, whose tale shall live with those
Of the great elder-time! Be of good heart!
Who is forsaken? He that gives the thought

A place within his breast? ’Tis not for you.

—Know ye this banner?

Cits. (murmuring to each other.) Is she not inspired?

Doth not heaven call us by her fervent voice?

Xim. Know ye this banner?

Cits. ’Tis the Cid’s.

Xim. The Cid’s!

Who breathes that name but in th’ exulting tone

Which the heart rings to? Why, the very wind,

As it swells out the noble standard’s fold,

Hath a triumphant sound! The Cid’s! it moved

Even as a sign of victory through the land,

From the free skies ne’er stooping to a foe!

Old Cit. Can ye still pause, my brethren! Oh! that youth

Through this worn frame were kindling once again!

Xim. Ye linger still? Upon this very air,

He that was born in happy hour for Spain[280]

Pour’d forth his conquering spirit! ’Twas the breeze

From your own mountains which came down to wave

This banner of his battles, as it droop’d

Above the champion’s deathbed. Nor even then

Its tale of glory closed. They made no moan

O’er the dead hero, and no dirge was sung,[281]

But the deep tambour and shrill horn of war

Told when the mighty pass'd! They wrapt him not
With the pale shroud, but braced the warrior's form
In war-array, and on his barded[282] steed,
As for a triumph, rear'd him; marching forth
In the hush'd midnight from Valencia's walls,
Beleaguer'd then, as now. All silently
The stately funeral moved. But who was he
That follow'd, charging on the tall white horse,
And with the solemn standard, broad and pale,
Waving in sheets of snowlight? And the cross,
The bloody cross, far-blazing from his shield,
And the fierce meteor-sword? They fled, they fled!
The kings of Afric, with their countless hosts,
Were dust in his red path. The scimitar
Was shiver'd as a reed;—for in that hour
The warrior-saint that keeps the watch for Spain,
Was arm'd betimes. And o'er that fiery field
The Cid's high banner stream'd all joyously,
For still its lord was there.
Cits. (rising tumultuously.) Even unto death
Again it shall be follow'd!
Xim. Will he see
The noble stem hewn down, the beacon-light
Which from his house for ages o'er the land

Hath shone through cloud and storm, thus quench’d at once?
Will he not aid his children in the hour
Of this their utmost peril? Awful power
Is with the holy dead, and there are times
When the tomb hath no chain they cannot burst!
Is it a thing forgotten how he woke
From its deep rest of old; remembering Spain
In her great danger? At the night’s mid-watch
How Leon started, when the sound was heard
That shook her dark and hollow-echoing streets,
As with the heavy tramp of steel-clad men,
By thousands marching through. For he had risen!
The Campeador was on his march again,
And in his arms, and follow’d by his hosts
Of shadowy spearmen. He had left the world
From which we are dimly parted, and gone forth,
And call’d his buried warriors from their sleep,
Gathering them round him to deliver Spain;
For Afric was upon her. Morning broke,
Day rush’d through clouds of battle; but at eve
Our God had triumph’d, and the rescued land
Sent up a shout of victory from the field,
That rock’d her ancient mountains.
Cits. Arm! to arms!

On to our chief! We have strength within us yet

To die with our blood roused! Now, be the word

For the Cid’s house!

[They begin to arm themselves.

Xim. Ye know his battle-song?

The old rude strain wherewith his bands went forth

To strike down Paynim swords!

[She sings.

THE CID’S BATTLE-SONG.

The Moor is on his way!

With the tambour-peal and the tecbir-shout,

And the horn o’er the blue seas ringing out,

He hath marshall’d his dark array!

Shout through the vine-clad land!

That her sons on all their hills may hear;

And sharpen the point of the red wolf-spear,

And the sword for the brave man’s hand!

[The Citizens join in the song, while they continue arming themselves.

Banners are in the field!

The chief must rise from his joyous board,

And turn from the feast ere the wine be pour’d,

And take up his father’s shield!

The Moor is on his way!

Let the peasant leave his olive-ground,

And the goats roam wild through the pine-woods round:

There is nobler work to-day!

Send forth the trumpet’s call!

Till the bridegroom cast the goblet down,

And the marriage-robe, and the flowery crown;

And arm in the banquet hall!

And stay the funeral-train:

Bid the chanted mass be hush’d awhile,

And the bier laid down in the holy aisle,

And the mourners girt for Spain.

[They take up the banner and follow Ximena out, their voices are heard gradually dying away at a distance.

Ere night must swords be red!

It is not an hour for knells and tears,

But for helmets braced and serried spears!

To-morrow for the dead!

The Cid is in array!

His steed is barded, his plume waves high,

His banner is up in the sunny sky—

Now, joy for the Cross to-day!

[279] It was a Spanish tradition that the great bell of the cathedral of Saragossa always tolled spontaneously before a king of Spain died.

[280] “El que en buen hora nasco;” he that was born in happy hour. An appellation given to the Cid in the ancient chronicles.

[281] For this, and the subsequent allusions to Spanish legends, see The Romances, and Chronicle of the Cid.

[282] Barded, caparisoned for battle.

Scene VII.—The walls of the city. The plains beneath, with the Moorish Camp and Army.

Gonzalez, Garcias, Hernandez.

(A wild sound of Moorish music heard from below.)

Her. What notes are these in their deep mournfulness
So strangely wild?

Gar. ’Tis the shrill melody
Of the Moor’s ancient death-song. Well I know
The rude barbaric sound; but, till this hour,
It seem’d not fearful. Now, a shuddering chill
Comes o’er me with its tones.—Lo! from yon tent
They lead the noble boys!

Her. The young, and pure,
And beautiful victims!—’Tis on things like these
We cast our hearts in wild idolatry,
Sowing the wands with hope! Yet this is well:
Thus brightly crown’d with life’s most gorgeous flowers,
And all unblemish’d, earth should offer up
Her treasures unto heaven!

Gar. (to Gonzalez.) My chief, the Moor
Hath led your children forth.

Gon. (starting.)Are my sons there?
I knew they could not perish; for yon heaven
Would ne’er behold it!—Where is he that said
I was no more a father? They look changed—
Pallid and worn, as from a prison-house!
Or is’t mine eyes see dimly? But their steps
Seem heavy, as with pain. I hear the clank—
Oh God! their limbs are fetter’d!
Abd. (coming forward beneath the walls.)
Christian! look
Once more upon thy children. There is yet
One moment for the trembling of the sword;
Their doom is still with thee.
Gon. Why should this man
So mock us with the semblance of our kind?
—Moor! Moor! thou dost too daringly provoke,
In thy bold cruelty, th’ all-judging One,
Who visits for such things! Hast thou no sense
Of thy frail nature? ’Twill be taught thee yet;
And darkly shall the anguish of my soul,
Darkly and heavily, pour itself on thine,
When thou shalt cry for mercy from the dust,
And be denied!
Abd. Nay, is it not thyself

That hast no mercy and no love within thee?

These are thy sons, the nurslings of thy house;

Speak! must they live or die?

Gon. (in violent emotion.) Is it heaven’s will

To try the dust it kindles for a day,

With infinite agony! How have I drawn

This chastening on my head! They bloom’d around me,

And my heart grew too fearless in its joy,

Glorying in their bright promise!—If we fall,

Is there no pardon for our feebleness?

Hernandez, without speaking, holds up a cross before him.

Abd. Speak!

Gon. (snatching the cross, and lifting it up.) Let the earth be shaken through its depths,

But this must triumph!

Abd. (coldly.) Be it as thou wilt.

—Unsheath the scimitar!

[To his guards.

Gar. (to Gonzalez.) Away, my chief!

This is your place no longer. There are things

No human heart, though battle-proof as yours,

Unmadden’d may sustain.

Gon. Be still! I have now

No place on earth but this!

Alph. (from beneath.) Men! give me way,

That I may speak forth once before I die!

Gar. The princely boy!—how gallantly his brow

Wears its high nature in the face of death!

Alph. Father!

Gon. My son! my son!—Mine eldest-born!

Alph. Stay but upon the ramparts! Fear thou not

—There is good courage in me. O my father!

I will not shame thee!—only let me fall

Knowing thine eye looks proudly on thy child,

So shall my heart have strength.

Gon. Would, would to God,

That I might die for thee, my noble boy!

Alphonso, my fair son!

Alph. Could I have lived,

I might have been a warrior! Now, farewell!

But look upon me still!—I will not blench

When the keen sabre flashes. Mark me well!

Mine eyelids shall not quiver as it falls,

So thou wilt look upon me!

Gar. (to Gonzalez.) Nay, my lord!

We must be gone! Thou canst not bear it!

Gon. Peace!

Who hath told thee how much man’s heart can bear?

—Lend me thine arm—my brain whirls fearfully—

How thick the shades close round! My boy! my boy!

Where art thou in this gloom?

Gar. Let us go hence!

This is a dreadful moment!

Gon. Hush!—what saidst thou?

Now let me look on him!—Dost thou see aught

Through the dull mist which wraps us?

Gar. I behold—

Oh, for a thousand Spaniards! to rush down——

Gon. Thou seest—My heart stands still to hear thee speak!

—There seems a fearful hush upon the air,

As ’twere the dead of night!

Gar. The hosts have closed

Around the spot in stillness. Through the spears,

Ranged thick and motionless, I see him not!

—But now——

Gon. He bade me keep mine eye upon him,

And all is darkness round me!—Now?

Gar. A sword,

A sword, springs upward, like a lightning burst,

Through the dark serried mass! Its cold blue glare

Is wavering to and fro—’tis vanish’d—hark!

Gon. I heard it, yes!—I heard the dull dead sound

That heavily broke the silence! Didst thou speak?

—I lost thy words—come nearer!

Gar. ’Twas—’tis past!—

The sword fell then!

Her. (with exultation.) Flow forth thou noble blood!

Fount of Spain’s ransom and deliverance, flow

Uncheck’d and brightly forth! Thou kingly stream!

Blood of our heroes! blood of martyrdom!

Which through so many warrior-hearts hast pour’d

Thy fiery currents, and hast made our hills

Free, by thine own free offering! Bathe the land,—

But there thou shalt not sink! Our very air

Shall take thy colouring, and our loaded skies

O’er th’ infidel hang dark and ominous,

With battle-hues of thee! And thy deep voice,

Rising above them to the judgment-seat,

Shall call a burst of gather’d vengeance down,

To sweep th’ oppressor from us! For thy wave

Hath made his guilt run o’er!

Gon. (endeavouring to rouse himself.) ’Tis all a dream!

There is not one—no hand on earth could harm

That fair boy’s graceful head! Why look you thus?

Abd. (pointing to Carlos.) Christian! e’en yet thou hast a son!

Gon. E’en yet!

Gar. My father! take me from these fearful men!

Wilt thou not save me, father?

Gon. (attempting to unsheath his sword.) Is the strength

From mine arm shiver’d? Garcias, follow me!

Gar. Whither, my chief?

Gon. Why, we can die as well

On yonder plain—ay, a spear’s thrust will do

The little that our misery doth require,

Sooner than e’en this anguish! Life is best

Thrown from us in such moments.

[Voices heard at a distance.

Her. Hush! what strain

Floats on the wind?

Gar. ’Tis the Cid’s battle-song!

What marvel hath been wrought?

Voices approaching heard in chorus.

The Moor is on his way!

With the tambour-peal and the tecbir-shout,

And the horn o’er the blue seas ringing out,

He hath marshall’d his dark array!

Ximena enters, followed by the Citizens, with the Banner.

Xim. Is it too late?—My father, these are men

Through life and death prepared to follow thee

Beneath this banner! Is their zeal too late?

—Oh! there’s a fearful history on thy brow!

What hast thou seen?

Gar. It is not all too late.

Xim. My brothers!

Her. All is well.

(To Garcias.) Hush! wouldst thou chill

That which hath sprung within them, as a flame

From th’ altar-embers mounts in sudden brightness?

I say, ’tis not too late, ye men of Spain!

On to the rescue!

Xim. Bless me, O my father!

And I will hence, to aid thee with my prayers,

Sending my spirit with thee through the storm

Lit up by flashing swords!

Gon. (falling upon her neck.) Hath aught been spared?

Am I not all bereft? Thou’rt left me still!

Mine own, my loveliest one, thou’rt left me still!

Farewell!—thy father’s blessing, and thy God’s,

Be with thee, my Ximena!

Xim. Fare thee well!

If, ere thy steps turn homeward from the field,

The voice is hush’d that still hath welcomed thee,

Think of me in thy victory!

Her. Peace! no more!

This is no time to melt our nature down
To a soft stream of tears! Be of strong heart!
Give me the banner! Swell the song again!
Cits. Ere night must swords be red!
It is not an hour for knells and tears,
But for helmets braced and serried spears!
To-morrow for the dead!
[Exeunt omnes.

Scene VIII.—Before the Altar of a Church.

Elmina rises from the steps of the Altar.

Elm. The clouds are fearful that o'erhang thy ways,
O thou mysterious heaven! It cannot be
That I have drawn the vials of thy wrath
To burst upon me, through the lifting up
Of a proud heart elate in happiness!
No! in my day's full noon, for me life's flowers
But wreath'd a cup of trembling; and the love,
The boundless love, my spirit was form'd to bear,
Hath ever, in its place of silence, been
A trouble and a shadow, tinging thought
With hues too deep for joy! I never look'd
On my fair children, in their buoyant mirth
Or sunny sleep, when all the gentle air
Seem'd glowing with their quiet blessedness,

But o’er my soul there came a shuddering sense
Of earth, and its pale changes; e’en like that
Which vaguely mingles with our glorious dreams—
A restless and disturbing consciousness
That the bright things must fade! How have I shrunk
From the dull murmur of th’ unquiet voice,
With its low tokens of mortality,
Till my heart fainted midst their smiles!—their smiles!
Where are those glad looks now?—Could they go down
With all their joyous light, that seem’d not earth’s,
To the cold grave? My children!—righteous heaven!
There floats a dark remembrance o’er my brain
Of one who told me, with relentless eye,
That this should be the hour!

Ximena enters.

Xim. They are gone forth
Unto the rescue!—strong in heart and hope,
Faithful, though few!—My mother, let thy prayers
Call on the land’s good saints to lift once more
The sword and cross that sweep the field for Spain,
As in old battle; so thine arms e’en yet
May clasp thy sons! For me, my part is done!
The flame which dimly might have linger’d yet
A little while, hath gather’d all its rays

Brightly to sink at once. And it is well!

The shadows are around me: to thy heart

Fold me, that I may die.

Elm. My child! what dream

Is on thy soul? Even now thine aspect wears

Life’s brightest inspiration!

Xim. Death’s!

Elm. Away!

Thine eye hath starry clearness; and thy cheek

Doth glow beneath it with a richer hue,

Than tinged its earliest flower!

Xim. It well may be!

There are far deeper and far warmer hues

Than those which draw their colouring from the founts

Of youth, or health, or hope.

Elm. Nay, speak not thus!

There’s that about thee shining which would send

E’en through my heart a sunny glow of joy,

Were’t not for these sad words. The dim cold air

And solemn light, which wrap these tombs and shrines

As a pale gleaming shroud, seem kindled up

With a young spirit of ethereal hope

Caught from thy mien!—Oh no! this is not death!

Xim. Why should not He, whose touch dissolves our chain,

Put on his robes of beauty when he comes
As a deliverer? He hath many forms—
They should not all be fearful! If his call
Be but our gathering to that distant land,
For whose sweet waters we have pined with thirst,
Why should not its prophetic sense be borne
Into the heart’s deep stillness, with a breath
Of summer-winds, a voice of melody,
Solemn, yet lovely! Mother, I depart!—
Be it thy comfort, in the after-days,
That thou hast seen me thus!
Elm. Distract me not
With such wild fears! Can I bear on with life
When thou art gone?—thy voice, thy step, thy smile,
Pass’d from my path! Alas! even now thine eye
Is changed—thy cheek is fading!
Xim. Ay, the clouds
Of the dim hour are gathering o’er my sight;
And yet I fear not, for the God of Help
Comes in that quiet darkness! It may soothe
Thy woes, my mother! if I tell thee now
With what glad calmness I behold the veil
Falling between me and the world, wherein
My heart so ill hath rested.

Elm. Thine!

Xim. Rejoice

For her that, when the garland of her life

Was blighted, and the springs of hope were dried,

Received her summons hence; and had no time,

Bearing the canker at th’ impatient heart,

To wither; sorrowing for that gift of heaven,

Which lent one moment of existence light

That dimm’d the rest for ever!

Elm. How is this?

My child, what mean’st thou?

Xim. Mother! I have loved,

And been beloved! The sunbeam of an hour,

Which gave life’s hidden treasures to mine eye,

As they lay shining in their secret founts,

Went out and left them colourless. ’Tis past—

And what remains on earth? The rainbow mist

Through which I gazed, hath melted, and my sight

Is clear’d to look on all things as they are!—

But this is far too mournful! Life’s dark gift

Hath fall’n too early and too cold upon me!—

Therefore I would go hence!

Elm. And thou hast loved

Unknown——

Xim. Oh! pardon, pardon that I veil’d
My thoughts from thee! But thou hadst woes enough,
And mine came o’er me when thy soul had need
Of more than mortal strength! For I had scarce
Given the deep consciousness that I was loved
A treasure’s place within my secret heart,
When earth’s brief joy went from me!
’Twas at morn
I saw the warriors to their field go forth,
And he—my chosen—was there amongst the rest,
With his young, glorious brow! I look’d again:
The strife grew dark beneath me—but his plume
Waved free above the lances. Yet again—
It had gone down! and steeds were trampling o’er
The spot to which mine eyes were riveted,
Till blinded by th’ intenseness of their gaze!—
And then—at last—I hurried to the gate,
And met him there!—I met him!—on his shield,
And with his cloven helm, and shiver’d sword,
And dark hair steep’d in blood! They bore him past:
Mother!—I saw his face! Oh! such a death
Works fearful changes on the fair of earth,
The pride of woman’s eye!
Elm. Sweet daughter, peace!

Wake not the dark remembrance; for thy frame—

Xim. There will be peace ere long. I shut my heart,

Even as a tomb, o’er that lone silent grief,

That I might spare it thee!—But now the hour

Is come, when that, which would have pierced thy soul,

Shall be its healing balm. Oh! weep thou not,

Save with a gentle sorrow!

Elm. Must it be?

Art thou indeed to leave me?

Xim. (exultingly.) Be thou glad!

I say, rejoice above thy favour’d child!

Joy, for the soldier when his field is fought,

Joy, for the peasant when his vintage-task

Is closed at eve!—But most of all for her,

Who, when her life had changed its glittering robes

For the dull garb of sorrow, which doth cling

So heavily around the journeyers on,

Cast down its weight—and slept!

Elm. Alas! thine eye

Is wandering—yet how brightly! Is this death!

Or some high wondrous vision? Speak, my child!

How is it with thee now?

Xim. (wildly.) I see it still!

’Tis floating, like a glorious cloud on high,

My father’s banner! Hear’st thou not a sound?

The trumpet of Castile! Praise, praise to heaven!

—Now may the weary rest!—Be still!—Who calls

The night so fearful?——

[She dies.

Elm. No! she is not dead!

Ximena!—speak to me! Oh yet a tone

From that sweet voice, that I may gather in

One more remembrance of its lovely sound,

Ere the deep silence fall! What, is all hush’d?—

No, no!—it cannot be! How should we bear

The dark misgivings of our souls, if heaven

Left not such beings with us? But is this

Her wonted look?—too sad a quiet lies

On its dim fearful beauty! Speak, Ximena!

Speak! My heart dies within me! She is gone,

With all her blessed smiles! My child! my child!

Where art thou?—Where is that which answer’d me,

From thy soft-shining eyes?—Hush! doth she move?

One light lock seem’d to tremble on her brow,

As a pulse throbb’d beneath;—’twas but the voice

Of my despair that stirr’d it! She is gone!

[She throws herself on the body.

Gonzalez enters wounded.

Elm. (rising as he approaches.) I must not now be scorn’d!—No, not a look.
A whisper of reproach! Behold my woe!—
Thou canst not scorn me now!
Gon. Hast thou heard all?
Elm. Thy daughter on my bosom laid her head,
And pass’d away to rest! Behold her there,
Even such as death hath made her![283]
Gon. (bending over Ximena’s body.) Thou art gone
A little while before me, O my child!
Why should the traveller weep to part with those,
That scarce an hour will reach their promised land,
Ere he too cast his pilgrim staff away,
And spread his couch beside them?
Elm. Must it be
Henceforth enough that once a thing so fair
Had its bright place amongst us! Is this all
Left for the years to come? We will not stay!
Earth’s chain each hour grows weaker.
Gon. (still gazing upon Ximena.) And thou’rt laid
To slumber in the shadow, blessed child!
Of a yet stainless altar, and beside
A sainted warrior’s tomb! Oh, fitting place
For thee to yield thy pure heroic soul
Back unto him that gave it! And thy cheek

Yet smiles in its bright paleness!

Elm. Hadst thou seen

The look with which she pass’d!

Gon. (still bending over her.) Why, ’tis almost

Like joy to view thy beautiful repose!

The faded image of that perfect calm

Floats, e’en as long-forgotten music, back

Into my weary heart! No dark wild spot

On thy clear brow doth tell of bloody hands

That quench’d young life by violence! We’ve seen

Too much of horror, in one crowded hour,

To weep for aught so gently gather’d hence!

—Oh! man leaves other traces!

Elm. (suddenly starting.) It returns

On my bewilder’d soul? Went ye not forth

Unto the rescue? And thou’rt here alone!

—Where are my sons?

Gon. (solemnly.) We were too late!

Elm. Too late!

Hast thou naught else to tell me?

Gon. I brought back

From that last field the banner of my sires,

And my own death-wound.

Elm. Thine!

Gon. Another hour

Shall hush its throbs for ever. I go hence,

And with me——

Elm. No! Man could not lift his hands—

Where hast thou left thy sons?

Gon. I have no sons.

Elm. What hast thou said?

Gon. That now there lives not one

To wear the glory of mine ancient house,

When I am gone to rest.

Elm.(throwing herself on the ground, and speaking in a low hurried voice.)

In one brief hour, all gone!—and such a death!

I see their blood gush forth!—their graceful heads!

—Take the dark vision from me, O my God!

And such a death for them! I was not there!

They were but mine in beauty and in joy,

Not in that mortal anguish! All, all gone!—

Why should I struggle more?—What is this Power,

Against whose might, on all sides pressing us,

We strive with fierce impatience, which but lays

Our own frail spirits prostrate?

(After a long pause.) Now I know

Thy hand, my God!—and they are soonest crush’d

That most withstand it! I resist no more.

[She rises.

A light, a light springs up from grief and death,

Which with its solemn radiance doth reveal

Why we have thus been tried!

Gon. Then I may still

Fix my last look on thee, in holy love,

Parting, but yet with hope!

Elm. (falling at his feet.) Canst thou forgive?

Oh, I have driven the arrow to thy heart,

That should have buried it within mine own,

And borne the pang in silence! I have cast

Thy life's fair honour, in my wild despair,

As an unvalued gem upon the waves,

Whence thou hast snatch'd it back, to bear from earth,

All stainless, on thy breast. Well hast thou done—

But I—canst thou forgive?

Gon. Within this hour

I've stood upon that verge whence mortals fall,

And learn'd how 'tis with one whose sight grows dim,

And whose foot trembles on the gulf's dark side.

Death purifies all feeling: we will part

In pity and in love.

Elm. Death! And thou too

Art on thy way! Oh, joy for thee, high heart!

Glory and joy for thee! The day is closed,
And well and nobly hast thou borne thyself
Through its long battle-toils, though many swords
Have enter’d thine own soul! But on my head
Recoil the fierce invokings of despair,
And I am left far distanced in the race,
The lonely one of earth! Ay, this is just.
I am not worthy that upon my breast
In this, thine hour of victory, thou shouldst yield
Thy spirit unto God!
Gon. Thou art! thou art!
Oh! a life’s love, a heart’s long faithfulness,
Even in the presence of eternal things,
Wearing their chasten’d beauty all undimm’d,
Assert their lofty claims; and these are not
For one dark hour to cancel! We are here,
Before that altar which received the vows
Of our unbroken youth; and meet it is
For such a witness, in the sight of heaven,
And in the face of death, whose shadowy arm
Comes dim between us, to record th’ exchange
Of our tried hearts’ forgiveness. Who are they,
That in one path have journey’d, needing not
Forgiveness at its close?

A Citizen enters hastily.

Cit. The Moors! the Moors!

Gon. How! is the city storm’d?

O righteous heaven! for this I look’d not yet!

Hath all been done in vain? Why, then, ’tis time

For prayer, and then to rest!

Cit. The sun shall set,

And not a Christian voice be left for prayer,

To-night, within Valencia. Round our walls

The Paynim host is gathering for th’ assault,

I And we have none to guard them.

Gon. Then my place

Is here no longer. I had hoped to die

E’en by the altar and the sepulchre

Of my brave sires; but this was not to be!

Give me my sword again, and lead me hence

Back to the ramparts. I have yet an hour,

And it hath still high duties. Now, my wife!

Thou mother of my children—of the dead—

Whom I name unto thee in steadfast hope—

Farewell!

Elm. No, not farewell! My soul hath risen

To mate itself with thine; and by thy side,

Amidst the hurling lances, I will stand,

As one on whom a brave man’s love hath been

Wasted not utterly.

Gon. I thank thee, heaven!

That I have tasted of the awful joy

Which thou hast given, to temper hours like this

With a deep sense of thee, and of thine ends

In these dread visitings!

(To Elmina.) We will not part,

But with the spirit’s parting.

Elm. One farewell

To her, that, mantled with sad loveliness,

Doth slumber at our feet! My blessed child!

Oh! in thy heart’s affliction thou wert strong,

And holy courage did pervade thy woe,

As light the troubled waters! Be at peace!

Thou whose bright spirit made itself the soul

Of all that were around thee! And thy life

E’en then was struck and withering at the core!

Farewell! thy parting look hath on me fallen,

E’en as a gleam of heaven, and I am now

More like what thou hast been. My soul is hush’d;

For a still sense of purer worlds hath sunk

And settled on its depths with that last smile

Which from thine eye shone forth. Thou hast not lived

In vain! My child, farewell!

Gon. Surely for thee

Death had no sting, Ximena! We are blest

To learn one secret of the shadowy pass,

From such an aspect’s calmness. Yet once more

I kiss thy pale young cheek, my broken flower!

In token of th’ undying love and hope

Whose land is far away.

[Exeunt.

[283] “La voilà, telle que la mort nous l’a faite!”—Bossuet, Oraisons Funèbres.

Scene IX.—The walls of the city.

Hernandez—A few citizens gathered round him.

Her. Why, men have cast the treasures, which their lives

Had been worn down in gathering, on the pyre;

Ay, at their household hearths have lit the brand,

Even from that shrine of quiet love to bear

The flame which gave their temples and their homes

In ashes to the winds! They have done this,

Making a blasted void where once the sun

Look’d upon lovely dwellings; and from earth

Razing all record that on such a spot

Childhood hath sprung, age faded, misery wept,

And frail humanity knelt before her God:

They have done this, in their free nobleness,

Rather than see the spoiler's tread pollute
Their holy places. Praise, high praise be theirs,
Who have left man such lessons! And these things,
Made your own hills their witnesses! The sky,
Whose arch bends o'er you, and the seas, wherein
Your rivers pour their gold, rejoicing saw
The altar, and the birthplace, and the tomb,
And all memorials of man's heart and faith,
Thus proudly honour'd! Be ye not outdone
By the departed! Though the godless foe
Be close upon us, we have power to snatch
The spoils of victory from him. Be but strong!
A few bright torches and brief moments yet
Shall baffle his flush'd hope; and we may die,
Laughing him unto scorn. Rise, follow me!
And thou, Valencia! triumph in thy fate—
The ruin, not the yoke; and make thy towers
A beacon unto Spain!
Cits. We'll follow thee!
Alas! for our fair city, and the homes
Wherein we rear'd our children! But away!
The Moor shall plant no Crescent o'er our fanes!
Voice. (from a tower on the walls.) Succours!—Castile! Castile!
Cits. (rushing to the spot.) It is even so!

Now blessing be to heaven, for we are saved!

Castile! Castile!

Voice. (from the tower.) Line after line of spears,

Lance after lance, upon th’ horizon’s verge,

Like festal lights from cities bursting up,

Doth skirt the plain. In faith, a noble host!

Another voice. The Moor hath turn’d him from our walls, to front

Th’ advancing might of Spain!

Cits. (shouting.) Castile! Castile!

Gonzalez enters, supported by Elmina and a citizen.

Gon. What shouts of joy are these?

Her. Hail! chieftain, hail!

Thus, even in death, ’tis given thee to receive

The conqueror’s crown! Behold our God hath heard,

And arm’d himself with vengeance! Lo! they come!

The lances of Castile!

Gon. I knew, I knew,

Thou wouldst not utterly, my God! forsake

Thy servant in his need! My blood and tears

Have not sunk vainly to th’ attesting earth.

Praise to Thee, thanks and praise, that I have lived

To see this hour!

Elm. And I, too, bless thy name,

Though thou hast proved me unto agony!

O God!—thou God of chastening!

Voice. (from the tower.) They move on!

I see the royal banner in the air,

With its emblazon’d towers!

Gon. Go, bring ye forth

The banner of the Cid, and plant it here,

To stream above me, for an answering sign

That the good Cross doth hold its lofty place

Within Valencia still! What see you now?

Her. I see a kingdom’s might upon its path,

Moving, in terrible magnificence,

Unto revenge and victory! With the flash

Of knightly swords, up-springing from the ranks,

As meteors from a still and gloomy deep,

And with the waving of ten thousand plumes,

Like a land’s harvest in the autumn wind,

And with fierce light, which is not of the sun,

But flung from sheets of steel—it comes, it comes,

The vengeance of our God!

Gon. I hear it now,

The heavy tread of mail-clad multitudes,

Like thunder-showers upon the forest paths.

Her. Ay, earth knows well the omen of that sound;

And she hath echoes, like a sepulchre’s,

Pent in her secret hollows, to respond

Unto the step of death!

Gon. Hark! how the wind

Swells proudly with the battle-march of Spain?

Now the heart feels its power! A little while

Grant me to Eve, my God! What pause is this?

Her. A deep and dreadful one! The serried files

Level their spears for combat; now the hosts

Look on each other in their brooding wrath,

Silent, and face to face.

Voices heard without, chanting.

Calm on the bosom of thy God,

Fair spirit! rest thee now!

E’en while with ours thy footsteps trode

His seal was on thy brow.

Dust, to its narrow house beneath!

Soul, to its place on high!

They that have seen thy look in death

No more may fear to die.

Elm. (to Gonzalez.) It is the death-hymn o’er thy daughter’s bier!

But I am calm; and e’en like gentle winds,

That music, through the stillness of my heart,

Sends mournful peace.

Gon. Oh! well those solemn tones

Accord with such an hour, for all her life
Breathed of a hero’s soul!
[A sound of trumpets and shouting from the plain.]
Her. Now, now they close! Hark! what a dull dead sound
Is in the Moorish war-shout! I have known
Such tones prophetic oft. The shock is given—
Lo! they have placed their shields before their hearts,
And lower’d their lances with the streamers on,
And on their steeds bent forward! God for Spain!
The first bright sparks of battle have been struck
From spear to spear, across the gleaming field!—
There is no sight on which the blue sky looks
To match with this! ’Tis not the gallant crests,
Nor banners with their glorious blazonry;
The very nature and high soul of man
Doth now reveal itself!
Gon. Oh, raise me up,
That I may look upon the noble scene!—
It will not be!—That this dull mist would pass
A moment from my sight! Whence rose that shout,
As in fierce triumph?
Her. (clasping his hands.) Must I look on this?
The banner sinks—’tis taken!
Gon. Whose?

Her. Castile's!

Gon. O God of Battles!

Elm. Calm thy noble heart;

Thou wilt not pass away without thy meed.

Nay, rest thee on my bosom.

Her. Cheer thee yet!

Our knights have spurr'd to rescue. There is now

A whirl, a mingling of all terrible things,

Yet more appalling than the fierce distinctness

Wherewith they moved before! I see tall plumes

All wildly tossing o'er the battle's tide,

Sway'd by the wrathful motion, and the press

Of desperate men, as cedar boughs by storms.

Many a white streamer there is dyed with blood,

Many a false corslet broken, many a shield

Pierced through! Now, shout for Santiago, shout!

Lo! javelins with a moment's brightness cleave

The thickening dust, and barded steeds go down

With their helm'd riders! Who, but One, can tell

How spirits part amidst that fearful rush

And trampling-on of furious multitudes?

Gon. Thou'rt silent!—See'st thou more? My

soul grows dark.

Her. And dark and troubled, as an angry sea,

Dashing some gallant armament in scorn
Against its rocks, is all on which I gaze!
I can but tell thee how tall spears are cross’d,
And lances seem to shiver, and proud helms
To lighten with the stroke! But round the spot
Where, like a storm-fell’d mast, our standard sank,
The heart of battle burns.
Gon. Where is that spot?
Her. It is beneath the lonely tuft of palms,
That lift their green heads o’er the tumult still,
In calm and stately grace.
Gon. There didst thou say?
Then God is with us, and we must prevail!
For on that spot they died: my children’s blood
Calls on th’ avenger thence!
Elm. They perish’d there!
—And the bright locks that waved so joyously
To the free winds, lay trampled and defiled
Even on that place of death! O Merciful!
Hush the dark thought within me!
Her. (with sudden exultation.) Who is he,
On the white steed, and with the castled helm,
And the gold-broider’d mantle, which doth float
E’en like a sunny cloud above the fight;

And the pale cross, which from his breastplate gleams

With star-like radiance?

Gon. (eagerly.) Didst thou say the cross?

Her. On his mail'd bosom shines a broad white cross,

And his long plumage through the dark'ning air

Streams like a snow-wreath.

Gon. That should be—

Her. The king!

Was it not told to us how he sent, of late,

To the Cid's tomb, e'en for the silver cross,

Which he who slumbers there was wont to bind

O'er his brave heart in fight?[284]

Gon. (springing up joyfully.) My king! my king!

Now all good saints for Spain! My noble king!

And thou art there! That I might look once more

Upon thy face! But yet I thank thee, heaven!

That thou hast sent him, from my dying hands

Thus to receive his city!

[He sinks back into Elmina's arms.

Her. He hath clear'd

A pathway midst the combat, and the light

Follows his charge through yon close living mass,

E'en as a gleam on some proud vessel's wake

Along the stormy waters! 'Tis redeem'd—

The castled banner; it is flung once more,
In joy and glory, to the sweeping winds!
There seems a wavering through the Paynim hosts—
Castile doth press them sore—now, now rejoice!
Gon. What hast thou seen?
Her. Abdullah falls! He falls!
The man of blood!—the spoiler!—he hath sunk
In our king's path! Well hath that royal sword
Avenged thy cause, Gonzalez!
They give way,
The Crescent's van is broken! On the hills,
And the dark pine-woods, may the infidel
Call vainly, in his agony of fear,
To cover him from vengeance! Lo! they fly!
They of the forest and the wilderness
Are scatter'd, e'en as leaves upon the wind!
Woe to the sons of Afric! Let the plains,
And the vine mountains, and Hesperian seas,
Take their dead unto them!—that blood shall wash
Our soil from stains of bondage.
Gon. (attempting to raise himself.) Set me free!
Come with me forth, for I must greet my king,
After his battle-field!
Her. Oh, blest in death!

Chosen of heaven, farewell! Look on the Cross,

And part from earth in peace!

Gon. Now, charge once more!

God is with Spain, and Santiago's sword

Is reddening all the air! Shout forth "Castile!"

The day is ours! I go; but fear ye not!

For Afric's lance is broken, and my sons

Have won their first good field!

[He dies.

Elm. Look on me yet!

Speak one farewell, my husband!—must thy voice

Enter my soul no more! Thine eye is fix'd—

Now is my life uprooted—and 'tis well.

[A sound of triumphant music is heard, and many Castilian Knights and Soldiers enter.]

A Cit. Hush your triumphal sounds, although ye come

E'en as deliverers! But the noble dead,

And those that mourn them, claim from human hearts

Deep silent reverence.

Elm. (rising proudly.) No, swell forth, Castile!

Thy trumpet music, till the seas and heavens,

And the deep hills, give every stormy note

Echoes to ring through Spain! How, know ye not

That all array'd for triumph, crown'd and robed

With the strong spirit which hath saved the land,
E’en now a conqueror to his rest is gone?
Fear not to break that sleep, but let the wind
Swell on with victory’s shout!—He will not hear—
Hath earth a sound more sad?
Her. Lift ye the dead,
And bear him with the banner of his race
Waving above him proudly, as it waved
O’er the Cid’s battles, to the tomb wherein
His warrior sires are gather’d.
[They raise the body.
Elm. Ay, ’tis thus
Thou shouldst be honour’d! And I follow thee,
With an unfaltering and a lofty step,
To that last home of glory. She that wears
In her deep heart the memory of thy love,
Shall thence draw strength for all things; till the God
Whose hand around her hath unpeopled earth,
Looking upon her still and chasten’d soul,
Call it once more to thine!
(To the Castilians.) Awake, I say!
Tambour and trumpet, wake! And let the land
Through all her mountains hear your funeral peal.
—So should a hero pass to his repose.

[Exeunt omnes.

[284] This circumstance is recorded of King Don Alfonso, the last of that name. He sent to the Cid's tomb for the cross which that warrior was accustomed to wear upon his breast when he went to battle, and had it made into one for himself, "because of the faith which he had, that through it he should obtain the victory."—Southey's Chronicle of the Cid.

[CRITICAL ANNOTATIONS ON THE "SIEGE OF VALENCIA."

"Of 'The Siege of Valencia' we say little, for we by no means consider it as the happiest of Mrs Hemans's efforts. Not that it does not contain, nay, abound with fine passages; but the whole wants vigour, coherence, and compression. The story is meagre, and the dialogue too diffuse."—The Rev. Dr Morehead in Constable's Magazine for September 1823.

"The 'Tales and Historic Scenes,' 'The Sceptic,' 'The Welsh Melodies,' 'The Siege of Valencia,' and 'The Vespers of Palermo,'" says Delta, "may all be referred to this epoch of her literary career, and are characterised by beauties of a high and peculiar stamp. With reference to the two latter, it must be owned, that if the genius of Mrs Hemans was not essentially dramatic, yet that both abound with high and magnificent bursts of poetry. It was not easy to adapt her fine taste and uniformly high-toned sentiment to the varied aspects of life and character necessary to the success of scenic exhibition; and she must have been aware of the difficulties that surrounded her in that path. If these cannot, therefore, be considered as successful tragedies, they hold their places as dramatic poems of rich and rare poetic beauty. Indeed, it would be difficult, from the whole range of Mrs Hemans's writings, to select any thing more exquisitely conceived, more skilfully managed, or more energetically written, than the Monk's tale in 'The Siege of Valencia.' The description of his son, in which he dwells with parental enthusiasm on his boyish beauty and accomplishments—of his horror at that son's renunciation of the

Christian faith, and leaguing with the infidel—and of the twilight encounter, in which he took the life of his own giving—are all worked out in the loftiest spirit of poetry."—Biographical Memoir, p. 16-17.

"'The Siege of Valencia,' 'The Last Constantine,' and other poems, were published in the course of the year 1823. This volume was marked by more distinct evidences of originality than any of Mrs Hemans's previous works. None of her after poems contain finer bursts of strong, fervid, indignant poetry than 'The Siege of Valencia;' its story—a thrilling conflict between maternal love and the inflexible spirit of chivalrous honour—afforded to her an admirable opportunity of giving utterance to the two master interests of her mind. It is a tale that will bear a second reading—though, it must be confessed that, as in the case of 'The Vespers of Palermo,' somewhat of a monotony of colouring is thrown over its scenes by the unchanged employment of a lofty and enriched phraseology, which would have gained in emphasis by its being more sparingly used. Ximena, too, all glowing and heroic as she is, stirring up the sinking hearts of the besieged citizens with her battle-song of the Cid, and dying as it were of that strain of triumph—is too spiritual, too saintly, wholly to carry away the sympathies. Our imagination is kindled by her splendid, high-toned devotion—our tears are called forth by the grief of her mother, the stately Elmina, broken down, but not degraded, by the agony of maternal affection, to connive at a treachery she is too noble wholly to carry through. The scenes with her husband are admirable; some of her speeches absolutely startle us with their passion and intensity—the following, for instance:—

'Love! love! there are soft smiles and gentle words,'" etc.

—Chorley's Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 110-12.

"'The Siege of Valencia' is a dramatic poem, but not intended for representation. The story is extremely simple. The Moors, who besiege Valencia, take the two sons of the governor, Gonzalez, captive, as they come to visit their father, and now the

ransom demanded for them is the surrender of the city: they are to die if the place is not yielded up. Elmina, the mother of the boys, and Ximena, their sister, are the remaining members of a family to which so dreadful an option is submitted. The poem is one of the highest merit. The subject is of great dignity, being connected with the defence of Spain against the Moors; and at the same time it is of the greatest tenderness, offering a succession of the most moving scenes that can be imagined to occur in the bosom of a family. The father is firm, the daughter is heroic, the mother falters. She finds her way to the Moorish camp, sees her children, forms her plan for betraying the town, and then is not able to conceal her grief and her design from her husband. He immediately sends a defiance to the Moors, his children are brought out and beheaded, a sortie is made from the besieged city: finally, the king of Spain arrives to the rescue; the wrongs of Gonzalez are avenged; he himself dies in victory; and the poem closes with a picture of his wife, moved by the strongest grief, of which she is yet able to restrain the expression. The great excellence of the poem lies in the description of the struggle between the consciousness of duty and maternal fondness. We believe none but a mother could have written it."—Professor Norton, in North American Review for April 1827.

"The graceful powers of Mrs Hemans in the same walk which had been trodden so grandly by Miss Baillie, were manifested in her 'Vespers of Palermo', and her 'Siege of Valencia.' The latter is a noble work, and as a poem ranks with her highest productions, though it is filled too uniformly perhaps with the spirit of her own mind, to be very distinctively dramatic. It has indeed variety, but less of the variety of human nature, than of a godlike and exalted nature, which belongs to few among mankind, and to them, perhaps, only in strange and terrible crises. The steadfastness of the paternal chieftain, the sterner enthusiasm of the priest, the mother's maddening affection, and the gentle heroism of the melancholy Ximena are drawn with individuality, but it is the individuality of a common greatness, the apparent appropriation to many of an essence really the same in all. In her own heart the

poetess found this pure essence; and when she created her Christian patriots at Valencia, she but translated herself into a new dialect of manners and motives. Of this one elevated material she has, however, made fine dramatic use. The language, while faultless in its measured music, has passion to swell its cadences; the loftiness is never languid; and the flow of the verse is skilfully broken into the animated abruptness suitable to earnest dialogue. There are many, too, of those sudden glimpses of profound truth in which the energy of passion seems to force its rude way, in a moment, into regions of the heart that philosophy would take hours to survey with its technical language. Thus, when the iron-hearted monk is telling the story of his son's disgrace,—

'Elmina. He died?

Hernandez. Not so!

—Death! death! Why, earth should be a paradise

To make that name so fearful! Had he died,

With his young fame about him for a shroud,

I had not learn'd the might of agony

To bring proud natures low! No! he fell off——

Why do I tell thee this? What right hast thou

To learn how pass'd the glory from my house?

Yet listen. He forsook me! He that was

As mine own soul forsook me!—trampled o'er

The ashes of his sires!—ay, leagued himself

Even with the infidel, the curse of Spain;

And, for the dark eye of a Moorish maid,

Abjured his faith, his God! Now, talk of death!

“The whole of the scene to which the passage belongs, is moulded in the highest spirit of tragic verse. The bewilderment of the mother betrayed into guilt by overpowering affection, and the death of the beautiful enthusiast Ximena, are sketched in a style of excellence little inferior; and the peculiar powers of Mrs Hemans’s poetry, less dramatic than declamatory, have full scope in the spirit-stirring address of the latter to the fainting host of Valencia, as she lifts in her own ancient city the banner of the Cid, and recounts the sublime legend of his martial burial. Spain and its romances formed the darling theme of Mrs Hemans’s muse; and before leaving the subject, she gives us her magnificent series of ballads, the ‘Songs of the Cid,’ which meet us at the close of the drama, as if to form an appropriate chorus to the whole.”—William Archer Butler, Introductory Notice to National Lyrics and Songs for Music. Dublin: 1838.]

Miscellaneous Poems.

SONG.

FOUNDED ON AN ARABIAN ANECDOTE.

Away! though still thy sword is red
With life-blood from my sire,
No drop of thine may now be shed
To quench my bosom’s fire;
Though on my heart ’twould fall more blest
Than dews upon the desert’s breast.

I’ve sought thee midst the sons of men,
Through the wide city’s fanes;
I’ve sought thee by the lion’s den,

O’er pathless, boundless plains;
No step that mark’d the burning waste,
But mine its lonely course hath traced.
Thy name hath been a baleful spell,
O’er my dark spirit cast;
No thought may dream, no words may tell,
What there unseen hath pass’d:
This wither’d cheek, this faded eye,
Are seals of thee—behold! and fly!
Hath not my cup for thee been pour’d
Beneath the palm-tree’s shade?
Hath not soft sleep thy frame restored
Within my dwelling laid?
What though unknown—yet who shall rest
Secure—if not the Arab’s guest?
Haste thee! and leave my threshold-floor
Inviolate and pure!
Let not thy presence tempt me more,
—Man may not thus endure!
Away! I bear a fetter’d arm,
A heart that burns—but must not harm.
Begone! outstrip the swift gazelle!
The wind in speed subdue!
Fear cannot fly so swift, so well,

As vengeance shall pursue;
And hate, like love in parting pain,
Smiles o’er one hope—we meet again!
To-morrow—and th’ avenger’s hand,
The warrior’s dart is free!
E’en now, no spot in all thy land,
Save this, had shelter’d thee;
Let blood the monarch’s hall profane,—
The Arab’s tent must bear no stain!
Fly! may the desert’s fiery blast
Avoid thy secret way!
And sternly, till thy steps be past,
Its whirlwinds sleep to-day!
I would not that thy doom should be
Assign’d by heaven to aught but me.

ALP-HORN SONG.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF TIECK.

What dost thou here, brave Swiss?
Forgett’st thou thus thy native clime—
The lovely land of thy bright spring-time?
The land of thy home, with its free delights,
And fresh green valleys and mountain heights?
Can the stranger’s yield thee bliss?
What welcome cheers thee now?

Dar’st thou lift thine eye to gaze around?
Where are the peaks, with their snow-wreaths crown’d?
Where is the song, on the wild winds borne,
Or the ringing peal of the joyous horn,
Or the peasant’s fearless brow?
But thy spirit is far away!
Where a greeting waits thee in kindred eyes.
Where the white Alps look through the sunny skies,
With the low senn-cabins, and pastures free,
And the sparkling blue of the glacier-sea,
And the summits clothed with day!
Back, noble child of Tell!
Back to the wild and the silent glen,
And the frugal board of peasant-men!
Dost thou seek the friend, the loved one, here?—
Away! not a true Swiss heart is near,
Against thine own to swell!

THE CROSS OF THE SOUTH.

[The beautiful constellation of the Cross is seen only in the southern hemisphere. The following lines are supposed to be addressed to it by a Spanish traveller in South America.]

In the silence and grandeur of midnight I tread,
Where savannahs in boundless magnificence spread,
And bearing sublimely their snow-wreaths on high,

The far Cordilleras unite with the sky.
The fir-tree waves o’er me, the fire-flies’ red light
With its quick-glancing splendour illumines the night;
And I read in each tint of the skies and the earth,
How distant my steps from the land of my birth.
But to thee, as thy lode-stars resplendently bum
In their clear depths of blue, with devotion I turn,
Bright Cross of the South! and beholding thee shine,
Scarce regret the loved land of the olive and vine.
Thou recallest the ages when first o’er the main
My fathers unfolded the ensign of Spain,
And planted their faith in the regions that see
Its unperishing symbol emblazon’d in thee.
How oft in their course o’er the oceans unknown,
Where all was mysterious, and awful, and lone,
Hath their spirit been cheer’d by thy light, when the deep
Reflected its brilliance in tremulous sleep!
As the vision that rose to the Lord of the world,[285]
When first his bright banner of faith was unfurl’d;
Even such, to the heroes of Spain, when their prow
Made the billows the path of their glory, wert thou.
And to me, as I traversed the world of the west,
Through deserts of beauty in stillness that rest;
By forests and rivers untamed in their pride,

Thy hues have a language, thy course is a guide.
Shine on!—my own land is a far distant spot,
And the stars of thy sphere can enlighten it not;
And the eyes that I love, though e’en now they may be
O’er the firmament wandering, can gaze not on thee!
But thou to my thoughts art a pure-blazing shrine,
A fount of bright hopes and of visions divine;
And my soul, as an eagle exulting and free,
Soars high o’er the Andes to mingle with thee.
[285] Constantine.

THE SLEEPER OF MARATHON.

I lay upon the solemn plain,
And by the funeral mound,
Where those who died not there in vain,
Their place of sleep had found.
’Twas silent where the free blood gush’d,
When Persia came array’d—
So many a voice had there been hush’d,
So many a footstep stay’d.
I slumber’d on the lonely spot
So sanctified by death;
I slumber’d—but my rest was not
As theirs, who lay beneath.
For on my dreams, that shadowy hour,

They rose—the chainless dead—
All arm’d they sprang, in joy, in power,
Up from their grassy bed.
I saw their spears, on that red field,
Flash as in time gone by—
Chased to the seas without his shield,
I saw the Persian fly.
I woke—the sudden trumpet’s blast
Call’d to another fight:
From visions of our glorious past,
Who doth not wake in might?

TO MISS F. A. L. ON HER BIRTH-DAY.

What Wish can Friendship form for thee,
What brighter star invoke to shine?—
Thy path from every thorn is free,
And every rose is thine!
Life hath no purer joy in store,
Time hath no sorrow to efface;
Hope cannot paint one blessing more
Than memory can retrace!
Some hearts a boding fear might own,
Had Fate to them thy portion given,
Since many an eye, by tears alone,
Is taught to gaze on heaven!

And there are virtues oft conceal’d,
Till roused by anguish from repose;
As odorous trees no balm will yield,
Till from their wounds it flows.
But fear not thou the lesson fraught
With Sorrow’s chastening power to know;
Thou need’st not thus be sternly taught
“To melt at others’ woe.”
Then still, with heart as blest, as warm,
Rejoice thou in thy lot on earth;
Ah! why should Virtue dread the storm,
If sunbeams prove her worth?

WRITTEN ON THE FIRST LEAF OF THE ALBUM OF THE SAME.

What first should consecrate as thine,
The volume, destined to be fraught
With many a sweet and playful line,
With many a pure and pious thought?
It should be, what a loftier strain
Perchance less meetly would impart;
What never yet was pour’d in vain,—
The blessing of a grateful heart—
For kindness, which hath soothed the hour
Of anxious grief, of weary pain,
And oft, with its beguiling power,

Taught languid Hope to smile again.
Long shall that fervent blessing rest
On thee and thine; and, heavenwards borne,
Call down such peace to soothe thy breast,
As thou wouldst bear to all that mourn.

TO THE SAME;

ON THE DEATH OF HER MOTHER.

Say not ’tis fruitless, nature’s holy tear,
Shed by affection o’er a parent’s bier!
More blest than dew on Hermon’s brow that falls,
Each drop to life some latent virtue calls,
Awakes some purer hope, ordain’d to rise,
By earthly sorrow strengthen’d for the skies;
Till the sad heart, whose pangs exalt its love,
With its lost treasure, seeks a home—above.
But grief will claim her hour,—and He whose eye
Looks pitying down on nature’s agony,
He, in whose love the righteous calmly sleep,
Who bids us hope, forbids us not to weep!
He, too, hath wept—and sacred be the woes
Once borne by Him, their inmost source who knows,
Searches each wound, and bids His Spirit bring
Celestial healing on its dove-like wing!
And who but He shall soothe, when one dread stroke

Ties, that were fibres of the soul, hath broke?
Oh! well may those, yet lingering here, deplore
The vanish'd light, that cheers their path no more!
Th' Almighty hand, which many a blessing dealt,
Sends its keen arrows not to be unfelt!
By fire and storm, heaven tries the Christian's worth,
And joy departs, to wean us from the earth,
Where still too long, with beings born to die,
Time hath dominion o'er Eternity.
Yet not the less, o'er all the heart hath lost,
Shall Faith rejoice, when Nature grieves the most.
Then comes her triumph! through the shadowy gloom,
Her star in glory rises from the tomb,
Mounts to the day-spring, leaves the cloud below,
And gilds the tears that cease not yet to flow!
Yes, all is o'er! fear, doubt, suspense are fled—
Let brighter thoughts be with the virtuous dead!
The final ordeal of the soul is past,
And the pale brow is seal'd to heaven at last![286]
And thou, loved spirit! for the skies mature,
Steadfast in faith, in meek devotion pure;
Thou that didst make the home thy presence bless'd
Bright with the sunshine of thy gentle breast,
Where peace a holy dwelling-place had found,

Whence beam'd her smile benignantly around;
Thou, that to bosoms widow'd and bereft
Dear, precious records of thy worth hast left,
The treasured gem of sorrowing hearts to be,
Till heaven recall surviving love to thee!
O cherish'd and revered! fond memory well
On thee, with sacred, sad delight, may dwell!
So pure, so blest thy life, that Death alone
Could make more perfect happiness thine own.
He came: thy cup of joy, serenely bright,
Full to the last, still flow'd in cloudless light;
He came—an angel, bearing from on high
The all it wanted—Immortality!

[286] "Till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads."—Revelation.

FROM THE SPANISH OF GARCILASO DE LA VEGA.

Divine Eliza!—since the sapphire sky
Thou measur'st now on angel wings, and feet
Sandall'd with immortality—oh, why
Of me forgetful? Wherefore not entreat
To hurry on the time, when I shall see
The veil of mortal being rent in twain,
And smile that I am free?
In the third circle of that happy land,
Shall we not seek together, hand in hand,

Another lovelier landscape, a new plain,
Other romantic streams and mountains blue,
And other vales, and a new shady shore,
When I may rest, and ever in my view
Keep thee, without the terror and surprise
Of being sunder’d more!

FROM THE ITALIAN OF SANNAZARO.

Oh! pure and blessèd soul,
That, from thy clay’s control
Escaped, hast sought and found thy native sphere,
And from thy crystal throne
Look’st down, with smiles alone,
On this vain scene of mortal hope and fear;
Thy happy feet have trod
The starry spangled road,
Celestial flocks by field and fountain guiding;
And from their erring track
Thou charm’st thy shepherds back,
With the soft music of thy gentle chiding.
Oh! who shall Death withstand—
Death, whose impartial hand
Levels the lowest plant and loftiest pine!
When shall our ears again
Drink in so sweet a strain,

Our eyes behold so fair a form as thine!

APPEARANCE OF THE SPIRIT OF THE CAPE TO VASCO DE GAMA.

(TRANSLATED FROM THE FIFTH BOOK OF THE LUSIAD OF CAMOENS.)

Propitious winds our daring bark impell'd
O'er seas which mortal ne'er till then beheld,
When as one eve, devoid of care, we stood
Watching the prow glide swiftly through the flood,
High o'er our heads arose a cloud so vast,
O'er sea and heaven a fearful shade it cast:
Awful, immense, it came! so thick, so drear,
Its gloomy grandeur chill'd our hearts with fear,
And the dark billow heaved with distant roar,
Hoarse, as if bursting on some rocky shore.
Thrill'd with amaze, I cried, "Supernal Power!
What mean the omens of this threatening hour!
What the dread mystery of this ocean-clime,
So darkly grand, so fearfully sublime?"
Scarce had I spoke, when lo! a mighty form,
Tower'd through the gathering shadows of the storm;
Of rude proportions and gigantic size,
Dark features, rugged beard, and deep-sunk eyes;
Fierce was his gesture, and his tresses flew,
Sable his lips, and earthly pale his hue.
Well may I tell thee that his limbs and height,

In vast dimensions and stupendous might,
Surpass’d that wonder, once the sculptor’s boast,
The proud Colossus of the Rhodian coast.
Deep was his voice—in hollow tones he spoke,
As if from ocean’s inmost caves they broke;
And but that form to view, that voice to hear,
Spread o’er our flesh and hair cold deadly thrills of fear.
“O daring band!” he cried, “far, far more bold
Than all whose deeds recording fame has told;
Adventurous spirits! whom no bounds of fear
Can teach one pause in rapine’s fierce career;
Since, bursting thus the barriers of the main,
Ye dare to violate my lonely reign,
Where, till this moment, from the birth of time,
No sail e’er broke the solitude sublime:
Since thus ye pierce the veil by Nature thrown
O’er the dark secrets of the Deep Unknown,
Ne’er yet reveal’d to aught of mortal birth,
Howe’er supreme in power, unmatch’d in worth—
Hear from my lips what chastisements of fate,
Rash, bold intruders! on your course await!
What countless perils, woes of darkest hue,
Haunt the vast main and shores your arms must yet subdue!
“Know that o’er every bark, whose fearless helm

Invades, like yours, this wide mysterious realm,
Unmeasured ills my arm in wrath shall pour,
And guard with storms my own terrific shore!
And on the fleet, which first presumes to brave
The dangers throned on this tempestuous wave,
Shall vengeance burst, ere yet a warning fear,
Have time to prophesy destruction near!
“Yes, desperate band! if right my hopes divine,
Revenge, fierce, full, unequall’d, shall be mine!
Urge your bold prow, pursue your venturous way—
Pain, Havoc, Ruin, wait their destined prey!
And your proud vessels, year by year, shall find
(If no false dreams delude my prescient mind)
My wrath so dread in many a fatal storm,
Death shall be deem’d misfortune’s mildest form.
“Lo! where my victim comes!—of noble birth,
Of cultured genius, and exalted worth,
With her,[287] his best beloved, in all her charms,
Pride of his heart, and treasure of his arms!
From foaming waves, from raging winds they fly,
Spared for revenge, reserved for agony!
Oh! dark the fate that calls them from their home,
On this rude shore, my savage reign, to roam,
And sternly saves them from a billowy tomb,

For woes more exquisite, more dreadful doom!
—Yes! he shall see the offspring, loved in vain,
Pierced with keen famine, die in lingering pain;
Shall see fierce Caffres every garment tear,
From her, the soft, the idolised, the fair;
Shall see those limbs, of nature's finest mould,
Bare to the sultry sun, or midnight cold,
And, in long wanderings o'er a desert land,
Those tender feet imprint the scorching sand.
"Yet more, yet deeper woe, shall those behold
Who live through toils unequall'd and untold!
On the wild shore, beneath the burning sky,
The hapless pair, exhausted, sink to die!
Bedew the rock with tears of pain intense,
Of bitterest anguish, thrilling every sense;
Till in one last embrace, with mortal throes,
Their struggling spirits mount from anguish to repose!"
As the dark phantom sternly thus portray'd
Our future ills, in Horror's deepest shade,—
"Who then art thou?" I cried. "Dread being, tell
Each sense thus bending in amazement's spell!"
—With fearful shriek, far echoing o'er the tide,
Writhing his lips and eyes, he thus replied:
"Behold the genius of that secret shore

Where the wind rages and the billows roar—
That stormy Cape, for ages mine alone,
To Pompey, Strabo, Pliny, all unknown!
Far to the southern pole my throne extends,
That hidden rock, which Afric's region ends.
Behold that spirit, whose avenging might,
Whose fiercest wrath your daring deeds excite."
Thus having said, with strange, terrific cries,
The giant-spectre vanish'd from our eyes;
In sable clouds dissolved—while far around,
Dark ocean's heaving realms his parting yells resound!
[287] Don Emmanuel de Sonsa, and his wife, Leonora de Sà.

A DIRGE.

Weep for the early lost!—
How many flowers were mingled in the crown
Thus, with the lovely, to the grave gone down,
E'en when life promised most!
How many hopes have wither'd! They that bow
To heaven's dread will, feel all its mysteries now.
Did the young mother's eye
Behold her child, and close upon the day,
Ere from its glance th' awakening spirit's ray
In sunshine could reply?
—Then look for clouds to dim the fairest morn!

Oh! strong is faith, if woe like this be borne.
For there is hush'd on earth
A voice of gladness—there is veil'd a face,
Whose parting leaves a dark and silent place
By the once-joyous hearth;
A smile hath pass'd, which fill'd its home with light,
A soul, whose beauty made that smile so bright!
But there is power with faith!
Power, e'en though nature o'er the untimely grave
Must weep, when God resumes the gem He gave;
For sorrow comes of Death,
And with a yearning heart we linger on,
When they, whose glance unlock'd its founts, are gone!
But glory from the dust,
And praise to Him, the merciful, for those
On whose bright memory love may still repose
With an immortal trust!
Praise for the dead, who leave us, when they part,
Such hope as she hath left—"the pure in heart!"
1823.

TRANSLATIONS FROM HORACE.

TO VENUS.

BOOK I., ODE XXX.

Oh! leave thine own loved isle,

Bright Queen of Cyprus and the Paphian shores!

And here in Glycera’s fair temple smile,

Where vows and incense lavishly she pours.

Waft here thy glowing son;

Bring Hermes; let the Nymphs thy path surround,

And youth, unlovely till thy gifts be won,

And the light Graces with the zone unbound.

TO HIS ATTENDANT.

BOOK I., ODE XXXVIII.

I hate the Persian’s costly pride:

The wreaths with bands of linden tied—

These, boy, delight me not;

Nor where the lingering roses bide

Seek thou for me the spot.

For me be naught but myrtle twined—

The modest myrtle, sweet to bind

Alike thy brows and mine,

While thus I quaff the bowl, reclined

Beneath th’ o’erarching vine.

TO DELIUS.

BOOK II., ODE III.

Firm be thy soul!—serene in power,

When adverse fortune clouds the sky;

Undazzled by the triumph’s hour,

Since, Delius, thou must die—
Alike, if still to grief resign’d,
Or if, through festal days, ’tis thine
To quaff, in grassy haunts reclined,
The old Falernian wine—
Haunts where the silvery poplar-boughs
Love with the pine’s to blend on high,
And some clear fountain brightly flows
In graceful windings by.
There be the rose with beauty fraught,
So soon to fade, so brilliant now;
There be the wine, the odours brought,
While time and fate allow!
For thou, resigning to thine heir
Thy halls, thy bowers, thy treasured store,
Must leave that home, those woodlands fair,
On yellow Tiber’s shore.
What then avails it, if thou trace
From Inachus thy glorious line?
Or, sprung from some ignoble race,
If not a roof be thine?
Since the dread lot for all must leap
Forth from the dark revolving urn,
And we must tempt the gloomy deep,

Whence exiles ne’er return.

TO THE FOUNTAIN OF BANDUSIA.

BOOK III., ODE XIII.

Oh! worthy fragrant gifts of flowers and wine,

Bandusian fount, than crystal far more bright!

To-morrow shall a sportive kid be thine,

Whose forehead swells with horns of infant might:

Ev’n now of love and war he dreams in vain,

Doom’d with his blood thy gelid wave to stain.

Let the red dog-star burn!—his scorching beam

Fierce in resplendence shall molest not thee!

Still shelter’d from his rays, thy banks, fair stream!

To the wild flock around thee wandering free,

And the tired oxen from the furrow’d field,

The genial freshness of their breath shall yield.

And thou, bright fount! ennobled and renown’d

Shalt by thy poet’s votive song be made;

Thou and the oak with deathless verdure crown’d,

Whose boughs, a pendant canopy, o’ershade

Those hollow rocks, whence, murmuring many a tale,

Thy chiming waters pour upon the vale.

TO FAUNUS.

BOOK III., ODE XVIII.

Faunus! who lovest the flying nymphs to chase,

Oh, let thy steps with genial influence tread
My sunny fields, and be thy fostering grace
Soft on my nursling groves and borders shed;
If, at the mellow closing of the year,
A tender kid in sacrifice be thine,
Nor fail the liberal bowls to Venus dear,
Nor clouds of incense to thine antique shrine.
Joyous each flock in meadow herbage plays,
When the December feast returns to thee;
Calmly the ox along the pasture strays,
With festal villagers from toil set free.
Then from the wolf no more the lambs retreat,
Then shower the woods to thee their foliage round;
And the glad labourer triumphs that his feet
In triple dance have struck the hated ground.

DE CHATILLON; OR, THE CRUSADERS.

A TRAGEDY.[288]

["About this time, Mrs Hemans was engaged in the composition of another tragedy, entitled 'De Chatillon, or, The Crusaders;' in which, with that deference to fair criticism which she was always ready to avow, and to act upon, she made it her purpose to attempt a more compressed style of writing, avoiding that redundancy of poetic diction which had been censured as the prevailing fault of 'The Vespers.' It may possibly be thought that in the composition in question she has fallen into the opposite extreme of want of elaboration; yet, in its present state, it is, perhaps,

scarcely amenable to criticism—for, by some strange accident, the fair copy transcribed by herself was either destroyed or mislaid in some of her subsequent removals, and the piece was long considered as utterly lost. Nearly two years after her death, the original rough MS., with all its hieroglyphical blots and erasures, was discovered amongst a mass of forgotten papers; and it has been a task of no small difficulty to decipher it, and complete the copy now first given to the world. Allowances must, therefore, be made for the disadvantages under which it appears,—thus deprived of her own finishing touches, and with no means of ascertaining how far it may differ from the copy so unaccountably missing."—Memoir, p. 80-1.]

[288] First published in Edition of Collected Works, vol. iv. 1840.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Rainier de Chatillon, A French Baron. Aymer, His Brother. Melech, A Saracen Emir. Herman, } Knights. Du Mornay,} Gaston, A Vassal of Rainier's. Urban, A Priest. Sadi. Moraima, Daughter of Melech. Knights, Arabs, Citizens, &c.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—Before the gates of a city in Palestine.

Urban, Priests, Citizens, at the gates. Others looking from the walls above.

Urb. (to a Citizen on the walls above.)

You see their lances glistening? You can tell

The way they take?

Cit. Not yet. Their march is slow;

They have not reach'd the jutting cliff, where first

The mountain path divides.

Urb. And now?

Cit. The wood

Shuts o’er their track. Now spears are flashing out—

It is the banner of De Chatillon.

(Very slow and mournful military music without.)

This way! they come this way!

Urb. All holy saints

Grant that they pass us not! Those martial sounds

Have a strange tone of sadness! Hark, they swell

Proudly, yet full of sorrow.

Rainier de Chatillon enters with knights, soldiers, &c.

Welcome, knights!

Ye bring us timely aid! men’s hearts were full

Of doubt and terror. Brave De Chatillon!

True soldier of the Cross! I welcome thee;

I greet thee with all blessing! Where thou art

There is deliverance!

Rai. (bending to receive the Priest’s blessing.)

Holy man, I come

From a lost battle.

Urb. And thou bring’st the heart

Whose spirit yields not to defeat.

Rai. I bring

My father’s bier.

Urb. His bier! I marvel not

To see your brow thus darken’d! And he died,

As he had lived, in arms?

Rai. (gloomily.) Not, not in arms—

His war-cry had been silenced. Have ye place

Amidst your ancient knightly sepulchres

For a warrior with his sword? He bade me bear

His dust to slumber here.

Urb. And it shall sleep

Beside our noblest, while we yet can call

One holy place our own! Heard you, my lord,

That the fierce Kaled’s host is on its march

Against our city?

Rai. (with sudden exultation.) That were joy to know!

That were proud joy!—Who told it?—there’s a weight

That must be heaved from off my troubled heart

By the strong tide of battle! Kaled!—ay,

A gallant name! How heard you?

Urb. Nay, it seem’d

As if a breeze first bore the rumour in.

I know not how it rose; but now it comes

Like fearful truth, and we were sad, thus left

Hopeless of aid or counsel—till we saw——

Rai. (hastily.) You have my brother here?

Urb. (with embarrassment.) We have; but he——

Rai. But he—but he!—Aymer de Chatillon!

The fiery knight—the very soul o' the field—

Rushing on danger with the joyous step

Of a hunter o'er the hills!—is that a tone

Wherewith to speak of him? I heard a tale—

If it be true—nay, tell me!

Urb. He is here:

Ask him to tell thee.

Rai. If that tale be true——

(He turns suddenly to his companions.)

—Follow me, give the noble dead his rites,

And we will have our day of vengeance yet,

Soldiers and friends!

[Exeunt omnes.

Scene II.—A Hall of Oriental architecture, opening upon gardens. A fountain in the centre.

Aymer de Chatillon, Moraima.

Mor. (bending over a couch on which her brother is sleeping.)

He sleeps so calmly now; the soft wind here

Brings in such lulling sounds! Nay, think you not

This slumber will restore him? See you not

His cheek's faint glow?

Aym. (turning away.) It was my sword which gave

The wound he dies from!

Mor. Dies from! say not so!

The brother of my childhood and my youth,

My heart's first friend!—Oh! I have been too weak,

I have delay'd too long! He could not sue,

He bade me urge the prayer he would not speak,

And I withheld it! Christian, set us free!

You have been gentle with us! 'tis the weight,

The bitter feeling, of captivity

Which preys upon his life!

Aym. You would go hence?

Mor. For his sake!

Aym. You would leave me! 'Tis too late!

You see it not—you know not, that your voice

Hath power in its low mournfulness to shake

Mine inmost soul?—that you but look on me,

With the soft darkness of your earnest eyes,

And bid the world fade from me, and call up

A thousand passionate dreams, which wrap my life

As with a troubled cloud? The very sound

Of your light step hath made my heart o'erflow,

Even unto aching, with the sudden gush

Of its deep tenderness! You know it not?

—Moraima!—speak to me!

Mor. (covering herself with her veil.) I can but weep!

Is it even so?—this love was born for tears!

Aymer! I can but weep! (going to leave him, he detains her.)

Aym. Hear me, yet hear me! I was rear'd in arms;

And the proud blast of trumpets, and the shouts

Of banner'd armies—these were joy to me,

Enough of joy! Till you!—I look'd on you—

We met where swords were flashing, and the light

Of burning towers glared wildly on the slain—

And then——

Mor. (hurriedly.) Yes! then you saved me!

Aym. Then I knew,

At once, what springs of deeper happiness

Lay far within my soul; and they burst forth

Troubled and dash'd with fear—yet sweet! I loved!

Moraima! leave me not!

Mor. For us to love!

Oh! is't not taking sorrow to our hearts,

Binding her there? I know not what I say!

How shall I look upon my brother? Hark!

Did he not call? (she goes up to the couch.)

Aym. Am I beloved? She wept

With a full heart! I am! and such deep joy

Is found on earth! If I should lose her now!

If aught——

[an attendant enters.

(To attendant.) You seek me!—why is this?

Att. My lord,

Your brother and his knights——

Aym. Here! are they here?

The knights—my brother, saidst thou?

Att. Yes, my lord,

And he would speak with you.

Aym. I see—I know—

(To attendant.) Leave me! I know why he is come: ’tis vain,

They shall not part us!

(Looking back on Moraima as he goes out.)

What a silent grace

Floats round her form! They shall not part us! no!

[Exit—Scene closes.

Scene III.—A square of the city—a church in the background.

Rainier de Chatillon.

Rai. (walking to and fro impatiently.)

And now, too! now! My father unavenged,

Our holy places threaten’d, every heart

Task’d to its strength! A knight of Palestine

Now to turn dreamer, to melt down his soul

In love-lorn sighs; and for an infidel!

—Will he lift up his eyes to look on mine?

Will he not——hush!

Aymer enters. (They look on each other for a moment without speaking.)

Rai. (suppressing his emotion.) So brothers meet! You know

Wherefore I come?

Aym. It cannot be; ’tis vain.

Tell me not of it!

Rai. How! you have not heard?

(Turning from him.)

He hath so shut the world out with his dreams,

The tidings have not reach’d him! or perchance

Have been forgotten! You have captives here?

Aym. (hurriedly.) Yes, mine! my own—won by the right of arms!

You dare not question it.

Rai. A prince, they say,

And his fair sister:—is the maid so fair?

Aym. (turning suddenly upon him.)

What, you would see her!

Rai. (scornfully.) I!—oh, yes! to quell

My soul’s deep yearnings! Let me look on swords.

Boy, boy! recall yourself!—I come to you

With the last blessing of our father!

Aym. Last!

His last!—how mean you? Is he——

Rai. Dead?—yes! dead.

He died upon my breast.

Aym. (with the deepest emotion.) And I was here!

Dead!—and upon your breast! You closed his eyes—

While I—he spoke of me?

Rai. With such deep love!

He ever loved you most! His spirit seem'd

To linger for your coming.

Aym. What! he thought

That I was on my way! He look'd for me?

And I——

Rai. You came not! I had sent to you,

And told you he was wounded.

Aym. Yes—but not—

Not mortally!

Rai. 'Twas not that outward wound—

That might have closed; and yet he surely thought

That you would come to him! He call'd on you

When his thoughts wander'd! Ay, the very night,

The very hour he died, some hasty step

Enter'd his chamber—and he raised his head,

With a faint lightning in his eyes, and ask'd

If it were yours! That hope's brief moment pass'd—

He sank then.

Aym. (throwing himself upon his brother's neck.)

Brother! take me to his grave,

That I may kneel there, till my burning tears,

With the strong passion of repentant love,

Wring forth a voice to pardon me!

Rai. You weep!

Tears for the garlands on a maiden's grave!

You know not how he died!

Aym. Not of his wound?

Rai. His wound!—it is the silent spirit's wound,

We cannot reach to heal! One burning thought

Prey'd on his heart.

Aym. Not—not—he had not heard—

He bless'd me, Rainier?

Rai. Have you flung away

Your birthright? Yes! he bless'd you!—but he died

—He whose name stood for Victory's—he believed

The ancient honour from his gray head fall'n,

And died—he died of shame!

Aym. What feverish dream——

Rai. (vehemently.) Was it not lost, the warrior's latest field,

The noble city held for Palestine

Taken—the Cross laid low? I came too late

To turn the tide of that disastrous fight,

But not to rescue him. We bore him thence

Wounded, upon his shield——

Aym. And I was here!

Rai. He cast one look back on his burning towers,

Then threw the red sword of a hundred fields

To the earth—and hid his face! I knew, I knew

His heart was broken! Such a death for him!

—The wasting—the sick loathing of the sun—

Let the foe's charger trample out my life,

Let me not die of shame! But we will have—

Aym. (grasping his hand eagerly.)Yes! vengeance!

Rai. Vengeance! By the dying once,

And once before the dead, and yet once more

Alone with heaven's bright stars, I took that vow

For both his sons! Think of it, when the night

Is dark around you, and in festive halls

Keep your soul hush'd, and think of it!

A low Chant of female voices, heard from behind the scenes.

Fall'n is the flower of Islam's race!

Break ye the lance he bore,

And loose his war-steed from its place:

He is no more—

Single voice. No more!

Weep for him mother, sister, bride!

He died, with all his fame—

Single voice. He died!

Aym. (Pointing to a palace, and eagerly speaking to his attendant, who enters.)

Came it not thence? Rudolf, what sounds are these?

Att. The Moslem prince, your captive—he is dead:

It is the mourners' wail for him.

Aym. And she—

His sister—heard you—did they say she wept?

[Hurrying away.

Rai. (indignantly.) All the deep stirring tones of honour's voice

In a moment silenced!

[Solemn military music.

(A funeral procession, with priests, &c., crosses the background to enter the church.)

Rai. (following Aymer and grasping his arm.)

Aymer! there—look there!

It is your father's bier!

Aym. (returning.) He bless'd me, Rainier?

You heard him bless me? Yes! you closed his eyes:

He look'd for me in vain!

[He goes to the bier, and bends over it, covering his face.

ACT II.

Scene I.—A room in the Citadel.

Rainier, Aymer, Knights, assembled in council.

A Knight. What! with our weary and distracted bands

To dare another field! Nay, give them rest.

Rai. (impatiently.) Rest! and that sleepless thought——

Knight. These walls have strength

To baffle siege. Let the foe gird us in—

We must wait aid; our soldiers must forget

That last disastrous day.

Rai. (coming forward.) If they forget it, in the combat's press

May their spears fail them!

Knight. Yet, bethink thee, chief.

Rai. When I forget it——how! you see not, knights!

Whence we must now draw strength. Send down your thoughts

Into the very depths of grief and shame,

And bring back courage thence! To talk of rest!

How do they rest, unburied on their field,

Our brethren slain by Gaza? Had we time

To give them funeral rites? and ask we now

Time to forget their fall? My father died—

I cannot speak of him! What! and forget

The infidel's fierce trampling o'er our dead?

Forget his scornful shout? Give battle now,

While the thought lives as fire lives!—there lies strength!

Hold the dark memory fast! Now, now—this hour!

—Aymer, you do not speak!

Aym. (starting.) Have I not said?

Battle!—yes, give us battle!—room to pour

The troubled spirit forth upon the winds,

With the trumpet’s ringing blast! Way for remorse!

Free way for vengeance!

All the Knights. Arm! Heaven wills it so!

Rai. Gather your forces to the western gate!

Let none forget that day! Our field was lost,

Our city’s strength laid low—one mighty heart

Broken! Let none forget it!

[Exeunt.

Scene II.—Garden of a Palace.

Moraima.

Mor. Yes! his last look—my brother’s dying look

Reproach’d me as it faded from his face.

And I deserved it! Had I not given way

To the wild guilty pleadings of my heart,

I might have won his freedom! Now, ’tis past.

He is free now!

Aymer enters, armed as for battle.

Aymer! you look so changed!

Aym. Changed!—it may be. A storm o’ the soul goes by

Not like a breeze! There’s such a fearful grasp

Fix’d on my heart! Speak to me—lull remorse!

Bid me farewell!

Mor. Yes! it must be farewell!

No other word but that.

Aym. No other word!

The passionate, burning words that I could pour

From my heart's depths! 'Tis madness! What have I

To do with love? I see it all—the mist

Is gone—the bright mist gone! I see the woe,

The ruin, the despair! And yet I love,

Love wildly, fatally! But speak to me!

Fill all my soul once more with reckless joy!

That blessèd voice again!

Mor. Why, why is this?

Oh! send me to my father! We must part.

Aym. Part!—yes, I know it all! I could not go

Till I had seen you! Give me one farewell,

The last—perchance the last!—but one farewell,

Whose mournful music I may take with me

Through tumult, horror, death!

[A distant sound of trumpets.

Mor. (starting.) You go to battle!

Aym. Hear you not that sound?

Yes! I go there, where dark and stormy thoughts

Find their free path!

Mor. Aymer! who leads the foe?

(Confused.) I meant—I mean—my people! Who is he,

My people’s leader?

Aym. Kaled. (Looking at her suspiciously.) How! you seem—

The name disturbs you!

Mor. My last brother’s name!

Aym. Fear not my sword for him!

Mor. (turning away.) If they should meet!

I know the vow he made.

(To Aymer.) If thou—if thou

Shouldst fall!

Aym. Moraima! then your blessèd tears

Would flow for me? then you would weep for me?

Mor. I must weep tears of very shame; and yet—

If—if your words have been love’s own true words,

Grant me one boon!

[Trumpet sounds again.

Aym. Hark! I must hence. A boon!

Ask it, and hold its memory to your heart,

As the last token, it may be, of love

So deep and sad.

Mor. Pledge me your knightly faith!

Aym. My knightly faith, my life, my honour—all,

I pledge thee all to grant it!

Mor. Then, to-day,

Go not this day to battle! He is there,

My brother Kaled!

Aym. (wildly.) Have I flung my sword

Down to dishonour?

[Going to leave her—she detains him.

Mor. Oh! your name hath stirr'd

His soul amidst his tents, and he had vow'd,

Long ere we met, to cross his sword with yours,

Till one or both should fall. There hath been death

Since then, amongst us; he will seek revenge.

And his revenge—forgive me!—oh! forgive!

—I could not bear that thought!

Aym. Now must the glance

Of a brave man strike me to the very dust!

Ay, this is shame.

[Covering his face.

(Turning wildly to Moraima.)

You scorn me too? Away!—She does not know

What she hath done!

[Rushes out.

Scene III.—Before a gateway within the city.

Rainier, Herman, Knights, Men-at-arms, &c.

Her. 'Tis past the hour.

Rai. (looking out anxiously.) Away! 'tis not the hour—

Not yet! When was the battle's hour delay'd

For a Chatillon? We must have come too soon!

All are not here.

Her. Yes, all!

Rai. They came too soon!

[Going up to the knights.

Couci, De Foix, Du Mornay—here, all here!

And he the last!—my brother!

(To a Soldier.) Where's your lord?

(Turning away.) Why should I ask, when that fair Infidel——

Aymer enters.

The Saracen at our gates—and you the last!

Come on, remember all your fame!

Aym. (coming forward in great agitation.) My fame!

—Why did you save me from the Paynim's sword,

In my first battle?

Rai. What wild words are these?

Aym. You should have let me perish then—yes, then!

Go to your field and leave me!

Knights. (thronging round him.) Leave you!

Rai. Aymer!

Was it your voice?

Aym. Now talk to me of fame!

Tell me of all my warlike ancestors,

And of my father's death—that bitter death!

Never did pilgrim for the fountains thirst

As I for this day's vengeance! To your field!

—I may not go!

Rai. (turning from him.) The name his race hath borne

Through a thousand battles—lost!

(Returning to Aymer.) A Chatillon!

Will you live and wed dishonour?

Aym. (covering his face.) Let the grave

Take me and cover me! I must go down

To its rest without my sword!

Rai. There's some dark spell upon him! Aymer, brother!

Let me not die of shame! He that died so

Turn'd sickening from the sun!

Aym. Where should I turn?

[Going up abruptly to the knights.

Herman—Du Mornay! ye have stood with me

I' the battle's front—ye know me! ye have seen

The fiery joy of danger bear me on

As a wind the arrow! Leave me now—'tis past!

Rai. (with bitterness.) He comes from her!—the infidel hath smiled,

Doubtless, for this.

Aym. I should have been to-day

Where shafts fly thickest, and the crossing swords

Cannot flash out for blood!—Hark! you are call'd!

[Wild Turkish music heard without. The background of the scene becomes more and more crowded with armed men.

Lay lance in rest!—wave, noble banners! wave!

[Throwing down his sword.

Go from me!—leave the fallen!

Her. Nay, but the cause?

Tell us the cause!

Rai. (approaching him indignantly.)

Your sword—your crested helm

And your knight’s mantle—cast them down! your name

Is in the dust!—our father’s name! The cause?

—Tell it not, tell it not!

[Turning to the soldiers and waving his hand.

Sound, trumpets! sound!

On, lances! for the Cross!

[Military music. As the knights march out, he looks back at Aymer.

I would not now

Call back my noble father from the dead,

If I could with but a breath!—Sound, trumpets, sound!

[Exeunt knights and soldiers.

Aym. Why should I bear this shame? ’tis not too late!

[Rushing after them, he suddenly checks himself.

My faith! my knightly faith pledged to my fall!

[Exit.

Scene IV. Before a Church.

Groups of Citizens passing to and fro. Aymer standing against one of the pillars of the church in the background, and leaning on his sword.

1st Cit. (to 2d.) From the walls, how goes the battle?

2d Cit. Well, all well,

Praise to the Saints! I saw De Chatillon

Fighting, as if upon his single arm

The fate o' the day were set.

3d Cit. Shame light on those

That strike not with him in their place!

1st Cit. You mean

His brother? Ay, is't not a fearful thing

That one of such a race—a brave one too—

Should have thus fallen?

2d Cit. They say the captive girl

Whom he so loved, hath won him from his faith

To the vile Paynim creed.

Aym. (suddenly coming forward.) Who dares say that?

Show me who dares say that!

[They shrink back—he laughs scornfully.

Ha! ha! ye thought

To play with a sleeper's name!—to make your mirth

As low-born men sit by a tomb, and jest

O'er a dead warrior! Where's the slanderer? Speak!

A Citizen enters hastily.

Cit. Haste to the walls! De Chatillon hath slain

The Paynim chief!

[They all go out.

Aym. Why should they shrink? I, I should ask the night

To cover me! I that have flung my name

Away to scorn! Hush! am I not alone?

[Listening eagerly.

There's a voice calling me—a voice i' the air—

My father's!—'Twas my father's! Are the dead,

Unseen, yet with us? Fearful!

(Loud shouts without, he rushes forward exultingly.)

'Tis the shout

Of victory! We have triumph'd!—We! my place

Is midst the fallen!

[Music heard, which approaches, swelling into a triumphant march. Knights enter in procession, with banners, torch-bearers, &c. The gates of the church are thrown open, and the altar, tombs, &c. within, are seen illuminated. Knights pass over, and enter the church. One of them takes a torch, and lifts it to Aymer's face in passing. He strikes it down with a sword; then, seeing Rainier approach, drops the sword, and covers his face.

Aym. (grasping Rainier by the mantle, as he is about to pass.)

Brother! forsake me not!

Rai. (suddenly drawing his sword, and showing it him.) My sword is red

With victory and revenge! Look—dyed to the hilt!

—We fought—and where were you?

Aym. Forsake me not!

Rai. (pointing with his sword to the tombs within the church.)

Those are proud tombs! The dead, the glorious dead,

Think you they sleep, and know not of their sons

In the mysterious grave? We laid him there!

—Before the ashes of your father, speak!

Have you abjured your faith?

Aym. (indignantly.) Your name is mine—your blood—and you ask this!

Wake him to hear me answer!—Have you? No!

—You have not dared to think it.

[Breaks from him, and goes out.

Rai. (entering the church, and bending over one of the tombs.)

Not yet lost!

Not yet all lost! He shall be thine again!

So shalt thou sleep in peace!

Music and Chorus of Voices from the church.

Praise, praise to heaven!

Sing of the conquer’d field, the Paynim flying,—

Light up the shrines, and bid the banners wave!

Sing of the warrior for the red-cross dying—

Chant a proud requiem o’er his holy grave!

Praise, praise to heaven!

Praise!—lift the song through night’s resounding sky!

Peace to the valiant for the Cross that die!

Sleep soft, ye brave!

ACT III.

Scene I.—A platform before the Citadel. Knights entering.

Her. (to one of the Knights.) You would plead for him?

Knight. Nay, remember all

His past renown!

Her. I had a friend in youth—

This Aymer's father had him shamed for less

Than his son's fault—far less!

We must accuse him;—he must have his shield

Reversed—his name degraded.

Knight. He might yet—

All the Knights. Must his shame cleave to us?

We cast him forth—

We will not bear it.

Rainier enters.

Rai. Knights! ye speak of him—

My brother—was't not so? All silent! Nay,

Give your thoughts breath! What said ye?

Her. That his name

Must be degraded.

Rai. Silence! ye disturb

The dead. Thou hear'st, my father!

[Going up indignantly to the Knights.

Which of ye

Shall first accuse him? He, whose bold step won

The breach at Ascalon ere Aymer’s step,

Let him speak first!

He that plunged deeper through the stormy fight,

Thence to redeem the banner of the Cross,

On Cairo’s plain, let him speak first! Or he

Whose sword burst swifter o’er the Saracen,

I’ the rescue of our king, by Jordan’s waves—

I say, let him speak first!

Her. Is he not an apostate?

Rai. No, no, no!

If he were that, had my life’s blood that taint,

This hand should pour it out! He is not that.

Her. Not yet.

Rai. Not yet, nor ever! Let me die

In a lost battle first!

Her. Hath he let go

Name—kindred—honour—for an infidel,

And will he grasp his faith?

Rai. (after a gloomy pause.)

That which bears poison—should it not be crush’d

What though the weed look lovely?

[Suddenly addressing Du Mornay

You have seen

My native halls, Du Mornay, far away

In Languedoc?

Du Mor. I was your father’s friend—

I knew them well.

Rai. (thoughtfully.) The weight of gloom that hangs—

The very banners seem to droop with it—

O’er some of those old rooms! Were we there now,

With a dull wind heaving the pale tapestries,

Why, I could tell you——

[Coming closer to Du Mornay.

There’s a dark-red spot

Grain’d in the floor of one—you know the tale?

Du Mor. I may have heard it by the winter fires,

—Now ’tis of things gone by.

Rai. (turning from him displeased.) Such legends give

Some minds a deeper tone.

(To Herman.) If you had heard

That tale i’ the shadowy tower——

Her. Nay, tell it now!

Rai. They say the place is haunted—moaning sounds

Come thence at midnight—sounds of woman’s voice.

Her. And you believe——

Rai. I but believe the deed

Done there of old. I had an ancestor—

Bertrand, the lion-chief—whose son went forth

(A younger son—I am not of his line)

To the wars of Palestine. He fought there well—

Ay, all his race were brave; but he return'd,

And with a Paynim bride.

Her. The recreant!—say,

How bore your ancestor?

Rai. Well may you think

It chafed him—but he bore it—for the love

Of that fair son, the child of his old age.

He pined in heart, yet gave the infidel

A place in his own halls.

Her. But did this last?

Rai. How should it last? Again the trumpet blew,

And men were summon'd from their homes to guard

The city of the Cross. But he seem'd cold—

That youth! He shunn'd his father's eye, and took

No armour from the walls.

Her. Had he then fallen?

Was his faith wavering?

Rai. So the father fear'd.

Her. If I had been that father——

Rai. Ay, you come

Of an honour'd lineage. What would you have done?

Her. Nay, what did he?

Rai. What did the lion-chief?

[Turning to Du Mornay.

Why, thou hast seen the very spot of blood

On the dark floor! He slew the Paynim bride.

Was it not well? (He looks at them attentively, and as he goes out exclaims—)

My brother must not fall!

Scene II.—A deserted Turkish burying-ground in the city—tombs and stones overthrown—the whole shaded by dark cypress-trees.

Mor. (leaning over a monumental pillar, which has been lately raised.)

He is at rest;—and I!—is there no power

In grief to win forgiveness from the dead?

When shall I rest? Hark! a step—Aymer's step!

The thrilling sound!

[She shrinks back as reproaching herself.

To feel that joy even here!

Brother! oh, pardon me!

Rai. (entering, and slowly looking round.)

A gloomy scene!

A place for——Is she not an infidel?

Who shall dare call it murder?

[He advances to her slowly, and looks at her.

She is fair—

The deeper cause! Maid, have you thought of death

Midst these old tombs?

Mor. (shrinking from him fearfully.) This is my brother's grave.

Rai. Thy brother's! That a warrior's grave had closed

O'er mine—the free and noble knight he was!

Ay, that the desert-sands had shrouded him

Before he look'd on thee!

Mor. If you are his—

If Aymer's brother—though your brow be dark,

I may not fear you!

Rai. No? why, thou shouldst fear

The very dust o' the mouldering sepulchre,

If it had lived, and borne his name on earth!

Hear'st thou?—that dust hath stirr'd, and found a voice,

And said that thou must die!

Mor. (clinging to the pillar as he approaches.)

Be with me, heaven!

You will not murder me?

Rai. (turning away.) A goodly word

To join with a warrior's name!—a sound to make

Men's flesh creep. What!—for Paynim blood

Did he stand faltering thus—my ancestor—

In that old tower?

[He again approaches her—she falls on her knees.

Mor. So young, and thus to die!

Mercy—have mercy! In your own far land

If there be love that weeps and watches for you,

And follows you with prayer—even by that love

Spare me—for it is woman's! If light steps

Have bounded there to meet you, clinging arms

Hung on your neck, fond tears o'erflow'd your cheek,

Think upon those that loved you thus, for thus

Doth woman love! and spare me!—think on them;

They, too, may yet need mercy! Aymer, Aymer!

Wilt thou not hear and aid me?

Rai. (starting.) There's a name

To bring back strength! Shall I not strike to save

His honour and his life? Were his life all——

Mor. To save his life and honour!—will my death——

[She rises and stands before him, covering her face hurriedly.

Do it with one stroke! I may not live for him!

Rai. (with surprise.) A woman meet death thus!

Mor. (uncovering her eyes.) Yet one thing more—

I have sisters and a father. Christian knight!

Oh! by your mother's memory, let them know

I died with a name unstain'd.

Rai. (softened and surprised.)

And such high thoughts from her!—an infidel!

And she named my mother!—Once in early youth

From the wild waves I snatch'd a woman's life;

My mother bless'd me for it (slowly dropping his dagger)—even with tears

She bless'd me. Stay, are there no other means?

(Suddenly recollecting himself.) Follow me, maiden! Fear not now.

Mor. But he—

But Aymer—

Rai. (sternly.) Wouldst thou perish? Name him not!—

Look not as if thou wouldst! Think'st thou dark thoughts

Are blown away like dew-drops? or I, like him,

A leaf to shake and turn i' the changing wind?

Follow me, and beware!

[She bends over the tomb for a moment, and follows him.

Aymer enters, and slowly comes forward from the background.

Aym. For the last time—yes! it must be the last!

Earth and heaven say—the last! The very dead

Rise up to part us! But one look—and then

She must go hence for ever! Will she weep?

It had been little to have died for her—

I have borne shame.

She shall know all! Moraima! Said they not

She would be found here at her brother's grave?

Where should she go? Moraima! There's the print

Of her step—what gleams beside it?

(Seeing the dagger, he takes it up.) Ha! men work

Dark deeds with things like this!

[Looking wildly and anxiously around.

I see no——blood!

[Looking at the dagger.

Stain'd!—it may be from battle; 'tis not—wet.

[Looks round, intently listening; then again examines the spot.

Ha!—what is this? another step in the grass!—

Hers and another's step!

[He rushes into the cypress-grove.

Scene III.—A hall in the citadel, hung with arms and banners.

Rainier, Herman—Knights in the background, laying aside their armour.

Her. (coming forward and speaking hurriedly.)

Is it done? Have you done it?

Rai. (with disgust.) What! you thirst

For blood so deeply?

Her. (indignantly.) Have you struck, and saved

The honour of your house?

Rai. (thoughtfully to himself.) The light i' the soul

Is such a wavering thing! Have I done well?

(To Herman).

Ask me not! Never shall they meet again.

Is 't not enough?

Aymer enters hurriedly with the dagger, and goes up with it to several of the knights, who begin to gather round the front.

Aym. Whose is this dagger?

Rai. (coming forward and taking it.) Mine.

Aym. Yours! yours!—and know you where—

Rai. (about to sheath it, but stopping.) Oh! you do well

So to remind me! Yes! it must have lain

In the Moslem burial-ground—and that vile dust—

Hence with it! ’tis defiled.

[Throws it from him.

Aym. If such a deed——

Brother! where is she?

Rai. Who?—what knight hath lost

A Ladye-love?

Aym. Could he speak thus, and wear

That scornful calm, if——No! he is not calm.

What have you done?

Rai. (aside.) Yes! she shall die to him!

Aym. (grasping his arm.) What have you done—speak!

Rai. You should know the tale

Of our dark ancestor, the Lion-Chief,

And his son’s bride.

Aym. Man! man! you murder’d her!

[Sinking back.

It grows so dark around me! She is dead!

(Wildly.) I'll not believe it! No! she never look'd

Like what could die!

[Goes up to his brother.

If you have done that deed——

Rai. (sternly.) If I have done it, I have flung off shame

From my brave father's house!

Aym. (in a low voice to himself.)

So young, and dead!—because I loved her—dead!

(To Rainier).

Where is she, murderer? Let me see her face.

You think to hide it with the dust!—ha! ha!

The dust to cover her! We'll mock you still:

If I call her back, she'll come! Where is she?—speak!

Now, by my father's tomb! but I am calm.

Rai. Never more hope to see her!

Aym. Never more!

[Sitting down on the ground.

I loved her, so she perish'd!—All the earth

Hath not another voice to reach my soul,

Now hers is silent! Never, never more!

If she had but said farewell!—(Bewildered.) It grows so dark!

This is some fearful dream. When the morn comes I shall wake.

——My life's bright hours are done!

Rai. I must be firm.

(Takes a banner from the wall, and brings it to Aymer.)

Have you forgotten this? We thought it lost,

But it rose proudly waving o'er the fight

In a warrior's hand again! Yours, Aymer! yours!

Brother! redeem your fame!

Aym. (putting it from him.) The worthless thing!

Fame! She is dead!—give a king's robe to one

Stretch'd on the rack! Hence with your pageantries

Down to the dust!

Her. The banner of the Cross!

Shame on the recreant! Cast him from us!

Rai. Boy!

Degenerate boy! Here, with the trophies won

By the sainted chiefs of old in Paynim war

Above you and around; the very air,

When it but shakes their armour on the walls,

Murmuring of glorious deeds; to sit and weep

Here for an Infidel! My father's son,

Shame! shame! deep shame!

Knights. Aymer de Chatillon!

Go from us, leave us!

Aym. (starting up.) Leave you! what! ye thought

That I would stay to breathe the air you breathe!—

And fight by you! Murderers! I burst all ties!

[Throws his sword on the ground before them.

There’s not a thing of the desert half so free!

(To Rainier.)

You have no brother! Live to need the love

Of a human heart, and steep your soul in fame

To still its restless yearnings! Die alone!

Midst all your pomps and trophies—die alone!

[Going out, he suddenly returns.

Did she not call on me to succour her?

Kneel to you—plead for life? The Voice of Blood

Follow you to your grave!

[Exit.

Rai. (with emotion.) Alas! my brother!

The time hath been, when in the face of Death

I have bid him leave me, and he would not!

(Turning to the Knights.) Knights!

The Soldan marches for Jerusalem—

We’ll meet him on the way.

ACT IV.

Scene I.—Camp of Melech, the Saracen Emir.

Melech, Sadi, Soldiers.

Mel. Yes! he I mean—Rainier de Chatillon!

Go, send swift riders o’er the mountains forth,

And through the deserts, to proclaim the price

I set upon his life!

Sadi. Thou gav’st the word

Before; it hath been done—they are gone forth.

Mel. Would that my soul could wing them!

Didst thou heed

To say his life? I’ll have my own revenge!

Yes! I would save him from another’s hand!

Thou said’st he must be brought alive?

Sadi. I heard

Thy will, and I obey’d.

Mel. He slew my son—

That was in battle—but to shed her blood!

My child Moraima’s! Could he see and strike her?

A Christian see her face, too! From my house

The crown is gone! Who brought the tale?

Sadi. A slave

Of your late son’s, escaped.

Mel. Have I a son

Left? speak, the slave of which? Kaled is gone—

And Octar gone—both, both are fallen—

Both my young stately trees, and she my flower—

No hand but mine shall be upon him, none!—

[A sound of festive music without.

What mean they there?

[An attendant enters.

Att. Tidings of joy, my chief!

Mel. Joy!—is the Christian taken?

Moraima enters, and throws herself into his arms.

Mor. Father! Father!

I did not think this world had yet so much

Of aught like happiness!

Mel. My own fair child!

Is it on thee I look indeed, my child?

[Turning to attendants.

Away, there!—gaze not on us! Do I hold

Thee in my arms! They told me thou wert slain.

Rainier de Chatillon, they said——

Mor. (hurriedly.) Oh, no!

Twas he that sent thee back thy child, my father.

Mel. He! why, his brother Aymer still refused

A monarch’s ransom for thee!

Mor. (with a momentary delight.) Did he thus?

[Suddenly checking herself.

—Yes! I knew well! Oh! do not speak of him!

Mel. What! hath he wrong’d thee? Thou hast suffer’d much

Amongst these Christians! Thou art changed, my child.

There’s a dim shadow in thine eye, where once——

But they shall pay me back for all thy tears

With their best blood.

Mor. (alarmed.) Father! not so, not so!

They still were gentle with me. But I sat

And watch'd beside my dying brother's couch

Through many days: and I have wept since then—

Wept much.

Mel. Thy dying brother's couch!—yes, thou

Wert ever true and kind.

Mor. (covering her face.) Oh! praise me not!

Look gently on me, or I sink to earth;

Not thus!

Mel. No praise! thou'rt faint, my child, and worn:

The length of way hath——

Mor. (eagerly.) Yes! the way was long,

The desert's wind breath'd o'er me. Could I rest?

Mel. Yes! thou shalt rest within thy father's tent.

Follow me, gentle child! Thou look'st so changed.

Mor. (hurriedly.) The weary way,—the desert's burning wind——

[Laying her hand on him as she goes out.

Think thou no evil of those Christians, father!—

They were still kind.

Scene II.—Before a Fortress amongst Rocks, with a Desert beyond.—Military Music.

Rainier de Chatillon—Knights and Soldiers.

Rai. They speak of truce?

The Knights. Even so. Of truce between

The Soldan and our King.

Rai. Let him who fears

Lest the close helm should wear his locks away,

Cry “truce,” and cast it off. I have no will

To change mine armour for a masquer’s robe,

And sit at festivals. Halt, lances, there!

Warriors and brethren! hear. I own no truce—

I hold my life but as a weapon now

Against the infidel! He shall not reap

His field, nor gather of his vine, nor pray

To his false gods—no! save by trembling stealth,

Whilst I can grasp a sword! Wherefore, noble friends,

Think not of truce with me!—but think to quaff

Your wine to the sound of trumpets, and to rest

In your girt hauberks, and to hold your steeds

Barded in the hall beside you. Now turn back,

[He throws a spear on the ground before them.

Ye that are weary of your armour’s load:

Pass o’er the spear, away!

They all shout. A Chatillon!

We’ll follow thee—all! all!

Rai. A soldier’s thanks!

[Turns away from them agitated.

There’s one face gone, and that a brother’s!

(Aloud.) War!—

War to the Paynim—war! March and set up

On our stronghold the banner of the Cross,

Never to sink!

[Trumpets sound. They march on, winding through the rocks with military music.

Enter Gaston, an aged vassal of Rainier’s, as an armed follower—Rainier addresses him.

You come at last! And she—where left you her?

The Paynim maid?

Gas. I found her guides, my lord,

Of her own race, and left her on the way

To reach her father’s tents.

Rai. Speak low!—the tale

Must rest with us. It must be thought she died.

I can trust you.

Gas. Your father trusted me.

Rai. He did, he did!—my father! You have been

Long absent, and you bring a troubled eye

Back with you. Gaston! heard you aught of him?

Gas. Whom means my lord?

Rai. (impatiently.) Old man, you know too well—

Aymer, my brother.

Gas. I have seen him.

Rai. How!

Seen him! Speak on.

Gas. Another than my chief

Should have my life before the shameful tale!

Rai. Speak quickly.

Gas. In the desert, as I journey'd back,

A band of Arabs met me on the way,

And I became their captive. Till last night—

Rai. Go on! Last night?

Gas. They slumber'd by their fires—

I could not sleep; when one—I thought him one

O' the tribe at first—came up and loosed my bonds,

And led me from the shadow of the tents,

Pointing my way in silence.

Rai. Well, and he—

You thought him one o' the tribe.

Gas. Ay, till we stood

In the clear moonlight forth;—and then, my lord——

Rai. You dare not say 'twas Aymer?

Gas. Woe and shame!

It was, it was!

Rai. In their vile garb too?

Gas. Yes,

Turban’d and robed like them.

Rai. What!—did he speak?

Gas. No word, but waved his hand,

Forbidding speech to me.

Rai. Tell me no more!—

Lost, lost—for ever lost! He that was rear’d

Under my father’s roof with me, and grew

Up by my side to glory!—lost! Is this

My work?—who dares to call it mine? And yet,

Had I not dealt so sternly with his soul

In its deep anguish——What! he wears their garb

I’ the face of heaven? You saw the turban on him?

You should have struck him to the earth, and so

Put out our shame for ever!

Gas. Lift my sword

Against your father’s son!

Rai. My father’s son!

Ay, and so loved!—that yearning love for him

Was the last thing death conquer’d! See’st thou there?

[The banner of the Cross is raised on the fortress.

The very banner he redeem’d for us

I’ the fight at Cairo! No! by yon bright sign,

He shall not perish! This way—follow me—

I’ll tell thee of a thought.

(Suddenly stopping him.) Take heed, old man!

Thou hast a fearful secret in thy grasp:

Let me not see thee wear mysterious looks.

But no! thou lovest our name!—I’ll trust thee, Gaston!

[Exeunt.

Scene III.—An Arab Encampment round a few palm-trees in the Desert—Watch-fires in the background.—Night.

Several Arabs enter with Aymer.

Arab Chief. Thou hast fought bravely, stranger;

Now, come on

To share the spoil.

Aym. I reck not of it. Go,

Leave me to rest.

Arab. Well, thou hast earn’d thy rest

With a red sabre. Be it as thou wilt.

[They go out.—He throws himself under a palm-tree.

Aym. This were an hour—if they would answer us.

—They from whose viewless world no answer comes—

To hear their whispering voices. Would they but

Speak once, and say they loved!

If I could hear thy thrilling voice once more,

It would be well with me. Moraima! speak!

Rainier enters disguised as a dervise.

Moraima, speak! No! the dead cannot love!

Rai. What doth the stranger here!—is there not mirth

Around the watch-fires yonder?

Aym. Mirth!—away!—

I've naught to do with mirth. Begone!

Rai. They tell

Wild tales by that red light; would'st thou not hear

Of Eastern marvels?

Aym. Hence! I heed them not.

Rai. Nay, then hear me!

Aym. Thee!

Rai. Yes, I know a tale

Wilder than theirs.

Aym. (raising himself in surprise.) Thou know'st!—

Rai. (without minding, continues.) A tale of one

Who flung in madness to the reckless deep

A gem beyond all price.

Aym. My day is closed.

What is aught human unto me?

Rai. Yet mark!

His name was of the noblest—dost thou heed?—

Even in a land of princely chivalry;

Brightness was on it—but he cast it down.

Aym. I will not hear—speak'st thou of chivalry?

Rai. Yes! I have been upon thy native hills.

There’s a gray cliff juts proudly from their woods,

Crown’d with baronial towers—rememberest thou?

And there’s a chapel by the moaning sea—

Thou know’st it well—tall pines wave over it,

Darkening the heavy banners, and the tombs.

Is not the cross upon thy fathers’ tombs!—

Christian! what dost thou here?

Aym. (starting up indignantly.) Man! who art thou

Thy voice disturbs my soul. Speak! I will know

Thy right to question me.

Rai. (throwing off his disguise, stands before him in the full dress of a Crusader.)

My birth-right!—look!

Aym. Brother! (Retreating from him with horror.)

—Her blood is on your hands!—keep back!

Rai. (scornfully.) Nay, keep the Paynim’s garb from touching mine.

Answer me thence!—what dost thou here?

Aym. You shrink

From your own work!—you, that have made me thus!

Wherefore are you here? Are you not afraid

To stand beneath the awful midnight sky,

And you a murderer? Leave me.

Rai. I lift up

No murderer’s brow to heaven!

Aym. You dare speak thus!—

Do not the bright stars, with their searching rays,

Strike through your guilty soul? Oh, no!—tis well,

Passing well! Murder! Make the earth's harvests grow

With Paynim blood!—Heaven wills it! The free air,

The sunshine—I forgot—they were not made

For infidels. Blot out the race from day!

Who talks of murder? Murder! when you die

Claim your soul's place of happiness i' the name

Of that good deed!

(In a tone of deep feeling.)

If you had loved a flower

I would not have destroy'd it!

Rai. (with emotion.) Brother!

Aym. (impetuously.) No!—

No brother now. She knelt to you in vain;

And that hath set a gulf—a boundless gulf—

Between our souls. Your very face is changed—

There's a red cloud shadowing it: your forehead wears

The marks of blood—her blood!

(In a triumphant tone.)

But you prevail not! You have made the dead

The mighty—the victorious! Yes! you thought

To dash her image into fragments down,

And you have given it power—such deep sad power,

I see naught else on earth!

Rai. (aside.) I dare not say she lives.

(To Aymer, holding up the cross of his sword.)

You see not this!

Once by our father's grave I ask'd, and here,

I' the silence of the waste, I ask once more—

Have you abjured your faith?

Aym. Why are you come

To torture me? No, no! I have not. No!

But you have sent the torrent through my soul,

And by their deep strong roots torn fiercely up

Things that were part of it—inborn feelings, thoughts—

I know not what I cling to!

Rai. Aymer! yet

Heaven hath not closed its gates! Return, return,

Before the shadow of the palm-tree fades

I' the waning moonlight. Heaven gives time.

Return,

My brother! By our early days—the love

That nurtured us!—the holy dust of those

That sleep i' the tomb!—sleep! no, they cannot sleep!

Doth the night bring no voices from the dead

Back on your soul?

Aym. (turning from him.) Yes—hers!

Rai. (indignantly turning off.) Why should I strive?

Why doth it cost me these deep throes to fling

A weed off?

[Checking himself.

Brother, hath the stranger come

Between our hearts for ever? Yet return—

Win back your fame, my brother!

Aym. Fame again!

Leave me the desert!—leave it me! I hate

Your false world's glittering draperies, that press down

Th' o'erlabour'd heart! They have crush'd mine. Your vain

And hollow-sounding words are wasted now:

You should adjure me by the name of him

That slew his son's young bride!—our ancestor—

That were a spell! Fame! fame!—your hand hath rent

The veil from off your world! To speak of fame,

When the soul is parch'd like mine! Away!

I have join'd these men because they war with man,

And all his hollow pomp! Will you go hence?

(Fiercely.) Why do I talk thus with a murderer? Ay,

This is the desert, where true words may rise

Up unto heaven i' the stillness! Leave it me!—

The free wild desert!

Arab Chief enters.

Arab. Stranger, we have shared

The spoil, forgetting not——A Christian here!

Ho! sons of Kedar!—'tis De Chatillon!

This way!—surround him! There's an Emir's wealth

Set on his life! Come on!

[Several Arabs rush in and surround Rainier, who, after vainly endeavouring to force his way through them, is made prisoner.

Rai. And he stands there

To see me bought and sold! Death, death!—not chains!

[Aymer, who has stood for a moment as if bewildered, rushes forward, and strikes down one of the Arabs.

Aym. Off from my brother, infidel!

[The others hurry Rainier away.

(Recollecting himself.) Why, then, heaven

Is just! So! now I see it! Blood for blood!

[Again rushing forward.

No! he shall feel remorse! I'll rescue him,

And make him weep for her!

[Exit.

ACT V.

Scene I.—A Hall in the Fortress occupied by De Chatillon's followers.

Knights listening to a Troubadour.

Her. No more soft strains of love. Good Vidal, sing

The imprison’d warrior’s lay. There’s a proud tone
Of lofty sadness in it.
Troubadour sings.
’Twas a trumpet’s pealing sound!
And the knight look’d down from the Paynim’s tower,
And a Christian host in its pride and power
Through the pass beneath him wound.
“Cease awhile, clarion! clarion, wild and shrill.
Cease! let them hear the captive’s voice—be still!
“I knew ’twas a trumpet’s note!
And I see my brethren’s lances gleam,
And their pennons wave by the mountain-stream,
And their plumes to the glad wind float.
“Cease awhile, clarion! &c.
“I am here with my heavy chain!
And I look on a torrent sweeping by,
And an eagle rushing to the sky,
And a host to its battle-plain!
Cease awhile, clarion! &c.
“Must I pine in my fetters here?
With the wild wave’s foam, and the free bird’s flight,
And the tall spears glancing on my sight,
And the trumpet in mine ear?
Cease awhile, clarion!” &c.[289]

Aymer enters hurriedly.

Aym. Silence, thou minstrel! silence!

Her. Aymer, here!

And in that garb! Seize on the renegade!

Knights he must die!

Aym. (scornfully.) Die! die!—the fearful threat!

To be thrust out of this same blessed world,

Your world—all yours! (Fiercely.) But I will not be made

A thing to circle with your pomps of death,

Your chains, and guards, and scaffolds! Back! I'll die

As the free lion dies!

[Drawing his sabre.

Her. What seek'st thou here?

Aym. Naught but to give your Christian swords a deed

Worthier than——Where's your chief? in the Paynim's bonds!

Made the wild Arabs' prize! Ay, heaven is just!

If ye will rescue him, then follow me:

I know the way they bore him!

Her. Follow thee!

Recreant! deserter of thy house and faith!

To think true knights would follow thee again!

'Tis all some snare—away!

Aym. Some snare! Heaven! heaven!

Is my name sunk to this? Must men first crush

My soul, then spurn the ruin they have made?

—Why, let him perish!—blood for blood!—must earth

Cry out in vain? Wine, wine! we'll revel here!

On, minstrel, with thy song!

Troubadour continues the song.

"They are gone—they have all pass'd by!

They in whose wars I had borne my part,

They that I loved with a brother's heart,

They have left me here to die!

Sound again, clarion! clarion, pour thy blast!

Sound, for the captive's dream of hope is past!"

Aym. (starting up.) That was the lay he loved in our boyish days—

And he must die forsaken! No, by heaven!

He shall not! Follow me! I say your chief

Is bought and sold! Is there no generous trust

Left in your souls? De Foix, I saved your life

At Ascalon! Du Mornay, you and I

On Jaffa's wall together set our breasts

Against a thousand spears! What! have I fought

Beside you, shared your cup, slept in your tents,

And ye can think——

[Dashing off his turban.

Look on my burning brow!

Read if there's falsehood branded on it—read

The marks of treachery there!

Knights, (gathering round him.) No, no! come on!

To the rescue! lead us on! we'll trust thee still!

Aym. Follow, then!—this way. If I die for him,

There will be vengeance! He shall think of me

To his last hour!

[Exeunt.

[289] "She preferred in music whatever was national and melancholy; and her strains adapted for singing were, of course, framed to the tones most congenial to the temperament of her own mind. How successfully wed to the magic of sweet sound many of her verses have been by her sister, no lover of music need to be reminded. The 'Roman Girl's Song' is full of a solemn classic beauty; and, in one of her letters, it is said that of 'The Captive Knight' Sir Walter Scott never was weary. Indeed, it seems in his mind to have been the song of Chivalry, representative of the English; as the Flowers of the Forest was of the Scottish; the Cancionella Española of the Spanish; and the Rhine Song of the Germans."—Biographical Sketch by Delta, 1836.

Of all Mrs Hemans's lyrics set to music, 'The Captive Knight' has been the most popular, and deservedly so. It has indeed stirred many a heart "like the sound of a trumpet."—Chorley's Memorials.

Scene II.—A Pavilion in the Camp of Melech.

Melech, Sadi.

Mel. It must be that these sounds and sights of war

Shake her too gentle nature. Yes, her cheek

Fades hourly in my sight! What other cause—

None, none! She must go hence! Choose from thy band

The bravest, Sadi! and the longest tried,

And I will send my child——

Voice without. Where is your chief?

De Chatillon enters, guarded by Arab and Turkish soldiers.

Arab Chief. The sons of Kedar's tribe have brought to the son

Of the Prophet's house a prisoner!

Mel. (half drawing his sword.) Chatillon!

That slew my boy! Thanks for the avenger's hour!

Sadi, their guerdon—give it them—the gold!

And me the vengeance!

(Looking at Rainier, who holds the upper fragment of his sword, and seems lost in thought.)

This is he

That slew my first-born!

Rai. (to himself.) Surely there leap'd up

A brother's heart within him! Yes, he struck

To the earth a Paynim——

Mel. (raising his voice.) Christian! thou hast been

Our nation's deadliest foe!

Rai. (looking up and smiling proudly.) 'Tis joy to hear

I have not lived in vain!

Mel. Thou bear'st thyself

With a conqueror's mien! What is thy hope from me?

Rai. A soldier's death.

Mel. (hastily.) Then thou wouldst fear a slave's?

Rai. Fear! As if man's own spirit had not power

To make his death a triumph! Waste not words;

Let my blood bathe thine own sword. Infidel!

I slew thy son!

[Looking at his broken sword.

Ay, there's the red mark here!

Mel. (approaching him.) Thou darest to tell me this!

[A tumult heard without.

Voices without. A Chatillon!

Rai. My brother's voice! He is saved!

Mel. (calling.) What, ho! my guards!

Aymer enters with the knights, fighting their way through Melech's soldiers, who are driven before them.

Aym. On with the war-cry of our ancient house:

For the Cross—De Chatillon!

Knights. For the Cross—De Chatillon!

[Rainier attempts to break from his guards. Sadi enters with more soldiers to the assistance of Melech. Aymer and the knights are overpowered. Aymer is wounded and falls.

Mel. Bring fetters—bind the captives!

Rai. Lost—all lost!

No! he is saved!

(Breaking from his guards, he goes up to Aymer.)

Brother, my brother! hast thou pardon’d me

That which I did to save thee? Speak! forgive!

Aym. (turning from him.)

Thou see’st I die for thee! She is avenged!

Rai. I am no murderer! Hear me! turn to me!

We are parting by the grave!

Moraima enters veiled, and goes up to Melech.

Mor. Father! Oh! look not sternly on thy child.

I came to plead. They said thou hast condemn’d

A Christian knight to die——

Mel. Hence—to thy tent!

Away—begone!

Aym. (attempting to rise.) Moraima! hath her spirit come

To make death beautiful? Moraima! speak.

Mor. It was his voice! Aymer!

[She rushes to him, throwing aside her veil.

Aym. Thou liv’st—thou liv’st!

I knew thou couldst not die! Look on me still

Thou livest! and makest this world so full of joy—

But I depart!

Mel. (approaching her.) Moraima! hence! Is this

A place for thee?

Mor. Away! away!

There is no place but this for me on earth!

Where should I go? There is no place but this!

My soul is bound to it!

Mel. (to the guards.) Back, slaves! and look not on her!

[They retreat to the background.

’Twas for this

She droop’d to the earth.

Aym. Moraima, fare thee well!

Think on me! I have loved thee! I take hence

That deep love with my soul! for well I know

It must be deathless!

Mor. Oh! thou hast not known

What woman’s love is! Aymer, Aymer, stay!

If I could die for thee! My heart is grown

So strong in its despair!

Rai. (turning from them.) And all the past

Forgotten!—our young days! His last thoughts hers!

The Infidel’s!

Aym. (with a violent effort turning his head round.)

Thou art no murderer! Peace

Between us—peace, my brother! In our deaths

We shall be join’d once more!

Rai. (holding the cross of the sword before him.)

Look yet on this!

Aym. If thou hadst only told me that she lived!

—But our hearts meet at last!

[Presses the cross to his lips.

Moraima! save my brother! Look on me!

Joy—there is joy in death!

[He dies on Rainier's arm.

Mor. Speak—speak once more!

Aymer! how is it that I call on thee,

And that thou answer'st not? Have we not loved?

Death! death!—and this is—death!

Rai. So thou art gone,

Aymer! I never thought to weep again—

But now—farewell! Thou wert the bravest knight

That e'er laid lance in rest—and thou didst wear

The noblest form that ever woman's eye

Dwelt on with love; and till that fatal dream

Came o'er thee! Aymer! Aymer! thou wert still

The most true-hearted brother! There thou art

Whose breast was once my shield! I never thought

That foes should see me weep! but there thou art,

Aymer, my brother!——

Mor. (suddenly rising.) With his last, last breath

He bade me save his brother!

(Falling at Melech's feet.) Father, spare

The Christian—spare him!

Mel. For thy sake spare him

That slew thy father’s son!—Shame to thy race!

(To the soldiers in the background.)

Soldiers! come nearer with your levell’d spears!

Yet nearer!—gird him in! My boy’s young blood

Is on his sword. Christian, abjure thy faith,

Or die: thine hour is come!

Rai. (turning and throwing himself on the weapons of the soldiers.) Thou hast mine answer, Infidel!

[Calling aloud to the knights as he falls back.

Knights of France!

Herman! De Foix! Du Mornay! be ye strong!

Your hour will come!——

Must the old war-cry cease?

[Half raising himself, and waving the cross triumphantly.

For the Cross—De Chatillon!

[He dies.

(The curtain falls.)

ANNOTATION ON “DE CHATILLON.”

[“The merits of ‘The Siege of Valencia’ are more of a descriptive than of a strictly dramatic kind; and abounding as it does with fine passages of narrative beauty, and with striking scenes and situations, it is not only not adapted for representation, but, on the contrary, the characters are developed by painting much more than by incident. Withal, it wants unity and entireness, and in several places is not rhetorical but diffuse.

"From the previous writings of the same author, and until the appearance of 'The Vespers of Palermo,' it seemed to be the prevalent opinion of critics, that the genius of Mrs Hemans was not of a dramatic cast—that it expatiated too much in the development of sentiment, too much in the luxuriancy of description, to be ever brought under the trammels essentially necessary for the success of scenic dialogue.

"The merits of 'The Vespers' are great, and have been acknowledged to be so, not only by the highest of contemporary literary authorities, but by the still more unequivocal testimony of theatrical applause. What 'has been, has been,' and we wish not to detract one iota from praise so fairly earned; but we must candidly confess, that before the perusal of 'De Chatillon,' (although that poem is probably not quite in the state in which it would have been submitted to the world by its writer,) we were somewhat infected with the prevailing opinion, that the most successful path of Mrs Hemans did not lead her towards the drama. Our opinion on this subject is, however, now much altered; and we hesitate not to say, after minutely considering the characters of Rainier—so skilfully acted on, now by fraternal love, and now by public duty—and of Aymer and Moraima, placed in situations where inclination is opposed to principle—that, by the cultivation of this species of composition, had health and prolonged years been the fate of the author of 'De Chatillon,' that tragedy, noble as it is, which must now be placed at the head of her dramatic efforts, would in all probability have been even surpassed in excellence by ulterior efforts.

"Mrs Hemans had at length struck the proper keys. It is quite evident that she had succeeded in imbibing new and more severe ideas of this class of compositions. She had passed from the narrative into what has been conventionally termed the dramatic poem—from the 'Historic Scenes' to 'Sebastian' and 'The Siege of Valencia;' but 'The Vespers of Palermo' and 'De Chatillon' can alone be said to be her legitimate dramas.

“The last, however, must be ranked first, by many degrees of comparison. Without stripping her language of that richness and poetic beauty so characteristic of her genius, or condescending in a single passage to the mean baldness, so commonly mistaken by many modern writers for the stage as essentially necessary to the truth of dialogue, she has, in this attempt, preserved adherence to reality amid scenes allied with romance—brevity and effect, in situations strongly alluring to amplification; and, in her delineation of some of the strongest, as well as the finest emotions of the heart, there is exhibited a knowledge of nature’s workings, at once minute, faithful, and affecting.”—MS. Critique by Δ.]

THE FOREST SANCTUARY.

“Long time against oppression have I fought,

And for the native liberty of faith

Have bled and suffer’d bonds.” Remorse; a Tragedy.

[The following poem is intended to describe the mental conflicts, as well as outward sufferings, of a Spaniard, who, flying from the religious persecutions of his own country, in the sixteenth century, takes refuge, with his child, in a North American forest. The story is supposed to be related by himself, amidst the wilderness which has afforded him an asylum.]

I.

The voices of my home!—I hear them still!

They have been with me through the dreamy night—

The blessed household voices, wont to fill

My heart’s clear depths with unalloy’d delight!

I hear them still, unchanged: though some from earth

Are music parted, and the tones of mirth—

Wild, silvery tones, that rang through days more bright—
Have died in others; yet to me they come
Singing of boyhood back—the voices of my home!

II.

They call me through this hush of woods reposing
In the gray stillness of the summer morn;
They wander by when heavy flowers are closing,
And thoughts grow deep, and winds and stars are born.
Even as a fount's remember'd gushings burst
On the parch'd traveller in his hour of thirst,
E'en thus they haunt me with sweet sounds, till worn
By quenchless longings, to my soul I say—
Oh! for the dove's swift wings, that I might flee away,

III.

And find mine ark! Yet whither? I must bear
A yearning heart within me to the grave.
I am of those o'er whom a breath of air—
Just darkening in its course the lake's bright wave,
And sighing through the feathery canes—hath power
To call up shadows, in the silent hour,
From the dim past, as from a wizard's cave!
So must it be! These skies above me spread:
Are they my own soft skies?—Ye rest not here, my dead!

IV.

Ye far amidst the southern flowers lie sleeping,
Your graves all smiling in the sunshine clear;
Save one! a blue, lone, distant main is sweeping
High o’er one gentle head. Ye rest not here!—
’Tis not the olive, with a whisper swaying,
Not thy low ripplings, glassy water, playing
Through my own chestnut groves which fill mine ear;
But the faint echoes in my breast that dwell,
And for their birthplace moan, as moans the ocean-shell.

V.

Peace!—I will dash these fond regrets to earth,
Even as an eagle shakes the cumbering rain
From his strong pinion. Thou that gavest me birth,
And lineage, and once home,—my native Spain!
My own bright land—my fathers’ land—my child’s!
What hath thy son brought from thee to the wilds?
He hath brought marks of torture and the chain—
Traces of things which pass not as a breeze;
A blighted name, dark thoughts, wrath, woe—thy gifts are these!

VI.

A blighted name! I hear the winds of morn—
Their sounds are not of this! I hear the shiver
Of the green reeds, and all the rustlings, borne
From the high forest, when the light leaves quiver

Their sounds are not of this!—the cedars, waving,
Lend it no tone: His wide savannahs laving,
It is not murmur’d by the joyous river!
What part hath mortal name, where God alone
Speaks to the mighty waste, and through its heart is known?

VII.

Is it not much that I may worship Him
With naught my spirit’s breathings to control,
And feel His presence in the vast, and dim,
And whispery woods, where dying thunders roll
From the far cataracts? Shall I not rejoice
That I have learn’d at last to know His voice
From man’s? I will rejoice!—my soaring soul
Now hath redeem’d her birthright of the day,
And won, through clouds, to Him her own unfetter’d way!

VIII.

And thou, my boy! that silent at my knee
Dost lift to mine thy soft, dark, earnest eyes,
Fill’d with the love of childhood, which I see
Pure through its depths, a thing without disguise;
Thou that hast breathed in slumber on my breast,
When I have check’d its throbs to give thee rest,
Mine own! whose young thoughts fresh before me rise!
Is it not much that I may guide thy prayer,

And circle thy glad soul with free and healthful air?

IX.

Why should I weep on thy bright head, my boy?

Within thy fathers' halls thou wilt not dwell,

Nor lift their banner, with a warrior's joy,

Amidst the sons of mountain chiefs, who fell

For Spain of old. Yet what if rolling waves

Have borne us far from our ancestral graves?

Thou shalt not feel thy bursting heart rebel,

As mine hath done; nor bear what I have borne,

Casting in falsehood's mould th' indignant brow of scorn.

X.

This shall not be thy lot, my blessed child!

I have not sorrow'd, struggled, lived in vain.

Hear me! magnificent and ancient wild;

And mighty rivers, ye that meet the main,

As deep meets deep; and forests, whose dim shade

The flood's voice, and the wind's, by swells pervade;

Hear me! 'Tis well to die, and not complain;

Yet there are hours when the charged heart must speak,

E'en in the desert's ear to pour itself, or break!

XI.

I see an oak before me:[290] it hath been

The crown'd one of the woods; and might have flung

Its hundred arms to heaven, still freshly green;
But a wild vine around the stem hath clung,
From branch to branch close wreaths of bondage throwing,
Till the proud tree, before no tempest bowing,
Hath shrunk and died those serpent folds among.
Alas! alas! what is it that I see?
An image of man's mind, land of my sires, with thee!

XII.

Yet art thou lovely! Song is on thy hills:
O sweet and mournful melodies of Spain,
That lull'd my boyhood, how your memory thrills
The exile's heart with sudden-wakening pain!
Your sounds are on the rocks:—that I might hear
Once more the music of the mountaineer!
And from the sunny vales the shepherd's strain
Floats out, and fills the solitary place
With the old tuneful names of Spain's heroic race.

XIII.

But there was silence one bright, golden day,
Through my own pine-hung mountains. Clear, yet lone,
In the rich autumn light the vineyards lay,
And from the fields the peasant's voice was gone;
And the red grapes untrodden strew'd the ground;
And the free flocks, untended, roam'd around.

Where was the pastor?—where the pipe’s wild tone?
Music and mirth were hush’d the hills among,
While to the city’s gates each hamlet pour’d its throng.

XIV.

Silence upon the mountains! But within
The city’s gate a rush, a press, a swell
Of multitudes, their torrent-way to win;
And heavy boomings of a dull deep bell,
A dead pause following each—like that which parts
The dash of billows, holding breathless hearts
Fast in the hush of fear—knell after knell;
And sounds of thickening steps, like thunder-rain
That plashes on the roof of some vast echoing fane!

XV.

What pageant’s hour approach’d? The sullen gate
Of a strong ancient prison-house was thrown
Back to the day. And who, in mournful state,
Came forth, led slowly o’er its threshold-stone?
They that had learn’d, in cells of secret gloom,
How sunshine is forgotten! They to whom
The very features of mankind were grown
Things that bewilder’d! O’er that dazzled sight
They lifted their wan hands, and cower’d before the light!

XVI.

To this, man brings his brother! Some were there,
Who, with their desolation, had entwined
Fierce strength, and girt the sternness of despair
Fast round their bosoms, even as warriors bind
The breastplate on for fight; but brow and cheek
Seem'd theirs a torturing panoply to speak!
And there were some, from whom the very mind
Had been wrung out; they smiled—oh, startling smile,
Whence man's high soul is fled! Where doth it sleep the while?

XVII.

But onward moved the melancholy train,
For their false creeds in fiery pangs to die.
This was the solemn sacrifice of Spain—
Heaven's offering from the land of chivalry!
Through thousands, thousands of their race they moved—
Oh, how unlike all others!—the beloved,
The free, the proud, the beautiful! whose eye
Grew fix'd before them, while a people's breath
Was hush'd, and its one soul bound in the thought of death!

XVIII.

It might be that, amidst the countless throng,
There swell'd some heart with pity's weight oppress'd:
For the wide stream of human love is strong;
And woman, on whose fond and faithful breast

Childhood is rear'd, and at whose knee the sigh
Of its first prayer is breathed—she, too, was nigh.
But life is dear, and the free footstep bless'd,
And home a sunny place, where each may fill
Some eye with glistening smiles,—and therefore all were still.

XIX.

All still,—youth, courage, strength!—a winter laid,
A chain of palsy cast, on might and mind!
Still, as at noon a southern forest's shade,
They stood, those breathless masses of mankind,
Still, as a frozen torrent! But the wave
Soon leaps to foaming freedom; they, the brave,
Endured—they saw the martyr's place assign'd
In the red flames—whence is the withering spell
That numbs each human pulse? They saw, and thought it well.

XX.

And I, too, thought it well! That very morn
From a far land I came, yet round me clung
The spirit of my own. No hand had torn
With a strong grasp away the veil which hung
Between mine eyes and truth. I gazed, I saw
Dimly, as through a glass. In silent awe
I watch'd the fearful rites; and if there sprung
One rebel feeling from its deep founts up,

Shuddering, I flung it back, as guilt's own poison-cup.

XXI.

But I was waken'd as the dreamers waken,
Whom the shrill trumpet and the shriek of dread
Rouse up at midnight, when their walls are taken,
And they must battle till their blood is shed
On their own threshold floor. A path for light
Through my torn breast was shatter'd by the might
Of the swift thunder-stroke; and freedom's tread
Came in through ruins, late, yet not in vain,
Making the blighted place all green with life again.

XXII.

Still darkly, slowly, as a sullen mass
Of cloud o'ersweeping, without wind, the sky,
Dream-like I saw the sad procession pass,
And mark'd its victims with a tearless eye.
They moved before me but as pictures, wrought
Each to reveal some secret of man's thought,
On the sharp edge of sad mortality;
Till in his place came one—oh! could it be?
My friend, my heart's first friend!—and did I gaze on thee!

XXIII.

On thee! with whom in boyhood I had play'd,
At the grape-gatherings, by my native streams;

And to whose eye my youthful soul had laid
Bare, as to heaven's, its glowing world of dreams;
And by whose side midst warriors I had stood,
And in whose helm was brought—oh, earn'd with blood!—
The fresh wave to my lips, when tropic beams
Smote on my fever'd brow! Ay, years had pass'd,
Severing our paths, brave friend!—and thus we met at last!

XXIV.

I see it still—the lofty mien thou borest!
On thy pale forehead sat a sense of power—
The very look that once thou brightly worest,
Cheering me onward through a fearful hour,
When we were girt by Indian bow and spear,
Midst the white Andes—even as mountain deer,
Hemm'd in our camp; but through the javelin shower
We rent our way, a tempest of despair!
And thou—hadst thou but died with thy true brethren there!

XXV.

I call the fond wish back—for thou hast perish'd
More nobly far, my Alvar!—making known
The might of truth;[291] and be thy memory cherish'd
With theirs, the thousands that around her throne
Have pour'd their lives out smiling, in that doom
Finding a triumph, if denied a tomb!

Ay, with their ashes hath the wind been sown,

And with the wind their spirit shall be spread,

Filling man’s heart and home with records of the dead.

XXVI.

Thou Searcher of the soul! in whose dread sight

Not the bold guilt alone that mocks the skies,

But the scarce-own’d unwhisper’d thought of night,

As a thing written with the sunbeam lies;

Thou know’st—whose eye through shade and depth can see,

That this man’s crime was but to worship thee,

Like those that made their hearts thy sacrifice,

The call’d of yore—wont by the Saviour’s side

On the dim Olive Mount to pray at eventide.

XXVII.

For the strong spirit will at times awake,

Piercing the mists that wrap her clay abode;

And, born of thee, she may not always take

Earth’s accents for the oracles of God;

And even for this—O dust, whose mask is power!

Reed, that wouldst be a scourge thy little hour!

Spark, whereon yet the mighty hath not trod,

And therefore thou destroyest!—where were flown

Our hopes, if man were left to man’s decree alone!

XXVIII.

But this I felt not yet. I could but gaze
On him, my friend; while that swift moment threw
A sudden freshness back on vanish'd days,
Like water-drops on some dim picture's hue;
Calling the proud time up, when first I stood
Where banners floated, and my heart's quick blood
Sprang to a torrent as the clarion blew,
And he—his sword was like a brother's worn,
That watches through the field his mother's youngest born.

XXIX.

But a lance met me in that day's career—
Senseless I lay amidst the o'ersweeping fight;
Wakening at last, how full, how strangely clear,
That scene on memory flash'd!—the shivery light,
Moonlight, on broken shields—the plain of slaughter,
The fountain-side, the low sweet sound of water—
And Alvar bending o'er me—from the night
Covering me with his mantle. All the past
Flow'd back; my soul's far chords all answer'd to the blast.

XXX.

Till, in that rush of visions, I became
As one that, by the bands of slumber wound,
Lies with a powerless but all-thrilling frame,
Intense in consciousness of sight and sound,

Yet buried in a wildering dream which brings
Loved faces round him, girt with fearful things!
Troubled even thus I stood, but chain'd and bound
On that familiar form mine eye to keep:
Alas! I might not fall upon his neck and weep!

XXXI.

He pass'd me—and what next? I look'd on two,
Following his footsteps to the same dread place,
For the same guilt—his sisters![292] Well I knew
The beauty on those brows, though each young face
Was changed—so deeply changed!—a dungeon's air
Is hard for loved and lovely things to bear.
And ye, O daughters of a lofty race,
Queen-like Theresa! radiant Inez!—flowers
So cherish'd! were ye then but rear'd for those dark hours?

XXXII.

A mournful home, young sisters, had ye left!
With your lutes hanging hush'd upon the wall,
And silence round the aged man, bereft
Of each glad voice once answering to his call.
Alas, that lonely father! doom'd to pine
For sounds departed in his life's decline;
And, midst the shadowing banners of his hall,
With his white hair to sit, and deem the name

A hundred chiefs had borne, cast down by you to shame![293]

XXXIII.

And woe for you, midst looks and words of love,
And gentle hearts and faces, nursed so long!
How had I seen you in your beauty move,
Wearing the wreath, and listening to the song!—
Yet sat, even then, what seem'd the crowd to shun,
Half-veil'd upon the pale clear brow of one,
And deeper thoughts than oft to youth belong—
Thoughts, such as wake to evening's whispery sway,
Within the drooping shade of her sweet eyelids lay.

XXXIV.

And if she mingled with the festive train,
It was but as some melancholy star
Beholds the dance of shepherds on the plain,
In its bright stillness present, though afar.
Yet would she smile—and that, too, hath its smile—
Circled with joy which reach'd her not the while,
And bearing a lone spirit, not at war
With earthly things, but o'er their form and hue
Shedding too clear a light, too sorrowfully true.

XXXV.

But the dark hours wring forth the hidden might
Which hath lain bedded in the silent soul,

A treasure all undreamt of,—as the night
Calls out the harmonies of streams that roll
Unheard by day. It seem’d as if her breast
Had hoarded energies, till then suppress’d
Almost with pain, and bursting from control,
And finding first that hour their pathway free:
Could a rose brave the storm, such might her emblem be!

XXXVI.

For the soft gloom whose shadow still had hung
On her fair brow, beneath its garlands worn,
Was fled; and fire, like prophecy’s, had sprung
Clear to her kindled eye. It might be scorn—
Pride—sense of wrong; ay, the frail heart is bound
By these at times, even as with adamant round,
Kept so from breaking! Yet not thus upborne
She moved, though some sustaining passion’s wave
Lifted her fervent soul—a sister for the brave!

XXXVII.

And yet, alas! to see the strength which clings
Round woman in such hours!—a mournful sight,
Though lovely!—an o’erflowing of the springs,
The full springs of affection, deep as bright!
And she, because her life is ever twined
With other lives, and by no stormy wind

May thence be shaken, and because the light
Of tenderness is round her, and her eye
Doth weep such passionate tears—therefore she thus can die.

XXXVIII.

Therefore didst thou, through that heart-shaking scene,
As through a triumph move; and cast aside
Thine own sweet thoughtfulness for victory's mien,
O faithful sister! cheering thus the guide,
And friend, and brother of thy sainted youth,
Whose hand had led thee to the source of truth,
Where thy glad soul from earth was purified;
Nor wouldst thou, following him through all the past,
That he should see thy step grow tremulous at last.

XXXIX.

For thou hadst made no deeper love a guest,
Midst thy young spirit's dreams, than that which grows
Between the nurtured of the same fond breast,
The shelter'd of one roof; and thus it rose
Twined in with life. How is it that the hours
Of the same sport, the gathering early flowers
Round the same tree, the sharing one repose,
And mingling one first prayer in murmurs soft,
From the heart's memory fade in this world's breath so oft?

XL.

But thee that breath hath touch’d not; thee, nor him,
The true in all things found!—and thou wert blest
Even then, that no remember’d change could dim
The perfect image of affection, press’d
Like armour to thy bosom! Thou hadst kept
Watch by thy brother’s couch of pain, and wept,
Thy sweet face covering with thy robe, when rest
Fled from the sufferer; thou hadst bound his faith
Unto thy soul; one light, one hope ye chose——one death.

XLI.

So didst thou pass on brightly!—but for her,
Next in that path, how may her doom be spoken!
All Merciful! to think that such things were,
And are, and seen by men with hearts unbroken!
To think of that fair girl, whose path had been
So strew’d with rose-leaves, all one fairy scene!
And whose quick glance came ever as a token
Of hope to drooping thought, and her glad voice
As a free bird’s in spring, that makes the woods rejoice!

XLII.

And she to die!—she loved the laughing earth
With such deep joy in its fresh leaves and flowers!
Was not her smile even as the sudden birth
Of a young rainbow, colouring vernal showers?

Yes! but to meet her fawn-like step, to hear
The gushes of wild song, so silvery clear,
Which oft, unconsciously, in happier hours
Flow'd from her lips, was to forget the sway
Of Time and Death below, blight, shadow, dull decay!

XLIII.

Could this change be? The hour, the scene, where last
I saw that form, came floating o'er my mind:
A golden vintage-eve; the heats were pass'd,
And, in the freshness of the fanning wind,
Her father sat where gleam'd the first faint star
Through the lime-boughs; and with her light guitar,
She, on the greensward at his feet reclined,
In his calm face laugh'd up; some shepherd lay
Singing, as childhood sings on the lone hills at play.

XLIV.

And now—oh, God!—the bitter fear of death,
The sore amaze, the faint o'ershadowing dread,
Had grasp'd her!—panting in her quick-drawn breath,
And in her white lips quivering. Onward led,
She look'd up with her dim bewilder'd eyes,
And there smiled out her own soft brilliant skies,
Far in their sultry southern azure spread,
Glowing with joy, but silent!—still they smiled,

Yet sent down no reprieve for earth’s poor trembling child.

XLV.

Alas! that earth had all too strong a hold,
Too fast, sweet Inez! on thy heart, whose bloom
Was given to early love, nor knew how cold
The hours which follow. There was one, with whom,
Young as thou wert, and gentle, and untried,
Thou mightst, perchance, unshrinkingly have died:
But he was far away; and with thy doom
Thus gathering, life grew so intensely dear,
That all thy slight frame shook with its cold mortal fear!

XLVI.

No aid!—thou too didst pass!—and all had pass’d,
The fearful—and the desperate—and the strong!
Some like the bark that rushes with the blast,
Some like the leaf swept shiveringly along;
And some as men that have but one more field
To fight, and then may slumber on their shield,—
Therefore they arm in hope. But now the throng
Roll’d on, and bore me with their living tide,
Even as a bark wherein is left no power to guide.

XLVII.

Wave swept on wave. We reach’d a stately square,
Deck’d for the rites. An altar stood on high,

And gorgeous, in the midst: a place for prayer,
And praise, and offering. Could the earth supply
No fruits, no flowers for sacrifice, of all
Which on her sunny lap unheeded fall?
No fair young firstling of the flock to die,
As when before their God the patriarchs stood?—
Look down! man brings thee, heaven! his brother's guiltless blood!

XLVIII.

Hear its voice, hear!—a cry goes up to thee,
From the stain'd sod; make thou thy judgment known
On him the shedder!—let his portion be
The fear that walks at midnight—give the moan
In the wind haunting him, a power to say,
"Where is thy brother?"—and the stars a ray
To search and shake his spirit, when alone
With the dread splendour of their burning eyes!
So shall earth own thy will—Mercy, not sacrifice!

XLIX.

Sounds of triumphant praise! the mass was sung—
Voices that die not might have pour'd such strains!
Through Salem's towers might that proud chant have rung
When the Most High, on Syria's palmy plains,
Had quell'd her foes!—so full it swept, a sea
Of loud waves jubilant, and rolling free!

—Oft when the wind, as through resounding fanes,
Hath fill’d the choral forests with its power,
Some deep tone brings me back the music of that hour.

L.

It died away;—the incense-cloud was driven
Before the breeze—the words of doom were said;
And the sun faded mournfully from heaven:
He faded mournfully, and dimly red,
Parting in clouds from those that look’d their last,
And sigh’d—“Farewell, thou sun!” Eve glow’d and pass’d;
Night—midnight and the moon—came forth and shed
Sleep, even as dew, on glen, wood, peopled spot—
Save one—a place of death—and there men slumber’d not.

LI.

’Twas not within the city—[294] but in sight
Of the snow-crown’d sierras, freely sweeping,
With many an eagle’s eyrie on the height,
And hunter’s cabin, by the torrent peeping
Far off: and vales between, and vineyards lay,
With sound and gleam of waters on their way,
And chestnut woods, that girt the happy sleeping
In many a peasant home!—the midnight sky
Brought softly that rich world round those who came to die.

LII.

The darkly glorious midnight sky of Spain,
Burning with stars! What had the torches' glare
To do beneath that temple, and profane
Its holy radiance? By their wavering flare,
I saw beside the pyres—I see thee now,
O bright Theresa! with thy lifted brow,
And thy clasp'd hands, and dark eyes fill'd with prayer!
And thee, sad Inez! bowing thy fair head,
And mantling up thy face, all colourless with dread!

LIII.

And Alvar, Alvar!—I beheld thee too,
Pale, steadfast, kingly: till thy clear glance fell
On that young sister; then perturb'd it grew,
And all thy labouring bosom seem'd to swell
With painful tenderness. Why came I there,
That troubled image of my friend to bear
Thence, for my after-years?—a thing to dwell
In my heart's core, and on the darkness rise,
Disquieting my dreams with its bright mournful eyes?

LIV.

Why came I?—oh! the heart's deep mystery!—Why
In man's last hour doth vain affection's gaze
Fix itself down on struggling agony,
To the dimm'd eyeballs freezing as they glaze?

It might be—yet the power to will seem'd o'er—
That my soul yearn'd to hear his voice once more!
But mine was fetter'd!—mute in strong amaze,
I watch'd his features as the night-wind blew,
And torch-light or the moon's pass'd o'er their marble hue.

LV.

The trampling of a steed! A tall white steed,
Rending his fiery way the crowds among—
A storm's way through a forest—came at speed,
And a wild voice cried "Inez!" Swift she flung
The mantle from her face, and gazed around,
With a faint shriek at that familiar sound;
And from his seat a breathless rider sprung.
And dash'd off fiercely those who came to part,
And rush'd to that pale girl, and clasp'd her to his heart.

LVI.

And for a moment all around gave way
To that full burst of passion! On his breast,
Like a bird panting yet from fear, she lay,
But blest—in misery's very lap—yet blest!
O love, love, strong as death!—from such an hour
Pressing out joy by thine immortal power;
Holy and fervent love! had earth but rest
For thee and thine, this world were all too fair

How could we thence be wean’d to die without despair?

LVII.

But she—as falls a willow from the storm,

O’er its own river streaming—thus reclined

On the youth’s bosom hung her fragile form,

And clasping arms, so passionately twined

Around his neck—with such a trusting fold,

A full deep sense of safety in their hold,

As if naught earthly might th’ embrace unbind!

Alas! a child’s fond faith, believing still

Its mother’s breast beyond the lightning’s reach to kill?

LVIII.

Brief rest! upon the turning billow’s height

A strange sweet moment of some heavenly strain,

Floating between the savage gusts of night,

That sweep the seas to foam! Soon dark again

The hour—the scene; th’ intensely present rush’d

Back on her spirit, and her large tears gush’d

Like blood-drops from a victim—with swift rain

Bathing the bosom where she lean’d that hour,

As if her life would melt into th’ o’erswelling shower.

LIX.

But he whose arm sustain’d her!—oh, I knew

’Twas vain!—and yet he hoped—he fondly strove

Back from her faith her sinking soul to woo,
As life might yet be hers! A dream of love
Which could not look upon so fair a thing,
Remembering how like hope, like joy, like spring,
Her smile was wont to glance, her step to move,
And deem that men indeed, in very truth,
Could mean the sting of death for her soft flowering youth!

LX.

He woo'd her back to life. "Sweet Inez, live!
My blessed Inez!—visions have beguiled
Thy heart; abjure them! thou wert form'd to give
And to find joy; and hath not sunshine smiled
Around thee ever? Leave me not, mine own!
Or earth will grow too dark!—for thee alone,
Thee have I loved, thou gentlest! from a child,
And borne thine image with me o'er the sea,
Thy soft voice in my soul. Speak! Oh! yet live for me!"

LXI.

She look'd up wildly; there were anxious eyes
Waiting that look—sad eyes of troubled thought,
Alvar's—Theresa's! Did her childhood rise,
With all its pure and home-affections fraught,
In the brief glance? She clasp'd her hands—the strife
Of love, faith, fear, and that vain dream of life,

Within her woman’s breast so deeply wrought,
It seem’d as if a reed so slight and weak
Must, in the rending storm not quiver only—break!

LXII.

And thus it was. The young cheek flush’d and faded,
As the swift blood in currents came and went,
And hues of death the marble brow o’ershaded,
And the sunk eye a watery lustre sent
Through its white fluttering lids. Then tremblings pass’d
O’er the frail form, that shook it as the blast
Shakes the sere leaf, until the spirit rent
Its way to peace—the fearful way unknown.
Pale in love’s arms she lay—she!—what had loved was gone!

LXIII.

Joy for thee, trembler!—thou redeem’d one, joy!
Young dove set free!—earth, ashes, soulless clay,
Remain’d for baffled vengeance to destroy.
Thy chain was riven! Nor hadst thou cast away
Thy hope in thy last hour!—though love was there
Striving to wring thy troubled soul from prayer,
And life seem’d robed in beautiful array,
Too fair to leave!—but this might be forgiven,
Thou wert so richly crown’d with precious gifts of heaven!

LXIV.

But woe for him who felt the heart grow still,
Which, with its weight of agony, had lain
Breaking on his! Scarce could the mortal chill
Of the hush’d bosom, ne’er to heave again,
And all the silence curdling round the eye,
Bring home the stern belief that she could die—
That she indeed could die!—for, wild and vain
As hope might be, his soul had hoped: ’twas o’er—
Slowly his failing arms dropp’d from the form they bore.

LXV.

They forced him from that spot. It might be well,
That the fierce reckless words by anguish wrung
From his torn breast, all aimless as they fell,
Like spray-drops from the strife of torrents flung,
Were mark’d as guilt. There are who note these things
Against the smitten heart; its breaking strings
—On whose low thrills once gentle music hung—
With a rude hand of touch unholy trying,
And numbering then as crimes, the deep, strange tones replying.

LXVI.

But ye in solemn joy, O faithful pair!
Stood gazing on your parted sister’s dust;
I saw your features by the torch’s glare,
And they were brightening with a heavenward trust!

I saw the doubt, the anguish, the dismay,
Melt from my Alvar's glorious mien away;
And peace was there—the calmness of the just!
And, bending down the slumb'rer's brow to kiss,
"Thy rest is won," he said, "sweet sister! Praise for this!"

LXVII.

I started as from sleep;—yes!—he had spoken—
A breeze had troubled memory's hidden source!
At once the torpor of my soul was broken—
Thought, feeling, passion, woke in tenfold force.
There are soft breathings in the southern wind,
That so your ice-chains, O ye streams! unbind,
And free the foaming swiftness of your course!
I burst from those that held me back, and fell
Even on his neck, and cried—"Friend! brother! fare thee well!"

LXVIII.

Did he not say "Farewell?" Alas! no breath
Came to mine ear. Hoarse murmurs from the throng
Told that the mysteries in the face of death
Had from their eager sight been veil'd too long.
And we were parted as the surge might part
Those that would die together, true of heart.
His hour was come—but in mine anguish strong,
Like a fierce swimmer through the midnight sea,

Blindly I rush'd away from that which was to be.

LXIX.

Away—away I rush'd; but swift and high
The arrowy pillars of the firelight grew,
Till the transparent darkness of the sky
Flush'd to a blood-red mantle in their hue;
And, phantom-like, the kindling city seem'd
To spread, float, wave, as on the wind they stream'd,
With their wild splendour chasing me! I knew
The death-work was begun—I veil'd mine eyes,
Yet stopp'd in spell-bound fear to catch the victims' cries.

LXX.

What heard I then?—a ringing shriek of pain,
Such as for ever haunts the tortured ear?
I heard a sweet and solemn-breathing strain
Piercing the flame, untremulous and clear!
The rich, triumphal tones!—I knew them well,
As they came floating with a breezy swell!
Man's voice was there—a clarion-voice to cheer
In the mid-battle—ay, to turn the flying;
Woman's—that might have sung of heaven beside the dying!

LXXI.

It was a fearful, yet a glorious thing
To hear that hymn of martyrdom, and know

That its glad stream of melody could spring

Up from th’ unsounded gulfs of human woe!

Alvar! Theresa!—what is deep? what strong?

—God’s breath within the soul! It fill’d that song

From your victorious voices! But the glow

On the hot air and lurid skies increased:

Faint grew the sounds—more faint: I listen’d—they had ceased!

LXXII.

And thou indeed hadst perish’d, my soul’s friend!

I might form other ties—but thou alone

Couldst with a glance the veil of dimness rend,

By other years o’er boyhood’s memory thrown!

Others might aid me onward: thou and I

Had mingled the fresh thoughts that early die,

Once flowering—never more! And thou wert gone!

Who could give back my youth, my spirit free,

Or be in aught again what thou hadst been to me?

LXXIII.

And yet I wept thee not, thou true and brave!

I could not weep—there gather’d round thy name

Too deep a passion. Thou denied a grave!

Thou, with the blight flung on thy soldier’s fame!

Had I not known thy heart from childhood’s time?

Thy heart of hearts?—and couldst thou die for crime?

No! had all earth decreed that death of shame,
I would have set, against all earth's decree,
Th' inalienable trust of my firm soul in thee!

LXXIV.

There are swift hours in life—strong, rushing hours,
That do the work of tempests in their might!
They shake down things that stood as rocks and towers
Unto th' undoubting mind; they pour in light
Where it but startles—like a burst of day
For which th' uprooting of an oak makes way;
They sweep the colouring mists from off our sight;
They touch with fire thought's graven page, the roll
Stamp'd with past years—and lo! it shrivels as a scroll!

LXXV.

And this was of such hours! The sudden flow
Of my soul's tide seem'd whelming me; the glare
Of the red flames, yet rocking to and fro,
Scorch'd up my heart with breathless thirst for air,
And solitude, and freedom. It had been
Well with me then, in some vast desert scene,
To pour my voice out, for the winds to bear
On with them, wildly questioning the sky,
Fiercely the untroubled stars, of man's dim destiny.

LXXVI.

I would have call’d, adjuring the dark cloud;
To the most ancient heavens I would have said—
“Speak to me! show me truth!”[295]—through night aloud
I would have cried to him, the newly dead,
“Come back! and show me truth!” My spirit seem’d
Gasping for some free burst, its darkness teem’d
With such pent storms of thought! Again I fled,
I fled, a refuge from man’s face to gain,
Scarce conscious when I paused, entering a lonely fane.

LXXVII.

A mighty minster, dim, and proud, and vast!
Silence was round the sleepers whom its floor
Shut in the grave; a shadow of the past,
A memory of the sainted steps that wore
Erewhile its gorgeous pavement, seem’d to brood
Like mist upon the stately solitude;
A halo of sad fame to mantle o’er
Its white sepulchral forms of mail-clad men;
And all was hush’d as night in some deep Alpine glen.

LXXVIII.

More hush’d, far more!—for there the wind sweeps by,
Or the woods tremble to the streams’ loud play;
Here a strange echo made my very sigh
Seem for the place too much a sound of day!

Too much my footsteps broke the moonlight, fading,
Yet arch through arch in one soft flow pervading.
And I stood still: prayer, chant had died away;
Yet past me floated a funereal breath
Of incense. I stood still—as before God and death.

LXXIX.

For thick ye girt me round, ye long departed![296]
Dust—imaged forms—with cross, and shield, and crest;
It seem'd as if your ashes would have started
Had a wild voice burst forth above your rest!
Yet ne'er, perchance, did worshipper of yore
Bear to your thrilling presence what I bore
Of wrath, doubt, anguish, battling in the breast!
I could have pour'd out words, on that pale air,
To make your proud tombs ring. No, no! I could not there!

LXXX.

Not midst those aisles, through which a thousand years,
Mutely as clouds, and reverently, had swept;
Not by those shrines, which yet the trace of tears
And kneeling votaries on their marble kept!
Ye were too mighty in your pomp of gloom
And trophied age, O temple, altar, tomb!
And you, ye dead!—for in that faith ye slept,
Whose weight had grown a mountain's on my heart,

Which could not there be loosed. I turn'd me to depart.

LXXXI.

I turn'd: what glimmer'd faintly on my sight—

Faintly, yet brightening as a wreath of snow

Seen through dissolving haze? The moon, the night,

Had waned, and down pour'd in—gray, shadowy, slow,

Yet dayspring still! A solemn hue it caught,

Piercing the storied windows, darkly fraught

With stoles and draperies of imperial glow;

And, soft and sad, that colouring gleam was thrown

Where, pale, a pictured form above the altar shone.

LXXXII.

Thy form, thou Son of God!—a wrathful deep,

With foam, and cloud, and tempest round Thee spread,

And such a weight of night!—a night, when sleep

From the fierce rocking of the billows fled.

A bark show'd dim beyond Thee, with its mast

Bow'd, and its rent sail shivering to the blast;

But, like a spirit in thy gliding tread,

Thou, as o'er glass, didst walk that stormy sea

Through rushing winds, which left a silent path for Thee.

LXXXIII.

So still thy white robes fell!—no breath of air

Within their long and slumb'rous folds had sway.

So still the waves of parted, shadowy hair
From thy clear brow flow'd droopingly away!
Dark were the heavens above thee, Saviour!—dark
The gulfs, Deliverer! round the straining bark!
But Thou!—o'er all thine aspect and array
Was pour'd one stream of pale, broad, silvery light:
Thou wert the single star of that all-shrouding night!

LXXXIV.

Aid for one sinking! Thy lone brightness gleam'd
On his wild face, just lifted o'er the wave,
With its worn, fearful, human look, that seem'd
To cry, through surge and blast—"I perish—save!"
Not to the winds—not vainly! Thou wert nigh,
Thy hand was stretch'd to fainting agony,
Even in the portals of th' unquiet grave!
O Thou that art the life! and yet didst bear
Too much of mortal woe to turn from mortal prayer!

LXXXV.

But was it not a thing to rise on death,
With its remember'd light, that face of thine,
Redeemer! dimm'd by this world's misty breath,
Yet mournfully, mysteriously divine?
Oh! that calm, sorrowful, prophetic eye,
With its dark depths of grief, love, majesty!

And the pale glory of the brow!—a shrine
Where power sat veil'd, yet shedding softly round
What told that Thou couldst be but for a time uncrown'd!

LXXXVI.

And, more than all, the heaven of that sad smile!
The lip of mercy, our immortal trust!
Did not that look, that very look, erewhile
Pour its o'ershadow'd beauty on the dust?
Wert thou not such when earth's dark cloud hung o'er Thee?—
Surely thou wert! My heart grew hush'd before Thee,
Sinking, with all its passions, as the gust
Sank at thy voice, along its billowy way:
What had I there to do but kneel, and weep, and pray?

LXXXVII.

Amidst the stillness rose my spirit's cry,
Amidst the dead—"By that full cup of woe,
Press'd from the fruitage of mortality,
Saviour! for Thee—give light! that I may know
If by thy will, in thine all-healing name,
Men cast down human hearts to blighting shame,
And early death; and say, if this be so,
Where, then, is mercy? Whither shall we flee,
So unallied to hope, save by our hold on Thee?

LXXXVIII.

“But didst Thou not, the deep sea brightly treading,
Lift from despair that struggler with the wave?
And wert Thou not, sad tears, yet awful, shedding,
Beheld a weeper at a mortal’s grave?
And is this weight of anguish, which they bind
On life—this searing to the quick of mind,
That but to God its own free path would crave—
This crushing out of hope, and love, and youth,
Thy will, indeed? Give light! that I may know the truth!

LXXXIX.

“For my sick soul is darken’d unto death,
With shadows from the suffering it hath seen;
The strong foundations of mine ancient faith
Sink from beneath me—whereon shall I lean?
Oh! if from thy pure lips was wrung the sigh
Of the dust’s anguish! if like man to die—
And earth round him shuts heavily—hath been
Even to Thee bitter, aid me! guide me! turn
My wild and wandering thoughts back from their starless bourne!”

XC.

And calm’d I rose: but how the while had risen
Morn’s orient sun, dissolving mist and shade!
Could there indeed be wrong, or chain, or prison,
In the bright world such radiance might pervade?

It fill’d the fane, it mantled the pale form
Which rose before me through the pictured storm,
Even the gray tombs it kindled, and array’d
With life!—How hard to see thy race begun,
And think man wakes to grief, wakening to thee, O Sun!

XCI.

I sought my home again; and thou, my child,
There at thy play beneath yon ancient pine,
With eyes, whose lightning laughter[297] hath beguiled
A thousand pangs, thence flashing joy to mine;
Thou in thy mother’s arms, a babe, didst meet
My coming with young smiles, which yet, though sweet,
Seem’d on my soul all mournfully to shine,
And ask a happier heritage for thee,
Than but in turn the blight of human hope to see.

XCII.

Now sport, for thou art free! the bright birds chasing,
Whose wings waft star-like gleams from tree to tree;
Or with the fawn, thy swift wood-playmate, racing,
Sport on, my joyous child! for thou art free!
Yes, on that day I took thee to my heart,
And inly vow’d, for thee a better part
To choose; that so thy sunny bursts of glee
Should wake no more dim thoughts of far-seen woe,

But, gladdening fearless eyes, flow on—as now they flow.

XCIII.

Thou hast a rich world round thee—mighty shades

Weaving their gorgeous tracery o’er thy head,

With the light melting through their high arcades

As through a pillar’d cloister’s;[298] but the dead

Sleep not beneath; nor doth the sunbeam pass

To marble shrines through rainbow-tinted glass;

Yet thou, by fount and forest-murmur led

To worship, thou art blest! to thee is shown

Earth in her holy pomp, deck’d for her God alone.

[290] “I recollect hearing a traveller, of poetical temperament, expressing the kind of horror which he felt on beholding, on the banks of the Missouri, an oak of prodigious size, which had been in a manner overpowered by an enormous wild-grape vine. The vine had clasped its huge folds round the trunk, and from thence had wound about every branch and twig, until the mighty tree had withered in its embrace. It seemed like Laocoon struggling ineffectually in the hideous coils of the monster Python.”—Bracebridge Hall. Chapter on Forest-Trees.

[291] For a most interesting account of the Spanish Protestants, and the heroic devotion with which they met the spirit of persecution in the sixteenth century, see the Quarterly Review, No. 57, Art. “Quin’s Visit to Spain.”

[292] “A priest named Gonzalez had, among other proselytes, gained over two young females, his sisters, to the Protestant faith. All three were confined in the dungeons of the Inquisition. The torture, repeatedly applied, could not draw from them the least evidence against their religious associates. Every artifice was employed to obtain a recantation from the two sisters, since the constancy and

learning of Gonzalez precluded all hopes of a theological victory. Their answer, if not exactly logical, is wonderfully simple and affecting:—‘We will die in the faith of our brother: he is too wise to be wrong, and too good to deceive us.’ The three stakes on which they died were near each other. The priest had been gagged till the moment of lighting up the wood. The few minutes that he was allowed to speak he employed in comforting his sisters, with whom he sung the 109th Psalm, till the flames smothered their voices.”—Ibid.

[293] The names, not only of the immediate victims of the Inquisition were devoted to infamy, but those of all their relations were branded with the same indelible stain, which was likewise to descend as an inheritance to their latest posterity.

[294] The piles erected for these executions were without the towns, and the final scene of an Auto da Fe was sometimes, from the length of the preceding ceremonies, delayed till midnight.

[295] For one of the most powerful and impressive pictures perhaps ever drawn, of a young mind struggling against habit and superstition in its first aspirations after truth, see the admirable Letters from Spain by Don Leucadio Doblado.

[296] “You walk from end to end over a floor of tombstones, inlaid in brass with the forms of the departed, mitres, and crosiers, and spears, and shields, and helmets, all mingled together—all worn into glass-like smoothness by the feet and the knees of long-departed worshippers. Around, on every side, each in their separate chapel, sleep undisturbed from age to age the venerable ashes of the holiest or the loftiest that of old came thither to worship—their images and their dying prayers sculptured among the resting-places of their remains.”—From a beautiful description of ancient Spanish Cathedrals, in Peter’s Letters to his Kinsfolk.

[297] “El’ lampeggiar de l’angelico riso.”—Petrarch.

[298] “Sometimes their discourse was held in the deep shades of moss-grown forests, whose gloom and interlaced boughs first suggested that Gothic architecture

beneath whose pointed arches, where they had studied and prayed, the parti-coloured windows shed a tinged light; scenes which the gleams of sunshine, penetrating the deep foliage, and flickering on the variegated turf below, might have recalled to their memory."—Webster's Oration on the Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England.—See Hodgson's Letters from North America, vol. ii. p. 305.

PART II.

Wie diese treue liebe seele

Von ihrem Glauben Voll,

Der ganz allein

Ihr selig machend ist, sich heilig quale,

Das sie den liebsten Mann verloren halten soll.—Faust.

I never shall smile more—but all my days

Walk with still footsteps and with humble eyes,

An everlasting hymn within my soul.—Wilson.

I.

Bring me the sounding of the torrent-water,

With yet a nearer swell! Fresh breeze, awake![299]

And river, darkening ne'er with hues of slaughter

Thy wave's pure silvery green,—and shining lake,

Spread far before my cabin, with thy zone

Of ancient woods, ye chainless things and lone!

Send voices through the forest aisles, and make

Glad music round me, that my soul may dare,

Cheer’d by such tones, to look back on a dungeon’s air!

II.

O Indian hunter of the desert’s race!

That with the spear at times, or bended bow,

Dost cross my footsteps in thy fiery chase

Of the swift elk or blue hill’s flying roe;

Thou that beside the red night-fire thou heapest,

Beneath the cedars and the starlight sleepest,

Thou know’st not, wanderer—never may’st thou know!—

Of the dark holds wherewith man cumbers earth,

To shut from human eyes the dancing seasons’ mirth.

III.

There, fetter’d down from day, to think the while

How bright in heaven the festal sun is glowing,

Making earth’s loneliest places, with his smile,

Flush like the rose; and how the streams are flowing

With sudden sparkles through the shadowy grass,

And water-flowers, all trembling as they pass;

And how the rich, dark summer trees are bowing

With their full foliage: this to know, and pine

Bound unto midnight’s heart, seems a stern lot—’twas mine!

IV.

Wherefore was this? Because my soul had drawn

Light from the Book whose words are graved in light!

There, at its well-head, had I found the dawn,
And day, and noon of freedom: but too bright
It shines on that which man to man hath given,
And call’d the truth—the very truth, from heaven!
And therefore seeks he in his brother’s sight
To cast the mote; and therefore strives to bind,
With his strong chains, to earth what is not earth’s—the mind!

V.

It is a weary and a bitter task
Back from the lip the burning word to keep,
And to shut out heaven’s air with falsehood’s mask,
And in the dark urn of the soul to heap
Indignant feelings—making e’en of thought
A buried treasure, which may but be sought
When shadows are abroad—and night—and sleep.
I might not brook it long—and thus was thrown
Into that grave-like cell, to wither there alone.

VI.

And I, a child of danger, whose delights
Were on dark hills and many-sounding seas—
I, that amidst the Cordillera heights
Had given Castilian banners to the breeze,
And the full circle of the rainbow seen
There, on the snows;[300] and in my country been

A mountain wanderer, from the Pyrenees
To the Morena crags—how left I not
Life, or the soul's life, quench'd on that sepulchral spot?

VII.

Because Thou didst not leave me, O my God!
Thou wert with those that bore the truth of old
Into the deserts from th' oppressor's rod,
And made the caverns of the rock their fold;
And in the hidden chambers of the dead,
Our guiding lamp with fire immortal fed;
And met when stars met, by their beams to hold
The free heart's communing with Thee,—and Thou
Wert in the midst, felt, own'd—the Strengthener then as now!

VIII.

Yet once I sank. Alas! man's wavering mind!
Wherefore and whence the gusts that o'er it blow?
How they bear with them, floating uncombined,
The shadows of the past, that come and go,
As o'er the deep the old long-buried things
Which a storm's working to the surface brings!
Is the reed shaken,—and must we be so,
With every wind? So, Father! must we be,
Till we can fix undimm'd our steadfast eyes on Thee.

IX.

Once my soul died within me. What had thrown
That sickness o’er it? Even a passing thought
Of a clear spring, whose side, with flowers o’ergrown,
Fondly and oft my boyish steps had sought!
Perchance the damp roof’s water-drops that fell
Just then, low tinkling through my vaulted cell,
Intensely heard amidst the stillness, caught
Some tone from memory, of the music, welling
Ever with that fresh rill, from its deep rocky dwelling.

X.

But so my spirit’s fever’d longings wrought,
Wakening, it might be, to the faint, sad sound,
That from the darkness of the walls they brought
A loved scene round me, visibly around.[301]
Yes! kindling, spreading, brightening, hue by hue,
Like stars from midnight, through the gloom, it grew,
That haunt of youth, hope, manhood!—till the bound
Of my shut cavern seem’d dissolved, and I
Girt by the solemn hills and burning pomp of sky.

XI.

I look’d—and lo! the clear, broad river flowing
Past the old Moorish ruin on the steep,
The lone tower dark against a heaven all glowing,
Like seas of glass and fire!—I saw the sweep

Of glorious woods far down the mountain side,
And their still shadows in the gleaming tide,
And the red evening on its waves asleep;
And midst the scene—oh! more than all—there smiled
My child's fair face, and hers, the mother of my child!

XII.

With their soft eyes of love and gladness raised
Up to the flushing sky, as when we stood
Last by that river, and in silence gazed
On the rich world of sunset. But a flood
Of sudden tenderness my soul oppress'd;
And I rush'd forward, with a yearning breast,
To clasp—alas!—a vision! Wave and wood,
And gentle faces, lifted in the light
Of day's last hectic blush, all melted from my sight.

XIII.

Then darkness!—oh! th' unutterable gloom
That seem'd as narrowing round me, making less
And less my dungeon, when, with all its bloom,
That bright dream vanish'd from my loneliness!
It floated off, the beautiful! yet left
Such deep thirst in my soul, that thus bereft,
I lay down, sick with passion's vain excess,
And pray'd to die. How oft would sorrow weep

Her weariness to death, if he might come like sleep!

XIV.

But I was roused—and how? It is no tale,
Even midst thy shades, thou wilderness! to tell.
I would not have my boy's young cheek made pale,
Nor haunt his sunny rest with what befell
In that drear prison-house. His eye must grow
More dark with thought, more earnest his fair brow,
More high his heart in youthful strength must swell;
So shall it fitly burn when all is told:
Let childhood's radiant mist the free child yet enfold.

XV.

It is enough that through such heavy hours
As wring us by our fellowship of clay,
I lived, and undegraded. We have powers
To snatch th' oppressor's bitter joy away!
Shall the wild Indian for his savage fame
Laugh and expire, and shall not Truth's high name
Bear up her martyrs with all-conquering sway?
It is enough that torture may be vain:
I had seen Alvar die—the strife was won from Pain.

XVI.

And faint not, heart of man! Though years wane slow,
There have been those that from the deepest caves,

And cells of night, and fastnesses below
The stormy dashing of the ocean waves,
Down, farther down than gold lies hid, have nursed
A quenchless hope, and watch'd their time, and burst
On the bright day, like wakeners from the graves!
I was of such at last!—unchain'd I trode
This green earth, taking back my freedom from my God!

XVII.

That was an hour to send its fadeless trace
Down life's far-sweeping tide! A dim, wild night,
Like sorrow, hung upon the soft moon's face,
Yet how my heart leap'd in her blessed light!
The shepherd's light—the sailor's on the sea—
The hunter's homeward from the mountains free,
Where its lone smile makes tremulously bright
The thousand streams!—I could but gaze through tears.
Oh! what a sight is heaven, thus first beheld for years!

XVIII.

The rolling clouds!—they have the whole blue space
Above to sail in—all the dome of sky!
My soul shot with them in their breezy race
O'er star and gloom; but I had yet to fly,
As flies the hunted wolf. A secret spot
And strange, I knew—the sunbeam knew it not,—

Wildest of all the savage glens that lie
In far sierras, hiding their deep springs,
And traversed but by storms, or sounding eagles' wings.

XIX.

Ay, and I met the storm there! I had gain'd
The covert's heart with swift and stealthy tread:
A moan went past me, and the dark trees rain'd
Their autumn foliage rustling on my head;
A moan—a hollow gust—and there I stood
Girt with majestic night, and ancient wood,
And foaming water.—Thither might have fled
The mountain Christian with his faith of yore,
When Afric's tambour shook the ringing western shore!

XX.

But through the black ravine the storm came swelling:
—Mighty thou art amidst the hills, thou blast!
In thy lone course the kingly cedars felling,
Like plumes upon the path of battle cast!
A rent oak thunder'd down beside my cave,
Booming it rush'd, as booms a deep sea wave;
A falcon soar'd; a startled wild-deer pass'd;
A far-off bell toll'd faintly through the roar.
How my glad spirit swept forth with the winds once more!

XXI.

And with the arrowy lightnings!—for they flash’d,
Smiting the branches in their fitful play,
And brightly shivering where the torrents dash’d
Up, even to crag and eagle’s nest, their spray!
And there to stand amidst the pealing strife,
The strong pines groaning with tempestuous life,
And all the mountain-voices on their way,—
Was it not joy? ’Twas joy in rushing might,
After those years that wove but one long dead of night!

XXII.

There came a softer hour, a lovelier moon,
And lit me to my home of youth again,
Through the dim chestnut shade, where oft at noon,
By the fount’s flashing burst, my head had lain
In gentle sleep. But now I pass’d as one
That may not pause where wood-streams whispering run,
Or light sprays tremble to a bird’s wild strain;
Because th’ avenger’s voice is in the wind,
The foe’s quick, rustling step close on the leaves behind.

XXIII.

My home of youth! Oh! if indeed to part
With the soul’s loved ones be a mournful thing,
When we go forth in buoyancy of heart,
And bearing all the glories of our spring

For life to breathe on,—is it less to meet,
When these are faded?—who shall call it sweet?
Even though love’s mingling tears may haply bring
Balm as they fall, too well their heavy showers
Teach us how much is lost of all that once was ours!

XXIV.

Not by the sunshine, with its golden glow,
Nor the green earth, nor yet the laughing sky,
Nor the fair flower-scents,[302] as they come and go
In the soft air, like music wandering by;
—Oh! not by these, th’ unfailing, are we taught
How time and sorrow on our frames have wrought;
But by the sadden’d eye, the darken’d brow
Of kindred aspect, and the long dim gaze,
Which tells us we are changed—how changed from other days!

XXV.

Before my father, in my place of birth,
I stood an alien. On the very floor
Which oft had trembled to my boyish mirth,
The love that rear’d me knew my face no more!
There hung the antique armour, helm and crest,
Whose every stain woke childhood in my breast;
There droop’d the banner, with the marks it bore
Of Paynim spears; and I, the worn in frame

And heart, what there was I?—another and the same!

XXVI.

Then bounded in a boy, with clear, dark eye—

How should he know his father? When we parted,

From the soft cloud which mantles infancy,

His soul, just wakening into wonder, darted

Its first looks round. Him follow'd one, the bride

Of my young days, the wife how loved and tried!

Her glance met mine—I could not speak—she started

With a bewilder'd gaze—until there came

Tears to my burning eyes, and from my lips her name.

XXVII.

She knew me then! I murmur'd "Leonor!"

And her heart answer'd! Oh! the voice is known

First from all else, and swiftest to restore

Love's buried images, with one low tone

That strikes like lightning, when the cheek is faded,

And the brow heavily with thought o'ershaded,

And all the brightness from the aspect gone!

—Upon my breast she sunk, when doubt was fled,

Weeping as those may weep, that meet in woe and dread.

XXVIII.

For there we might not rest. Alas! to leave

Those native towers, and know that they must fall

By slow decay, and none remain to grieve
When the weeds cluster’d on the lonely wall!
We were the last—my boy and I—the last
Of a long line which brightly thence had pass’d!
My father bless’d me as I left his hall—
With his deep tones and sweet, though full of years,
He bless’d me there, and bathed my child’s young head with tears.

XXIX.

I had brought sorrow on his gray hairs down,
And cast the darkness of my branded name
(For so he deem’d it) on the clear renown,
My own ancestral heritage of fame.
And yet he bless’d me! Father! if the dust
Lie on those lips benign, my spirit’s trust
Is to behold thee yet, where grief and shame
Dim the bright day no more; and thou wilt know
That not through guilt thy son thus bow’d thine age with woe!

XXX.

And thou, my Leonor! that unrepining,
If sad in soul, didst quit all else for me,
When stars, the stars that earliest rise, are shining,
How their soft glance unseals each thought of thee!
For on our flight they smiled; their dewy rays,
Through the last olives, lit thy tearful gaze

Back to the home we never more might see.

So pass'd we on, like earth's first exiles, turning

Fond looks where hung the sword above their Eden burning.

XXXI.

It was a woe to say, "Farewell, my Spain!

The sunny and the vintage land, farewell!"

—I could have died upon the battle-plain

For thee, my country! but I might not dwell

In thy sweet vales, at peace. The voice of song

Breathes, with the myrtle scent, thy hills along;

The citron's glow is caught from shade and dell:

But what are these? upon thy flowery sod

I might not kneel, and pour my free thoughts out to God!

XXXII.

O'er the blue deep I fled, the chainless deep!

Strange heart of man! that e'en midst woe swells high,

When through the foam he sees his proud bark sweep,

Flinging out joyous gleams to wave and sky!

Yes! it swells high, whate'er he leaves behind,

His spirit rises with the rising wind;

For, wedded to the far futurity,

On, on, it bears him ever, and the main

Seems rushing, like his hope, some happier shore to gain.

XXXIII.

Not thus is woman. Closely her still heart
Doth twine itself with e'en each lifeless thing
Which, long remember'd, seem'd to bear its part
In her calm joys. For ever would she cling,
A brooding dove, to that sole spot of earth
Where she hath loved, and given her children birth,
And heard their first sweet voices. There may spring
Array no path, renew no flower, no leaf,
But hath its breath of home, its claim to farewell grief.

XXXIV.

I look'd on Leonor,—and if there seem'd
A cloud of more than pensiveness to rise
In the faint smiles that o'er her features gleam'd,
And the soft darkness of her serious eyes,
Misty with tender gloom, I call'd it naught
But the fond exile's pang, a lingering thought
Of her own vale, with all its melodies
And living light of streams. Her soul would rest
Beneath your shades, I said, bowers of the gorgeous West!

XXXV.

Oh, could we live in visions! could we hold
Delusion faster, longer, to our breast,
When it shuts from us, with its mantle's fold,
That which we see not, and are therefore blest!

But they, our loved and loving—they to whom
We have spread out our souls in joy and gloom,
Their looks and accents, unto ours address'd,
Have been a language of familiar tone
Too long to breathe, at last, dark sayings and unknown.

XXXVI.

I told my heart, 'twas but the exile's woe
Which press'd on that sweet bosom; I deceived
My heart but half: a whisper, faint and low,
Haunting it ever, and at times believed,
Spoke of some deeper cause. How oft we seem
Like those that dream, and know the while they dream—
Midst the soft falls of airy voices grieved
And troubled, while bright phantoms round them play,
By a dim sense that all will float and fade away!

XXXVII.

Yet, as if chasing joy, I woo'd the breeze
To speed me onward with the wings of morn.
Oh! far amidst the solitary seas,
Which were not made for man, what man hath borne,
Answering their moan with his!—what thou didst bear,
My lost and loveliest! while that secret care
Grew terror, and thy gentle spirit, worn
By its dull brooding weight, gave way at last,

Beholding me as one from hope for ever cast!

XXXVIII.

For unto thee, as through all change, reveal’d

Mine inward being lay. In other eyes

I had to bow me yet, and make a shield,

To fence my burning bosom, of disguise;

By the still hope sustain’d, ere long to win

Some sanctuary, whose green retreats within

My thoughts unfetter’d to their source might rise,

Like songs and scents of morn. But thou didst look

Through all my soul, and thine e’en unto fainting shook.

XXXIX.

Fallen, fallen, I seem’d—yet, oh! not less beloved,

Though from thy love was pluck’d the early pride,

And harshly by a gloomy faith reproved,

And sear’d with shame! Though each young flower had died,

There was the root,—strong, living, not the less

That all it yielded now was bitterness;

Yet still such love as quits not misery’s side,

Nor drops from guilt its ivy-like embrace,

Nor turns away from death’s its pale heroic face.

XL.

Yes! thou hadst follow’d me through fear and flight!

Thou wouldst have follow’d had my pathway led

E’en to the scaffold; had the flashing light
Of the raised axe made strong men shrink with dread,
Thou, midst the hush of thousands, wouldst have been
With thy clasp’d hands beside me kneeling seen,
And meekly bowing to the shame thy head—
The shame!—oh! making beautiful to view
The might of human love—fair thing! so bravely true!

XLI.

There was thine agony—to love so well
Where fear made love life’s chastener. Heretofore,
Whate’er of earth’s disquiet round thee fell,
Thy soul, o’erpassing its dim bounds, could soar
Away to sunshine, and thy clear eye speak
Most of the skies when grief most touch’d thy cheek.
Now, that far brightness faded, never more
Could thou lift heavenwards for its hope thy heart,
Since at heaven’s gate it seem’d that thou and I must part.

XLII.

Alas! and life hath moments when a glance—
(If thought to sudden watchfulness be stirr’d)—
A flush—a fading of the cheek, perchance—
A word—less, less—the cadence of a word,
Lets in our gaze the mind’s dim veil beneath,
Thence to bring haply knowledge fraught with death!

Even thus, what never from thy lip was heard
Broke on my soul. I knew that in thy sight
I stood, howe’er beloved, a recreant from the light.

XLIII.

Thy sad, sweet hymn, at eve, the seas along,—
Oh! the deep soul it breathed!—the love, the woe,
The fervour, pour’d in that full gush of song,
As it went floating through the fiery glow
Of the rich sunset!—bringing thoughts of Spain,
With all their vesper voices, o’er the main,
Which seem’d responsive in its murmuring flow.
“Ave sanctissima!”—how oft that lay
Hath melted from my heart the martyr strength away!
Ave, sanctissima!
’Tis nightfall on the sea;
Ora pro nobis!
Our souls rise to thee!
Watch us, while shadows lie
O’er the dim waters spread;
Hear the heart’s lonely sigh—
Thine too hath bled!
Thou that hast look’d on death,
Aid us when death is near!
Whisper of heaven to faith;

Sweet Mother, hear!

Ora pro nobis!

The wave must rock our sleep,

Ora, Mater, ora!

Thou star of the deep!

XLIV.

“Ora pro nobis, Mater!”—What a spell

Was in those notes, with day’s last glory dying

On the flush’d waters—seem’d they not to swell

From the far dust wherein my sires were lying

With crucifix and sword? Oh! yet how clear

Comes their reproachful sweetness to mine ear!

“Ora”—with all the purple waves replying,

All my youth’s visions rising in the strain—

And I had thought it much to bear the rack and chain!

XLV.

Torture! the sorrow of affections eye,

Fixing its meekness on the spirit’s core,

Deeper, and teaching more of agony,

May pierce than many swords!—and this I bore

With a mute pang. Since I had vainly striven

From its free springs to pour the truth of heaven

Into thy trembling soul, my Leonor!

Silence rose up where hearts no hope could share:

Alas! for those that love, and may not blend in prayer!

XLVI.

We could not pray together midst the deep,
Which, like a floor of sapphire, round us lay,
Through days of splendour, nights too bright for sleep,
Soft, solemn, holy! We were on our way
Unto the mighty Cordillera land,
With men whom tales of that world's golden strand
Had lured to leave their vines. Oh! who shall say
What thoughts rose in us, when the tropic sky
Touch'd all its molten seas with sunset's alchemy!

XLVII.

Thoughts no more mingled! Then came night—th' intense
Dark blue—the burning stars! I saw thee shine
Once more, in thy serene magnificence,
O Southern Cross![303] as when thy radiant sign
First drew my gaze of youth. No, not as then;
I had been stricken by the darts of men
Since those fresh days; and now thy light divine
Look'd on mine anguish, while within me strove
The still small voice against the might of suffering love.

XLVIII.

But thou, the clear, the glorious! thou wert pouring
Brilliance and joy upon the crystal wave,

While she that met thy ray with eyes adoring,
Stood in the lengthening shadow of the grave!
Alas! I watch'd her dark religious glance,
As it still sought thee through the heaven's expanse,
Bright Cross! and knew not that I watch'd what gave
But passing lustre—shrouded soon to be—
A soft light found no more—no more on earth or sea!

XLIX.

I knew not all—yet something of unrest
Sat on my heart. Wake, ocean-wind! I said;
Waft us to land, in leafy freshness drest,
Where, through rich clouds of foliage o'er her head,
Sweet day may steal, and rills unseen go by,
Like singing voices, and the green earth lie
Starry with flowers, beneath her graceful tread!
But the calm bound us midst the glassy main:
Ne'er was her step to bend earth's living flowers again.

L.

Yes! as if heaven upon the waves were sleeping,
Vexing my soul with quiet, there they lay,
All moveless, through their blue transparence keeping
The shadows of our sails, from day to day;
While she——oh! strongest is the strong heart's woe—
And yet I live! I feel the sunshine's glow—

And I am he that look’d, and saw decay
Steal o’er the fair of earth, th’ adored too much!—
It is a fearful thing to love what death may touch.

LI.

A fearful thing that love and death may dwell
In the same world! She faded on—and I,
Blind to the last, there needed death to tell
My trusting soul that she could fade to die!
Yet, ere she parted, I had mark’d a change;
But it breathed hope—’twas beautiful, though strange:
Something of gladness in the melody
Of her low voice, and in her words a flight
Of airy thought—alas! too perilously bright!

LII.

And a clear sparkle in her glance, yet wild,
And quick, and eager, like the flashing gaze
Of some all-wondering and awakening child,
That first the glories of the earth surveys.
How could it thus deceive me? She had worn
Around her, like the dewy mists of morn,
A pensive tenderness through happiest days;
And a soft world of dreams had seem’d to lie
Still in her dark, and deep, and spiritual eye.

LIII.

And I could hope in that strange fire!—she died,
She died, with all its lustre on her mien!
The day was melting from the waters wide,
And through its long bright hours her thoughts had been,
It seem'd, with restless and unwonted yearning,
To Spain's blue skies and dark sierras turning;
For her fond words were all of vintage-scene,
And flowering myrtle, and sweet citron's breath:
Oh! with what vivid hues life comes back oft on death!

LIV.

And from her lips the mountain-songs of old,
In wild, faint snatches, fitfully had sprung;
Songs of the orange bower, the Moorish hold,
The "Rio verde,"[304] on her soul that hung,
And thence flow'd forth. But now the sun was low,
And watching by my side its last red glow,
That ever stills the heart, once more she sung
Her own soft "Ora, Mater!" and the sound
Was e'en like love's farewell—so mournfully profound.

LV.

The boy had dropp'd to slumber at our feet;
"And I have lull'd him to his smiling rest
Once more!" she said. I raised him—it was sweet,
Yet sad, to see the perfect calm, which bless'd

His look that hour: for now her voice grew weak,
And on the flowery crimson of his cheek,
With her white lips, a long, long kiss she press'd,
Yet light, to wake him not. Then sank her head
Against my bursting heart. What did I clasp?—The dead!

LVI.

I call'd! To call what answers not our cries—
By what we loved to stand unseen, unheard—
With the loud passion of our tears and sighs,
To see but some cold glittering ringlet stirr'd;
And in the quench'd eye's fixedness to gaze,
All vainly searching for the parted rays—
This is what waits us! Dead!—with that chill word
To link our bosom-names! For this we pour
Our souls upon the dust—nor tremble to adore!

LVII.

But the true parting came! I look'd my last
On the sad beauty of that slumbering face:
How could I think the lovely spirit pass'd
Which there had left so tenderly its trace?
Yet a dim awfulness was on the brow—
No! not like sleep to look upon art thou,
Death, Death! She lay, a thing for earth's embrace,
To cover with spring-wreaths. For earth's?—the wave

That gives the bier no flowers, makes moan above her grave!

LVIII.

On the mid-seas a knell!—for man was there,

Anguish and love—the mourner with his dead!

A long, low-rolling knell—a voice of prayer—

Dark glassy waters, like a desert spread—

And the pale-shining Southern Cross on high,

Its faint stars fading from a solemn sky,

Where mighty clouds before the dawn grew red:

Were these things round me? Such o'er memory sweep

Wildly, when aught brings back that burial of the deep.

LIX.

Then the broad, lonely sunrise!—and the plash

Into the sounding waves![305] Around her head

They parted, with a glancing moment's flash,

Then shut—and all was still. And now thy bed

Is of their secrets, gentlest Leonor!

Once fairest of young brides!—and never more,

Loved as thou wert, may human tear be shed

Above thy rest! No mark the proud seas keep,

To show where he that wept may pause again to weep!

LX.

So the depths took thee! Oh! the sullen sense

Of desolation in that hour compress'd!

Dust going down, a speck, amidst th’ immense
And gloomy waters, leaving on their breast
The trace a weed might leave there! Dust!—the thing
Which to the heart was as a living spring
Of joy, with fearfulness of love possess’d,
Thus sinking! Love, joy, fear, all crush’d to this—
And the wide heaven so far—so fathomless th’ abyss!

LXI.

Where the line sounds not, where the wrecks lie low,
What shall wake thence the dead? Blest, blest, are they
That earth to earth entrust, for they may know
And tend the dwelling whence the slumberer’s clay
Shall rise at last; and bid the young flowers bloom
That waft a breath of hope around the tomb;
And kneel upon the dewy turf to pray!
But thou, what cave hath dimly chamber’d thee?
Vain dreams!—oh! art thou not where there is no more sea?[306]

LXII.

The wind rose free and singing: when for ever,
O’er that sole spot of all the watery plain,
I could have bent my sight with fond endeavour
Down, where its treasure was, its glance to strain
Then rose the reckless wind! Before our prow
The white foam flash’d—ay, joyously, and thou

Wert left with all the solitary main

Around thee—and thy beauty in my heart,

And thy meek, sorrowing love—oh! where could that depart?

LXIII.

I will not speak of woe; I may not tell—

Friend tells not such to friends—the thoughts which rent

My fainting spirit, when its wild farewell

Across the billows to thy grave was sent,

Thou, there most lonely! He that sits above,

In his calm glory, will forgive the love

His creatures bear each other, even if blent

With a vain worship; for its close is dim

Ever with grief which leads the wrung soul back to Him!

LXIV.

And with a milder pang if now I bear

To think of thee in thy forsaken rest,

If from my heart be lifted the despair,

The sharp remorse with healing influence press’d,

If the soft eyes that visit me in sleep

Look not reproach, though still they seem to weep;

It is that He my sacrifice hath bless’d,

And fill’d my bosom, through its inmost cell,

With a deep chastening sense that all at last is well.

LXV.

Yes! thou art now——Oh! wherefore doth the thought
Of the wave dashing o’er thy long bright hair,
The sea-weed into its dark tresses wrought,
The sand thy pillow—thou that wert so fair!
Come o’er me still! Earth, earth!—it is the hold
Earth ever keeps on that of earthly mould!
But thou art breathing now in purer air,
I well believe, and freed from all of error,
Which blighted here the root of thy sweet life with terror.

LXVI.

And if the love, which here was passing light,
Went with what died not—oh! that this we knew,
But this!—that through the silence of the night,
Some voice, of all the lost ones and the true,
Would speak, and say, if in their far repose,
We are yet aught of what we were to those
We call the dead! Their passionate adieu,
Was it but breath, to perish? Holier trust
Be mine!—thy love is there, but purified from dust!

LXVII.

A thing all heavenly!—clear’d from that which hung
As a dim cloud between us, heart and mind!
Loosed from the fear, the grief, whose tendrils flung
A chain so darkly with its growth entwined.

This is my hope!—though when the sunset fades,
When forests rock the midnight on their shades,
When tones of wail are in the rising wind,
Across my spirit some faint doubt may sigh;
For the strong hours will sway this frail mortality!

LXVIII.

We have been wand'rers since those days of woe,
Thy boy and I! As wild birds tend their young,
So have I tended him—my bounding roe!
The high Peruvian solitudes among;
And o'er the Andes' torrents borne his form,
Where our frail bridge had quiver'd midst the storm.[307]
But there the war-notes of my country rung,
And, smitten deep of heaven and man, I fled
To hide in shades unpierced a mark'd and weary head.

LXIX.

But he went on in gladness—that fair child!
Save when at times his bright eye seem'd to dream,
And his young lips, which then no longer smiled,
Ask'd of his mother! That was but a gleam
Of memory, fleeting fast; and then his play
Through the wide Llanos[308] cheer'd again our way,
And by the mighty Oronoco stream,[309]
On whose lone margin we have heard at morn,

From the mysterious rocks, the sunrise-music borne:

LXX.

So like a spirit’s voice! a harping tone,

Lovely, yet ominous to mortal ear—

Such as might reach us from a world unknown,

Troubling man’s heart with thrills of joy and fear!

’Twas sweet!—yet those deep southern shades oppress’d

My soul with stillness, like the calms that rest

On melancholy waves:[310] I sigh’d to hear

Once more earth’s breezy sounds, her foliage fann’d,

And turn’d to seek the wilds of the red hunter’s land.

LXXI.

And we have won a bower of refuge now,

In this fresh waste, the breath of whose repose

Hath cool’d, like dew, the fever of my brow,

And whose green oaks and cedars round me close

As temple walls and pillars, that exclude

Earth’s haunted dreams from their free solitude;

All, save the image and the thought of those

Before us gone—our loved of early years,

Gone where affection’s cup hath lost the taste of tears.

LXXII.

I see a star—eve’s first-born!—in whose train

Past scenes, words, looks, come back. The arrowy spire

Of the lone cypress, as of wood-girt fane,
Rests dark and still amidst a heaven of fire;
The pine gives forth its odours, and the lake
Gleams like one ruby, and the soft winds wake,
Till every string of nature's solemn lyre
Is touch'd to answer; its most secret tone
Drawn from each tree, for each hath whispers all its own.

LXXIII.

And hark! another murmur on the air,
Not of the hidden rills or quivering shades!—
That is the cataract's, which the breezes bear,
Filling the leafy twilight of the glades
With hollow surge-like sounds, as from the bed
Of the blue, mournful seas, that keep the dead:
But they are far! The low sun here pervades
Dim forest arches, bathing with red gold
Their stems, till each is made a marvel to behold,—

LXXIV.

Gorgeous, yet full of gloom! In such an hour,
The vesper-melody of dying bells
Wanders through Spain, from each gray convent's tower
O'er shining rivers pour'd and olive dells,
By every peasant heard, and muleteer,
And hamlet, round my home: and I am here,

Living again through all my life’s farewells,
In these vast woods, where farewell ne’er was spoken,
And sole I lift to heaven a sad heart—yet unbroken!

LXXV.

In such an hour are told the hermit’s beads;
With the white sail the seaman’s hymn floats by:
Peace be with all! whate’er their varying creeds,
With all that send up holy thoughts on high!
Come to me, boy! By Guadalquiver’s vines,
By every stream of Spain, as day declines,
Man’s prayers are mingled in the rosy sky.
We, too, will pray; nor yet unheard, my child!
Of Him whose voice we hear at eve amidst the wild.

LXXVI.

At eve? Oh, through all hours! From dark dreams oft
Awakening, I look forth, and learn the might
Of solitude, while thou art breathing soft,
And low, my loved one! on the breast of night.
I look forth on the stars—the shadowy sleep
Of forests—and the lake whose gloomy deep
Sends up red sparkles to the fire-flies’ light:
A lonely world!—even fearful to man’s thought,
But for His presence felt, whom here my soul hath sought.

[299] The varying sounds of waterfalls are thus alluded to in an interesting work of

Mrs Grant's. "On the opposite side the view was bounded by steep hills, covered with lofty pines, from which a waterfall descended, which not only gave animation to the sylvan scene, but was the best barometer imaginable; foretelling by its varied and intelligible sounds every approaching change, not only of the weather but of the wind."—Memoirs of an American Lady, vol. i. p. 143.

[300] The circular rainbows, occasionally seen amongst the Andes, are described by Ulloa.

[301] Many striking instances of the vividness with which the mind, when strongly excited, has been known to renovate past impressions, and embody them into visible imagery, are noticed and accounted for in Dr Hibbert's Philosophy of Apparitions. The following illustrative passage is quoted in the same work, from the writings of the late Dr Ferriar:—"I remember that, about the age of fourteen, it was a source of great amusement to myself, if I had been viewing any interesting object in the course of the day, such as a romantic ruin, a fine seat, or a review of a body of troops, as soon as evening came on, if I had occasion to go into a dark room, the whole scene was brought before my eyes with a brilliancy equal to what it had possessed in daylight, and remained visible for several minutes. I have no doubt that dismal and frightful images have been thus presented to young persons after scenes of domestic affliction or public horror."

The following passage from the Alcazar of Seville, a tale or historical sketch, by the author of Doblado's Letters, affords a further illustration of this subject. "When, descending fast into the vale of years, I strongly fix my mind's eye on those narrow, shady, silent streets, where I breathed the scented air which came rustling through the surrounding groves; where the footsteps re-echoed from the clean watered porches of the houses, and where every object spoke of quiet and contentment;... the objects around me begin to fade into a mere delusion, and not only the thoughts, but the external sensations, which I then experienced, revive with a reality that almost

makes me shudder—it has so much the character of a trance or vision."

[302] "For because the breath of flowers is farre sweeter in the aire (where it comes and goes like the warbling of musick) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight than to know what be the flowers and plants which doe best perfume the aire."—Lord Bacon's Essay on Gardens.

[303] "The pleasure we felt on discovering the Southern Cross was warmly shared by such of the crew as had lived in the colonies. In the solitude of the seas, we hail a star as a friend from whom we have long been separated. Among the Portuguese and the Spaniards, peculiar motives seem to increase this feeling; a religious sentiment attaches them to a constellation, the form of which recalls the sign of the faith planted by their ancestors in the deserts of the New World.... It has been observed at what hour of the night, in different seasons, the Cross of the South is erect or inclined. It is a time-piece that advances very regularly near four minutes a-day, and no other group of stars exhibits to the naked eye an observation of time so easily made. How often have we heard our guides exclaim, in the savannahs of Venezuela, or in the desert extending from Lima to Truxillo, 'Midnight is past—the Cross begins to bend!' How often these words reminded us of that affecting scene where Paul and Virginia, seated near the source of the river of Lataniers, conversed together for the last time; and where the old man, at the sight of the Southern Cross, warns them that it is time to separate!"—De Humboldt's Travels.

[304] "Rio verde! rio verde!" the popular Spanish romance, known to the English reader in Percy's translation:—

"Gentle river! gentle river!

Lo, thy streams are stain'd with gore;

Many a brave and noble captain

Floats along thy willow'd shore," etc.

[305] De Humboldt, in describing the burial of a young Asturian at sea, mentions the

entreaty of the officiating priest, that the body, which had been brought upon deck during the night, might not be committed to the waves until after sunrise, in order to pay it the last rites according to the usage of the Romish Church.

[306] “And there was no more sea.”—Revelation, xxi. 1.

[307] The bridges over many deep chasms amongst the Andes are pendulous, and formed only of the fibres of equinoctial plants. Their tremulous motion is thus alluded to in one of the stanzas of Gertrude of Wyoming:—

“Anon some wilder portraiture he draws,

Of nature’s savage glories he would speak;

The loneliness of earth, that overawes,

Where, resting by the tomb of old Cacique,

The lama-driver on Peruvia’s peak

Nor voice nor living motion marks around,

But storks that to the boundless forest shriek,

Or wild-cane arch, high flung o’er gulf profound,

That fluctuates when the storms of El Dorado sound.”

[308] Llanos, or savannahs, the great plains in South America.

[309] De Humboldt speaks of these rocks on the shores of the Oronoco. Travellers have heard from time to time subterraneous sounds proceed from them at sunrise, resembling those of an organ. He believes in the existence of this mysterious music, although not fortunate enough to have heard it himself; and thinks that it may be produced by currents of air issuing through the crevices.

[310] The same distinguished traveller frequently alludes to the extreme stillness of the air in the equatorial regions of the New World, and particularly on the thickly wooded shores of the Oronoco. “In this neighbourhood,” he says, “no breath of wind ever agitates the foliage.”

CRITICAL ANNOTATIONS ON “THE FOREST SANCTUARY.”

[“In the autumn of 1824 she began the poem which, in point of finish and consecutiveness, if not in popularity, may be considered her principal work, and which she herself inclined to look upon as her best. ‘I am at present,’ she wrote to one always interested in her literary occupations, ‘engaged upon a poem of some length, the idea of which was suggested to me by some passages in your friend Mr Blanco White’s delightful writings.[311] It relates to the sufferings of a Spanish Protestant, in the time of Philip the Second, and is supposed to be narrated by the sufferer himself, who escapes to America. I am very much interested in my subject, and hope to complete the poem in the course of the winter.’ The progress of this work was watched with great interest in her domestic circle, and its touching descriptions would often extract a tribute of tears from the fireside auditors. When completed, a family consultation was held as to its name. Various titles were proposed and rejected, till that of ‘The Forest Sanctuary’ was suggested by her brother, and finally decided upon. Though finished early in 1825, the poem was not published till the following year, when it was brought out in conjunction with the ‘Lays of Many Lands,’ and a collection of miscellaneous pieces.”—Memoir, p. 81.

“Mrs Hemans may be considered as the representative of a new school of poetry, or, to speak more precisely, her poetry discovers characteristics of the highest kind, which belong almost exclusively to that of latter times, and have been the result of the gradual advancement, and especially the moral progress of mankind. It is only when man, under the influence of true religion, feels himself connected with whatever is infinite, that his affections and powers are fully developed. The poetry of an immortal being must be of a different character from that of an earthly being. But, in recurring to the classic poets of antiquity, we find that in their conceptions the element of religious faith was wanting. Their mythology was to them no object of sober belief; and, had it been so, was adapted not to produce but to annihilate devotion. They had no thought of regarding the universe as created, animated, and

ruled by God's all-powerful and omniscient goodness."—Professor Norton in Christian Examiner.

"We will now say a few words of 'The Forest Sanctuary;' but it so abounds with beauty, is so highly finished, and animated by so generous a spirit of moral heroism, that we can do no justice to our views of it in the narrow space which our limits allow us. A Spanish Protestant flies from persecution at home to religious liberty in America. He has imbibed the spirit of our own fathers, and his mental struggles are described in verses, with which the descendants of the pilgrims must know how to sympathise. We dare not enter on an analysis. From one scene at sea, in the second part, we will make a few extracts. The exile is attended by his wife and child, but his wife remains true to the faith of her fathers.

"'Ora pro nobis, Mater!' what a spell

Was in those notes," etc.

"But we must cease making extracts, for we could not transfer all that is beautiful in the poem without transferring the whole."—North American Review, April 1827.

"Mrs Hemans considered this poem as almost, if not altogether, the best of her works. She would sometimes say, that in proportion to the praise which had been bestowed upon other of her less carefully meditated and shorter compositions, she thought it had hardly met with its fair share of success: for it was the first continuous effort in which she dared to write from the fulness of her own heart—to listen to the promptings of her genius freely and fearlessly. The subject was suggested by a passage in one of the letters of Don Leucadio Doblado, and was wrought upon by her with that eagerness and fervour which almost command corresponding results. I have heard Mrs Hemans say, that the greater part of this poem was written in no more picturesque a retreat than a laundry, to which, as being detached from the house, she resorted for undisturbed quiet and leisure. When she read it, while in progress, to her mother and sister, they were surprised to tears at the increased

power displayed in it. She was not prone to speak with self-contentment of her own works, but, perhaps, the one favourite descriptive passage was that picture of a sea-burial in the second canto,—

‘——She lay a thing for earth’s embrace,’ etc.

“The whole poem, whether in its scenes of superstition—the Auto da Fè, the dungeon, the flight, or in its delineation of the mental conflicts of its hero—or in its forest pictures of the free West, which offer such a delicious repose to the mind, is full of happy thoughts and turns of expression. Four lines of peculiar delicacy and beauty recur to me as I write, too strongly to be passed by. They are from a character of one of the martyr sisters.

‘And if she mingled with the festive train,

It was but as some melancholy star

Beholds the dance of shepherds on the plain,

In its bright stillness present, though afar.’

“But the entire episode of ‘Queen-like Teresa—radiant Inez,’ is wrought up with a nerve and an impulse which men of renown have failed to reach. The death of the latter, if, perhaps, it be a little too romantic for the stern realities of the scene, is so beautifully told, that it cannot be read without strong feeling, nor carelessly remembered. And most beautiful, too, are the sudden outbursts of thankfulness—of the quick happy consciousness of liberty with which the narrator of this ghastly sacrifice interrupts the tale, to reassure himself, ‘Sport on, my happy child! for thou art free.’ The character of the convert’s wife, Leonor, devotedly clinging to his fortunes, without a reproach or a murmur, while her heart trembles before him as though she were in the presence of a lost spirit, is one of those in which Mrs Hemans’ individual mode of thought and manner of expression are most happily impersonated. As a whole, she was hardly wrong in her own estimate of this poem; and, on recently turning to it, I have been surprised to find how well it bears the tests

and trials with which it is only either fit or rational to examine works of the highest order of mind."—Chorley's Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 126-7.

"If taste and elegance be titles to enduring fame, we might venture securely to promise that rich boon to the author before us, who adds to those great merits a tenderness and loftiness of feeling, and an ethereal purity of sentiment, which could only emanate from the soul of a woman. She must beware of becoming too voluminous, and must not venture again on any thing so long as 'The Forest Sanctuary.' But if the next generation inherits our taste for short poems, we are persuaded it will not readily allow her to be forgotten. For we do not hesitate to say that she is, beyond all comparison, the most touching and accomplished writer of occasional verses that our literature has yet to boast of."—Lord Jeffrey, in Edinburgh Review, October 1829.]

[311] "Letters from Spain by Don Leucadio Doblado."

LAYS OF MANY LANDS.

[The following pieces may so far be considered a series, as each is intended to be commemorative of some national recollection, popular custom, or tradition. The idea was suggested by Harder's "Stimmen der Völker in Liedern;" the execution is, however, different, as the poems in his collection are chiefly translations.]

MOORISH BRIDAL-SONG.

["It is a custom among the Moors, that a female who dies unmarried is clothed for interment in wedding apparel, and the bridal-song is sung over her remains before they are borne from her home."—Narrative of a Ten Years' Residence in Tripoli, by the Sister-in-law of Mr Tully.]

The citron-groves their fruit and flowers were strewing

Around a Moorish palace, while the sigh

Of low sweet summer winds the branches wooing
With music through their shadowy bowers went by;
Music and voices, from the marble halls
Through the leaves gleaming, and the fountain-falls.
A song of joy, a bridal-song came swelling
To blend with fragrance in those southern shades,
And told of feasts within the stately dwelling,
Bright lamps, and dancing steps, and gem-crown’d maids;
And thus it flow’d:—yet something in the lay
Belong’d to sadness, as it died away.
“The bride comes forth! her tears no more are falling
To leave the chamber of her infant years;
Kind voices from a distant home are calling;
She comes like day-spring—she hath done with tears;
Now must her dark eye shine on other flowers,
Her soft smile gladden other hearts than ours!—
Pour the rich odours round!
“We haste! the chosen and the lovely bringing;
Love still goes with her from her place of birth;
Deep, silent joy within her soul is springing,
Though in her glance the light no more is mirth!
Her beauty leaves us in its rosy years;
Her sisters weep—but she hath done with tears!—
Now may the timbrel sound!”

Know’st thou for whom they sang the bridal numbers?—

One, whose rich tresses were to wave no more!

One, whose pale cheek soft winds, nor gentle slumbers,

Nor Love’s own sigh, to rose-tints might restore!

Her graceful ringlets o’er a bier were spread.

Weep for the young, the beautiful,—the dead!

THE BIRD’S RELEASE.

[The Indians of Bengal and of the coast of Malabar bring cages filled with birds to the graves of their friends, over which they set the birds at liberty. This custom is alluded to in the description of Virginia’s funeral.—See Paul and Virginia.]

Go forth! for she is gone!

With the golden light of her wavy hair,

She is gone to the fields of the viewless air;

She hath left her dwelling lone!

Her voice hath pass’d away!

It hath pass’d away like a summer breeze,

When it leaves the hills for the far blue seas,

Where we may not trace its way.

Go forth, and like her be free!

With thy radiant wing, and thy glancing eye,

Thou hast all the range of the sunny sky,

And what is our grief to thee?

Is it aught e’en to her we mourn?

Doth she look on the tears by her kindred shed?

Doth she rest with the flowers o’er her gentle head,
Or float, on the light wind borne?
We know not—but she is gone!
Her step from the dance, her voice from the song,
And the smile of her eye from the festal throng;
She hath left her dwelling lone!
When the waves at sunset shine,
We may hear thy voice amidst thousands more,
In the scented woods of our glowing shore;
But we shall not know ’tis thine!
Even so with the loved one flown!
Her smile in the starlight may wander by,
Her breath may be near in the wind’s low sigh,
Around us—but all unknown.
Go forth! we have loosed thy chain!
We may deck thy cage with the richest flowers
Which the bright day rears in our Eastern bowers;
But thou wilt not be lured again.
Even thus may the summer pour
All fragrant things on the land’s green breast,
And the glorious earth like a bride be dress’d,
But it wins her back no more!

THE SWORD OF THE TOMB.

A NORTHERN LEGEND.

[The idea of this ballad is taken from a scene in Starkother, a tragedy by the Danish poet Ochlenschlager. The sepulchral fire here alluded to, and supposed to guard the ashes of deceased heroes, is frequently mentioned in the Northern Sagas. Severe sufferings to the departed spirit were supposed by the Scandinavian mythologists to be the consequence of any profanation of the sepulchre.—See Ochlenschlager's Plays.]

"Voice of the gifted elder time!

Voice of the charm and the Runic rhyme!

Speak! from the shades and the depths disclose

How Sigurd may vanquish his mortal foes;

Voice of the buried past!

Voice of the grave! 'tis the mighty hour

When night with her stars and dreams hath power,

And my step hath been soundless on the snows,

And the spell I have sung hath laid repose

On the billow and the blast."

Then the torrents of the North

And the forest pines were still,

While a hollow chant came forth

From the dark sepulchral hill.

"There shines no sun midst the hidden dead,

But where the day looks not the brave may tread;

There is heard no song, and no mead is pour'd,

But the warrior may come to the silent board

In the shadow of the night.

There is laid a sword in thy father’s tomb,
And its edge is fraught with thy foeman’s doom;
But soft be thy step through the silence deep,
And move not the urn in the house of sleep,
For the viewless have fearful might!”
Then died the solemn lay,
As a trumpet’s music dies,
By the night-wind borne away
Through the wild and stormy skies.
The fir-trees rock’d to the wailing blast,
As on through the forest the warrior pass’d—
Through the forest of Odin, the dim and old—
The dark place of visions and legends, told
By the fires of Northern pine.
The fir-trees rock’d, and the frozen ground
Gave back to his footstep a hollow sound;
And it seem’d that the depths of those awful shades,
From the dreary gloom of their long arcades,
Gave warning, with voice and sign.
But the wind strange magic knows,
To call wild shape and tone
From the gray wood’s tossing boughs,
When Night is on her throne.
The pines closed o’er him with deeper gloom,

As he took the path to the monarch’s tomb:
The Pole-star shone, and the heavens were bright
With the arrowy streams of the Northern light;
But his road through dimness lay!
He pass’d, in the heart of that ancient wood,
The dark shrine stain’d with the victim’s blood;
Nor paused till the rock, where a vaulted bed
Had been hewn of old for the kingly dead,
Arose on his midnight way.
Then first a moment’s chill
Went shuddering through his breast,
And the steel-clad man stood still
Before that place of rest.
But he cross’d at length, with a deep-drawn breath,
The threshold-floor of the hall of Death,
And look’d on the pale mysterious fire
Which gleam’d from the urn of his warrior-sire
With a strange and solemn light.
Then darkly the words of the boding strain
Like an omen rose on his soul again—
“Soft be thy step through the silence deep,
And move not the urn in the house of sleep;
For the viewless have fearful might!”
But the gleaming sword and shield

Of many a battle-day
Hung o’er that urn, reveal’d
By the tomb-fire’s waveless ray;
With a faded wreath of oak-leaves bound,
They hung o’er the dust of the far-renown’d,
Whom the bright Valkyriur’s warning voice
Had call’d to the banquet where gods rejoice,
And the rich mead flows in light.
With a beating heart his son drew near,
And still rang the verse in his thrilling ear—
“Soft be thy step through the silence deep,
And move not the urn in the house of sleep;
For the viewless have fearful might!”
And many a Saga’s rhyme,
And legend of the grave,
That shadowy scene and time
Call’d back, to daunt the brave.
But he raised his arm—and the flame grew dim,
And the sword in its light seem’d to wave and swim,
And his faltering hand could not grasp it well—
From the pale oak-wreath, with a clash it fell
Through the chamber of the dead!
The deep tomb rang with the heavy sound,
And the urn lay shiver’d in fragments round;

And a rush, as of tempests, quench’d the fire,
And the scatter’d dust of his warlike sire
Was strewn on the champion’s head.
One moment—and all was still
In the slumberer’s ancient hall,
When the rock had ceased to thrill
With the mighty weapon’s fall.
The stars were just fading one by one,
The clouds were just tinged by the early sun,
When there stream’d through the cavern a torch’s flame,
And the brother of Sigurd the valiant came
To seek him in the tomb.
Stretch’d on his shield, like the steel-girt slain,
By moonlight seen on the battle-plain,
In a speechless trance lay the warrior there;
But he wildly woke when the torch’s glare
Burst on him through the gloom.
“The morning wind blows free,
And the hour of chase is near:
Come forth, come forth with me!
What dost thou, Sigurd, here?”
“I have put out the holy sepulchral fire,
I have scatter’d the dust of my warrior-sire!
It burns on my head, and it weighs down my heart;

But the winds shall not wander without their part
To strew o’er the restless deep!
In the mantle of death he was here with me now—
There was wrath in his eye, there was gloom on his brow;
And his cold still glance on my spirit fell
With an icy ray and a withering spell—
Oh! chill is the house of sleep!”
“The morning wind blows free,
And the reddening sun shines clear;
Come forth, come forth with me!
It is dark and fearful here!”
“He is there, he is there, with his shadowy frown!
But gone from his head is the kingly crown—
The crown from his head, and the spear from his hand—
They have chased him far from the glorious land
Where the feast of the gods is spread!
He must go forth alone on his phantom steed,
He must ride o’er the grave-hills with stormy speed!
His place is no longer at Odin’s board,
He is driven from Valhalla without his sword;
But the slayer shall avenge the dead!”
That sword its fame had won
By the fall of many a crest;
But its fiercest work was done

In the tomb, on Sigurd’s breast!

VALKYRIUR SONG.

[The Valkyriur, or Fatal Sisters of Northern mythology, were supposed to single out the warriors who were to die in battle, and be received into the halls of Odin.

When a northern chief fell gloriously in war, his obsequies were honoured with all possible magnificence. His arms, gold and silver, war-horse, domestic attendants, and whatever else he held most dear, were placed with him on the pile. His dependants and friends frequently made it a point of honour to die with their leader, in order to attend on his shade in Valhalla, or the Palace of Odin. And, lastly, his wife was generally consumed with him on the same pile.—See Mallet’s Northern Antiquities, Herbert’s Helga, &c.]

“Tremblingly flash’d th’ inconstant meteor-light,

Showing thin forms like virgins of this earth;

Save that all signs of human joy or grief,

The flush of passion, smile, or tear, had seem’d

On the fix’d brightness of each dazzling cheek

Strange and unnatural.” Milman.

The Sea-king woke from the troubled sleep

Of a vision-haunted night,

And he look’d from his bark o’er the gloomy deep,

And counted the streaks of light;

For the red sun’s earliest ray

Was to rouse his bands that day

To the stormy joy of fight!

But the dreams of rest were still on earth,

And the silent stars on high,
And there waved not the smoke of one cabin hearth
Midst the quiet of the sky;
And along the twilight bay,
In their sleep the hamlets lay,
For they knew not the Norse were nigh!
The Sea-king look’d o’er the brooding wave,
He turn’d to the dusky shore,
And there seem’d, through the arch of a tide-worn cave,
A gleam, as of snow, to pour;
And forth, in watery light,
Moved phantoms, dimly white,
Which the garb of woman bore.
Slowly they moved to the billow-side;
And the forms, as they grew more clear,
Seem’d each on a tall pale steed to ride,
And a shadowy crest to rear,
And to beckon with faint hand
From the dark and rocky strand,
And to point a gleaming spear.
Then a stillness on his spirit fell,
Before th’ unearthly train,
For he knew Valhalla’s daughters well—
The Choosers of the slain!

And a sudden rising breeze
Bore, across the moaning seas,
To his ear their thrilling strain.
“There are songs in Odin’s Hall
For the brave ere night to fall!
Doth the great sun hide his ray?
He must bring a wrathful day!
Sleeps the falchion in its sheath?
Swords must do the work of death!
Regner!—Sea-king!—thee we call!—
There is joy in Odin’s Hall.
“At the feast, and in the song,
Thou shalt be remember’d long!
By the green isles of the flood,
Thou hast left thy track in blood!
On the earth and on the sea,
There are those will speak of thee!
’Tis enough,—the war-gods call,—
There is mead in Odin’s Hall!
“Regner! tell thy fair-hair’d bride
She must slumber at thy side!
Tell the brother of thy breast
Even for him thy grave hath rest!
Tell the raven steed which bore thee,

When the wild wolf fled before thee,
He too with his lord must fall,—
There is room in Odin’s Hall!
“Lo! the mighty sun looks forth—
Arm! thou leader of the North!
Lo! the mists of twilight fly—
We must vanish, thou must die!
By the sword and by the spear,
By the hand that knows no fear,
Sea-king! nobly thou shalt fall!—
There is joy in Odin’s Hall!”
There was arming heard on land and wave,
When afar the sunlight spread,
And the phantom-forms of the tide-worn cave
With the mists of morning fled;
But at eve, the kingly hand
Of the battle-axe and brand
Lay cold on a pile of dead!

THE CAVERN OF THE THREE TELLS.

A SWISS TRADITION.

[The three founders of the Helvetic Confederacy are thought to sleep in a cavern near the Lake of Lucerne. The herdsmen call them the Three Tells; and say that they lie there in their antique garb, in quiet slumber; and when Switzerland is in her utmost need, they will awaken and regain the liberties of the land.—See Quarterly

Review, No. 44.

The Grütli, where the confederates held their nightly meetings, is a meadow on the shore of the Lake of Lucerne, or Lake of the Forest Cantons, here called the Forest-Sea.]

Oh! enter not yon shadowy cave,

Seek not the bright spars there,

Though the whispering pines that o’er it wave

With freshness fill the air:

For there the Patriot Three,

In the garb of old array’d,

By their native Forest-Sea

On a rocky couch are laid.

The Patriot Three that met of yore

Beneath the midnight sky,

And leagued their hearts on the Grütli shore

In the name of liberty!

Now silently they sleep

Amidst the hills they freed;

But their rest is only deep

Till their country’s hour of need.

They start not at the hunter’s call,

Nor the Lammer-geyer’s cry,

Nor the rush of a sudden torrent’s fall,

Nor the Lauwine thundering by;

And the Alpine herdsman’s lay,
To a Switzer’s heart so dear!
On the wild wind floats away,
No more for them to hear.
But when the battle-horn is blown
Till the Schreckhorn’s peaks reply,
When the Jungfrau’s cliffs send back the tone
Through their eagles’ lonely sky;
When the spear-heads light the lakes,
When trumpets loose the snows,
When the rushing war-steed shakes
The glacier’s mute repose;
When Uri’s beechen woods wave red
In the burning hamlet’s light—
Then from the cavern of the dead
Shall the sleepers wake in might!
With a leap, like Tell’s proud leap
When away the helm he flung,
And boldly up the steep
From the flashing billow sprung![312]
They shall wake beside their Forest-Sea,
In the ancient garb they wore
When they link’d the hands that made us free,
On the Grütli’s moonlight shore;

And their voices shall be heard,

And be answer’d with a shout,

Till the echoing Alps are stirr’d,

And the signal-fires blaze out.

And the land shall see such deeds again

As those of that proud day

When Winkelried, on Sempach’s plain,

Through the serried spears made way;

And when the rocks came down

On the dark Morgarten dell,

And the crownèd casques,[313] o’erthrown,

Before our fathers fell!

For the Kühreihen’s[314] notes must never sound

In a land that wears the chain,

And the vines on freedom’s holy ground

Untrampled must remain;

And the yellow harvests wave

For no stranger’s hand to reap,

While within their silent cave

The men of Grütli sleep!

[312] The point of rock on which Tell leaped from the boat of Gessler is marked by a chapel, and called the Tellensprung.

[313] Crowned Helmets, as a distinction of rank, are mentioned in Simond’s Switzerland.

[314] The Kühreihen—the celebrated Ranz des Vaches.

SWISS SONG,

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF AN ANCIENT BATTLE.

[The Swiss, even to our days, have continued to celebrate the anniversaries of their ancient battles with much solemnity; assembling in the open air on the fields where their ancestors fought, to hear thanksgivings offered up by the priests, and the names of all who shared in the glory of the day enumerated. They afterwards walk in procession to chapels, always erected in the vicinity of such scenes, where masses are sung for the souls of the departed.—See Planta's History of the Helvetic Confederacy.]

Look on the white Alps round!
If yet they gird a land
Where Freedom's voice and step are found,
Forget ye not the band,—
The faithful band, our sires, who fell
Here in the narrow battle-dell!
If yet, the wilds among,
Our silent hearts may burn,
When the deep mountain-horn hath rung,
And home our steps may turn,—
Home!—home!—if still that name be dear,
Praise to the men who perish'd here!
Look on the white Alps round!
Up to their shining snows

That day the stormy rolling sound,
The sound of battle, rose!
Their caves prolong'd the trumpet's blast,
Their dark pines trembled as it pass'd!
They saw the princely crest,
They saw the knightly spear,
The banner and the mail-clad breast,
Borne down and trampled here!
They saw—and glorying there they stand,
Eternal records to the land!
Praise to the mountain-born,
The brethren of the glen!
By them no steel array was worn,
They stood as peasant-men!
They left the vineyard and the field,
To break an empire's lance and shield!
Look on the white Alps round!
If yet, along their steeps,
Our children's fearless feet may bound,
Free as the chamois leaps:
Teach them in song to bless the band
Amidst whose mossy graves we stand!
If, by the wood-fire's blaze,
When winter stars gleam cold,

The glorious tales of elder days
May proudly yet be told,
Forget not then the shepherd race.
Who made the hearth a holy place!
Look on the white Alps round!
If yet the Sabbath-bell
Comes o'er them with a gladdening sound,
Think on the battle-dell!
For blood first bathed its flowery sod,
That chainless hearts might worship God!

THE MESSENGER BIRD.

[Some of the native Brazilians pay great veneration to a certain bird that sings mournfully in the night-time. They say it is a messenger which their deceased friends and relations have sent, and that it brings them news from the other world.—See Picart's Ceremonies and Religious Customs.]

Thou art come from the spirits' land, thou bird!
Thou art come from the spirits' land:
Through the dark pine grove let thy voice be heard,
And tell of the shadowy band!
We know that the bowers are green and fair
In the light of that summer shore;
And we know that the friends we have lost are there,
They are there—and they weep no more!
And we know they have quench'd their fever's thirst

From the fountain of youth ere now,[315]
For there must the stream in its freshness burst
Which none may find below!
And we know that they will not be lured to earth
From the land of deathless flowers,
By the feast, or the dance, or the song of mirth,
Though their hearts were once with ours:
Though they sat with us by the night-fire's blaze,
And bent with us the bow,
And heard the tales of our fathers' days,
Which are told to others now!
But tell us, thou bird of the solemn strain!
Can those who have loved forget?
We call—and they answer not again:
Do they love—do they love us yet?
Doth the warrior think of his brother there,
And the father of his child?
And the chief of those that were wont to share
His wandering through the wild?
We call them far through the silent night,
And they speak not from cave or hill;
We know, thou bird! that their land is bright,
But say, do they love there still?[316]

[315] An expedition was actually undertaken by Juan Ponce de Leon, in the 16th

century, with a view of discovering a wonderful fountain, believed by the natives of Puerto Rico to spring in one of the Lucayo Isles, and to possess the virtue of restoring youth to all who bathed in its waters.—See Robertson's History of America.

[316] ANSWER TO "THE MESSENGER BIRD."

BY AN AMERICAN QUAKER LADY.

Yes! I came from the spirits' land,
From the land that is bright and fair;
I came with a voice from the shadowy band,
To tell that they love you there.
To say, if a wish or a vain regret
Could live in Elysian bowers,
'Twould be for the friends they can ne'er forget,
The beloved of their youthful hours.
To whisper the dear deserted band,
Who smiled on their tarriance here,
That a faithful guard in the dreamless land
Are the friends they have loved so dear.
'Tis true, in the silent night you call,
And they answer you not again;
But the spirits of bliss are voiceless all—
Sound only was made for pain.
That their land is bright and they weep no more,
I have warbled from hill to hill;

But my plaintive strain should have told before,

That they love, oh! they love you still.

They bid me say that unfading flowers

You'll find in the path they trode;

And a welcome true to their deathless bowers,

Pronounced by the voice of God. 1827.

THE STRANGER IN LOUISIANA.

[An early traveller mentions people on the banks of the Mississippi who burst into tears at the sight of a stranger. The reason of this is, that they fancy their deceased friends and relations to be only gone on a journey, and, being in constant expectation of their return, look for them vainly amongst these foreign travellers.—Picart's Ceremonies and Religious Customs.

"J'ai passé moi-même," says Chateaubriand in his Souvenirs d'Amérique, "chez une peuplade Indienne qui se prenait à pleurer à la vue d'un voyageur, parce qu'il lui rappelait des amis partis pour la Contrée des Ames, et depuis long-tems en voyage."]

We saw thee, O stranger! and wept.

We look'd for the youth of the sunny glance

Whose step was the fleetest in chase or dance;

The light of his eye was a joy to see,

The path of his arrows a storm to flee.

But there came a voice from a distant shore—

He was call'd—he is found midst his tribe no more

He is not in his place when the night-fires burn,

But we look for him still—he will yet return!

His brother sat with a drooping brow
In the gloom of the shadowing cypress bough:
We roused him—we bade him no longer pine,
For we heard a step—but the step was thine!
We saw thee, O stranger! and wept.
We look'd for the maid of the mournful song—
Mournful, though sweet,—she hath left us long:
We told her the youth of her love was gone,
And she went forth to seek him—she pass'd alone.
We hear not her voice when the woods are still,
From the bower where it sang, like a silvery rill.
The joy of her sire with her smile is fled,
The winter is white on his lonely head:
He hath none by his side when the wilds we track,
He hath none when we rest—yet she comes not back!
We look'd for her eye on the feast to shine,
For her breezy step—but the step was thine!
We saw thee, O stranger! and wept.
We look'd for the chief, who hath left the spear
And the bow of his battles forgotten here:
We look'd for the hunter, whose bride's lament
On the wind of the forest at eve is sent:
We look'd for the first-born, whose mother's cry
Sounds wild and shrill through the midnight sky!—

Where are they? Thou’rt seeking some distant coast:

Oh ask of them, stranger!—send back the lost!

Tell them we mourn by the dark-blue streams,

Tell them our lives but of them are dreams!

Tell, how we sat in the gloom to pine,

And to watch for a step—but the step was thine!

THE ISLE OF FOUNTS;

AN INDIAN TRADITION.

[“The river St Mary has its source from a vast lake or marsh, which lies between Flint and Oakmulge rivers, and occupies a space of near three hundred miles in circuit. This vast accumulation of waters, in the wet season, appears as a lake, and contains some large islands or knolls of rich high land; one of which the present generation of the Creek Indians represent to be a most blissful spot of earth. They say it is inhabited by a peculiar race of Indians, whose women are incomparably beautiful. They also tell you that this terrestrial paradise has been seen by some of their enterprising hunters, when in pursuit of game; but that in their endeavours to approach it, they were involved in perpetual labyrinths, and, like enchanted land, still as they imagined they had just gained it, it seemed to fly before them, alternately appearing and disappearing. They resolved, at length, to leave the delusive pursuit, and to return; which, after a number of difficulties, they effected. When they reported their adventures to their countrymen, the young warriors were inflamed with an irresistible desire to invade and make a conquest of so charming a country; but all their attempts have hitherto proved abortive, never having been able again to find that enchanting spot.”—Bertram’s Travels through North and South Carolina, &c.

The additional circumstances in the “Isle of Founts” are merely imaginary.]

Son of the stranger! wouldst thou take
O’er yon blue hills thy lonely way,
To reach the still and shining lake
Along whose banks the west winds play?
Let no vain dreams thy heart beguile—
Oh! seek thou not the Fountain Isle!
Lull but the mighty serpent-king,[317]
Midst the gray rocks, his old domain;
Ward but the cougar’s deadly spring,—
Thy step that lake’s green shore may gain;
And the bright Isle, when all is pass’d,
Shall vainly meet thine eye at last!
Yes! there, with all its rainbow streams,
Clear as within thine arrow’s flight,
The Isle of Founts, the isle of dreams,
Floats on the wave in golden light;
And lovely will the shadows be
Of groves whose fruit is not for thee!
And breathings from their sunny flowers,
Which are not of the things that die,
And singing voices from their bowers,
Shall greet thee in the purple sky;
Soft voices, e’en like those that dwell
Far in the green reed’s hollow cell.

Or hast thou heard the sounds that rise
From the deep chambers of the earth?
The wild and wondrous melodies
To which the ancient rocks gave birth?[318]
Like that sweet song of hidden caves
Shall swell those wood-notes o’er the waves.
The emerald waves!—they take their hue
And image from that sun-bright shore;
But wouldst thou launch thy light canoe,
And wouldst thou ply thy rapid oar,—
Before thee, hadst thou morning’s speed,
The dreamy land should still recede!
Yet on the breeze thou still wouldst hear
The music of its flowering shades,
And ever should the sound be near
Of founts that ripple through its glades;
The sound, and sight, and flashing ray
Of joyous waters in their play!
But woe for him who sees them burst
With their bright spray-showers to the lake!
Earth has no spring to quench the thirst
That semblance in his soul shall wake,
For ever pouring through his dreams
The gush of those untasted streams!

Bright, bright in many a rocky urn,
The waters of our deserts lie,
Yet at their source his lip shall burn,
Parch’d with the fever’s agony!
From the blue mountains to the main,
Our thousand floods may roll in vain.
E’en thus our hunters came of yore
Back from their long and weary quest;—
Had they not seen th’ untrodden shore?
And could they midst our wilds find rest?
The lightning of their glance was fled,
They dwelt amongst us as the dead!
They lay beside our glittering rills
With visions in their darken’d eye;
Their joy was not amidst the hills
Where elk and deer before us fly:
Their spears upon the cedar hung,
Their javelins to the wind were flung.
They bent no more the forest bow,
They arm’d not with the warrior band,
The moons waned o’er them dim and slow—
They left us for the spirits’ land!
Beneath our pines yon greensward heap
Shows where the restless found their sleep.

Son of the stranger! if at eve

Silence be midst us in thy place,

Yet go not where the mighty leave

The strength of battle and of chase!

Let no vain dreams thy heart beguile—

Oh! seek thou not the Fountain Isle!

[317] The Cherokees believe that the recesses of their mountains, overgrown with lofty pines and cedars, and covered with old mossy rocks, are inhabited by the kings or chiefs of rattlesnakes, whom they denominate the “bright old inhabitants.” They represent them as snakes of an enormous size, and which possess the power of drawing to them every living creature that comes within the reach of their eyes. Their heads are said to be crowned with a carbuncle of dazzling brightness.—See Notes to Leyden’s Scenes of Infancy.

[318] The stones on the banks of the Oronoco, called by the South American missionaries Laxas de Musica, and alluded to in a former note.

THE BENDED BOW.

[It is supposed that war was anciently proclaimed in Britain by sending messengers in different directions through the land, each bearing a bended bow; and that peace was in like manner announced by a bow unstrung, and therefore straight.—See the Cambrian Antiquities.]

There was heard the sound of a coming foe,

There was sent through Britain a bended bow;

And a voice was pour’d on the free winds far,

As the land rose up at the sign of war.

“Heard you not the battle-horn?—

Reaper! leave thy golden corn:
Leave it for the birds of heaven—
Swords must flash and spears be riven!
Leave it for the winds to shed—
Arm! ere Britain’s turf grow red.”
And the reaper arm’d, like a freeman’s son;
And the bended bow and the voice pass’d on.
“Hunter! leave the mountain-chase,
Take the falchion from its place;
Let the wolf go free to-day,
Leave him for a nobler prey;
Let the deer ungall’d sweep by—
Arm thee! Britain’s foes are nigh.”
And the hunter arm’d ere the chase was done;
And the bended bow and the voice pass’d on.
“Chieftain! quit the joyous feast—
Stay not till the song hath ceased:
Though the mead be foaming bright,
Though the fires give ruddy light,
Leave the hearth, and leave the hall—
Arm thee! Britain’s foes must fall.”
And the chieftain arm’d, and the horn was blown;
And the bended bow and the voice pass’d on.
“Prince! thy father’s deeds are told

In the bower and in the hold,

Where the goatherd’s lay is sung,

Where the minstrel’s harp is strung!

Foes are on thy native sea—

Give our bards a tale of thee!”

And the prince came arm’d, like a leader’s son;

And the bended bow and the voice pass’d on.

“Mother! stay thou not thy boy,

He must learn the battle’s joy:

Sister! bring the sword and spear,

Give thy brother words of cheer:

Maiden! bid thy lover part:

Britain calls the strong in heart!”

And the bended bow and the voice pass’d on;

And the bards made song for a battle won.

HE NEVER SMILED AGAIN.

[It is recorded of Henry the First, that after the death of his son, Prince William, who perished in a shipwreck off the coast of Normandy, he was never seen to smile.]

The bark that held a prince went down,

The sweeping waves roll’d on;

And what was England’s glorious crown

To him that wept a son?

He lived—for life may long be borne

Ere sorrow break its chain;

Why comes not death to those who mourn?

He never smiled again!

There stood proud forms around his throne,

The stately and the brave;

But which could fill the place of one,

That one beneath the wave?

Before him pass’d the young and fair,

In pleasure’s reckless train;

But seas dash’d o’er his son’s bright hair—

He never smiled again!

He sat where festal bowls went round,

He heard the minstrel sing,

He saw the tourney’s victor crown’d

Amidst the knightly ring:

A murmur of the restless deep

Was blent with every strain,

A voice of winds that would not sleep—

He never smiled again!

Hearts, in that time, closed o’er the trace

Of vows once fondly pour’d,

And strangers took the kinsman’s place

At many a joyous board;

Graves, which true love had bathed with tears,

Were left to heaven’s bright rain,

Fresh hopes were born for other years—

He never smiled again!

CŒUR-DE-LION AT THE BIER OF HIS FATHER.

[The body of Henry the Second lay in state in the abbey-church of Fontevraud, where it was visited by Richard Cœur-de-Lion, who, on beholding it, was struck with horror and remorse, and bitterly reproached himself for that rebellious conduct which had been the means of bringing his father to an untimely grave.]

Torches were blazing clear,

Hymns pealing deep and slow,

Where a king lay stately on his bier

In the church of Fontevraud.

Banners of battle o’er him hung,

And warriors slept beneath;

And light, as noon’s broad light, was flung

On the settled face of death.

On the settled face of death

A strong and ruddy glare,

Though dimm’d at times by the censer’s breath,

Yet it fell still brightest there:

As if each deeply furrow’d trace

Of earthly years to show.

Alas! that sceptred mortal’s race

Had surely closed in woe!

The marble floor was swept

By many a long dark stole,
As the kneeling priests round him that slept
Sang mass for the parted soul:
And solemn were the strains they pour’d
Through the stillness of the night,
With the cross above, and the crown and sword,
And the silent king in sight.
There was heard a heavy clang,
As of steel-girt men the tread,
And the tombs and the hollow pavement rang
With a sounding thrill of dread;
And the holy chant was hush’d awhile,
As, by the torch’s flame,
A gleam of arms up the sweeping aisle
With a mail-clad leader came.
He came with haughty look,
An eagle-glance and clear;
But his proud heart through its breastplate shook,
When he stood beside the bier!
He stood there still with a drooping brow,
And clasp’d hands o’er it raised;
For his father lay before him low—
It was Cœur-de-Lion gazed!
And silently he strove

With the workings of his breast;
But there’s more in late repentant love
Than steel may keep suppress’d!
And his tears brake forth, at last, like rain,—
Men held their breath in awe;
For his face was seen by his warrior train,
And he reck’d not that they saw.
He look’d upon the dead—
And sorrow seem’d to lie,
A weight of sorrow, even like lead,
Pale on the fast-shut eye.
He stoop’d—and kiss’d the frozen cheek,
And the heavy hand of clay;
Till bursting words—yet all too weak—
Gave his soul’s passion way.
“O father! is it vain,
This late remorse and deep?
Speak to me, father! once again:
I weep—behold, I weep!
Alas! my guilty pride and ire!—
Were but this work undone,
I would give England’s crown, my sire!
To hear thee bless thy son.
“Speak to me! Mighty grief

Ere now the dust hath stirr’d!

Hear me, but hear me!—father, chief,

My king! I must be heard!

Hush’d, hush’d—how is it that I call,

And that thou answerest not?

When was it thus?——Woe, woe for all

The love my soul forgot!

“Thy silver hairs I see,

So still, so sadly bright!

And father, father! but for me,

They had not been so white!

I bore thee down, high heart! at last:

No longer couldst thou strive.

Oh! for one moment of the past,

To kneel and say—‘forgive!’

“Thou wert the noblest king

On royal throne e’er seen;

And thou didst wear in knightly ring,

Of all, the stateliest mien;

And thou didst prove, where spears are proved,

In war, the bravest heart:

Oh! ever the renown’d and loved

Thou wert—and there thou art!

“Thou that my boyhood’s guide

Didst take fond joy to be!—

The times I've sported at thy side,

And climb'd thy parent knee!

And there before the blessed shrine,

My sire! I see thee lie,—

How will that sad still face of thine

Look on me till I die!"

THE VASSAL'S LAMENT FOR THE FALLEN TREE.

["Here (at Brereton in Cheshire) is one thing incredibly strange, but attested, as I myself have heard, by many persons, and commonly believed. Before any heir of this family dies, there are seen, in a lake adjoining, the bodies of trees swimming on the water for several days."—Camden's Britannia.]

Yes! I have seen the ancient oak

On the dark deep water cast,

And it was not fell'd by the woodman's stroke,

Or the rush of the sweeping blast;

For the axe might never touch that tree,

And the air was still as a summer sea.

I saw it fall, as falls a chief

By an arrow in the fight,

And the old woods shook, to their loftiest leaf,

At the crashing of its might;

And the startled deer to their coverts drew,

And the spray of the lake as a fountain's flew!

’Tis fallen! But think thou not I weep
For the forest’s pride o’erthrown—
An old man’s tears lie far too deep
To be pour’d for this alone;
But by that sign too well I know
That a youthful head must soon be low!
A youthful head, with its shining hair,
And its bright quick-flashing eye;
Well may I weep! for the boy is fair,
Too fair a thing to die!
But on his brow the mark is set—
Oh! could my life redeem him yet!
He bounded by me as I gazed
Alone on the fatal sign,
And it seem’d like sunshine when he raised
His joyous glance to mine.
With a stag’s fleet step he bounded by,
So full of life—but he must die!
He must, he must! in that deep dell,
By that dark water’s side,
’Tis known that ne’er a proud tree fell
But an heir of his fathers died.
And he—there’s laughter in his eye,
Joy in his voice—yet he must die!

I’ve borne him in these arms, that now
Are nerveless and unstrung;
And must I see, on that fair brow,
The dust untimely flung?
I must!—yon green oak, branch and crest,
Lies floating on the dark lake’s breast!
The noble boy!—how proudly sprung
The falcon from his hand!
It seem’d like youth to see him young,
A flower in his father’s land!
But the hour of the knell and the dirge is nigh,
For the tree hath fallen, and the flower must die.
Say not ’tis vain! I tell thee, some
Are warn’d by a meteor’s light,
Or a pale bird, flitting, calls them home,
Or a voice on the winds by night;
And they must go! And he too, he!—
Woe for the fall of the glorious Tree!

THE WILD HUNTSMAN.

[It is a popular belief in the Odenwald, that the passing of the Wild Huntsman announces the approach of war. He is supposed to issue with his train from the ruined castle of Rodenstein, and traverse the air to the opposite castle of Schnellerts. It is confidently asserted, that the sound of his phantom horses and hounds was heard by the Duke of Baden before the commencement of the last war in Germany.]

Thy rest was deep at the slumberer’s hour,
If thou didst not hear the blast
Of the savage horn from the mountain-tower,
As the Wild Night-Huntsman pass’d,
And the roar of the stormy chase went by
Through the dark unquiet sky!
The stag sprang up from his mossy bed
When he caught the piercing sounds,
And the oak-boughs crash’d to his antler’d head,
As he flew from the viewless hounds;
And the falcon soar’d from her craggy height,
Away through the rushing night!
The banner shook on its ancient hold,
And the pine in its desert place,
As the cloud and tempest onward roll’d
With the din of the trampling race;
And the glens were fill’d with the laugh and shout,
And the bugle, ringing out!
From the chieftain’s hand the wine-cup fell,
At the castle’s festive board,
And a sudden pause came o’er the swell
Of the harp’s triumphal chord;
And the Minnesinger’s[319] thrilling lay
In the hall died fast away.

The convent’s chanted rite was stay’d,
And the hermit dropp’d his beads,
And a trembling ran through the forest-shade,
At the neigh of the phantom steeds,
And the church-bells peal’d to the rocking blast
As the Wild Night-Huntsman pass’d.

The storm hath swept with the chase away,
There is stillness in the sky;
But the mother looks on her son to-day
With a troubled heart and eye,
And the maiden’s brow hath a shade of care
Midst the gleam of her golden hair!

The Rhine flows bright; but its waves ere long
Must hear a voice of war,
And a clash of spears our hills among,
And a trumpet from afar;
And the brave on a bloody turf must lie—
For the Huntsman hath gone by!

[319] Minnesinger, love-singer—the wandering minstrels of Germany were so called in the middle ages.

BRANDENBURG HARVEST-SONG.[320]

FROM THE GERMAN OF LA MOTTE FOUQUE.

The corn in golden light
Waves o’er the plain;

The sickle’s gleam is bright;

Full swells the grain.

Now send we far around

Our harvest lay!—

Alas! a heavier sound

Comes o’er the day!

Earth shrouds with burial sod

Her soft eyes blue,—

Now o’er the gifts of God

Fall tears like dew!

On every breeze a knell

The hamlets pour:

We know its cause too well—

She is no more!

[320] For the year of the Queen of Prussia’s death.

THE SHADE OF THESEUS.

AN ANCIENT GREEK TRADITION.

Know ye not when our dead

From sleep to battle sprung?—

When the Persian charger’s tread

On their covering greensward rung;

When the trampling march of foes

Had crush’d our vines and flowers,

When jewel’d crests arose

Through the holy laurel bowers;
When banners caught the breeze,
When helms in sunlight shone,
When masts were on the seas,
And spears on Marathon.
There was one, a leader crown’d,
And arm’d for Greece that day;
But the falchions made no sound
On his gleaming war-array.
In the battle’s front he stood,
With his tall and shadowy crest;
But the arrows drew no blood,
Though their path was through his breast.
When banners caught the breeze,
When helms in sunlight shone,
When masts were on the seas,
And spears on Marathon.
His sword was seen to flash
Where the boldest deeds were done;
But it smote without a clash—
The stroke was heard by none!
His voice was not of those
That swell’d the rolling blast,
And his steps fell hush’d like snows—

’Twas the Shade of Theseus pass’d!
When banners caught the breeze,
When helms in sunlight shone,
When masts were on the seas,
And spears on Marathon.
Far sweeping through the foe,
With a fiery charge he bore;
And the Mede left many a bow
On the sounding ocean-shore.
And the foaming waves grew red,
And the sails were crowded fast,
When the sons of Asia fled,
As the Shade of Theseus pass’d!
When banners caught the breeze,
When helms in sunlight shone,
When masts were on the seas,
And spears on Marathon.

ANCIENT GREEK SONG OF EXILE.

Where is the summer with her golden sun?—
That festal glory hath not pass’d from earth:
For me alone the laughing day is done!
Where is the summer with her voice of mirth?
—Far in my own bright land?
Where are the Fauns, whose flute-notes breathe and die

On the green hills?—the founts, from sparry caves
Through the wild places bearing melody?—
The reeds, low whispering o’er the river waves?
—Far in my own bright land!
Where are the temples, through the dim wood shining,
The virgin dances, and the choral strains?
Where the sweet sisters of my youth, entwining
The spring’s first roses for their sylvan fanes?
—Far in my own bright land!
Where are the vineyards, with their joyous throngs,
The red grapes pressing when the foliage fades?
The lyres, the wreaths, the lovely Dorian songs,
And the pine forests, and the olive shades?
—Far in my own bright land!
Where the deep haunted grots, the laurel bowers,
The Dryad’s footsteps, and the minstrel’s dreams?—
Oh, that my life were as a southern flower’s!—
I might not languish then by these chill streams,
Far from my own bright land!

GREEK FUNERAL CHANT, OR MYRIOLOGUE.

[“Les Chants Funèbres par lesquels on déplore en Grèce la mort de ses proches, prennent le nom particulier de Myriologia—comme qui dirait, Discours de lamentation, complaintes. Un malade vient-il de rendre le dernier soupir, sa femme, sa mère, ses filles, ses sœurs, celles, en un mot, de ses plus proches parentes qui sont

là, lui ferment les yeux et la bouche, en épanchant librement, chacune selon son naturel et sa mesure de tendresse pour le défunt, la douleur qu'elle ressent de sa perte. Ce premier devoir rempli, elles se retirent toutes chez une de leurs parentes ou de leurs amies. Là elles changent de vêtemens, s'habillent de blanc, comme pour la cérémonie nuptiale, avec cette différence, qu'elles gardent la tête nue, les cheveux épars et pendants. Ces apprêts terminés, les parentes reviennent dans leur parure de deuil; toutes se rangent en cercle autour du mort, et leur douleur s'exhale de nouveau, et comme la première fois, sans règle et sans contrainte. A ces plaintes spontanées succèdent bientôt des lamentations d'une autre espèce: ce sont les Myriologues. Ordinairement c'est la plus proche parente qui prononce le sien la première; après elle les autres parentes, les amies, les simples voisines. Les Myriologues sont toujours composés et chantés par les femmes. Ils sont toujours improvisés, toujours en vers, et toujours chantés sur un air qui diffère d'un lieu à un autre, mais qui, dans un lieu donné, reste invariablement consacré à ce genre de poésie."—Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne, par C. Fauriel.]

A wail was heard around the bed, the deathbed of the young—

Amidst her tears the Funeral Chant a mournful mother sung:—

"Ianthis! dost thou sleep? Thou sleep'st—but this is not the rest,

The breathing and the rosy calm, I have pillow'd on my breast:

I lull'd thee not to this repose, Ianthis! my sweet son!

As, in thy glowing childhood's time, by twilight I have done.

How is it that I bear to stand and look upon thee now?

And that I die not, seeking death on thy pale glorious brow?

"I look upon thee, thou that wert of all most fair and brave!

I see thee wearing still too much of beauty for the grave.

Though mournfully thy smile is fix'd, and heavily thine eye

Hath shut above the falcon-glance that in it loved to lie;
And fast is bound the springing step, that seem'd on breezes borne,
When to thy couch I came and said,—'Wake, hunter, wake! 'tis morn!'
Yet art thou lovely still, my flower! untouch'd by slow decay,—
And I, the wither'd stem, remain. I would that grief might slay!
"Oh! ever, when I met thy look, I knew that this would be!
I knew too well that length of days was not a gift for thee!
I saw it in thy kindling cheek, and in thy bearing high;—
A voice came whispering to my soul, and told me thou must die!
That thou must die, my fearless one! where swords were flashing red.—
Why doth a mother live to say—My first-born and my dead!
They tell me of thy youthful fame, they talk of victory won:
Speak thou, and I will hear, my child! Ianthis! my sweet son!"
A wail was heard around the bed, the deathbed of the young—
A fair-hair'd bride the Funeral Chant amidst her weeping sung:—
"Ianthis! look'st thou not on me? Can love indeed be fled?
When was it woe before to gaze upon thy stately head?
I would that I had follow'd thee, Ianthis, my beloved!
And stood as woman oft hath stood where faithful hearts are proved;
That I had bound a breastplate on, and battled at thy side!—
It would have been a blessed thing together had we died!
"But where was I when thou didst fall beneath the fatal sword?
Was I beside the sparkling fount, or at the peaceful board?
Or singing some sweet song of old, in the shadow of the vine,

Or praying to the saints for thee, before the holy shrine?
And thou wert lying low the while, the life-drops from thy heart
Fast gushing, like a mountain-spring! And couldst thou thus depart?
Couldst thou depart, nor on my lips pour out thy fleeting breath?—
Oh! I was with thee but in joy, that should have been in death!
"Yes! I was with thee when the dance through mazy rings was led,
And when the lyre and voice were tuned, and when the feast was spread;
But not where noble blood flow'd forth, where sounding javelins flew—
Why did I hear love's first sweet words, and not its last adieu?
What now can breathe of gladness more,—what scene, what hour, what tone?
The blue skies fade with all their lights; they fade, since thou art gone!
Even that must leave me, that still face, by all my tears unmoved:
Take me from this dark world with thee, Ianthis! my beloved!"
A wail was heard around the bed, the deathbed of the young—
Amidst her tears the Funeral Chant a mournful sister sung:—
"Ianthis! brother of my soul!—oh! where are now the days
That laugh'd among the deep-green hills, on all our infant plays?
When we two sported by the streams, or track'd them to their source,
And like a stag's, the rocks along, was thy fleet, fearless course!—
I see the pines there waving yet, I see the rills descend,
But see thy bounding step no more—my brother and my friend!
"I come with flowers—for spring is come! Ianthis! art thou here?
I bring the garlands she hath brought, I cast them on thy bier.
Thou shouldst be crown'd with victory's crown—but oh! more meet they seem,

The first faint violets of the wood, and lilies of the stream—
More meet for one so fondly loved, and laid thus early low.
Alas! how sadly sleeps thy face amidst the sunshine's glow—
The golden glow that through thy heart was wont such joy to send:
Woe! that it smiles, and not for thee!—my brother and my friend!"

GREEK PARTING SONG.

[This piece is founded on a tale related by Fauriel, in his "Chansons Populaires de la Grèce Moderne," and accompanied by some very interesting particulars respecting the extempore parting songs, or songs of expatriation, as he informs us they are called, in which the modern Greeks are accustomed to pour forth their feelings on bidding farewell to their country and friends.]

A Youth went forth to exile, from a home
Such as to early thought gives images,
The longest treasured, and most oft recall'd,
And brightest kept, of love;—a mountain-home,
That, with the murmur of its rocking pines,
And sounding waters, first in childhood's heart
Wakes the deep sense of nature unto joy,
And half-unconscious prayer;—a Grecian home,
With the transparence of blue skies o'erhung,
And, through the dimness of its olive shades,
Catching the flash of fountains, and the gleam
Of shining pillars from the fanes of old.
And this was what he left! Yet many leave

Far more—the glistening eye, that first from theirs
Call'd out the soul's bright smile; the gentle hand,
Which through the sunshine led forth infant steps
To where the violets lay; the tender voice
That earliest taught them what deep melody
Lives in affection's tones. He left not these.
Happy the weeper, that but weeps to part
With all a mother's love! A bitterer grief
Was his—to part unloved!—of her unloved
That should have breathed upon his heart like spring,
Fostering its young faint flowers!
Yet had he friends,
And they went forth to cheer him on his way
Unto the parting spot; and she too went,
That mother, tearless for her youngest-born.
The parting spot was reach'd—a lone deep glen,
Holy, perchance, of yore; for cave and fount
Were there, and sweet-voiced echoes; and above,
The silence of the blue still upper heaven
Hung round the crags of Pindus, where they wore
Their crowning snows. Upon a rock he sprung,
The unbeloved one, for his home to gaze
Through the wild laurels back; but then a light
Broke on the stern proud sadness of his eye,

A sudden quivering light, and from his lips
A burst of passionate song.
“Farewell, farewell!
I hear thee, O thou rushing stream!—thou’rt from my native dell,
Thou’rt bearing thence a mournful sound—a murmur of farewell!
And fare thee well—flow on, my stream!—flow on, thou bright and free!
I do but dream that in thy voice one tone laments for me;
But I have been a thing unloved from childhood’s loving years,
And therefore turns my soul to thee, for thou hast known my tears!
The mountains, and the caves, and thou, my secret tears have known:
The woods can tell where he hath wept, that ever wept alone!
“I see thee once again, my home! thou’rt there amidst thy vines,
And clear upon thy gleaming roof the light of summer shines.
It is a joyous hour when eve comes whispering through thy groves—
The hour that brings the son from toil, the hour the mother loves.
The hour the mother loves!—for me beloved it hath not been;
Yet ever in its purple smile, thou smilest, a blessed scene!
Whose quiet beauty o’er my soul through distant years will come—
Yet what but as the dead, to thee, shall I be then, my home?
“Not as the dead!—no, not the dead! We speak of them—we keep
Their names, like light that must not fade, within our bosoms deep:
We hallow even the lyre they touch’d, we love the lay they sung,
We pass with softer step the place they fill’d our band among!
But I depart like sound, like dew, like aught that leaves on earth

No trace of sorrow or delight, no memory of its birth!
I go!—the echo of the rock a thousand songs may swell
When mine is a forgotten voice. Woods, mountains, home, farewell!
“And farewell, mother! I have borne in lonely silence long,
But now the current of my soul grows passionate and strong;
And I will speak! though but the wind that wanders through the sky,
And but the dark, deep-rustling pines and rolling streams reply.
Yes! I will speak! Within my breast, whate’er hath seem’d to be,
There lay a hidden fount of love that would have gush’d for thee!
Brightly it would have gush’d—but thou, my mother! thou hast thrown
Back on the forests and the wilds, what should have been thine own!
“Then fare thee well! I leave thee not in loneliness to pine,
Since thou hast sons of statelier mien and fairer brow than mine.
Forgive me that thou couldst not love!—it may be that a tone
Yet from my burning heart may pierce through thine, when I am gone;
And thou, perchance, mayst weep for him on whom thou ne’er hast smiled,
And the grave give his birthright back to thy neglected child!
Might but my spirit then return, and midst its kindred dwell,
And quench its thirst with love’s free tears! ’Tis all a dream—farewell!”
“Farewell!”—the echo died with that deep word;
Yet died not so the late repentant pang
By the strain quicken’d in the mother’s breast!
There had pass’d many changes o’er her brow,
And cheek, and eye; but into one bright flood

Of tears at last all melted; and she fell
On the glad bosom of her child, and cried,
“Return, return, my son!” The echo caught
A lovelier sound than song, and woke again,
Murmuring, “Return, my son!”

THE SULIOTE MOTHER.

[It is related, in a French life of Ali Pasha, that several of the Suliote women, on the advance of the Turkish troops into the mountain fastnesses, assembled on a lofty summit, and, after chanting a wild song, precipitated themselves, with their children, into the chasm below, to avoid becoming the slaves of the enemy.]

She stood upon the loftiest peak,
Amidst the clear blue sky;
A bitter smile was on her cheek,
And a dark flash in her eye.
“Dost thou see them, boy?—through the dusky pines
Dost thou see where the foeman’s armour shines?
Hast thou caught the gleam of the conqueror’s crest?
My babe, that I cradled on my breast!
Wouldst thou spring from thy mother’s arms with joy?
—That sight hath cost thee a father, boy!”
For in the rocky strait beneath,
Lay Suliote sire and son:
They had heap’d high the piles of death
Before the pass was won.

“They have cross’d the torrent, and on they come:
Woe for the mountain hearth and home!
There, where the hunter laid by his spear,
There, where the lyre hath been sweet to hear,
There, where I sang thee, fair babe! to sleep,
Naught but the blood-stain our trace shall keep!”
And now the horn’s loud blast was heard,
And now the cymbal’s clang,
Till even the upper air was stirr’d,
As cliff and hollow rang.
“Hark! they bring music, my joyous child!
What saith the trumpet to Suli’s wild?
Doth it light thine eye with so quick a fire,
As if at a glance of thine armèd sire?
Still!—be thou still!—there are brave men low:
Thou wouldst not smile couldst thou see him now!”
But nearer came the clash of steel,
And louder swell’d the horn,
And farther yet the tambour’s peal
Through the dark pass was borne.
“Hear’st thou the sound of their savage mirth?
Boy! thou wert free when I gave thee birth,—
Free, and how cherish’d, my warrior’s son!
He too hath bless’d thee, as I have done!

Ay, and unchain'd must his loved ones be—

Freedom, young Suliote! for thee and me!"

And from the arrowy peak she sprung,

And fast the fair child bore:—

A veil upon the wind was flung,

A cry—and all was o'er!

THE FAREWELL TO THE DEAD.

[The following piece is founded on a beautiful part of the Greek funeral service, in which relatives and friends are invited to embrace the deceased (whose face is uncovered) and to bid their final adieu.—See Christian Researches in the Mediterranean.]

"'Tis hard to lay into the earth

A countenance so benign! a form that walk'd

But yesterday so stately o'er the earth!" Wilson.

Come near! Ere yet the dust

Soil the bright paleness of the settled brow,

Look on your brother; and embrace him now,

In still and solemn trust!

Come near!—once more let kindred lips be press'd

On his cold cheek; then bear him to his rest!

Look yet on this young face!

What shall the beauty, from amongst us gone,

Leave of its image, even where most it shone,

Gladdening its hearth and race?

Dim grows the semblance on man’s heart impress’d.
Come near, and bear the beautiful to rest!
Ye weep, and it is well!
For tears befit earth’s partings! Yesterday,
Song was upon the lips of this pale clay,
And sunshine seem’d to dwell
Where’er he moved—the welcome and the bless’d.
Now gaze! and bear the silent unto rest!
Look yet on him whose eye
Meets yours no more, in sadness or in mirth.
Was he not fair amidst the sons of earth,
The beings born to die?—
But not where death has power may love be bless’d.
Come near! and bear ye the beloved to rest!
How may the mother’s heart
Dwell on her son, and dare to hope again?
The spring’s rich promise hath been given in vain—
The lovely must depart!
Is he not gone, our brightest and our best?
Come near! and bear the early-call’d to rest!
Look on him! Is he laid
To slumber from the harvest or the chase?—
Too still and sad the smile upon his face;
Yet that, even that must fade:

Death holds not long unchanged his fairest guest.
Come near! and bear the mortal to his rest!
His voice of mirth hath ceased
Amidst the vineyards! there is left no place
For him whose dust receives your vain embrace,
At the gay bridal-feast!
Earth must take earth to moulder on her breast.
Come near! weep o'er him! bear him to his rest.
Yet mourn ye not as they
Whose spirits' light is quench'd! For him the past
Is seal'd: he may not fall, he may not cast
His birthright's hope away!
All is not here of our beloved and bless'd.
Leave ye the sleeper with his God to rest!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

I GO, SWEET FRIENDS!

I go, sweet friends! yet think of me
When spring's young voice awakes the flowers;
For we have wander'd far and free
In those bright hours, the violet's hours.
I go; but when you pause to hear,
From distant hills, the Sabbath-bell
On summer-winds float silvery clear,

Think on me then—I loved it well!
Forget me not around your hearth,
When cheerly smiles the ruddy blaze;
For dear hath been its evening mirth
To me, sweet friends, in other days.
And oh! when music's voice is heard
To melt in strains of parting woe,
When hearts to love and grief are stirr'd,
Think of me then!—I go, I go!

ANGEL VISITS.

"No more of talk where God or angel guest With man, as with his friend, familiar used To sit indulgent and with him partake Rural repast." Milton.

Are ye for ever to your skies departed?
Oh! will ye visit this dim world no more?
Ye, whose bright wings a solemn splendour darted
Through Eden's fresh and flowering shades of yore!
Now are the fountains dried on that sweet spot,
And ye—our faded earth beholds you not.
Yet, by your shining eyes not all forsaken,
Man wander'd from his Paradise away;
Ye, from forgetfulness his heart to waken,
Came down, high guests! in many a later day,
And with the patriarchs, under vine or oak,
Midst noontide calm or hush of evening, spoke.

From you, the veil of midnight darkness rending,
Came the rich mysteries to the sleeper's eye,
That saw your hosts ascending and descending
On those bright steps between the earth and sky:
Trembling he woke, and bow'd o'er glory's trace,
And worshipp'd awe-struck, in that fearful place.
By Chebar's[321] brook ye pass'd, such radiance wearing
As mortal vision might but ill endure;
Along the stream the living chariot bearing,
With its high crystal arch, intensely pure;
And, the dread rushing of your wings that hour
Was like the noise of waters in their power.
But in the Olive Mount, by night appearing,
Midst the dim leaves, your holiest work was done.
Whose was the voice that came divinely cheering,
Fraught with the breath of God to aid his Son?
—Haply of those that, on the moonlit plains,
Wafted good tidings unto Syrian swains.
Yet one more task was Yours! your heavenly dwelling,
Ye left, and by th' unseal'd sepulchral stone,
In glorious raiment, sat; the weepers telling,
That He they sought had triumph'd and was gone.
Now have ye left us for the brighter shore;
Your presence lights the lonely groves no more.

But may ye not, unseen, around us hover,
With gentle promptings and sweet influence yet.
Though the fresh glory of those days be over,
When, midst the palm-trees, man your footsteps met?
Are ye not near when faith and hope rise high,
When love, by strength, o'ermasters agony?
Are ye not near when sorrow, unrepining,
Yields up life's treasures unto Him who gave?
When martyrs, all things for His sake resigning,
Lead on the march of death, serenely brave?
Dreams! But a deeper thought our souls may fill:
One, One is near—a spirit holier still!

[321] Ezekiel, chap. x.

IVY SONG.

WRITTEN ON RECEIVING SOME IVY-LEAVES GATHERED FROM THE RUINED CASTLE OF RHEINFELS, ON THE RHINE.

Oh! how could Fancy crown with thee
In ancient days the God of Wine,
And bid thee at the banquet be
Companion of the vine?
Thy home, wild plant! is where each sound
Of revelry hath long been o'er,
Where song's full notes once peal'd around,
But now are heard no more.

The Roman on his battle-plains,
Where kings before his eagles bent,
Entwined thee with exulting strains
Around the victor’s tent:
Yet there, though fresh in glossy green,
Triumphantly thy boughs might wave,
Better thou lovest the silent scene
Around the victor’s grave.
Where sleeps the sons of ages flown,
The bards and heroes of the past;
Where, through the halls of glory gone,
Murmurs the wintry blast;
Where years are hastening to efface
Each record of the grand and fair;
Thou, in thy solitary grace,
Wreath of the tomb! art there.
Oh! many a temple, once sublime,
Beneath a blue Italian sky,
Hath naught of beauty left by time,
Save thy wild tapestry!
And, rear’d midst crags and clouds, ’tis thine
To wave where banners waved of yore,
O’er towers that crest the noble Rhine,
Along his rocky shore.

High from the fields of air look down
Those eyries of a vanish’d race—
Homes of the mighty, whose renown
Hath pass’d, and left no trace.
But there thou art!—thy foliage bright
Unchanged the mountain storm can brave;
Thou, that wilt climb the loftiest height,
Or deck the humblest grave!
’Tis still the same! Where’er we tread,
The wrecks of human power we see—
The marvels of all ages fled
Left to decay and thee!
And still let man his fabrics rear,
August in beauty, grace, and strength;
Days pass—thou ivy never sere![322]—
And all is thine at length!

[322] “Ye myrtles brown, and ivy never sere.”—Lycidas.

TO ONE OF THE AUTHOR’S CHILDREN ON HIS BIRTHDAY.

Where sucks the bee now? Summer is flying,
Leaves round the elm-tree faded are lying;
Violets are gone from their grassy dell,
With the cowslip cups, where the fairies dwell;
The rose from the garden hath pass’d away—
Yet happy, fair boy, is thy natal day!

For love bids it welcome, the love which hath smiled
Ever around thee, my gentle child!
Watching thy footsteps, and guarding thy bed,
And pouring out joy on thy sunny head.
Roses may vanish, but this will stay—
Happy and bright is thy natal day!

ON A SIMILAR OCCASION.

Thou wakest from rosy sleep, to play
With bounding heart, my boy!
Before thee lies a long bright day
Of summer and of joy.
Thou hast no heavy thought or dream
To cloud thy fearless eye:
Long be it thus!—life’s early stream
Should still reflect the sky.
Yet, ere the cares of life lie dim
On thy young spirit’s wings,
Now in thy mom forget not Him
From whom each pure thought springs.
So, in the onward vale of tears,
Where’er thy path may be,
When strength hath bow’d to evil years,
He will remember thee!

CHRIST STILLING THE TEMPEST.

Fear was within the tossing bark
When stormy winds grew loud,
And waves came rolling high and dark,
And the tall mast was bow’d.
And men stood breathless in their dread,
And baffled in their skill;
But One was there, who rose and said
To the wild sea—Be still!
And the wind ceased—it ceased! that word
Pass’d through the gloomy sky:
The troubled billows knew their Lord,
And fell beneath His eye.
And slumber settled on the deep,
And silence on the blast;
They sank, as flowers that fold to sleep
When sultry day is past.
O Thou! that in its wildest hour
Didst rule the tempest’s mood,
Send thy meek spirit forth in power,
Soft on our souls to brood!
Thou that didst bow the billow’s pride
Thy mandate to fulfil!
Oh, speak to passion’s raging tide,

Speak, and say, “Peace, be still!”

EPITAPH

OVER THE GRAVE OF TWO BROTHERS, A CHILD AND A YOUTH.

[Amongst the numerous friends Mrs Hemans was fortunate enough to possess in Scotland, there was one to whom she was linked by so peculiar a bond of union, and whose unwearied kindness is so precious an inheritance to her children, that it is hoped the owner of a name so dear to them, (though it be a part of her nature to shrink from publicity,) will forgive its being introduced into these pages.

This invaluable friend was Lady Wedderburn,[323] the mother of those “two brothers, a child and a youth,” for whose monument Mrs Hemans had written an inscription, which, with its simple pathos, has doubtless sunk deep into the heart of many a mourner, as well as of many a yet rejoicing parent, there called upon to remember that for them, too,

“Speaks the grave,

Where God hath seal’d the fount of hope He gave.”

Into the gentle heart, which has found relief for its own sorrows in soothing the griefs and promoting the enjoyments of others, the author of this sacred tribute was taken with a warmth and loving-kindness which extended its genial influence to all belonging to her; and during their stay in Edinburgh, whither they proceeded from Abbotsford, Mrs Hemans and her children were cherished with a true home welcome at the house of Sir David Wedderburn.—Memoir, p. 192.]

Thou, that canst gaze upon thine own fair boy,

And hear his prayer’s low murmur at thy knee,

And o’er his slumber bend in breathless joy,

Come to this tomb!—it hath a voice for thee!

Pray! Thou art blest—ask strength for sorrow's hour:

Love, deep as thine, lays here its broken flower.

Thou that art gathering from the smile of youth

Thy thousand hopes, rejoicing to behold

All the heart's depths before thee bright with truth,

All the mind's treasures silently unfold,

Look on this tomb!—for thee, too, speaks the grave,

Where God hath seal'd the fount of hope He gave.

[323] The lady of Sir David Wedderburn, Bart., and sister of the late Viscountess Hampden. The monument on which the lines are inscribed, is at Glynde, in Sussex, near Lord Hampden's seat. This excellent lady only survived Mrs Hemans a few years.

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTION.

Earth! guard what here we lay in holy trust,

That which hath left our home a darken'd place,

Wanting the form, the smile, now veil'd with dust,

The light departed with our loveliest face.

Yet from thy bonds our sorrow's hope is free—

We have but lent the beautiful to thee.

But thou, O heaven! keep, keep what thou hast taken,

And with our treasure keep our hearts on high;

The spirit meek, and yet by pain unshaken,

The faith, the love, the lofty constancy—

Guide us where these are with our sister flown:

They were of Thee, and thou hast claim’d thine own!

THE SOUND OF THE SEA.

Thou art sounding on, thou mighty sea!
For ever and the same;
The ancient rocks yet ring to thee—
Those thunders naught can tame.
Oh! many a glorious voice is gone
From the rich bowers of earth,
And hush’d is many a lovely one
Of mournfulness or mirth.
The Dorian flute that sigh’d of yore
Along the wave, is still;
The harp of Judah peals no more
On Zion’s awful hill.
And Memnon’s lyre hath lost the chord
That breathed the mystic tone;
And the songs at Rome’s high triumphs pour’d
Are with her eagles flown.
And mute the Moorish horn that rang
O’er stream and mountain free;
And the hymn the leagued Crusaders sang
Hath died in Galilee.
But thou art swelling on, thou deep!
Through many an olden clime,

Thy billowy anthem, ne’er to sleep
Until the close of time.
Thou liftest up thy solemn voice
To every wind and sky,
And all our earth’s green shores rejoice
In that one harmony.
It fills the noontide’s calm profound,
The sunset’s heaven of gold;
And the still midnight hears the sound,
Even as first it roll’d.
Let there be silence, deep and strange,
Where sceptred cities rose!
Thou speak’st of One who doth not change—
So. may our hearts repose.

THE CHILD AND DOVE.

SUGGESTED BY CHANTREY’S STATUE OF LADY LOUISA RUSSELL.

Thou art a thing on our dreams to rise,
Midst the echoes of long-lost melodies,
And to fling bright dew from the morning back,
Fair form! on each image of childhood’s track.
Thou art a thing to recall the hours
When the love of our souls was on leaves and flowers,
When a world was our own in some dim sweet grove,
And treasure untold in one captive dove.

Are they gone? can we think it, while thou art there,
Thou joyous child with the clustering hair?
Is it not spring that indeed breathes free
And fresh o’er each thought, while we gaze on thee?
No! never more may we smile as thou
Sheddest round smiles from thy sunny brow;
Yet something it is, in our hearts to shrine
A memory of beauty undimm’d as thine—
To have met the joy of thy speaking face,
To have felt the spell of thy breezy grace,
To have linger’d before thee, and turn’d, and borne
One vision away of the cloudless morn.

A DIRGE.

[The two first stanzas of this dirge may be found in the last scene of “The Siege of Valencia;” but they are more particularly worthy of the reader’s consideration, as having been selected for inscription on the tablet placed above the vault beneath St Ann’s Church, Dublin, where the remains of the author repose.]

Calm on the bosom of thy God,
Young spirit! rest thee now!
Even while with us thy footstep trod,
His seal was on thy brow.
Dust, to its narrow house beneath!
Soul, to its place on high!—
They that have seen thy look in death,

No more may fear to die.

Lone are the paths, and sad the bowers,

Whence thy meek smile is gone;

But oh!—a brighter home than ours,

In heaven, is now thine own.

SCENE IN A DALECARLIAN MINE.

“Oh! fondly, fervently, those two had loved,

Had mingled minds in Love’s own perfect trust;

Had watch’d bright sunsets, dreamt of blissful years,

——And thus they met!”

“Haste, with your torches, haste! make firelight round!”—

They speed, they press: what hath the miner found?

Relic or treasure—giant sword of old?

Gems bedded deep—rich veins of burning gold?

—Not so—the dead, the dead! An awe-struck band

In silence gathering round the silent stand,

Chain’d by one feeling, hushing e’en their breath,

Before the thing that, in the might of death,

Fearful, yet beautiful, amidst them lay—

A sleeper, dreaming not!—a youth with hair

Making a sunny gleam (how sadly fair!)

O’er his cold brow: no shadow of decay

Had touch’d those pale, bright features—yet he wore

A mien of other days, a garb of yore.

Who could unfold that mystery? From the throng
A woman wildly broke; her eye was dim,
As if through many tears, through vigils long,
Through weary strainings:—all had been for him!
Those two had loved! And there he lay, the dead,
In his youth's flower—and she, the living, stood
With her gray hair, whence hue and gloss had fled—
And wasted form, and cheek, whose flushing blood
Had long since ebb'd—a meeting sad and strange!
—Oh! are not meetings in this world of change
Sadder than partings oft! She stood there, still,
And mute, and gazing—all her soul to fill
With the loved face once more—the young, fair face,
Midst that rude cavern, touch'd with sculpture's grace,
By torchlight and by death: until at last
From her deep heart the spirit of the past
Gush'd in low broken tones:—"And there thou art!
And thus we meet, that loved, and did but part
As for a few brief hours! My friend, my friend!
First love, and only one! Is this the end
Of hope deferr'd, youth blighted! Yet thy brow
Still wears its own proud beauty, and thy cheek
Smiles—how unchanged!—while I, the worn, and weak,
And faded—oh! thou wouldst but scorn me now,

If thou couldst look on me!—a wither’d leaf,
Sear’d—though for thy sake—by the blast of grief!
Better to see thee thus! For thou didst go
Bearing my image on thy heart, I know,
Unto the dead. My Ulric! through the night
How have I call’d thee! With the morning light
How have I watch’d for thee!—wept, wander’d, pray’d,
Met the fierce mountain-tempest, undismay’d,
In search of thee!—bound my worn life to one—
One torturing hope! Now let me die! ’Tis gone.
Take thy betrothed!” And on his breast she fell,
Oh! since their youth’s last passionate farewell,
How changed in all but love!—the true, the strong,
Joining in death whom life had parted long!
They had one grave—one lonely bridal-bed,
No friend, no kinsman there a tear to shed!
His name had ceased—her heart outlived each tie,
Once more to look on that dead face, and die!

ENGLISH SOLDIERS SONG OF MEMORY.

TO THE AIR OF “AM RHEIN, AM RHEIN!”

Sing, sing in memory of the brave departed,
Let song and wine be pour’d!
Pledge to their fame, the free and fearless hearted,
Our brethren of the sword!

Oft at the feast, and in the fight, their voices
Have mingled with our own;
Fill high the cup! but when the soul rejoices,
Forget not who are gone.
They that stood with us, midst the dead and dying,
On Albuera’s plain;
They that beside us cheerily track’d the flying,
Far o’er the hills of Spain;
They that amidst us, when the shells were showering
From old Rodrigo’s wall,
The rampart scaled, through clouds of battle towering,
First, first at Victory’s call;
They that upheld the banners, proudly waving,
In Roncesvalles’ dell,
With England’s blood the southern vineyards laving—
Forget not how they fell!
Sing, sing in memory of the brave departed,
Let song and wine be pour’d!
Pledge to their fame, the free and fearless hearted,
Our brethren of the sword!

HAUNTED GROUND.

“And slight, withal, may be the things which bring
Back on the heart the weight which it would fling
Aside for ever—it may be a sound,

A tone of music, summer eve, or spring,

A flower—the wind—the ocean—which shall wound,

Striking the electric train, wherewith we are darkly bound.”

Byron.

Yes, it is haunted, this quiet scene,

Fair as it looks, and all softly green;

Yet fear not thou—for the spell is thrown,

And the might of the shadow, on me alone.

Are thy thoughts wandering to elves and fays,

And spirits that dwell where the water plays?

Oh! in the heart there are stronger powers,

That sway, though viewless, this world of ours!

Have I not lived midst these lonely dells,

And loved, and sorrow’d, and heard farewells,

And learn’d in my own deep soul to look,

And tremble before that mysterious book?

Have I not, under these whispering leaves,

Woven such dreams as the young heart weaves?

Shadows—yet unto which life seem’d bound;

And is it not—is it not haunted ground?

Must I not hear what thou hearest not,

Troubling the air of the sunny spot?

Is there not something to rouse but me,

Told by the rustling of every tree?

Song hath been here, with its flow of thought;
Love, with its passionate visions fraught;
Death, breathing stillness and sadness round;
And is it not—is it not haunted ground?
Are there no phantoms, but such as come
By night from the darkness that wraps the tomb?
A sound, a scent, or a whispering breeze,
Can summon up mightier far than these!
But I may not linger amidst them here!
Lovely they are, and yet things to fear;
Passing and leaving a weight behind,
And a thrill on the chords of the stricken mind.
Away, away!—that my soul may soar
As a free bird of blue skies once more!
Here from its wing it may never cast
The chain by those spirits brought back from the past.
Doubt it not—smile not—but go thou, too,
Look on the scenes where thy childhood grew—
Where thou hast pray’d at thy mother’s knee,
Where thou hast roved with thy brethren free;
Go thou, when life unto thee is changed,
Friends thou hast loved as thy soul, estranged;
When from the idols thy heart hath made,
Thou hast seen the colours of glory fade.

Oh! painfully then, by the wind's low sigh,

By the voice of the stream, by the flower-cup's dye,

By a thousand tokens of sight and sound,

Thou wilt feel thou art treading on haunted ground.

THE CHILD OF THE FORESTS.

WRITTEN AFTER READING THE MEMOIRS OF JOHN HUNTER.

[On one occasion, Mrs Hemans was somewhat ludicrously disenchanted, through the medium of a North American Review, on the subject of a self-constituted hero, whose history (which suggested her little poem, "The Child of the Forests") she had read with unquestioning faith and lively interest. This was the redoubtable John Dunn Hunter, whose marvellous adventures amongst the Indians—by whom he represented himself to have been carried away in childhood—were worked up into a plausible narrative, admirably calculated to excite the sympathies of its readers. But how far it was really deserving of them, may be judged by the following extract from a letter to a friend who had been similarly mystified:—"I send you a North American Review, which will mortify C. and you with the sad intelligence that John Hunter—even our own John Dunn—the man of the panther's skin—the adopted of the Kansas—the shooter with the rifle—no, with the long bow—is, I blush to say it, neither more nor less than an impostor; no better than Psalmanazar; no, no better than Carraboo herself. After this, what are we to believe again? Are there any Loo Choo Islands? Was there ever any Robinson Crusoe? Is there any Rammohun Roy? All one's faith and trust is shaken to its foundations. No one here sympathises with me properly on this annoying occasion; but you, I think, will know how to feel, who have been quite as much devoted to that vile John Dunn as myself."—Memoir, pp. 95-6.]

Is not thy heart far off amidst the woods,

Where the red Indian lays his father’s dust,
And, by the rushing of the torrent floods,
To the Great Spirit bows in silent trust?
Doth not thy soul o’ersweep the foaming main,
To pour itself upon the wilds again?
They are gone forth, the desert’s warrior race,
By stormy lakes to track the elk and roe;
But where art thou, the swift one in the chase,
With thy free footstep and unfailing bow?
Their singing shafts have reach’d the panther’s lair,
And where art thou?—thine arrows are not there.
They rest beside their streams—the spoil is won—
They hang their spears upon the cypress bough;
The night-fires blaze, the hunter’s work is done—
They hear the tales of old—but where art thou?
The night-fires blaze beneath the giant pine,
And there a place is fill’d that once was thine.
For thou art mingling with the city’s throng,
And thou hast thrown thine Indian bow aside;
Child of the forests! thou art borne along,
E’en as ourselves, by life’s tempestuous tide.
But will this be? and canst thou here find rest?
Thou hadst thy nurture on the desert’s breast.
Comes not the sound of torrents to thine ear

From the savannah land, the land of streams?
Hear’st thou not murmurs which none else may hear?
Is not the forest’s shadow on thy dreams?
They call—wild voices call thee o’er the main,
Back to thy free and boundless woods again.
Hear them not! hear them not!—thou canst not find
In the far wilderness what once was thine!
Thou hast quaff’d knowledge from the founts of mind,
And gather’d loftier aims and hopes divine.
Thou know’st the soaring thought, the immortal strain—
Seek not the deserts and the woods again!

STANZAS TO THE MEMORY OF * * *

In the full tide of melody and mirth,
While joy’s bright spirit beams from every eye,
Forget not him, whose soul, though fled from earth,
Seems yet to speak in strains that cannot die.
Forget him not, for many a festal hour,
Charm’d by those strains, for us has lightly flown:
And memory’s visions, mingling with their power,
Wake the heart’s thrill at each familiar tone.
Blest be the harmonist, whose well-known lays
Revive life’s morning dreams, when youth is fled,
And, fraught with images of other days,
Recall the loved, the absent, and the dead.

His the dear art whose spells awhile renew
Hope’s first illusions in their tenderest bloom—
Oh! what were life, unless such moments threw
Bright gleams, “like angel visits,” o’er its gloom?

THE VAUDOIS VALLEYS.

Yes! thou hast met the sun’s last smile
From the haunted hills of Rome;
By many a bright Ægean isle
Thou hast seen the billows foam.
From the silence of the Pyramid,
Thou hast watch’d the solemn flow
Of the Nile, that with its waters hid
The ancient realm below.
Thy heart hath burn’d, as shepherds sung
Some wild and warlike strain,
Where the Moorish horn once proudly rung
Through the pealing hills of Spain.
And o’er the lonely Grecian streams
Thou hast heard the laurels moan,
With a sound yet murmuring in thy dreams
Of the glory that is gone.
But go thou to the pastoral vales
Of the Alpine mountains old,
If thou wouldst hear immortal tales

By the wind’s deep whispers told!
Go, if thou lovest the soil to tread
Where man hath nobly striven,
And life, like incense, hath been shed,
An offering unto heaven.
For o’er the snows, and round the pines,
Hath swept a noble flood;
The nurture of the peasant’s vines
Hath been the martyr’s blood!
A spirit, stronger than the sword,
And loftier than despair,
Through all the heroic region pour’d,
Breathes in the generous air.
A memory clings to every steep
Of long-enduring faith,
And the sounding streams glad record keep
Of courage unto death.
Ask of the peasant where his sires
For truth and freedom bled?
Ask, where were lit the torturing fires,
Where lay the holy dead!
And he will tell thee, all around,
On fount, and turf, and stone,
Far as the chamois’ foot can bound,

Their ashes have been sown!

Go, when the Sabbath-bell is heard[324]

Up through the wilds to float,

When the dark old woods and caves are stirr’d

To gladness by the note;

When forth, along their thousand rills,

The mountain people come,

Join thou their worship on those hills

Of glorious martyrdom.

And while the song of praise ascends,

And while the torrent’s voice,

Like the swell of many an organ, blends,

Then let thy soul rejoice.

Rejoice, that human hearts, through scorn,

Through shame, through death, made strong,

Before the rocks and heavens have borne

Witness of God so long!

[324] See Gilly’s Researches among the Mountains of Piedmont, for an interesting account of a Sabbath-day among the upper regions of the Vaudois. The inhabitants of these Protestant valleys, who, like the Swiss, repair with their flocks and herds to the summit of the hills during the summer, are followed thither by their pastors, and at that season of the year assemble on that sacred day to worship in the open air.

SONG OF THE SPANISH WANDERER.

Pilgrim! oh say, hath thy cheek been fann’d

By the sweet winds of my sunny land?
Know’st thou the sound of its mountain pines?
And hast thou rested beneath its vines?
Hast thou heard the music still wandering by,
A thing of the breezes, in Spain’s blue sky,
Floating away o’er hill and heath,
With the myrtle’s whisper, the citron’s breath?
Then say, are there fairer vales than those
Where the warbling of fountains for ever flows?
Are there brighter flowers than mine own, which wave
O’er Moorish ruin and Christian grave?
O sunshine and song! they are lying far
By the streams that look to the western star;
My heart is fainting to hear once more
The water-voices of that sweet shore.
Many were they that have died for thee,
And brave, my Spain! though thou art not free;
But I call them blest—they have rent their chain—
They sleep in thy valleys, my sunny Spain!

THE CONTADINA.

WRITTEN FOR A PICTURE.

Not for the myrtle, and not for the vine,
Though its grape, like a gem, be the sunbeam’s shrine;
And not for the rich blue heaven that showers

Joy on thy spirit, like light on the flowers;
And not for the scent of the citron trees—
Fair peasant! I call thee not blest for these.
Not for the beauty spread over thy brow,
Though round thee a gleam, as of spring, it throw;
And not for the lustre that laughs from thine eye,
Like a dark stream's flash to the sunny sky,
Though the south in its riches naught lovelier sees—
Fair peasant! I call thee not blest for these.
But for those breathing and loving things—
For the boy's fond arm that around thee clings,
For the smiling cheek on thy lap that glows,
In the peace of a trusting child's repose—
For the hearts whose home is thy gentle breast,
Oh! richly I call thee, and deeply blest!

TROUBADOUR SONG.

The warrior cross'd the ocean's foam
For the stormy fields of war;
The maid was left in a smiling home
And a sunny land afar.
His voice was heard where javelin showers
Pour'd on the steel-clad line;
Her step was midst the summer flowers,
Her seat beneath the vine.

His shield was cleft, his lance was riven,
And the red blood stain’d his crest;
While she—the gentlest wind of heaven
Might scarcely fan her breast!
Yet a thousand arrows pass’d him by,
And again he cross’d the seas;
But she had died as roses die
That perish with a breeze—
As roses die, when the blast is come
For all things bright and fair:
There was death within the smiling home—
How had death found her there?

THE TREASURES OF THE DEEP.[325]

What hidest thou in thy treasure caves and cells,
Thou hollow-sounding and mysterious main?—
Pale glistening pearls, and rainbow-colour’d shells
Bright things which gleam unreck’d of, and in vain.
Keep, keep thy riches, melancholy sea!
We ask not such from thee.
Yet more, the depths have more! What wealth untold,
Far down, and shining through their stillness lies!
Thou hast the starry gems, the burning gold,
Won from ten thousand royal Argosies.—
Sweep o’er thy spoils, thou wild and wrathful main!

Earth claims not these again.

Yet more, the depths have more! Thy waves have roll’d

Above the cities of a world gone by!

Sand hath fill’d up the palaces of old,

Sea-weed o’ergrown the halls of revelry.—

Dash o’er them, ocean! in thy scornful play:

Man yields them to decay.

Yet more! the billows and the depths have more!

High hearts and brave are gather’d to thy breast!

They hear not now the booming waters roar,

The battle-thunders will not break their rest.—

Keep thy red gold and gems, thou stormy grave!

Give back the true and brave!

Give back the lost and lovely!—those for whom

The place was kept at board and hearth so long,

The prayer went up through midnight’s breathless gloom,

And the vain yearning woke midst festal song!

Hold fast thy buried isles, thy towers o’erthrown—

But all is not thine own.

To thee the love of woman hath gone down,

Dark flow thy tides o’er manhood’s noble head,

O’er youth’s bright locks, and beauty’s flowery crown:

Yet must thou hear a voice—Restore the dead!

Earth shall reclaim her precious things from thee!—

Restore the dead, thou sea!

[325] Originally introduced in the “Forest Sanctuary.”

[“The only public mention that I have made of Mrs Hemans,” says Mr Montgomery of Sheffield, in a letter regarding her, with which we have been favoured by that excellent man and distinguished poet, “was in a series of lectures on the principal British Poets, delivered at the Royal Institution from ten to twelve years ago. In one of these, having to notice very briefly the ‘Female Poets,’ I said, ‘Mrs Hemans, in many of her lyrics, has struck out a new and attractive style of mingling the picturesque and the sentimental with such grace and beauty that, in her best pieces, she is better than almost any poet of either sex in that sprightly, yet pathetic vein, which she has exercised.’ I gave ‘The Treasures of the Deep’ as an example; and, indeed, I know nothing in our language—of the kind and the character I mean—comparable with it, either in conception or execution, for wealth of thought, felicity of diction, and commanding address:—The Ocean summoned to give an account of all that it has been doing through six thousand years, and the answers dictated by the questioner, till all the secrets of the abyss are revealed in the light by which poetry alone, of the purest order, can discover them. The last stanza is a crown of glory to the perfect whole.”

We beg to remind the author of “The World before the Flood,” and “The Pelican Island,” that the lectures to which he alludes have never been published. They were flatteringly successful, both when delivered at the Royal Institution, and before the literary societies of several of the principal provincial towns of England; and could not fail being acceptable to the great reading public, as the recorded opinions concerning the leading poets of Great Britain of past and present times, deliberately formed by one of their own number, who has himself written so much and so well, and who, in popularity as a lyrist, has no superior among contemporaries.]

BRING FLOWERS.

Bring flowers, young flowers, for the festal board,
To wreath the cup ere the wine is pour’d!
Bring flowers! they are springing in wood and vale:
Their breath floats out on the southern gale,
And the touch of the sunbeam hath waked the rose,
To deck the hall where the bright wine flows.
Bring flowers to strew in the conqueror’s path!
He hath shaken thrones with his stormy wrath:
He comes with the spoils of nations back,
The vines lie crush’d in his chariot’s track,
The turf looks red where he won the day.
Bring flowers to die in the conqueror’s way!
Bring flowers to the captive’s lonely cell!
They have tales of the joyous woods to tell—
Of the free blue streams, and the glowing sky,
And the bright world shut from his languid eye;
They will bear him a thought of the sunny hours,
And the dream of his youth. Bring him flowers, wild flowers!
Bring flowers, fresh flowers, for the bride to wear!
They were born to blush in her shining hair.
She is leaving the home of her childhood’s mirth,
She hath bid farewell to her father’s hearth,
Her place is now by another’s side.
Bring flowers for the locks of the fair young bride!

Bring flowers, pale flowers, o’er the bier to shed,
A crown for the brow of the early dead!
For this through its leaves hath the white rose burst,
For this in the woods was the violet nursed!
Though they smile in vain for what once was ours,
They are love’s last gift. Bring ye flowers, pale flowers!
Bring flowers to the shrine where we kneel in prayer—
They are nature’s offering, their place is there!
They speak of hope to the fainting heart,
With a voice of promise they come and part,
They sleep in dust through the wintry hours,
They break forth in glory. Bring flowers, bright flowers!

THE CRUSADER’S RETURN.

“Alas! the mother that him bare,
If she had been in presence there,
In his wan cheeks and sunburnt hair
She had not known her child.”
Marmion.

Rest, pilgrim, rest! Thou’rt from the Syrian land,
Thou’rt from the wild and wondrous East, I know
By the long-wither’d palm-branch in thy hand,
And by the darkness of thy sunburnt brow.
Alas! the bright, the beautiful, who part
So full of hope, for that far country’s bourne!

Alas! the weary and the changed in heart,
And dimm’d in aspect, who like thee return!
Thou’rt faint—stay, rest thee from thy toils at last:
Through the high chestnuts lightly plays the breeze,
The stars gleam out, the Ave hour is past,
The sailor’s hymn hath died along the seas.
Thou’rt faint and worn—hear’st thou the fountain welling
By the gray pillars of yon ruin’d shrine?
Seest thou the dewy grapes before thee swelling?
—He that hath left me train’d that loaded vine!
He was a child when thus the bower he wove,
(Oh! hath a day fled since his childhood’s time?)
That I might sit and hear the sound I love,
Beneath its shade—the convent’s vesper-chime.
And sit thou there!—for he was gentle ever,
With his glad voice he would have welcomed thee,
And brought fresh fruits to cool thy parch’d lips’ fever.
There in his place thou’rt resting—where is he?
If I could hear that laughing voice again,
But once again! How oft it wanders by,
In the still hours, like some remember’d strain,
Troubling the heart with its wild melody!—
Thou hast seen much, tired pilgrim! hast thou seen
In that far land, the chosen land of yore,

A youth—my Guido—with the fiery mien
And the dark eye of this Italian shore?
The dark, clear, lightning eye! On heaven and earth
It smiled—as if man were not dust it smiled!
The very air seem’d kindling with his mirth,
And I—my heart grew young before my child!
My blessed child!—I had but him—yet he
Fill’d all my home even with o’erflowing joy,
Sweet laughter, and wild song, and footstep free.
Where is he now?—my pride, my flower, my boy!
His sunny childhood melted from my sight,
Like a spring dew-drop. Then his forehead wore
A prouder look—his eye a keener light:
I knew these woods might be his world no more!
He loved me—but he left me! Thus they go
Whom we have rear’d, watch’d, bless’d, too much adored!
He heard the trumpet of the Red Cross blow,
And bounded from me with his father’s sword!
Thou weep’st—I tremble! Thou hast seen the slain
Pressing a bloody turf—the young and fair,
With their pale beauty strewing o’er the plain
Where hosts have met: speak! answer!—was he there?
Oh! hath his smile departed? Could the grave
Shut o’er those bursts of bright and tameless glee?

No! I shall yet behold his dark locks wave!——

That look gives hope—I knew it could not be!

Still weep’st thou, wanderer? Some fond mother’s glance

O’er thee, too, brooded in thine early years—

Think’st thou of her, whose gentle eye, perchance,

Bathed all thy faded hair with parting tears?

Speak, for thy tears disturb me!—what art thou?

Why dost thou hide thy face, yet weeping on?

Look up! Oh! is it—that wan cheek and brow!—

Is it—alas! yet joy!—my son, my son!

THEKLA’S SONG; OR, THE VOICE OF A SPIRIT.

FROM THE GERMAN OF SCHILLER.

——“’Tis not merely

The human being’s pride that peoples space

With life and mystical predominance;

Since likewise for the stricken heart of love

This visible nature, and this common world,

Are all too narrow.”—Coleridge’s “Wallenstein.”

[This song is said to have been composed by Schiller in answer to the inquiries of a friend respecting the fate of Thekla, whose beautiful character is withdrawn from the tragedy of Wallenstein’s Death, after her resolution to visit the grave of her lover is made known.]

Ask’st thou my home?—my pathway wouldst thou know,

When from thine eye my floating shadow pass’d?

Was not my work fulfill’d and closed below?
Had I not lived and loved? My lot was cast.
Wouldst thou ask where the nightingale is gone,
That, melting into song her soul away,
Gave the spring-breeze what witch’d thee in its tone?
But while she loved, she lived, in that deep lay!
Think’st thou my heart its lost one hath not found?
Yes! we are one: oh! trust me, we have met,
Where naught again may part what love hath bound,
Where falls no tear, and whispers no regret.
There shalt thou find us, there with us be blest,
If, as our love, thy love is pure and true!
There dwells my father,[326] sinless and at rest,
Where the fierce murderer may no more pursue.
And well he feels, no error of the dust
Drew to the stars of heaven his mortal ken;
There it is with us even as is our trust—
He that believes is near the holy then.
There shall each feeling, beautiful and high,
Keep the sweet promise of its earthly day.
Oh! fear thou not to dream with waking eye!
There lies deep meaning oft in childish play.

[326] Wallenstein.

THE REVELLERS.

Ring, joyous chords!—ring out again!
A swifter, and a wilder strain!
They are here—the fair face and the careless heart,
And stars shall wane ere the mirthful part.——
But I met a dimly mournful glance,
In a sudden turn of the flying dance;
I heard the tone of a heavy sigh
In a pause of the thrilling melody!
And it is not well that woe should breathe
On the bright spring-flowers of the festal wreath!—
Ye that to thought or to grief belong,
Leave, leave the hall of song!
Ring, joyous chords!——But who art thou
With the shadowy locks o’er thy pale young brow,
And the world of dreamy gloom that lies
In the misty depths of thy soft dark eyes?
Thou hast loved, fair girl! thou hast loved too well!
Thou art mourning now o’er a broken spell;
Thou hast pour’d thy heart’s rich treasures forth,
And art unrepaid for their priceless worth!
Mourn on!—yet come thou not here the while,
It is but a pain to see thee smile!
There is not a tone in our songs for thee—

Home with thy sorrows flee!
Ring, joyous chords!—ring out again!——
But what dost thou with the revel's train?
A silvery voice through the soft air floats,
But thou hast no part in the gladdening notes;
There are bright young faces that pass thee by,
But they fix no glance of thy wandering eye!
Away! there's a void in thy yearning breast,
Thou weary man! wilt thou here find rest!
Away! for thy thoughts from the scene have fled,
And the love of thy spirit is with the dead:
Thou art but more lone midst the sounds of mirth—
Back to thy silent hearth!
Ring, joyous chords!—ring forth again!
A swifter still, and a wilder strain!——
But thou, though a reckless mien be thine,
And thy cup be crown'd with the foaming wine,
By the fitful bursts of thy laughter loud,
By thine eye's quick flash through its troubled cloud,
I know thee! it is but the wakeful fear
Of a haunted bosom that brings thee here!
I know thee!—thou fearest the solemn night,
With her piercing stars and her deep wind's might!
There's a tone in her voice which thou fain wouldst shun,

For it asks what the secret soul hath done!
And thou—there's a dark weight on thine—away!—
Back to thy home, and pray!
Ring, joyous chords!—ring out again!
A swifter still, and a wilder strain!
And bring fresh wreaths!—we will banish all
Save the free in heart from our festive hall.
On! through the maze of the fleet dance, on!—
But where are the young and the lovely gone?
Where are the brows with the Red Rose crown'd,
And the floating forms with the bright zone bound?
And the waving locks and the flying feet,
That still should be where the mirthful meet?—
They are gone—they are fled—they are parted all:
Alas! the forsaken hall!

THE CONQUEROR'S SLEEP.

Sleep midst thy banners furl'd!
Yes! thou art there, upon thy buckler lying,
With the soft wind unfelt around thee sighing,
Thou chief of hosts, whose trumpet shakes the world!
Sleep, while the babe sleeps on its mother's breast.
Oh! strong is night—for thou too art at rest!
Stillness hath smooth'd thy brow,
And now might love keep timid vigils by thee,

Now might the foe with stealthy foot draw nigh thee,
Alike unconscious and defenceless thou!
Tread lightly, watchers! Now the field is won,
Break not the rest of nature’s weary son!
Perchance some lovely dream
Back from the stormy fight thy soul is bearing,
To the green places of thy boyish daring,
And all the windings of thy native stream.
Why, this were joy! Upon the tented plain,
Dream on, thou Conqueror!—be a child again!
But thou wilt wake at morn,
With thy strong passions to the conflict leaping,
And thy dark troubled thoughts all earth o’ersweeping;
So wilt thou rise, O thou of woman born!
And put thy terrors on, till none may dare
Look upon thee—the tired one, slumbering there!
Why, so the peasant sleeps
Beneath his vine!—and man must kneel before thee,
And for his birthright vainly still implore thee!
Shalt thou be stay’d because thy brother weeps?—
Wake! and forget that midst a dreaming world,
Thou hast lain thus, with all thy banners furl’d!
Forget that thou, even thou,
Hast feebly shiver’d when the wind pass’d o’er thee,

And sunk to rest upon the earth which bore thee,
And felt the night-dew chill thy fever’d brow!
Wake with the trumpet, with the spear press on!—
Yet shall the dust take home its mortal son.

OUR LADY’S WELL.[327]

Fount of the woods! thou art hid no more
From heaven’s clear eye, as in time of yore.
For the roof hath sunk from thy mossy walls,
And the sun’s free glance on thy slumber falls;
And the dim tree-shadows across thee pass,
As the boughs are sway’d o’er thy silvery glass;
And the reddening leaves to thy breast are blown,
When the autumn wind hath a stormy tone;
And thy bubbles rise to the flashing rain—
Bright Fount! thou art nature’s own again!
Fount of the vale! thou art sought no more
By the pilgrim’s foot, as in time of yore,
When he came from afar, his beads to tell,
And to chant his hymn at Our Lady’s Well.
There is heard no Ave through thy bowers,
Thou art gleaming lone midst thy water-flowers!
But the herd may drink from thy gushing wave,
And there may the reaper his forehead lave,
And the woodman seeks thee not in vain—

Bright Fount! thou art nature’s own again!

Fount of the Virgin’s ruin’d shrine!

A voice that speaks of the past is thine!

It mingles the tone of a thoughtful sigh

With the notes that ring through the laughing sky;

Midst the mirthful song of the summer bird,

And the sound of the breeze, it will yet be heard!—

Why is it that thus we may gaze on thee,

To the brilliant sunshine sparkling free?

’Tis that all on earth is of Time’s domain—

He hath made thee nature’s own again!

Fount of the chapel with ages gray!

Thou art springing freshly amidst decay;

Thy rites are closed, and thy cross lies low,

And the changeful hours breathe o’er thee now.

Yet if at thine altar one holy thought

In man’s deep spirit of old hath wrought;

If peace to the mourner hath here been given,

Or prayer, from a chasten’d heart, to heaven—

Be the spot still hallow’d while Time shall reign,

Who hath made thee nature’s own again!

[327] A beautiful spring in the woods near St Asaph, formerly covered in with a chapel, now in ruins. It was dedicated to the Virgin, and, according to Pennant, much the resort of pilgrims.

[Those who only know the neighbourhood of St Asaph from travelling along its highways, can be little aware how much delightful scenery is attainable within walks of two or three miles' distance from Mrs Hemans's residence. The placid beauty of the Clwyd, and the wilder graces of the sister stream, the Elwy, particularly in the vicinity of "Our Lady's Well," and the interesting rocks and caves at Cefn, are little known to general tourists; though, by the lovers of her poetry, it will be remembered how sweetly she has apostrophised the

"Fount of the chapel with ages gray;"

and how tenderly, amid far different scenes, her thoughts reverted to the

"Cambrian river with slow music gliding,

By pastoral hills, old woods, and ruin'd towers."

—(Sonnet to the River Clwyd.)

—Memoir, p. 92-3.]

THE PARTING OF SUMMER.

Thou'rt bearing hence thy roses,

Glad summer, fare thee well!

Thou'rt singing thy last melodies

In every wood and dell.

But ere the golden sunset

Of thy latest lingering day,

Oh! tell me, o'er this checker'd earth,

How hast thou pass'd away?

Brightly, sweet Summer! brightly

Thine hours have floated by,

To the joyous birds of the woodland boughs,
The rangers of the sky;
And brightly in the forests,
To the wild deer wandering free;
And brightly, ’midst the garden flowers,
To the happy murmuring bee:
But how to human bosoms,
With all their hopes and fears,
And thoughts that make them eagle-wings,
To pierce the unborn years?
Sweet Summer! to the captive
Thou hast flown in burning dreams
Of the woods, with all their whispering leaves,
And the blue rejoicing streams;—
To the wasted and the weary
On the bed of sickness bound,
In swift delirious fantasies,
That changed with every sound;—
To the sailor on the billows,
In longings, wild and vain,
For the gushing founts and breezy hills,
And the homes of earth again!
And unto me, glad Summer!
How hast thou flown to me?

My chainless footstep naught hath kept
From thy haunts of song and glee.
Thou hast flown in wayward visions,
In memories of the dead—
In shadows from a troubled heart,
O’er thy sunny pathway shed:
In brief and sudden strivings
To fling a weight aside—
Midst these thy melodies have ceased,
And all thy roses died.
But oh! thou gentle Summer!
If I greet thy flowers once more,
Bring me again the buoyancy
Wherewith my soul should soar!
Give me to hail thy sunshine
With song and spirit free;
Or in a purer air than this
May that next meeting be!

THE SONGS OF OUR FATHERS.

——“Sing aloud
Old songs, the precious music of the heart.”
Wordsworth

Sing them upon the sunny hills,
When days are long and bright,

And the blue gleam of shining rills
Is loveliest to the sight!
Sing them along the misty moor,
Where ancient hunters roved,
And swell them through the torrent's roar,
The songs our fathers loved!—
The songs their souls rejoiced to hear
When harps were in the hall,
And each proud note made lance and spear
Thrill on the banner'd wall:
The songs that through our valleys green,
Sent on from age to age,
Like his own river's voice, have been
The peasant's heritage.
The reaper sings them when the vale
Is fill'd with plumy sheaves;
The woodman, by the starlight pale,
Cheer'd homeward through the leaves:
And unto them the glancing oars
A joyous measure keep,
Where the dark rocks that crest our shores
Dash back the foaming deep.
So let it be! a light they shed
O'er each old fount and grove;

A memory of the gentle dead,
A lingering spell of love.
Murmuring the names of mighty men,
They bid our streams roll on,
And link high thoughts to every glen
Where valiant deeds were done.
Teach them your children round the hearth,
When evening fires burn clear,
And in the fields of harvest mirth,
And on the hills of deer.
So shall each unforgotten word,
When far those loved ones roam,
Call back the hearts which once it stirr’d,
To childhood’s holy home.
The green woods of their native land
Shall whisper in the strain,
The voices of their household band
Shall breathe their names again;
The heathery heights in vision rise,
Where, like the stag, they roved.
Sing to your sons those melodies,
The songs your fathers loved!

THE WORLD IN THE OPEN AIR.

Come, while in freshness and dew it lies,

To the world that is under the free blue skies!
Leave ye man’s home, and forget his care—
There breathes no sigh on the dayspring’s air.
Come to the woods, in whose mossy dells
A light, all made for the poet dwells—
A light, colour’d softly by tender leaves,
Whence the primrose a mellower glow receives.
The stock-dove is there in the beechen tree,
And the lulling tone of the honey-bee;
And the voice of cool waters midst feathery fern,
Shedding sweet sounds from some hidden urn.
There is life, there is youth, there is tameless mirth,
Where the streams, with the lilies they wear, have birth;
There is peace where the alders are whispering low:
Come from man’s dwellings with all their woe!
Yes! we will come—we will leave behind
The homes and the sorrows of human kind.
It is well to rove where the river leads
Its bright blue vein along sunny meads:
It is well through the rich wild woods to go,
And to pierce the haunts of the fawn and doe;
And to hear the gushing of gentle springs,
When the heart has been fretted by worldly stings;
And to watch the colours that flit and pass,

With insect-wings, through the wavy grass;
And the silvery gleams o’er the ash-tree’s bark,
Borne in with a breeze through the foliage dark.
Joyous and far shall our wanderings be,
As the flight of birds o’er the glittering sea:
To the woods, to the dingles where violets blow,
We will bear no memory of earthly woe.
But if, by the forest-brook, we meet
A line like the pathway of former feet;
If, midst the hills, in some lonely spot,
We reach the gray ruins of tower or cot;—
If the cell, where a hermit of old hath pray’d,
Lift up its cross through the solemn shade;
Or if some nook, where the wild flowers wave,
Bear token sad of a mortal grave,—
Doubt not but there will our steps be stay’d,
There our quick spirits awhile delay’d;
There will thought fix our impatient eyes,
And win back our hearts to their sympathies.
For what though the mountains and skies be fair,
Steep’d in soft hues of the summer air?
’Tis the soul of man, by its hopes and dreams,
That lights up all nature with living gleams.
Where it hath suffer’d and nobly striven,

Where it hath pour’d forth its vows to heaven;
Where to repose it hath brightly pass’d,
O’er this green earth there is glory cast.
And by that soul, midst groves and rills,
And flocks that feed on a thousand hills,
Birds of the forest, and flowers of the sod,
We, only we, may be link’d to God!

KINDRED HEARTS.

Oh! ask not, hope thou not too much
Of sympathy below!
Few are the hearts whence one same touch
Bids the sweet fountains flow—
Few, and by still conflicting powers
Forbidden here to meet:
Such ties would make this life of ours
Too fair for aught so fleet.
It may be that thy brother’s eye
Sees not as thine, which turns
In such deep reverence to the sky,
Where the rich sunset burns:
It may be that the breath of spring,
Born amidst violets lone,
A rapture o’er thy soul can bring—
A dream, to his unknown.

The tune that speaks of other times—
A sorrowful delight!
The melody of distant chimes,
The sound of waves by night,
The wind that, with so many a tone,
Some chord within can thrill,—
These may have language all thine own,
To him a mystery still.
Yet scorn thou not, for this, the true
And steadfast love of years;
The kindly, that from childhood grew,
The faithful to thy tears!
If there be one that o’er the dead
Hath in thy grief borne part,
And watch’d through sickness by thy bed,—
Call his a kindred heart!
But for those bonds all perfect made,
Wherein bright spirits blend,
Like sister flowers of one sweet shade
With the same breeze that bend—
For that full bliss of thought allied
Never to mortals given,
Oh! lay thy lovely dreams aside,
Or lift them unto heaven.

THE TRAVELLER AT THE SOURCE OF THE NILE.

In sunset's light, o'er Afric thrown,
A wanderer proudly stood
Beside the well-spring, deep and lone,
Of Egypt's awful flood—
The cradle of that mighty birth,
So long a hidden thing to earth!
He heard its life's first murmuring sound,
A low mysterious tone—
A music sought, but never found
By kings and warriors gone.
He listen'd—and his heart beat high:
That was the song of victory!
The rapture of a conqueror's mood
Rush'd burning through his frame,—
The depths of that green solitude
Its torrents could not tame;
Though stillness lay, with eve's last smile,
Round those far fountains of the Nile.
Night came with stars. Across his soul
There swept a sudden change:
E'en at the pilgrim's glorious goal,
A shadow dark and strange
Breathed from the thought, so swift to fall

O’er triumph’s hour—and is this all?[328]
No more than this! What seem’d it now
First by that spring to stand?
A thousand streams of lovelier flow
Bathed his own mountain-land!
Whence, far o’er waste and ocean track,
Their wild, sweet voices, call’d him back.
They call’d him back to many a glade,
His childhood’s haunt of play,
Where brightly through the beechen shade
Their waters glanced away;
They call’d him, with their sounding waves,
Back to his father’s hills and graves.
But, darkly mingling with the thought
Of each familiar scene,
Rose up a fearful vision, fraught
With all that lay between—
The Arab’s lance, the desert’s gloom,
The whirling sands, the red simoom!
Where was the glow of power and pride?
The spirit born to roam?
His alter’d heart within him died
With yearnings for his home!
All vainly struggling to repress

That gush of painful tenderness.

He wept! The stars of Afric’s heaven

Beheld his bursting tears,

E’en on that spot where fate had given

The meed of toiling years!—

O Happiness! how far we flee

Thine own sweet paths in search of thee!

[328] Bruce’s mingled feelings on arriving at the source of the Nile, are thus portrayed by him:—“I was, at that very moment, in possession of what had for many years been the principal object of my ambition and wishes; indifference, which, from the usual infirmity of human nature, follows, at least for a time, complete enjoyment, had taken place of it. The marsh and the fountains of the Nile, upon comparison with the rise of many of our rivers, became now a trifling object in my sight. I remembered that magnificent scene in my own native country, where the Tweed, Clyde, and Annan, rise in one hill. I began, in my sorrow, to treat the inquiry about the source of the Nile as a violent effort of a distempered fancy.”

CASABIANCA.[329]

The boy stood on the burning deck

Whence all but he had fled;

The flame that lit the battle’s wreck

Shone round him o’er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,

As born to rule the storm—

A creature of heroic blood,

A proud, though child-like form.

The flames roll’d on—he would not go
Without his father’s word;
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.
He call’d aloud:—“Say, father! say
If yet my task is done!”
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.
“Speak, father!” once again he cried,
“If I may yet be gone!”
And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames roll’d on.
Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair,
And look’d from that lone post of death
In still yet brave despair;
And shouted but once more aloud,
“My father! must I stay?”
While o’er him fast, through sail and shroud,
The wreathing fires made way.
They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And stream’d above the gallant child
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder-sound—

The boy—oh! where was he?

Ask of the winds that far around

With fragments strew’d the sea!—

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,

That well had borne their part;

But the noblest thing which perish’d there

Was that young faithful heart!

[329] Young Casabianca, a boy about thirteen years old, son to the Admiral of the Orient, remained at his post (in the Battle of the Nile) after the ship had taken fire, and all the guns had been abandoned; and perished in the explosion of the vessel, when the flames had reached the powder.

THE DIAL OF FLOWERS.[330]

’Twas a lovely thought to mark the hours,

As they floated in light away,

By the opening and the folding flowers,

That laugh to the summer’s day.

Thus had each moment its own rich hue,

And its graceful cup and bell,

In whose colour’d vase might sleep the dew,

Like a pearl in an ocean-shell.

To such sweet signs might the time have flow’d

In a golden current on,

Ere from the garden, man’s first abode,

The glorious guests were gone.

So might the days have been brightly told—

Those days of song and dreams—

When shepherds gather'd their flocks of old

By the blue Arcadian streams.

So in those isles of delight, that rest

Far off in a breezeless main,

Which many a bark, with a weary quest,

Has sought, but still in vain.

Yet is not life, in its real flight,

Mark'd thus—even thus—on earth,

By the closing of one hope's delight,

And another's gentle birth?

Oh! let us live, so that flower by flower,

Shutting in turn, may leave

A lingerer still for the sunset hour,

A charm for the shaded eve.

[330] This dial was, I believe, formed by Linnæus, and marked the hours by the opening and closing, at regular intervals, of the flowers arranged in it.

OUR DAILY PATHS.[331]

"Naught shall prevail against us, or disturb

Our cheerful faith that all which we behold

Is full of blessings." Wordsworth.

There's beauty all around our paths, if but our watchful eyes

Can trace it midst familiar things, and through their lowly guise;
We may find it where a hedgerow showers its blossoms o’er our way,
Or a cottage window sparkles forth in the last red light of day.
We may find it where a spring shines clear beneath an aged tree,
With the foxglove o’er the water’s glass, borne downwards by the bee;
Or where a swift and sunny gleam on the birchen stems is thrown,
As a soft wind playing parts the leaves, in copses green and lone.
We may find it in the winter boughs, as they cross the cold blue sky,
While soft on icy pool and stream their pencil’d shadows lie,
When we look upon their tracery, by the fairy frost-work bound,
Whence the flitting redbreast shakes a shower of crystals to the ground.
Yes! beauty dwells in all our paths—but sorrow too is there:
How oft some cloud within us dims the bright, still summer air!
When we carry our sick hearts abroad amidst the joyous things,
That through the leafy places glance on many-colour’d wings,
With shadows from the past we fill the happy woodland shades,
And a mournful memory of the dead is with us in the glades;
And our dream-like fancies lend the wind an echo’s plaintive tone
Of voices, and of melodies, and of silvery laughter gone.
But are we free to do even thus—to wander as we will,
Bearing sad visions through the grove, and o’er the breezy hill?
No! in our daily paths lie cares, that ofttimes bind us fast,
While from their narrow round we see the golden day fleet past.
They hold us from the woodlark’s haunts, and violet dingles, back,

And from all the lovely sounds and gleams in the shining river’s track;

They bar us from our heritage of spring-time, hope, and mirth,

And weigh our burden’d spirits down with the cumbering dust of earth.

Yet should this be? Too much, too soon, despondingly we yield!

A better lesson we are taught by the lilies of the field!

A sweeter by the birds of heaven—which tell us, in their flight,

Of One that through the desert air for ever guides them right.

Shall not this knowledge calm our hearts, and bid vain conflicts cease?

Ay, when they commune with themselves in holy hours of peace,

And feel that by the lights and clouds through which our pathway lies,

By the beauty and the grief alike, we are training for the skies!

[331] This little poem derives an additional interest from being affectingly associated with a name no less distinguished than that of the late Mr Dugald Stewart. The admiration he always expressed for Mrs Hemans’s poetry, was mingled with regret that she so generally made choice of melancholy subjects; and on one occasion, he sent her, through a mutual friend, a message suggestive of his wish that she would employ her fine talents in giving more consolatory views of the ways of Providence, thus infusing comfort and cheer into the bosoms of her readers, in a spirit of Christian philosophy, which, he thought, would be more consonant with the pious mind and loving heart displayed in every line she wrote, than dwelling on what was painful and depressing, however beautifully and touchingly such subjects might be treated of. This message was faithfully transmitted, and almost by return of post, Mrs Hemans (who was then residing in Wales) sent to the kind friend to whom it had been forwarded, the poem of “Our Daily Paths,” requesting it might be given to Mr Stewart, with an assurance of her gratitude for the interest he took in her writings, and alleging as the reason of the mournful strain which pervaded them,

“that a cloud hung over her life which she could not always rise above.”

The letter reached Mr Stewart just as he was stepping into the carriage, to leave his country residence (Kinneil House, the property of the Duke of Hamilton) for Edinburgh—the last time, alas! his presence was ever to gladden that happy home, as his valuable life was closed very shortly afterwards. The poem was read to him by his daughter, on his way to Edinburgh, and he expressed himself in the highest degree charmed and gratified with the result of his suggestions; and some of the lines which pleased him more particularly were often repeated to him during the few remaining weeks of his life.

THE CROSS IN THE WILDERNESS.

Silent and mournful sat an Indian chief,
In the red sunset, by a grassy tomb;
His eyes, that might not weep, were dark with grief,
And his arms folded in majestic gloom;
And his bow lay unstrung, beneath the mound
Which sanctified the gorgeous waste around.
For a pale cross above its greensward rose,
Telling the cedars and the pines that there
Man’s heart and hope had struggled with his woes,
And lifted from the dust a voice of prayer.
Now all was hush’d—and eve’s last splendour shone
With a rich sadness on th’ attesting stone.
There came a lonely traveller o’er the wild,
And he, too, paused in reverence by that grave,
Asking the tale of its memorial, piled

Between the forest and the lake’s bright wave;
Till, as a wind might stir a wither’d oak,
On the deep dream of age his accents broke.
And the gray chieftain, slowly rising, said—
“I listen’d for the words, which, years ago,
Pass’d o’er these waters. Though the voice is fled
Which made them as a singing fountain’s flow,
Yet, when I sit in their long-faded track,
Sometimes the forest’s murmur gives them back.
“Ask’st thou of him whose house is lone beneath?
I was an eagle in my youthful pride,
When o’er the seas he came, with summer’s breath,
To dwell amidst us, on the lake’s green side.
Many the times of flowers have been since then—
Many, but bringing naught like him again!
“Not with the hunter’s bow and spear he came,
O’er the blue hills to chase the flying roe;
Not the dark glory of the woods to tame,
Laying their cedars, like the corn-stalks, low;
But to spread tidings of all holy things,
Gladdening our souls, as with the morning’s wings.
“Doth not yon cypress whisper how we met,
I and my brethren that from earth are gone,
Under its boughs to hear his voice, which yet

Seems through their gloom to send a silvery tone?
He told of One the grave’s dark bonds who broke,
And our hearts burn’d within us as he spoke.
“He told of far and sunny lands, which lie
Beyond the dust wherein our fathers dwell:
Bright must they be! for there are none that die,
And none that weep, and none that say ‘Farewell!’
He came to guide us thither; but away
The Happy call’d him, and he might not stay.
“We saw him slowly fade—athirst, perchance,
For the fresh waters of that lovely clime;
Yet was there still a sunbeam in his glance,
And on his gleaming hair no touch of time—
Therefore we hoped: but now the lake looks dim,
For the green summer comes—and finds not him!
“We gather’d round him in the dewy hour
Of one still morn, beneath his chosen tree;
From his clear voice, at first, the words of power
Came low, like moanings of a distant sea;
But swell’d and shook the wilderness ere long,
As if the spirit of the breeze grew strong.
“And then once more they trembled on his tongue,
And his white eyelids flutter’d, and his head
Fell back, and mist upon his forehead hung——

Know’st thou not how we pass to join the dead?
It is enough! he sank upon my breast—
Our friend that loved us, he was gone to rest!
“We buried him where he was wont to pray,
By the calm lake, e’en here, at eventide;
We rear’d this cross in token where he lay,
For on the cross, he said, his Lord had died!
Now hath he surely reach’d, o’er mount and wave,
That flowery land whose green turf hides no grave.
“But I am sad! I mourn the clear light taken
Back from my people, o’er whose place it shone,
The pathway to the better shore forsaken,
And the true words forgotten, save by one,
Who hears them faintly sounding from the past,
Mingled with death-songs in each fitful blast.”
Then spoke the wanderer forth with kindling eye:
“Son of the wilderness! despair thou not,
Though the bright hour may seem to thee gone by,
And the cloud settled o’er thy nation’s lot!
Heaven darkly works—yet, where the seed hath been,
There shall the fruitage, glowing yet, be seen.
“Hope on, hope ever!—by the sudden springing
Of green leaves which the winter hid so long;
And by the bursts of free, triumphant singing,

After cold silent months the woods among;

And by the rending of the frozen chains,

Which bound the glorious rivers on their plains.

“Deem not the words of light that here were spoken,

But as a lovely song, to leave no trace;

Yet shall the gloom which wraps thy hills be broken,

And the full dayspring rise upon thy race!

And fading mists the better path disclose,

And the wide desert blossom as the rose.”

So by the cross they parted, in the wild,

Each fraught with musings for life’s after day,

Memories to visit one, the forest’s child,

By many a blue stream in its lonely way;

And upon one, midst busy throngs to press

Deep thoughts and sad, yet full of holiness.

[“‘The Cross in the Wilderness,’ by Mrs Hemans, is in every way worthy of her delightful genius; and nothing but want of room prevents us from quoting it entire. Mrs Hemans is, indeed, the star that shines most brightly in the hemisphere; and in every thing she writes, there is, along with a fine spirit of poetry, a still finer spirit of moral and religious truth. Of all the female poets of the day, Mrs Hemans is, in the best sense of the word, the most truly feminine—no false glitter about her—no ostentatious display—no gaudy and jingling ornaments—but, as an English matron ought to be, simple, sedate, cheerful, elegant, and religious.”—Professor Wilson in Blackwood’s Magazine. Dec. 1826.

LAST RITES.

By the mighty minster’s bell,

Tolling with a sudden swell;

By the colours half-mast high,

O’er the sea hung mournfully;

Know, a prince hath died!

By the drum’s dull muffled sound,

By the arms that sweep the ground,

By the volleying muskets’ tone,

Speak ye of a soldier gone

In his manhood’s pride.

By the chanted psalm that fills

Reverently the ancient hills,[332]

Learn, that from his harvests done,

Peasants hear a brother on

To his last repose.

By the pall of snowy white

Through the yew-trees gleaming bright;

By the garland on the bier,

Weep! a maiden claims thy tear—

Broken is the rose!

Which is the tenderest rite of all?—

Buried virgin’s coronal,

Requiem o’er the monarch’s head,

Farewell gun for warrior dead,

Herdsman’s funeral hymn?

Tells not each of human woe?

Each of hope and strength brought low?

Number each with holy things,

If one chastening thought it brings

Ere life’s day grow dim!

[332] A custom still retained at rural funerals in some parts of England and Wales.

THE HEBREW MOTHER.[333]

The rose was in rich bloom on Sharon’s plain,

When a young mother, with her first-born, thence

Went up to Zion; for the boy was vow’d

Unto the Temple service. By the hand

She led him, and her silent soul, the while,

Oft as the dewy laughter of his eye

Met her sweet serious glance, rejoiced to think

That aught so pure, so beautiful was hers,

To bring before her God. So pass’d they on

O’er Judah’s hills; and wheresoe’er the leaves

Of the broad sycamore made sounds at noon,

Like lulling rain-drops, or the olive boughs,

With their cool dimness, cross’d the sultry blue

Of Syria’s heaven, she paused, that he might rest;

Yet from her own meek eyelids chased the sleep

That weigh’d their dark fringe down, to sit and watch

The crimson deepening o’er his cheek’s repose,
As at a red flower’s heart. And where a fount
Lay, like a twilight star, midst palmy shades,
Making its bank green gems along the wild,
There, too, she linger’d, from the diamond wave
Drawing bright water for his rosy lips,
And softly parting clusters of jet curls
To bathe his brow. At last the fane was reach’d,
The earth’s one sanctuary—and rapture hush’d
Her bosom, as before her, through the day,
It rose, a mountain of white marble, steep’d
In light like floating gold. But when that hour
Waned to the farewell moment, when the boy
Lifted, through rainbow-gleaming tears, his eye
Beseechingly to hers, and half in fear,
Turn’d from the white-robed priest, and round her arm
Clung even as joy clings—the deep spring-tide
Of nature then swell’d high, and o’er her child
Bending, her soul broke forth in mingled sounds
Of weeping and sad song. “Alas!” she cried,—
“Alas! my boy, thy gentle grasp is on me,
The bright tears quiver in thy pleading eyes;
And now fond thoughts arise,
And silver cords again to earth have won me,

And like a vine thou claspest my full heart—
How shall I hence depart?
“How the lone paths retrace where thou wert playing
So late, along the mountains, at my side?
And I, in joyous pride,
By every place of flowers my course delaying,
Wove, e’en as pearls, the lilies round thy hair,
Beholding thee so fair!
“And, oh! the home whence thy bright smile hath parted,
Will it not seem as if the sunny day
Turn’d from its door away?
While through its chambers wandering, weary-hearted,
I languish for thy voice, which past me still
Went like a singing rill?
“Under the palm-trees thou no more shalt meet me,
When from the fount at evening I return,
With the full water-urn;
Nor will thy sleep’s low dove-like breathings greet me,
As midst the silence of the stars I wake,
And watch for thy dear sake.
“And thou, will slumber’s dewy cloud fall round thee,
Without thy mother’s hand to smooth thy bed?
Wilt thou not vainly spread
Thine arms, when darkness as a veil hath wound thee,

To fold my neck, and lift up, in thy fear,

A cry which none shall hear?

“What have I said, my child! Will He not hear thee,

Who the young ravens heareth from their nest?

Shall He not guard thy rest,

And, in the hush of holy midnight near thee,

Breathe o’er thy soul, and fill its dreams with joy?

Thou shalt sleep soft, my boy.

“I give thee to thy God—the God that gave thee,

A well-spring of deep gladness to my heart!

And, precious as thou art,

And pure as dew of Hermon, He shall have thee,

My own, my beautiful, my undefiled!

And thou shalt be His child.

“Therefore, farewell! I go—my soul may fail me,

As the hart panteth for the water brooks,

Yearning for thy sweet looks.

But thou, my first-born, droop not, nor bewail me;

Thou in the Shadow of the Rock shalt dwell,

The Rock of Strength.—Farewell!”

[333] “It is long since we have read any thing more beautiful than the following poem by Mrs Hemans.”—Blackwood’s Magazine. Jan. 1826.

[“It would be wearisomely superfluous to enumerate the long series of lyrics which she now poured forth with increasing earnestness and rapidity, and without which

none of the lighter periodicals of the day made its appearance. One or two, however, must be mentioned, as certain to survive so long as the short poem shall be popular in England. ‘The Treasures of the Deep,’ ‘The Hour of Death,’ ‘The Graves of a Household,’ ‘The Cross in the Wilderness,’ are all admirable. With these, too, may be mentioned those poems in which a short descriptive recitative (to borrow a word from the opera) introduces a lyrical burst of passion or regret, or lamentation. This form of composition became so especially popular in America, that hardly a poet has arisen, since the influence of Mrs Hemans’ genius made itself felt on the other side of the Atlantic, who has not attempted something of a similar subject and construction. ‘The Hebrew Mother’ has been followed by an infinite number of sketches from Scripture: this lyric, too, should be particularised as having made friends for its authoress among those of the ancient faith in England. Among the last strangers who visited her, eager to thank her for the pleasure her writings had afforded them, were a Jewish gentleman and lady, who entreated to be admitted by the author of the ‘Hebrew Mother.’”—Chorley’s Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 114-15.

“Her ‘Voice of Spring,’ her ‘Hour of Death,’ her ‘Treasures of the Deep,’ her ‘Graves of a Household,’ her ‘England’s Dead,’ her ‘Trumpet,’ her ‘Hebrew Mother,’ and a host of similar pieces—these are the undying lays, the lumps of pure gold. We do not think thus with reference to Mrs Hemans’ lyrics only; it strikes us that nearly all our present poets must depend for future fame on their shorter pieces.”—Literary Magnet, 1826.]

THE WRECK.

All night the booming minute-gun

Had peal’d along the deep,

And mournfully the rising sun

Look’d o’er the tide-worn steep.

A bark from India’s coral strand,

Before the raging blast,

Had vail’d her topsails to the sand,

And bow’d her noble mast.

The queenly ship!—brave hearts had striven,

And true ones died with her!

We saw her mighty cable riven,

Like floating gossamer.

We saw her proud flag struck that morn—

A star once o’er the seas,—

Her anchor gone, her deck uptorn,

And sadder things than these!

We saw her treasures cast away,

The rocks with pearls were sown;

And, strangely sad, the ruby’s ray

Flash’d out o’er fretted stone.

And gold was strewn the wet sands o’er,

Like ashes by a breeze;

And gorgeous robes—but oh! that shore

Had sadder things than these!

We saw the strong man still and low,

A crush’d reed thrown aside;

Yet, by that rigid lip and brow,

Not without strife he died.
And near him on the sea-weed lay—
Till then we had not wept—
But well our gushing hearts might say,
That there a mother slept!
For her pale arms a babe had press'd
With such a wreathing grasp,
Billows had dash'd o'er that fond breast,
Yet not undone the clasp.
Her very tresses had been flung
To wrap the fair child's form,
Where still their wet long streamers hung
All tangled by the storm.
And beautiful, midst that wild scene,
Gleam'd up the boy's dead face,
Like slumber's, trustingly serene,
In melancholy grace.
Deep in her bosom lay his head,
With half-shut violet-eye—
He had known little of her dread,
Naught of her agony!
O human love! whose yearning heart,
Through all things vainly true,
So stamps upon thy mortal part

Its passionate adieu—

Surely thou hast another lot:

There is some home for thee,

Where thou shalt rest, remembering not

The moaning of the sea!

THE TRUMPET.[334]

The trumpet’s voice hath roused the land—

Light up the beacon pyre!

A hundred hills have seen the brand,

And waved the sign of fire.

A hundred banners to the breeze

Their gorgeous folds have cast—

And, hark! was that the sound of seas?

A king to war went past.

The chief is arming in his hall,

The peasant by his hearth;

The mourner hears the thrilling call,

And rises from the earth.

The mother on her first-born son

Looks with a boding eye—

They come not back, though all be won,

Whose young hearts leap so high.

The bard hath ceased his song, and bound

The falchion to his side;

E’en, for the marriage altar crown’d,

The lover quits his bride.

And all this haste, and change, and fear,

By earthly clarion spread!—

How will it be when kingdoms hear

The blast that wakes the dead?

[334] “We cannot refrain quoting another poem by the same distinguished writer. It has something sublime.”—Blackwood’s Magazine, Jan. 1826.

EVENING PRAYER, AT A GIRLS’ SCHOOL.

“Now in thy youth, beseech of Him

Who giveth, upbraiding not,

That His light in thy heart become not dim,

And his love be unforgot;

And thy God, in the darkest of days, will be

Greenness, and beauty, and strength to thee.”

Bernard Barton.

Hush! ’tis a holy hour. The quiet room

Seems like a temple, while yon soft lamp sheds

A faint and starry radiance, through the gloom

And the sweet stillness, down on fair young heads,

With all their clustering locks, untouch’d by care,

And bow’d, as flowers are bow’d with night, in prayer.

Gaze on—’tis lovely! Childhood’s lip and cheek,

Mantling beneath its earnest brow of thought!

Gaze—yet what seest thou in those fair, and meek,
And fragile things, as but for sunshine wrought?—
Thou seest what grief must nurture for the sky,
What death must fashion for eternity!
O joyous creatures! that will sink to rest
Lightly, when those pure orisons are done
As birds with slumber's honey-dew opprest,
Midst the dim folded leaves, at set of sun—
Lift up your hearts! though yet no sorrow lies
Dark in the summer-heaven of those clear eyes.
Though fresh within your breasts th' untroubled springs
Of hope make melody where'er ye tread,
And o'er your sleep bright shadows, from the wings
Of spirits visiting but youth, be spread;
Yet in those flute-like voices, mingling low,
Is woman's tenderness—how soon her woe!
Her lot is on you—silent tears to weep,
And patient smiles to wear through suffering's hour,
And sumless riches, from affection's deep,
To pour on broken reeds—a wasted shower!
And to make idols, and to find them clay,
And to bewail that worship. Therefore pray!
Her lot is on you—to be found untired,
Watching the stars out by the bed of pain,

With a pale cheek, and yet a brow inspired,
And a true heart of hope, though hope be vain;
Meekly to bear with wrong, to cheer decay,
And, oh! to love through all things. Therefore pray!
And take the thought of this calm vesper time,
With its low murmuring sounds and silvery light,
On through the dark days fading from their prime,
As a sweet dew to keep your souls from blight!
Earth will forsake—Oh! happy to have given
Th' unbroken heart's first fragrance unto heaven.

THE HOUR OF DEATH.

"Il est dans la Nature d'aimer à se livrer à l'idée même qu'on redoute."—Corinne.

Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!
Day is for mortal care,
Eve, for glad meetings round the joyous hearth,
Night, for the dreams of sleep, the voice of prayer—
But all for thee, thou mightiest of the earth.
The banquet hath its hour—
Its feverish hour, of mirth, and song, and wine;
There comes a day for grief's o'erwhelming power,
A time for softer tears—but all are thine.

Youth and the opening rose
May look like things too glorious for decay,
And smile at thee—but thou art not of those
That wait the ripen’d bloom to seize their prey.
Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind’s breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!
We know when moons shall wane,
When summer birds from far shall cross the sea,
When autumn’s hue shall tinge the golden grain—
But who shall teach us when to look for thee!
Is it when spring’s first gale
Comes forth to whisper where the violets lie?
Is it when roses in our paths grow pale?—
They have one season—all are ours to die!
Thou art where billows foam,
Thou art where music melts upon the air;
Thou art around us in our peaceful home,
And the world calls us forth—and thou art there.
Thou art where friend meets friend,
Beneath the shadow of the elm to rest—
Thou art where foe meets foe, and trumpets rend
The skies, and swords beat down the princely crest.

Leaves have their time to fall,

And flowers to wither at the north wind’s breath,

And stars to set—but all—

Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!

THE LOST PLEIAD.

“Like the lost Pleiad seen no more below.”—Byron.

And is there glory from the heavens departed?

O void unmark’d!—thy sisters of the sky

Still hold their place on high,

Though from its rank thine orb so long hath started,

Thou, that no more art seen of mortal eye!

Hath the night lost a gem, the regal night?

She wears her crown of old magnificence,

Though thou art exiled thence—

No desert seems to part those urns of light,

Midst the far depths of purple gloom intense.

They rise in joy, the starry myriads burning—

The shepherd greets them on his mountains free;

And from the silvery sea

To them the sailor’s wakeful eye is turning—

Unchanged they rise, they have not mourn’d for thee.

Couldst thou be shaken from thy radiant place,

Even as a dew-drop from the myrtle spray,

Swept by the wind away?

Wert thou not peopled by some glorious race,
And was there power to smite them with decay?
Why, who shall talk of thrones, of sceptres riven?
Bow’d be our hearts to think on what we are,
When from its height afar
A world sinks thus—and yon majestic heaven
Shines not the less for that one vanish’d star!

THE CLIFFS OF DOVER.

“The inviolate Island of the sage and free.”—Byron.

Rocks of my country! let the cloud
Your crested heights array,
And rise ye like a fortress proud
Above the surge and spray!
My spirit greets you as ye stand,
Breasting the billow’s foam:
Oh! thus for ever guard the land,
The sever’d land of home!
I have left rich blue skies behind,
Lighting up classic shrines,
And music in the southern wind,
And sunshine on the vines.
The breathings of the myrtle flowers
Have floated o’er my way;
The pilgrim’s voice, at vesper hours,

Hath soothed me with its lay.
The isles of Greece, the hills of Spain,
The purple heavens of Rome—
Yes, all are glorious,—yet again
I bless thee, land of home!
For thine the Sabbath peace, my land!
And thine the guarded hearth;
And thine the dead—the noble band,
That make thee holy earth.
Their voices meet me in thy breeze,
Their steps are on thy plains;
Their names, by old majestic trees,
Are whisper'd round thy fanes.
Their blood hath mingled with the tide
Of thine exulting sea;
Oh, be it still a joy, a pride,
To live and die for thee!

THE GRAVES OF MARTYRS.

The kings of old have shrine and tomb
In many a minster's haughty gloom;
And green, along the ocean side,
The mounds arise where heroes died;
But show me, on thy flowery breast,
Earth! where thy nameless martyrs rest!

The thousands that, uncheer’d by praise,
Have made one offering of their days;
For Truth, for Heaven, for Freedom’s sake,
Resign’d the bitter cup to take;
And silently, in fearless faith,
Bowing their noble souls to death.
Where sleep they, Earth? By no proud stone
Their narrow couch of rest is known;
The still sad glory of their name
Hallows no fountain unto Fame;
No—not a tree the record bears
Of their deep thoughts and lonely prayers.
Yet haply all around lie strew’d
The ashes of that multitude:
It may be that each day we tread
Where thus devoted hearts have bled;
And the young flowers our children sow,
Take root in holy dust below.
Oh, that the many-rustling leaves,
Which round our homes the summer weaves,
Or that the streams, in whose glad voice
Our own familiar paths rejoice,
Might whisper through the starry sky,
To tell where those blest slumberers lie!

Would not our inmost hearts be still’d,
With knowledge of their presence fill’d,
And by its breathings taught to prize
The meekness of self-sacrifice?
—But the old woods and sounding waves
Are silent of those hidden graves.
Yet what if no light footstep there
In pilgrim-love and awe repair,
So let it be! Like him, whose clay
Deep buried by his Maker lay,
They sleep in secret,—but their sod,
Unknown to man, is mark’d of God!

THE HOUR OF PRAYER.

“Pregar, pregar, pregar,
Ch’ altro ponno i mortali al pianger nati?” Alfieri.

Child, amidst the flowers at play,
While the red light fades away;
Mother, with thine earnest eye
Ever following silently;
Father, by the breeze of eve
Call’d thy harvest-work to leave—
Pray: ere yet the dark hours be,
Lift the heart and bend the knee!
Traveller, in the stranger’s land,

Far from thine own household band;

Mourner, haunted by the tone

Of a voice from this world gone;

Captive, in whose narrow cell

Sunshine hath not leave to dwell;

Sailor on the darkening sea—

Lift the heart and bend the knee!

Warrior, that from battle won

Breathest now at set of sun;

Woman, o’er the lowly slain

Weeping on his burial-plain;

Ye that triumph, ye that sigh,

Kindred by one holy tie,

Heaven’s first star alike ye see—

Lift the heart and bend the knee!

THE VOICE OF HOME TO THE PRODIGAL.

“Von Baumen, aus Wellen, aus Mauern,

Wie ruft es dir freundlich und lind;

Was hast du zu wandern, zu trauern?

Komm’ spielen, du freundliches Kind!”

La Motte Fouque.

Oh! when wilt thou return

To thy spirit’s early loves?

To the freshness of the morn,

To the stillness of the groves?
The summer birds are calling
Thy household porch around,
And the merry waters falling
With sweet laughter in their sound.
And a thousand bright-vein’d flowers,
From their banks of moss and fern,
Breathe of the sunny hours—
But when wilt thou return?
Oh! thou hast wander’d long
From thy home without a guide;
And thy native woodland song
In thine alter’d heart hath died.
Thou hast flung the wealth away,
And the glory of thy spring;
And to thee the leaves’ light play
Is a long-forgotten thing.
But when wilt thou return?—
Sweet dews may freshen soon
The flower, within whose urn
Too fiercely gazed the noon.
O’er the image of the sky,
Which the lake’s clear bosom wore,
Darkly may shadows lie—

But not for evermore.

Give back thy heart again

To the freedom of the woods,

To the birds’ triumphant strain,

To the mountain solitudes!

But when wilt thou return?

Along thine own pure air

There are young sweet voices borne—

Oh! should not thine be there?

Still at thy father’s board

There is kept a place for thee;

And, by thy smile restored,

Joy round the hearth shall be.

Still hath thy mother’s eye,

Thy coming step to greet,

A look of days gone by,

Tender and gravely sweet.

Still, when the prayer is said,

For thee kind bosoms yearn,

For thee fond tears are shed—

Oh! when wilt thou return?

THE WAKENING.

How many thousands are wakening now!

Some to the songs from the forest bough,

To the rustling of leaves at the lattice pane,
To the chiming fall of the early rain.
And some, far out on the deep mid-sea,
To the dash of the waves in their foaming glee,
As they break into spray on the ship’s tall side,
That holds through the tumult her path of pride.
And some—oh, well may their hearts rejoice!—
To the gentle sound of a mother’s voice:
Long shall they yearn for that kindly tone,
When from the board and the hearth ’tis gone.
And some, in the camp, to the bugle’s breath,
And the tramp of the steed on the echoing heath,
And the sudden roar of the hostile gun,
Which tells that a field must ere night be won.
And some, in the gloomy convict cell,
To the dull deep note of the warning bell,
As it heavily calls them forth to die,
When the bright sun mounts in the laughing sky.
And some to the peal of the hunter’s horn,
And some to the din from the city borne,
And some to the rolling of torrent floods,
Far midst old mountains and solemn woods.
So are we roused on this checker’d earth:
Each unto light hath a daily birth;

Though fearful or joyous, though sad or sweet,

Are the voices which first our upspringing meet.

But one must the sound be, and one the call,

Which from the dust shall awaken us all:

One!—but to sever’d and distant dooms,

How shall the sleepers arise from the tombs?

THE BREEZE FROM SHORE.

[“Poetry reveals to us the loveliness of nature, brings back the freshness of youthful feeling, revives the relish of simple pleasures, keeps unquenched the enthusiasm which warmed the spring-time of our being, refines youthful love, strengthens our interest in human nature, by vivid delineations of its tenderest and loftiest feelings; and, through the brightness of its prophetic visions, helps faith to lay hold on the future life.”—Channing.]

Joy is upon the lonely seas,

When Indian forests pour

Forth, to the billow and the breeze,

Their odours from the shore;

Joy, when the soft air’s fanning sigh

Bears on the breath of Araby.

Oh! welcome are the winds that tell

A wanderer of the deep

Where, far away, the jasmines dwell,

And where the myrrh-trees weep!

Blest on the sounding surge and foam

Are tidings of the citron’s home!
The sailor at the helm they meet,
And hope his bosom stirs,
Upspringing, midst the waves, to greet
The fair earth’s messengers,
That woo him, from the moaning main,
Back to her glorious bowers again.
They woo him, whispering lovely tales
Of many a flowering glade,
And fount’s bright gleam, in island vales
Of golden-fruited shade:
Across his lone ship’s wake they bring
A vision and a glow of spring.
And, O ye masters of the lay!
Come not even thus your songs
That meet us on life’s weary way,
Amidst her toiling throngs?
Yes! o’er the spirit thus they bear
A current of celestial air.
Their power is from the brighter clime
That in our birth hath part;
Their tones are of the world, which time
Sears not within the heart:
They tell us of the living light

In its green places ever bright.

They call us, with a voice divine,

Back to our early love,—

Our vows of youth at many a shrine,

Whence far and fast we rove.

Welcome high thought and holy strain

That make us Truth’s and Heaven’s again!

THE DYING IMPROVISATORE.[335]

“My heart shall be pour’d over thee—and break.”

Prophecy of Dante.

The spirit of my land,

It visits me once more!—though I must die

Far from the myrtles which thy breeze hath fann’d,

My own bright Italy!

It is, it is thy breath,

Which stirs my soul e’en yet, as wavering flame

Is shaken by the wind,—in life and death

Still trembling, yet the same!

Oh! that love’s quenchless power

Might waft my voice to fill thy summer sky,

And through thy groves its dying music shower,

Italy! Italy!

The nightingale is there,

The sunbeam’s glow, the citron flower’s perfume,

The south wind’s whisper in the scented air—
It will not pierce the tomb!
Never, oh! never more,
On thy Rome’s purple heaven mine eye shall dwell,
Or watch the bright waves melt along thy shore—
My Italy! farewell!
Alas!—thy hills among
Had I but left a memory of my name,
Of love and grief one deep, true, fervent song,
Unto immortal fame!
But like a lute’s brief tone,
Like a rose-odour on the breezes cast,
Like a swift flush of dayspring, seen and gone,
So hath my spirit pass’d—
Pouring itself away
As a wild bird amidst the foliage turns
That which within him triumphs, beats, or burns,
Into a fleeting lay;
That swells, and floats, and dies,
Leaving no echo to the summer woods
Of the rich breathings and impassion’d sighs
Which thrill’d their solitudes.
Yet, yet remember me!
Friends! that upon its murmurs oft have hung,

When from my bosom, joyously and free,

The fiery fountain sprung.

Under the dark rich blue

Of midnight heavens, and on the star-lit sea,

And when woods kindle into spring's first hue,

Sweet friends! remember me!

And in the marble halls,

Where life's full glow the dreams of beauty wear,

And poet-thoughts embodied light the walls,

Let me be with you there!

Fain would I bind, for you,

My memory with all glorious things to dwell!

Fain bid all lovely sounds my name renew—

Sweet friends! bright land! farewell!

[335] Sestini, the Roman Improvisatore, when on his deathbed at Paris, is said to have poured forth a Farewell to Italy, in his most impassioned poetry.

MUSIC OF YESTERDAY.

"O! mein Geist, ich fuhle es in mir, strebt nach etwas Ueberirdischem, das keinem Menschen gegonnt ist."—Tieck

The chord, the harp's full chord is hush'd,

The voice hath died away,

Whence music, like sweet waters, gush'd

But yesterday.

Th' awakening note, the breeze-like swell.

The full o’ersweeping tone,

The sounds that sigh’d “Farewell, farewell!”

Are gone—all gone!

The love, whose fervent spirit pass’d

With the rich measure’s flow;

The grief, to which it sank at last—

Where are they now?

They are with the scents by summer’s breath

Borne from a rose now shed:

With the words from lips long seal’d in death—

For ever fled.

The sea-shell of its native deep

A moaning thrill retains;

But earth and air no record keep

Of parted strains.

And all the memories, all the dreams,

They woke in floating by;

The tender thoughts, th’ Elysian gleams—

Could these too die?

They died! As on the water’s breast

The ripple melts away,

When the breeze that stirr’d it sinks to rest—

So perish’d they!

Mysterious in their sudden birth,

And mournful in their close,
Passing, and finding not on earth
Aim or repose.
Whence were they?—like the breath of flowers
Why thus to come and go?
A long, long journey must be ours
Ere this we know!

THE FORSAKEN HEARTH.

“Was mir fehlt?—Mir fehlt ja alles,
Bin so ganz verlassen hier!”
Tyrolese Melody.

The Hearth, the Hearth is desolate! the fire is quench’d and gone
That into happy children’s eyes once brightly laughing shone;
The place where mirth and music met is hush’d through day and night.
Oh! for one kind, one sunny face, of all that there made light!
But scatter’d are those pleasant smiles afar by mount and shore,
Like gleaming waters from one spring dispersed to meet no more.
Those kindred eyes reflect not now each other’s joy or mirth,
Unbound is that sweet wreath of home—alas! the lonely hearth!
The voices that have mingled here now speak another tongue,
Or breathe, perchance, to alien ears the songs their mother sung.
Sad, strangely sad, in stranger lands, must sound each household tone:
The hearth, the hearth is desolate! the bright fire quench’d and gone!
But are they speaking, singing yet, as in their days of glee?

Those voices, are they lovely still, still sweet on earth or sea?
Oh! some are hush’d, and some are changed, and never shall one strain
Blend their fraternal cadences triumphantly again.
And of the hearts that here were link’d by long-remember’d years,
Alas! the brother knows not now when fall the sister’s tears!
One haply revels at the feast, while one may droop alone:
For broken is the household chain, the bright fire quench’d and gone!
Not so—’tis not a broken chain: thy memory binds them still,
Thou holy hearth of other days! though silent now and chill.
The smiles, the tears, the rites, beheld by thine attesting stone,
Have yet a living power to mark thy children for thine own.
The father’s voice, the mother’s prayer, though call’d from earth away,
With music rising from the dead, their spirits yet shall sway;
And by the past, and by the grave, the parted yet are one,
Though the loved hearth be desolate, the bright fire quench’d and gone!

THE DREAMER.

“There is no such thing as forgetting, possible to the mind; a thousand accidents may, and will, interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscription on the mind; but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains for ever.”

English Opium-Eater.

“Thou hast been call’d, O sleep! the friend of woe,
But ’tis the happy who have call’d thee so.” Southey.

Peace to thy dreams! thou art slumbering now—

The moonlight’s calm is upon thy brow;
All the deep love that o’erflows thy breast
Lies midst the hush of thy heart at rest—
Like the scent of a flower in its folded bell,
When eve through the woodlands hath sigh’d farewell.
Peace! The sad memories that through the day
With a weight on thy lonely bosom lay,
The sudden thoughts of the changed and dead,
That bow’d thee as winds bow the willow’s head,
The yearnings for faces and voices gone—
All are forgotten! Sleep on, sleep on!
Are they forgotten? It is not so!
Slumber divides not the heart from its woe.
E’en now o’er thine aspect swift changes pass,
Like lights and shades over wavy grass:
Tremblest thou, Dreamer? O love and grief!
Ye have storms that shake e’en the closed-up leaf!
On thy parted lips there’s a quivering thrill,
As on a lyre ere its chords are still;
On the long silk lashes that fringe thine eye,
There’s a large tear gathering heavily—
A rain from the clouds of thy spirit press’d:
Sorrowful Dreamer! this is not rest!
It is Thought at work amidst buried hours—

It is Love keeping vigil o’er perish’d flowers.

—Oh, we bear within us mysterious things!

Of Memory and Anguish, unfathom’d springs;

And Passion—those gulfs of the heart to fill

With bitter waves, which it ne’er may still.

Well might we pause ere we gave them sway,

Flinging the peace of our couch away!

Well might we look on our souls in fear—

They find no fount of oblivion here!

They forget not, the mantle of sleep beneath—

How know we if under the wings of death?

THE WINGS OF THE DOVE.

“Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.”—Psalm lv.

Oh, for thy wings, thou dove!

Now sailing by with sunshine on thy breast;

That, borne like thee above,

I too might flee away, and be at rest!

Where wilt thou fold those plumes,

Bird of the forest-shadows, holiest bird?

In what rich leafy glooms,

By the sweet voice of hidden waters stirr’d?

Over what blessed home,

What roof with dark, deep summer foliage crown’d,

O fair as ocean’s foam!
Shall thy bright bosom shed a gleam around?
Or seek’st thou some old shrine
Of nymph or saint, no more by votary woo’d,
Though still, as if divine,
Breathing a spirit o’er the solitude?
Yet wherefore ask thy way?
Blest, ever blest, whate’er its aim, thou art!
Unto the greenwood spray,
Bearing no dark remembrance at thy heart!
No echoes that will blend
A sadness with the whispers of the grove;
No memory of a friend
Far off, or dead, or changed to thee, thou dove!
Oh! to some cool recess
Take, take me with thee on the summer wind,
Leaving the weariness
And all the fever of this life behind:
The aching and the void
Within the heart, whereunto none reply,
The young bright hopes destroy’d—
Bird! bear me with thee through the sunny sky!
Wild wish, and longing vain,
And brief upspringing to be glad and free!

Go to thy woodland reign:

My soul is bound and held—I may not flee.

For even by all the fears

And thoughts that haunt my dreams—untold, unknown,

And burning woman's tears,

Pour'd from mine eyes in silence and alone;

Had I thy wings, thou dove!

High midst the gorgeous isles of cloud to soar,

Soon the strong cords of love

Would draw me earthwards—homewards—yet once more.

PSYCHE BORNE BY ZEPHYRS TO THE ISLAND OF PLEASURE.[336]

"Souvent l'ame, fortifiée par la contemplation des choses divines, voudroit déployer ses ailes vers le ciel. Elle croit qu'au terme de sa carrière un rideau va se lever pour lui découvrir des scènes de lumière: mais quand la mort touche son corps périssable, elle jette un regard en arrière vers les plaisirs terrestres et vers ses compagnes mortelles."

Schlegel, translated by Madame de Stael.

Fearfully and mournfully

Thou bidd'st the earth farewell;

And yet thou'rt passing, loveliest one!

In a brighter land to dwell.

Ascend, ascend rejoicing!

The sunshine of that shore

Around thee, as a glorious robe,

Shall stream for evermore.

The breezy music wandering

There through th’ Elysian sky,

Hath no deep tone that seems to float

From a happier time gone by.

And there the day’s last crimson

Gives no sad memories birth,

No thought of dead or distant friends,

Or partings—as on earth.

Yet fearfully and mournfully

Thou bidd’st that earth farewell,

Although thou’rt passing, loveliest one!

In a brighter land to dwell.

A land where all is deathless—

The sunny wave’s repose,

The wood with its rich melodies,

The summer and its rose:

A land that sees no parting,

That hears no sound of sighs,

That waits thee with immortal air—

Lift, lift those anxious eyes!

Oh! how like thee, thou trembler!

Man’s spirit fondly clings

With timid love, to this, its world

Of old familiar things!

We pant, we thirst for fountains

That gush not here below!

On, on we toil, allured by dreams

Of the living water’s flow:

We pine for kindred natures

To mingle with our own;

For communings more full and high

Than aught by mortal known:

We strive with brief aspirings

Against our bonds in vain;

Yet summon’d to be free at last,

We shrink—and clasp our chain;

And fearfully and mournfully

We bid the earth farewell,

Though passing from its mists, like thee,

In a brighter world to dwell.

[336] Written for a picture in which Psyche, on her flight upwards, is represented looking back sadly and anxiously to the earth.

THE BOON OF MEMORY.

“Many things answered me.”—Manfred.

I go, I go!—and must mine image fade

From the green spots wherein my childhood play’d,

By my own streams?

Must my life part from each familiar place,
As a bird’s song, that leaves the woods no trace
Of its lone themes?
Will the friend pass my dwelling, and forget
The welcomes there, the hours when we have met
In grief or glee?
All the sweet counsel, the communion high,
The kindly words of trust, in days gone by,
Pour’d full and free?
A boon, a talisman, O Memory! give,
To shrine my name in hearts where I would live
For evermore!
Bid the wind speak of me where I have dwelt,
Bid the stream’s voice, of all my soul hath felt,
A thought restore!
In the rich rose, whose bloom I loved so well,
In the dim brooding violet of the dell,
Set deep that thought;
And let the sunset’s melancholy glow,
And let the spring’s first whisper, faint and low,
With me be fraught!
And Memory answer’d me:—“Wild wish, and vain!
I have no hues the loveliest to detain
In the heart’s core.

The place they held in bosoms all their own,
Soon with new shadows fill’d, new flowers o’ergrown,
Is theirs no more.”
Hast thou such power, O Love? And Love replied:
—“It is not mine! Pour out thy soul’s full tide
Of hope and trust,
Prayer, tear, devotedness, that boon to gain—
’Tis but to write, with the heart’s fiery rain,
Wild words on dust!”
Song, is the gift with thee? I ask a lay,
Soft, fervent, deep, that will not pass away
From the still breast;
Fill’d with a tone—oh! not for deathless fame,
But a sweet haunting murmur of my name,
Where it would rest.
And Song made answer—“It is not in me,
Though call’d immortal; though my gifts may be
All but divine.
A place of lonely brightness I can give:
A changeless one, where thou with Love wouldst live—
This is not mine!”
Death, Death! wilt thou the restless wish fulfil?
And Death, the Strong One, spoke:—“I can but still
Each vain regret.

What if forgotten?—All thy soul would crave,

Thou, too, within the mantle of the grave,

Wilt soon forget.”

Then did my heart in lone faint sadness die,

As from all nature’s voices one reply,

But one—was given.

“Earth has no heart, fond dreamer! with a tone

To send thee back the spirit of thine own—

Seek it in heaven.”

DRAMATIC SCENE BETWEEN BRONWYLFA AND RHYLLON.

[In the spring of 1825, Mrs Hemans removed from Bronwylfa to Rhyllon, another house belonging to her brother, not more than a quarter of a mile from the former place, and in full view from its windows. The distance being so inconsiderable, this could, in fact, scarcely be considered as a removal. The two houses, each situated on an eminence on opposite sides of the river Clwyd, confronted each other so conveniently, that a telegraphic communication was established between them, (by means of a regular set of signals and vocabulary, similar to those made use of in the navy,) and was carried on for a season with no little spirit, greatly to the amusement of their respective inhabitants.

Nothing could be less romantic than the outward appearance of Mrs Hemans’s new residence—a tall, staring brick house, almost destitute of trees, and unadorned (far, indeed, from being thus “adorned the most”) by the covering mantle of honeysuckle, jessamine, or any such charitable drapery.[337] Bronwylfa, on the contrary, was a perfect bower of roses, and peeped out like a bird’s nest from amidst the foliage in which it was embosomed. The contrast between the two dwellings was thus playfully descanted upon by Mrs Hemans, in her contribution to a set of jeux

d’esprit called the Bronwylfa Budget for 1825.—Memoir, p. 87-88.]

Bronwylfa,[338] after standing for some time in silent contemplation of Rhyllon, breaks out into the following vehement strain of vituperation.

You ugliest of fabrics! you horrible eyesore!
I wish you would vanish, or put on a visor!
In the face of the sun, without covering or rag on,
You stand and outstare me, like any red dragon.
With your great green-eyed windows, in boldness a host,
(The only green things which, indeed, you can boast,)
With your forehead as high, and as bare as the pate
Which an eagle once took for a stone or a slate,[339]
You lift yourself up, o’er the country afar,
As who would say, “Look at me!—here stands great R!”
I plant—I rear forest trees—shrubs great and small,
To wrap myself up in—you peer through them all!
With your lean scraggy neck o’er my poplars you rise;
You watch all my guests with your wide saucer eyes.
(In a paroxysm of rage.)
You monster! I would I could waken some morning,
And find you had taken French leave without warning;
You should never be sought like Aladdin’s famed palace.
You spoil my sweet temper—you make me bear malice:
For it is a hard fate, I will say it and sing,
Which has fix’d me to gaze on so frightful a thing.

Rhyllon—(with dignified equanimity.)

Content thee, Bronwylfa, what means all this rage?

This sudden attack on my quiet old age?

I am no parvenu: you and I, my good brother,

Have stood here this century facing each other;

And I can remember the days that are gone,

When your sides were no better array'd than my own.

Nay, the truth shall be told—since you flout me, restore

The tall scarlet woodbine you took from my door!

Since my baldness is mocked, and I'm forced to explain,

Pray give me my large laurustinus again.

(With a tone of prophetic solemnity.)

Bronwylfa! Bronwylfa! thus insolent grown,

Your pride and your poplars alike must come down!

I look through the future (and far I can see,

As St Asaph and Denbigh will answer for me,)

And in spite of thy scorn, and of all thou hast done,

From my kind heart's brick bottom, I pity thee, Bron!

The end of thy toiling and planting will be,

That thou wilt want sunshine, and ask it of me.

Thou wilt say, when thou wakest, looking out for the light,

"I suppose it is morning, for Rhyllon looks bright;"

While I—my green eyes with their tears overflow.

(Tenderly.)

Come!—let us be friends, as we were long ago.”

[337] Its conspicuousness has since been a good deal modified by the lowering of one storey, and by the growth of the surrounding plantations.

[338] Bronwylfa is pronounced as written Bronwylva; and perhaps the nearest English approach to the pronunciation of Rhyllon, would be by supposing it to be spelt Ruthln, the u sounded as in but.

[339] Bronwylfa is here supposed to allude to the pate of Æschylus, upon which an eagle dropped a tortoise to crack the shell.

[In spite, however, of the unromantic exterior of her new abode, the earlier part of Mrs Hemans’s residence at Rhyllon may, perhaps, be considered as the happiest of her life; as far, at least, as the term happiness could ever be fitly applied to any period of it later than childhood. The house, with all its ugliness, was large and convenient, the view from its windows beautiful and extensive, and its situation, on a fine green slope, terminating in a pretty woodland dingle, peculiarly healthy and cheerful. Never, perhaps, had she more thorough enjoyment of her boys than in witnessing, and often joining in, their sports in those pleasant breezy fields, where the kites soared so triumphantly, and the hoops trundled so merrily, and where the cowslips grew as cowslips had never grown before. An atmosphere of home soon gathered round the dwelling; roses were planted and honeysuckles trained, and the rustling of the solitary poplar near her window was taken to her heart like the voice of a friend. The dingle became a favourite haunt, where she would pass many dreamlike hours of enjoyment with her books, and her own sweet fancies, and her children playing around her. Every tree and flower, and tuft of moss that sprang amidst its green recesses, was invested with some individual charm by that rich imagination, so skilled in

“Clothing the palpable and the familiar
With golden exhalations of the dawn.”

Here, on what the boys would call ‘mamma’s sofa’—a little grassy mound under her favourite beech-tree—she first read The Talisman, and has described the scene with a loving minuteness in her Hour of Romance:—

“There were thick leaves above me and around,

And low sweet sighs, like those of childhood’s sleep,

Amidst their dimness, and a fitful sound

As of soft showers on water. Dark and deep

Lay the oak shadows o’er the turf—so still

They seem’d but pictured glooms; a hidden rill

Made music—such as haunts us in a dream—

Under the fern-tufts; and a tender gleam

Of soft green light, as by the glow-worm shed,

Came pouring through the woven beech-boughs down.”

Many years after, in the sonnet “To a Distant Scene,” she addresses, with a fond yearning, this well-remembered haunt:—

“Still are the cowslips from thy bosom springing,

O far-off grassy dell!”

How many precious memories has she hung round the thought of the cowslip—that flower, with its “gold coat” and “fairy favours,” which is, of all others, so associated with the “voice of happy childhood,” and was to her ever redolent of the hours when her

“Heart so leapt to that sweet laughter’s tone!”

Another favourite resort was the picturesque old bridge over the Clwyd, and when her health (which was subject to continual variation, but was at this time more robust than usual) admitted of more aspiring achievements, she delighted in roaming

to the hills; and the announcement of a walk to Cwm,[340] a remote little hamlet, nestled in a mountain hollow, amidst very lovely sylvan scenery, about two miles from Rhyllon, would be joyously echoed by her elated companions, to whom the recollection of these happy rambles must always be unspeakably dear. Very often, at the outset of these expeditions, the party would be reinforced by the addition of a certain little Kitty Jones, a child from a neighbouring cottage, who had taken an especial fancy to Mrs Hemans, and was continually watching her movements. This little creature never saw her without at once attaching herself to her side, and confidingly placing its tiny hand in hers. So great was her love for children, and her repugnance to hurt the feelings of any living creature, that she never would shake off this singular appendage, but let little Kitty rejoice in her "pride of place," till the walk became too long for her capacity, and she would quietly fall behind of her own accord.—Memoir, p. 87-93.]

[340] Pronounced "Coom."

RECORDS OF WOMAN.

TO

MRS JOANNA BAILLIE,

THIS VOLUME, AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF GRATEFUL RESPECT AND ADMIRATION, IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR.[341]

"Mightier far

Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway

Of magic, potent over sun and star,

Is love, though oft to agony distrest,

And though his favourite seat be feeble woman's breast." Wordsworth.

"Das ist sas Loos des Schonen auf der erde." Schiller.

[341] [“The little volume, ‘Records of Woman,’ which you kindly gave me permission to inscribe to you,” wrote Mrs H. to Mrs Joanna Baillie, “is now in the press, and I hope I shall soon be able to send you a copy; and that the dedication, which is in the simplest form, will be honoured by your approval. Mr Blackwood is its publisher.”

Mrs Hemans always spoke with pleasure of her literary intercourse with Mr Blackwood, in whose dealings she recognised all that uprightness and liberality which belonged to the sterling worth of his character. The “Records of Woman,” the first of her works published by him, was brought out in May 1828. This volume was, to use the words of its author the one in which “she had put her heart and individual feelings more than in any thing else she had written;” and it is also, and perhaps consequently, the one which has held its ground the most steadily in public favour.—Memoir, p. 136.]

ARABELLA STUART.

[“The Lady Arabella,” as she has been frequently entitled, was descended from Margaret, eldest daughter of Henry VII., and consequently allied by birth to Elizabeth as well as James I. This affinity to the throne proved the misfortune of her life, as the jealousies which it constantly excited in her royal relatives, who were anxious to prevent her marrying, shut her out from the enjoyment of that domestic happiness which her heart appears to have so fervently desired. By a secret but early discovered union with William Seymour, son of Lord Beauchamp, she alarmed the cabinet of James, and the wedded lovers were immediately placed in separate confinement. From this they found means to concert a romantic plan of escape; and having won over a female attendant, by whose assistance she was disguised in male attire, Arabella, though faint from recent sickness and suffering, stole out in the night, and at last reached an appointed spot, where a boat and servants were in waiting. She embarked; and at break of day a French vessel engaged to receive her

was discovered and gained. As Seymour, however, had not yet arrived, she was desirous that the vessel should lie at anchor for him; but this wish was overruled by her companions, who, contrary to her entreaties, hoisted sail, “which,” says D’Israeli, “occasioned so fatal a termination to this romantic adventure. Seymour, indeed, had escaped from the Tower; he reached the wharf, and found his confidential man waiting with a boat, and arrived at Lee. The time passed; the waves were rising; Arabella was not there; but in the distance he descried a vessel. Hiring a fisherman to take him on board, he discovered, to his grief, on hailing it, that it was not the French ship charged with his Arabella; in despair and confusion he found another ship from Newcastle, which for a large sum altered its course, and landed him in Flanders.” Arabella, meantime, whilst imploring her attendants to linger, and earnestly looking out for the expected boat of her husband, was overtaken in Calais Roads by a vessel in the king’s service, and brought back to a captivity, under the suffering of which her mind and constitution gradually sank. “What passed in that dreadful imprisonment cannot perhaps be recovered for authentic history, but enough is known—that her mind grew impaired, that she finally lost her reason, and, if the duration of her imprisonment was short, that it was only terminated by her death. Some effusions, often begun and never ended, written and erased, incoherent and rational, yet remain among her papers.”—D’Israeli’s Curiosities of Literature.

The following poem, meant as some record of her fate, and the imagined fluctuations of her thoughts and feelings, is supposed to commence during the time of her first imprisonment, whilst her mind was yet buoyed up by the consciousness of Seymour’s affection, and the cherished hope of eventual deliverance.]

“And is not love in vain

Torture enough without a living tomb?” Byron.

“Fermossi al fin il cor che balzo tanto.” Pindemonte.

I.

Twas but a dream! I saw the stag leap free,
Under the boughs where early birds were singing;
I stood o'ershadow'd by the greenwood tree,
And heard, it seem'd, a sudden bugle ringing
Far through a royal forest. Then the fawn
Shot, like a gleam of light, from grassy lawn
To secret covert; and the smooth turf shook,
And lilies quiver'd by the glade's lone brook,
And young leaves trembled, as, in fleet career,
A princely band, with horn, and hound, and spear,
Like a rich masque swept forth. I saw the dance
Of their white plumes, that bore a silvery glance
Into the deep wood's heart; and all pass'd by
Save one—I met the smile of one clear eye,
Flashing out joy to mine. Yes, thou wert there,
Seymour! A soft wind blew the clustering hair
Back from thy gallant brow, as thou didst rein
Thy courser, turning from that gorgeous train,
And fling, methought, thy hunting spear away,
And, lightly graceful in thy green array,
Bound to my side. And we, that met and parted
Ever in dread of some dark watchful power,
Won back to childhood's trust, and fearless-hearted,
Blent the glad fulness of our thoughts that hour

Even like the mingling of sweet streams, beneath
Dim woven leaves, and midst the floating breath
Of hidden forest-flowers.

II.

’Tis past! I wake,
A captive, and alone, and far from thee,
My love and friend! Yet fostering, for thy sake,
A quenchless hope of happiness to be;
And feeling still my woman-spirit strong,
In the deep faith which lifts from earthly wrong
A heavenward glance. I know, I know our love
Shall yet call gentle angels from above,
By its undying fervour, and prevail—
Sending a breath, as of the spring’s first gale,
Through hearts now cold; and, raising its bright face,
With a free gush of sunny tears, erase
The characters of anguish. In this trust,
I bear, I strive, I bow not to the dust,
That I may bring thee back no faded form,
No bosom chill’d and blighted by the storm,
But all my youth’s first treasures, when we meet,
Making past sorrow, by communion, sweet.

III.

And thou too art in bonds! Yet droop thou not,

O my beloved! there is one hopeless lot,
But one, and that not ours. Beside the dead
There sits the grief that mantles up its head,
Loathing the laughter and proud pomp of light,
When darkness, from the vainly doting sight
Covers its beautiful![342] If thou wert gone
To the grave's bosom, with thy radiant brow—
If thy deep-thrilling voice, with that low tone
Of earnest tenderness, which now, even now
Seems floating through my soul, were music taken
For ever from this world—oh! thus forsaken
Could I bear on? Thou livest, thou livest, thou'rt mine!
With this glad thought I make my heart a shrine,
And by the lamp which quenchless there shall burn,
Sit a lone watcher for the day's return.

IV.

And lo! the joy that cometh with the morning,
Brightly victorious o'er the hours of care!
I have not watch'd in vain, serenely scorning
The wild and busy whispers of despair!
Thou hast sent tidings, as of heaven—I wait
The hour, the sign, for blessed flight to thee.
Oh! for the skylark's wing that seeks its mate
As a star shoots!—but on the breezy sea

We shall meet soon. To think of such an hour!
Will not my heart, o'erburden'd by its bliss,
Faint and give way within me, as a flower
Borne down and perishing by noontide's kiss?
Yet shall I fear that lot—the perfect rest,
The full deep joy of dying on thy breast,
After long suffering won? So rich a close
Too seldom crowns with peace affection's woes.

V.

Sunset! I tell each moment. From the skies
The last red splendour floats along my wall,
Like a king's banner! Now it melts, it dies!
I see one star—I hear—'twas not the call,
Th' expected voice; my quick heart throbb'd too soon.
I must keep vigil till yon rising moon
Shower down less golden light. Beneath her beam
Through my lone lattice pour'd, I sit and dream
Of summer lands afar, where holy love,
Under the vine or in the citron grove,
May breathe from terror.
Now the night grows deep,
And silent as its clouds, and full of sleep.
I hear my veins beat. Hark! a bell's slow chime!
My heart strikes with it. Yet again—'tis time!

A step!—a voice!—or but a rising breeze?
Hark!—haste!—I come to meet thee on the seas!

VI.

Now never more, oh! never, in the worth
Of its pure cause, let sorrowing love on earth
Trust fondly—never more! The hope is crush'd
That lit my life, the voice within me hush'd
That spoke sweet oracles; and I return
To lay my youth, as in a burial urn,
Where sunshine may not find it. All is lost!
No tempest met our barks—no billow toss'd;
Yet were they sever'd, even as we must be,
That so have loved, so striven our hearts to free
From their close-coiling fate! In vain—in vain!
The dark links meet, and clasp themselves again,
And press out life. Upon the deck I stood,
And a white sail came gliding o'er the flood,
Like some proud bird of ocean; then mine eye
Strain'd out, one moment earlier to descry
The form it ached for, and the bark's career
Seem'd slow to that fond yearning: it drew near,
Fraught with our foes! What boots it to recall
The strife, the tears? Once more a prison wall
Shuts the green hills and woodlands from my sight,

And joyous glance of waters to the light,

And thee, my Seymour!—thee!

I will not sink!

Thou, thou hast rent the heavy chain that bound thee!

And this shall be my strength—the joy to think

That thou may'st wander with heaven's breath around thee,

And all the laughing sky! This thought shall yet

Shine o'er my heart a radiant amulet,

Guarding it from despair. Thy bonds are broken;

And unto me, I know, thy true love's token

Shall one day be deliverance, though the years

Lie dim between, o'erhung with mists of tears.

VII.

My friend! my friend! where art thou? Day by day,

Gliding like some dark mournful stream away,

My silent youth flows from me. Spring, the while,

Comes and rains beauty on the kindling boughs

Round hall and hamlet; summer with her smile

Fills the green forest; young hearts breathe their vows;

Brothers long parted meet; fair children rise

Round the glad board; hope laughs from loving eyes:

All this is in the world!—these joys lie sown,

The dew of every path! On one alone

Their freshness may not fall—the stricken deer

Dying of thirst with all the waters near.

VIII.

Ye are from dingle and fresh glade, ye flowers!
By some kind hand to cheer my dungeon sent;
O’er you the oak shed down the summer showers,
And the lark’s nest was where your bright cups bent,
Quivering to breeze and raindrop, like the sheen
Of twilight stars. On you heaven’s eye hath been,
Through the leaves pouring its dark sultry blue
Into your glowing hearts; the bee to you
Hath murmur’d, and the rill. My soul grows faint
With passionate yearning, as its quick dreams paint
Your haunts by dell and stream—the green, the free,
The full of all sweet sound—the shut from me!

IX.

There went a swift bird singing past my cell——
O Love and Freedom! ye are lovely things!
With you the peasant on the hills may dwell,
And by the streams. But I—the blood of kings,
A proud unmingling river, through my veins
Flows in lone brightness, and its gifts are chains!
Kings!—I had silent visions of deep bliss,
Leaving their thrones far distant; and for this
I am cast under their triumphal car,

An insect to be crush’d! Oh! heaven is far—
Earth pitiless!
Dost thou forget me, Seymour? I am proved
So long, so sternly! Seymour, my beloved!
There are such tales of holy marvels done
By strong affection, of deliverance won
Through its prevailing power! Are these things told
Till the young weep with rapture, and the old
Wonder, yet dare not doubt; and thou! oh, thou!
Dost thou forget me in my hope’s decay?—
Thou canst not! Through the silent night, even now,
I, that need prayer so much, awake and pray
Still first for thee. O gentle, gentle friend!
How shall I bear this anguish to the end?
Aid!—comes there yet no aid? The voice of blood
Passes heaven’s gate, even ere the crimson flood
Sinks through the greensward! Is there not a cry
From the wrung heart, of power, through agony,
To pierce the clouds? Hear, Mercy!—hear me! None
That bleed and weep beneath the smiling sun
Have heavier cause! Yet hear!—my soul grows dark!——
Who hears the last shriek from the sinking bark
On the mid seas, and with the storm alone,
And bearing to the abyss, unseen, unknown,

Its freight of human hearts? Th’ o’ermastering wave!
Who shall tell how it rush’d—and none to save!
Thou hast forsaken me! I feel, I know,
There would be rescue if this were not so.
Thou’rt at the chase, thou’rt at the festive board,
Thou’rt where the red wine free and high is pour’d,
Thou’rt where the dancers meet! A magic glass
Is set within my soul, and proud shapes pass,
Flushing it o’er with pomp from bower and hall:
I see one shadow, stateliest there of all—
Thine! What dost thou amidst the bright and fair,
Whispering light words, and mocking my despair?
It is not well of thee! My love was more
Than fiery song may breathe, deep thought explore;
And there thou smilest, while my heart is dying,
With all its blighted hopes around it lying:
Even thou, on whom they hung their last green leaf——
Yet smile, smile on! too bright art thou for grief!
Death! What! is death a lock’d and treasured thing,
Guarded by swords of fire?[343] a hidden spring,
A fabled fruit, that I should thus endure,
As if the world within me held no cure?
Wherefore not spread free wings——Heaven, heaven! control
These thoughts!—they rush—I look into my soul

As down a gulf, and tremble at the array
Of fierce forms crowding it! Give strength to pray!
So shall their dark host pass.
The storm is still'd.
Father in Heaven! thou, only thou, canst sound
The heart's great deep, with floods of anguish fill'd,
For human line too fearfully profound.
Therefore, forgive, my Father! if thy child,
Rock'd on its heaving darkness, hath grown wild,
And sinn'd in her despair! It well may be
That thou wouldst lead my spirit back to thee,
By the crush'd hope too long on this world pour'd—
The stricken love which hath perchance adored
A mortal in thy place! Now let me strive
With thy strong arm no more! Forgive, forgive!
Take me to peace!
And peace at last is nigh.
A sign is on my brow, a token sent
Th' o'erwearied dust from home: no breeze flits by,
But calls me with a strange sweet whisper, blent
Of many mysteries.
Hark! the warning tone
Deepens—its word is Death! Alone, alone,
And sad in youth, but chasten'd, I depart,

Bowing to heaven. Yet, yet my woman’s heart
Shall wake a spirit and a power to bless,
Even in this hour’s o’ershadowing fearfulness,
Thee, its first love! O tender still, and true!
Be it forgotten if mine anguish threw
Drops from its bitter fountain on thy name,
Though but a moment!
Now, with fainting frame,
With soul just lingering on the flight begun,
To bind for thee its last dim thoughts in one,
I bless thee! Peace be on thy noble head,
Years of bright fame, when I am with the dead!
I bid this prayer survive me, and retain
Its might, again to bless thee, and again!
Thou hast been gather’d into my dark fate
Too much; too long, for my sake, desolate
Hath been thine exiled youth: but now take back,
From dying hands, thy freedom, and retrack
(After a few kind tears for her whose days
Went out in dreams of thee) the sunny ways
Of hope, and find thou happiness! Yet send
Even then, in silent hours, a thought, dear friend!
Down to my voiceless chamber; for thy love
Hath been to me all gifts of earth above,

Though bought with burning tears! It is the sting

Of death to leave that vainly-precious thing

In this cold world! What were it, then, if thou,

With thy fond eyes, wert gazing on me now?

Too keen a pang! Farewell! and yet once more,

Farewell! The passion of long years I pour

Into that word! Thou hear'st not—but the woe

And fervour of its tones may one day flow

To thy heart's holy place: there let them dwell.

We shall o'ersweep the grave to meet. Farewell!

[342] "Wheresoever you are, or in what state soever you be, it sufficeth me you are mine. Rachel wept and would not be comforted, because her children were no more. And that indeed, is the remediless sorrow, and none else!"—From a letter of Arabella Stuart's to her husband.—See Curiosities of Literature.

[343] "And if you remember of old, I dare die. Consider what the world would conceive if I should be violently enforced to do it."—Fragments of her Letters.

THE BRIDE OF THE GREEK ISLE.[344]

"Fear! I'm a Greek, and how should I fear death?

A slave, and wherefore should I dread my freedom?

...

I will not live degraded." Sardanapalus.

Come from the woods with the citron-flowers,

Come with your lyres for the festal hours,

Maids of bright Scio! They came, and the breeze

Bore their sweet songs o’er the Grecian seas;
They came, and Eudora stood robed and crown’d,
The bride of the morn, with her train around.
Jewels flash’d out from her braided hair,
Like starry dews midst the roses there;
Pearls on her bosom quivering shone,
Heaved by her heart through its golden zone.
But a brow, as those gems of the ocean pale,
Gleam’d from beneath her transparent veil;
Changeful and faint was her fair cheek’s hue,
Though clear as a flower which the light looks through;
And the glance of her dark resplendent eye,
For the aspect of woman at times too high,
Lay floating in mists, which the troubled stream
Of the soul sent up o’er its fervid beam.
She look’d on the vine at her father’s door,
Like one that is leaving his native shore;
She hung o’er the myrtle once call’d her own,
As it greenly waved by the threshold stone;
She turn’d—and her mother’s gaze brought back
Each hue of her childhood’s faded track.
Oh! hush the song, and let her tears
Flow to the dream of her early years!
Holy and pure are the drops that fall

When the young bride goes from her father’s hall;
She goes unto love yet untried and new,
She parts from love which hath still been true:
Mute be the song and the choral strain,
Till her heart’s deep well-spring is clear again!
She wept on her mother’s faithful breast,
Like a babe that sobs itself to rest;
She wept—yet laid her hand awhile
In his that waited her dawning smile—
Her soul’s affianced, nor cherish’d less
For the gush of nature’s tenderness!
She lifted her graceful head at last—
The choking swell of her heart was past;
And her lovely thoughts from their cells found way
In the sudden flow of a plaintive lay.[345]

THE BRIDE’S FAREWELL.

Why do I weep? To leave the vine
Whose clusters o’er me bend;
The myrtle—yet, oh call it mine!—
The flowers I loved to tend.
A thousand thoughts of all things dear
Like shadows o’er me sweep;
I leave my sunny childhood here,
Oh! therefore let me weep!

I leave thee, sister! We have play’d
Through many a joyous hour,
Where the silvery green of the olive shade
Hung dim o’er fount and bower.
Yes! thou and I, by stream, by shore,
In song, in prayer, in sleep,
Have been as we may be no more—
Kind sister, let me weep!
I leave thee, father! Eve’s bright moon
Must now light other feet,
With the gather’d grapes, and the lyre in tune,
Thy homeward step to greet.
Thou in whose voice, to bless thy child,
Lay tones of love so deep,
Whose eye o’er all my youth hath smiled—
I leave thee! let me weep!
Mother! I leave thee! On thy breast
Pouring out joy and woe,
I have found that holy place of rest
Still changeless—yet I go!
Lips, that have lull’d me with your strain!
Eyes, that have watch’d my sleep!
Will earth give love like yours again?—
Sweet mother! let me weep!

And like a slight young tree, that throws
The weight of rain from its drooping boughs,
Once more she wept. But a changeful thing
Is the human heart—as a mountain spring
That works its way, through the torrent's foam,
To the bright pool near it, the lily's home!
It is well!—The cloud on her soul that lay,
Hath melted in glittering drops away.
Wake again, mingle, sweet flute and lyre!
She turns to her lover, she leaves her sire.
Mother! on earth it must still be so:
Thou rearest the lovely to see them go!
They are moving onward, the bridal throng,
Ye may track their way by the swells of song;
Ye may catch through the foliage their white robes' gleam,
Like a swan midst the reeds of a shadowy stream;
Their arms bear up garlands, their gliding tread
Is over the deep-vein'd violet's bed;
They have light leaves around them, blue skies above,
An arch for the triumph of youth and love!

II.

Still and sweet was the home that stood
In the flowering depths of a Grecian wood,
With the soft green light o'er its low roof spread,

As if from the glow of an emerald shed,
Pouring through lime-leaves that mingled on high,
Asleep in the silence of noon’s clear sky.
Citrons amidst their dark foliage glow’d,
Making a gleam round the lone abode;
Laurels o’erhung it, whose faintest shiver
Scatter’d out rays like a glancing river;
Stars of the jasmine its pillars crown’d,
Vine-stalks its lattice and walls had bound;
And brightly before it a fountain’s play
Flung showers through a thicket of glossy bay,
To a cypress which rose in that flashing rain,
Like one tall shaft of some fallen fane.
And thither Ianthis had brought his bride,
And the guests were met by that fountain side.
They lifted the veil from Eudora’s face—
It smiled out softly in pensive grace,
With lips of love, and a brow serene,
Meet for the soul of the deep wood-scene.
Bring wine, bring odours!—the board is spread;
Bring roses! a chaplet for every head!
The wine-cups foam’d, and the rose was shower’d
On the young and fair from the world embower’d;
The sun look’d not on them in that sweet shade,

The winds amid scented boughs were laid;
And there came by fits, through some wavy tree,
A sound and a gleam of the moaning sea.
Hush! be still! Was that no more
Than the murmur from the shore?
Silence!—did thick rain-drops beat
On the grass like trampling feet?
Fling down the goblet, and draw the sword!
The groves are fill’d with a pirate horde!
Through the dim olives their sabres shine!—
Now must the red blood stream for wine!
The youths from the banquet to battle sprang,
The woods with the shriek of the maidens rang;
Under the golden-fruited boughs
There were flashing poniards and darkening brows—
Footsteps, o’er garland and lyre that fled,
And the dying soon on a greensward bed.
Eudora, Eudora! thou dost not fly!—
She saw but Ianthis before her lie,
With the blood from his breast in a gushing flow,
Like a child’s large tears in its hour of woe,
And a gathering film in his lifted eye,
That sought his young bride out mournfully.
She knelt down beside him—her arms she wound

Like tendrils, his drooping neck around,
As if the passion of that fond grasp
Might chain in life with its ivy-clasp.
But they tore her thence in her wild despair,
The sea's fierce rovers—they left him there:
They left to the fountain a dark-red vein,
And on the wet violets a pile of slain,
And a hush of fear through the summer grove.—
So closed the triumph of youth and love!

III.

Gloomy lay the shore that night,
When the moon, with sleeping light,
Bathed each purple Sciote hill—
Gloomy lay the shore, and still.
O'er the wave no gay guitar
Sent its floating music far;
No glad sound of dancing feet
Woke the starry hours to greet.
But a voice of mortal woe,
In its changes wild or low,
Through the midnight's blue repose,
From the sea-beat rocks arose,
As Eudora's mother stood
Gazing o'er th' Ægean flood,

With a fix’d and straining eye—

Oh! was the spoilers’ vessel nigh?

Yes! there, becalm’d in silent sleep,

Dark and alone on a breathless deep,

On a sea of molten silver, dark

Brooding it frown’d, that evil bark!

There its broad pennon a shadow cast,

Moveless and black from the tall still mast;

And the heavy sound of its flapping sail

Idly and vainly woo’d the gale.

Hush’d was all else—had ocean’s breast

Rock’d e’en Eudora that hour to rest?

To rest? The waves tremble!—what piercing cry

Bursts from the heart of the ship on high?

What light through the heavens, in a sudden spire,

Shoots from the deck up? Fire! ’tis fire!

There are wild forms hurrying to and fro,

Seen darkly clear on that lurid glow;

There are shout, and signal-gun, and call,

And the dashing of water—but fruitless all!

Man may not fetter, nor ocean tame

The might and wrath of the rushing flame!

It hath twined the mast like a glittering snake,

That coils up a tree from a dusky brake;

It hath touch’d the sails, and their canvass rolls
Away from its breath into shrivell’d scrolls;
It hath taken the flag’s high place in the air,
And redden’d the stars with its wavy glare;
And sent out bright arrows, and soar’d in glee,
To a burning mount midst the moonlight sea.
The swimmers are plunging from stern and prow—
Eudora! Eudora! where, where art thou?
The slave and his master alike are gone.—
Mother! who stands on the deck alone?
The child of thy bosom!—and lo! a brand
Blazing up high in her lifted hand!
And her veil flung back, and her free dark hair
Sway’d by the flames as they rock and flare;
And her fragile form to its loftiest height
Dilated, as if by the spirit’s might;
And her eye with an eagle-gladness fraught——
Oh! could this work be of woman wrought?
Yes! ’twas her deed!—by that haughty smile,
It was hers: she hath kindled her funeral pile!
Never might shame on that bright head be:
Her blood was the Greek’s, and hath made her free!
Proudly she stands, like an Indian bride
On the pyre with the holy dead beside;

But a shriek from her mother hath caught her ear,

As the flames to her marriage-robe draw near,

And starting, she spreads her pale arms in vain

To the form they must never infold again.

—One moment more, and her hands are clasp'd—

Fallen is the torch they had wildly grasp'd—

Her sinking knee unto Heaven is bow'd,

And her last look raised through the smoke's dim shroud,

And her lips as in prayer for her pardon move;—

Now the night gathers o'er youth and love!

[344] Founded on a circumstance related in the Second Series of the Curiosities of Literature, and forming part of a picture in the "Painted Biography" there described.

[345] A Greek bride, on leaving her father's house, takes leave of her friends and relatives frequently in extemporaneous verses.—See Fauriel's Chants Populaires de la Grèce Moderne.

THE SWITZER'S WIFE.

[Werner Stauffacher, one of the three confederates of the field of Grutli, had been alarmed by the envy with which the Austrian Bailiff, Landenberg, had noticed the appearance of wealth and comfort which distinguished his dwelling. It was not, however, until roused by the entreaties of his wife, a woman who seems to have been of a heroic spirit, that he was induced to deliberate with his friends upon the measures by which Switzerland was finally delivered.]

"Nor look nor tone revealeth aught

Save woman's quietness of thought;

And yet around her is a light

Of inward majesty and might.” M. J. J.

“Wer solch ein herz an sienen Busen druckt

Der kann fur herd und hof mit freuden fechten.”

WILLHELM TELL.

It was the time when children bound to meet

Their father’s homeward step from field or hill,

And when the herd’s returning bells are sweet

In the Swiss valleys, and the lakes grow still,

And the last note of that wild horn swells by

Which haunts the exile’s heart with melody.

And lovely smiled full many an Alpine home,

Touch’d with the crimson of the dying hour,

Which lit its low roof by the torrent’s foam,

And pierced its lattice through the vine-hung bower;

But one, the loveliest o’er the land that rose,

Then first look’d mournful in its green repose.

For Werner sat beneath the linden tree

That sent its lulling whispers through his door,

Even as man sits, whose heart alone would be

With some deep care, and thus can find no more

Th’ accustom’d joy in all which evening brings,

Gathering a household with her quiet wings.

His wife stood hush’d before him—sad, yet mild

In her beseeching mien!—he mark’d it not.

The silvery laughter of his bright-hair'd child
Rang from the greensward round the shelter'd spot,
But seem'd unheard; until at last the boy
Raised from his heap'd up flowers a glance of joy,
And met his father's face. But then a change
Pass'd swiftly o'er the brow of infant glee,
And a quick sense of something dimly strange
Brought him from play to stand beside the knee
So often climb'd, and lift his loving eyes
That shone through clouds of sorrowful surprise.
Then the proud bosom of the strong man shook;
But tenderly his babe's fair mother laid
Her hand on his, and with a pleading look,
Through tears half-quivering, o'er him bent and said,
"What grief, dear friend, hath made thy heart its prey—
That thou shouldst turn thee from our love away?
"It is too sad to see thee thus, my friend!
Mark'st thou the wonder on thy boy's fair brow,
Missing the smile from thine? Oh, cheer thee! bend
To his soft arms: unseal thy thoughts e'en now!
Thou dost not kindly to withhold the share
Of tried affection in thy secret care."
He look'd up into that sweet earnest face,
But sternly, mournfully: not yet the band

Was loosen’d from his soul; its inmost place
Not yet unveil’d by love’s o’ermastering hand.
“Speak low!” he cried, and pointed where on high
The white Alps glitter’d through the solemn sky:
“We must speak low amidst our ancient hills
And their free torrents; for the days are come
When tyranny lies couch’d by forest rills,
And meets the shepherd in his mountain-home.
Go, pour the wine of our own grapes in fear—
Keep silence by the hearth! its foes are near.
“The envy of th’ oppressor’s eye hath been
Upon my heritage. I sit to-night
Under my household tree, if not serene,
Yet with the faces best beloved in sight:
To-morrow eve may find me chain’d, and thee—
How can I bear the boy’s young smiles to see?”
The bright blood left that youthful mother’s cheek;
Back on the linden stem she lean’d her form;
And her lip trembled as it strove to speak,
Like a frail harp-string shaken by the storm.
’Twas but a moment, and the faintness pass’d,
And the free Alpine spirit woke at last.
And she, that ever through her home had moved
With the meek thoughtfulness and quiet smile

Of woman, calmly loving and beloved,
And timid in her happiness the while,
Stood brightly forth, and steadfastly, that hour—
Her clear glance kindling into sudden power.
Ay, pale she stood, but with an eye of light,
And took her fair child to her holy breast,
And lifted her soft voice, that gather'd might
As it found language:—"Are we thus oppress'd?
Then must we rise upon our mountain-sod,
And man must arm, and woman call on God!
"I know what thou wouldst do;—and be it done!
Thy soul is darken'd with its fears for me.
Trust me to heaven, my husband! This, thy son,
The babe whom I have borne thee, must be free!
And the sweet memory of our pleasant hearth
May well give strength—if aught be strong on earth.
"Thou hast been brooding o'er the silent dread
Of my desponding tears; now lift once more,
My hunter of the hills! thy stately head,
And let thine eagle glance my joy restore!
I can bear all, but seeing thee subdued—
Take to thee back thine own undaunted mood.
"Go forth beside the waters, and along
The chamois paths, and through the forests go;

And tell, in burning words, thy tale of wrong
To the brave hearts that midst the hamlets glow.
God shall be with thee, my beloved! Away!
Bless but thy child, and leave me—I can pray!”
He sprang up, like a warrior youth awaking
To clarion sounds upon the ringing air;
He caught her to his heart, while proud tears breaking
From his dark eyes fell o’er her braided hair;
And “Worthy art thou,” was his joyous cry,
“That man for thee should gird himself to die!
“My bride, my wife, the mother of my child!
Now shall thy name be armour to my heart:
And this our land, by chains no more defiled,
Be taught of thee to choose the better part!
I go—thy spirit on my words shall dwell;
Thy gentle voice shall stir the Alps. Farewell!”
And thus they parted, by the quiet lake,
In the clear starlight: he the strength to rouse
Of the free hills; she, thoughtful for his sake,
To rock her child beneath the whispering boughs,
Singing its blue half-curtain’d eyes to sleep
With a low hymn, amidst the stillness deep.

PROPERZIA ROSSI.

[Properzia Rossi, a celebrated female sculptor of Bologna, possessed also of talents

for poetry and music, died in consequence of an unrequited attachment. A painting, by Ducis, represents her showing her last work, a basso-relievo of Ariadne, to a Roman knight, the object of her affection, who regards it with indifference.]

“Tell me no more, no more
Of my soul’s lofty gifts! Are they not vain
To quench its haunting thirst for happiness?
Have I not loved, and striven, and fail’d to bind
One true heart unto me, whereon my own
Might find a resting-place, a home for all
Its burden of affections? I depart,
Unknown, though Fame goes with me; I must leave
The earth unknown. Yet it may be that death
Shall give my name a power to win such tears
As would have made life precious.”

I.

One dream of passion and of beauty more!
And in its bright fulfilment let me pour
My soul away! Let earth retain a trace
Of that which lit my being, though its race
Might have been loftier far. Yet one more dream!
From my deep spirit one victorious gleam
Ere I depart! For thee alone, for thee!
May this last work, this farewell triumph be—
Thou, loved so vainly! I would leave enshrined

Something immortal of my heart and mind,
That yet may speak to thee when I am gone,
Shaking thine inmost bosom with a tone
Of lost affection,—something that may prove
What she hath been, whose melancholy love
On thee was lavish'd; silent pang and tear,
And fervent song that gush'd when none were near,
And dream by night, and weary thought by day,
Stealing the brightness from her life away—
While thou——Awake! not yet within me die!
Under the burden and the agony
Of this vain tenderness—my spirit, wake!
Even for thy sorrowful affection's sake,
Live! in thy work breathe out!—that he may yet,
Feeling sad mastery there, perchance regret
Thine unrequited gift.

II.

It comes! the power
Within me born flows back—my fruitless dower
That could not win me love. Yet once again
I greet it proudly, with its rushing train
Of glorious images: they throng—they press—
A sudden joy lights up my loneliness—
I shall not perish all!

The bright work grows
Beneath my hand, unfolding, as a rose,
Leaf after leaf, to beauty—line by line,
Through the pale marble's veins. It grows!—and now
I fix my thought, heart, soul, to burn, to shine:
I give my own life's history to thy brow,
Forsaken Ariadne!—thou shalt wear
My form, my lineaments; but oh! more fair,
Touch'd into lovelier being by the glow
Which in me dwells, as by the summer light
All things are glorified. From thee my woe
Shall yet look beautiful to meet his sight,
When I am pass'd away. Thou art the mould,
Wherein I pour the fervent thoughts, th' untold,
The self-consuming! Speak to him of me,
Thou, the deserted by the lonely sea,
With the soft sadness of thine earnest eye—
Speak to him, lorn one! deeply, mournfully,
Of all my love and grief! Oh! could I throw
Into thy frame a voice—a sweet, and low,
And thrilling voice of song! when he came nigh,
To send the passion of its melody
Through his pierced bosom—on its tones to bear
My life's deep feeling, as the southern air

Wafts the faint myrtle’s breath—to rise, to swell,
To sink away in accents of farewell,
Winning but one, one gush of tears, whose flow
Surely my parted spirit yet might know,
If love be strong as death!

III.

Now fair thou art,
Thou form, whose life is of my burning heart!
Yet all the vision that within me wrought,
I cannot make thee. Oh! I might have given
Birth to creations of far nobler thought;
I might have kindled, with the fire of heaven,
Things not of such as die! But I have been
Too much alone! A heart whereon to lean,
With all these deep affections that o’erflow
My aching soul, and find no shore below;
An eye to be my star; a voice to bring
Hope o’er my path like sounds that breathe of spring?
These are denied me—dreamt of still in vain.
Therefore my brief aspirings from the chain
Are ever but as some wild fitful song,
Rising triumphantly, to die ere long
In dirge-like echoes.

IV.

Yet the world will see
Little of this, my parting work! in thee.
Thou shalt have fame! Oh, mockery! give the reed
From storms a shelter—give the drooping vine
Something round which its tendrils may entwine—
Give the parch'd flower a rain-drop, and the meed
Of love's kind words to woman! Worthless fame!
That in his bosom wins not for my name
Th' abiding place it ask'd! Yet how my heart,
In its own fairy world of song and art,
Once beat for praise! Are those high longings o'er?
That which I have been can I be no more?
Never! oh, never more! though still thy sky
Be blue as then, my glorious Italy!
And though the music, whose rich breathings fill
Thine air with soul, be wandering past me still;
And though the mantle of thy sunlight streams
Unchanged on forms, instinct with poet-dreams.
Never! oh, never more! Where'er I move,
The shadow of this broken-hearted love
Is on me and around! Too well they know
Whose life is all within, too soon and well,
When there the blight hath settled! But I go
Under the silent wings of peace to dwell;

From the slow wasting, from the lonely pain,
The inward burning of those words—“in vain,”
Sear’d on the heart—I go. ’Twill soon be past!
Sunshine and song, and bright Italian heaven,
And thou, oh! thou, on whom my spirit cast
Unvalued wealth—who know’st not what was given
In that devotedness—the sad, and deep,
And unrepaid—farewell! If I could weep
Once, only once, beloved one! on thy breast,
Pouring my heart forth ere I sink to rest!
But that were happiness!—and unto me
Earth’s gift is fame. Yet I was form’d to be
So richly bless’d! With thee to watch the sky,
Speaking not, feeling but that thou wert nigh;
With thee to listen, while the tones of song
Swept even as part of our sweet air along—
To listen silently; with thee to gaze
On forms, the deified of olden days—
This had been joy enough; and hour by hour,
From its glad well-springs drinking life and power,
How had my spirit soar’d, and made its fame
A glory for thy brow! Dreams, dreams!—The fire
Burns faint within me. Yet I leave my name—
As a deep thrill may linger on the lyre

When its full chords are hush’d—awhile to live,

And one day haply in thy heart revive

Sad thoughts of me. I leave it, with a sound,

A spell o’er memory, mournfully profound;

I leave it, on my country’s air to dwell—

Say proudly yet—“’Twas hers who loved me well!”

GERTRUDE; OR, FIDELITY TILL DEATH.

[The Baron Von der Wart, accused—though it is believed unjustly—as an accomplice in the assassination of the Emperor Albert, was bound alive on the wheel, and attended by his wife Gertrude, throughout his last agonising hours, with the most heroic devotedness. Her own sufferings, with those of her unfortunate husband, are most affectingly described in a letter which she afterwards addressed to a female friend, and which was published some years ago, at Haarlem, in a book entitled Gertrude Von der Wart; or, Fidelity unto Death.]

“Dark lowers our fate,

And terrible the storm that gathers o’er us;

But nothing, till that latest agony

Which severs thee from nature, shall unloose

This fix’d and sacred hold. In thy dark prison-house,

In the terrific face of armed law,

Yea, on the scaffold, if it needs must be,

I never will forsake thee.” Joanna Baillie.

Her hands were clasp’d, her dark eyes raised,

The breeze threw back her hair;

Up to the fearful wheel she gazed—
All that she loved was there.
The night was round her clear and cold,
The holy heaven above,
Its pale stars watching to behold
The might of earthly love.
“And bid me not depart,” she cried;
“My Rudolph, say not so!
This is no time to quit thy side—
Peace! peace! I cannot go.
Hath the world aught for me to fear,
When death is on thy brow?
The world! what means it? Mine is here—
I will not leave thee now.
“I have been with thee in thine hour
Of glory and of bliss;
Doubt not its memory’s living power
To strengthen me through this!
And thou, mine honour’d love and true,
Bear on, bear nobly on!
We have the blessed heaven in view,
Whose rest shall soon be won.”
And were not these high words to flow
From woman’s breaking heart?

Through all that night of bitterest woe
She bore her lofty part;
But oh! with such a glazing eye,
With such a curdling cheek—
Love, Love! of mortal agony
Thou, only thou, shouldst speak!
The wind rose high—but with it rose
Her voice, that he might hear:—
Perchance that dark hour brought repose
To happy bosoms near;
While she sat striving with despair
Beside his tortured form,
And pouring her deep soul in prayer
Forth on the rushing storm.
She wiped the death-damps from his brow
With her pale hands and soft,
Whose touch upon the lute-chords low
Had still'd his heart so oft.
She spread her mantle o'er his breast,
She bathed his lips with dew,
And on his cheek such kisses press'd
As hope and joy ne'er knew.
Oh! lovely are ye, Love and Faith,
Enduring to the last!

She had her meed—one smile in death—
And his worn spirit pass’d!
While even as o’er a martyr’s grave
She knelt on that sad spot,
And, weeping, bless’d the God who gave
Strength to forsake it not.

IMELDA.

“Sometimes
The young forgot the lessons they had learnt,
And loved when they should hate—like thee,
Imelda!”[346]

Italy; a Poem.

“Passa la bella Donna, e par che dorma.”—Tasso.

We have the myrtle’s breath around us here,
Amidst the fallen pillars: this hath been
Some Naiad’s fane of old. How brightly clear,
Flinging a vein of silver o’er the scene,
Up through the shadowy grass the fountain wells,
And music with it, gushing from beneath
The ivied altar! That sweet murmur tells
The rich wild-flowers no tale of woe or death;
Yet once the wave was darken’d, and a stain
Lay deep, and heavy drops—but not of rain—
On the dim violets by its marble bed,

And the pale-shining water-lily’s head.
Sad is that legend’s truth.—A fair girl met
One whom she loved, by this lone temple’s spring.
Just as the sun behind the pine-grove set,
And eve’s low voice in whispers woke, to bring
All wanderers home. They stood, that gentle pair,
With the blue heaven of Italy above,
And citron-odours dying on the air,
And light leaves trembling round, and early love
Deep in each breast. What reck’d their souls of strife
Between their fathers? Unto them young life
Spread out the treasures of its vernal years;
And if they wept, they wept far other tears
Than the cold world brings forth. They stood, that hour,
Speaking of hope; while tree, and fount, and flower,
And star, just gleaming through the cypress boughs,
Seem’d holy things, as records of their vows.
But change came o’er the scene. A hurrying tread
Broke on the whispery shades. Imelda knew
The footstep of her brother’s wrath, and fled
Up where the cedars make yon avenue
Dim with green twilight: pausing there, she caught—
Was it the clash of swords? A swift dark thought
Struck down her lip’s rich crimson as it pass’d,

And from her eye the sunny sparkle took
One moment with its fearfulness, and shook
Her slight frame fiercely, as a stormy blast
Might rock the rose. Once more, and yet once more,
She still'd her heart to listen—all was o'er;
Sweet summer winds alone were heard to sigh,
Bearing the nightingale's deep spirit by.
That night Imelda's voice was in the song—
Lovely it floated through the festive throng
Peopling her father's halls. That fatal night
Her eye look'd starry in its dazzling light,
And her cheek glow'd with beauty's flushing dyes,
Like a rich cloud of eve in southern skies—
A burning, ruby cloud. There were, whose gaze
Follow'd her form beneath the clear lamp's blaze,
And marvell'd at its radiance. But a few
Beheld the brightness of that feverish hue
With something of dim fear; and in that glance
Found strange and sudden tokens of unrest,
Startling to meet amidst the mazy dance,
Where Thought, if present, an unbidden guest,
Comes not unmask'd. Howe'er this were, the time
Sped as it speeds with joy, and grief, and crime
Alike: and when the banquet's hall was left

Unto its garlands of their bloom bereft;
When trembling stars look'd silvery in their wane,
And heavy flowers yet slumber'd, once again
There stole a footstep, fleet, and light, and lone,
Through the dim cedar shade—the step of one
That started at a leaf, of one that fled,
Of one that panted with some secret dread.
What did Imelda there? She sought the scene
Where love so late with youth and hope had been.
Bodings were on her soul; a shuddering thrill
Ran through each vein, when first the Naiad's rill
Met her with melody—sweet sounds and low:
We hear them yet, they live along its flow—
Her voice is music lost! The fountain-side
She gain'd—the wave flash'd forth—'twas darkly dyed
Even as from warrior-hearts; and on its edge,
Amidst the fern, and flowers, and moss-tufts deep,
There lay, as lull'd by stream and rustling sedge,
A youth, a graceful youth. "Oh! dost thou sleep?
Azzo!" she cried, "my Azzo! is this rest?"
But then her low tones falter'd:—"On thy breast
Is the stain—yes, 'tis blood! And that cold cheek—
That moveless lip!—thou dost not slumber?—speak,
Speak, Azzo, my beloved! No sound—no breath—

What hath come thus between our spirits? Death!
Death?—I but dream—I dream!" And there she stood,
A faint fair trembler, gazing first on blood,
With her fair arm around yon cypress thrown,
Her form sustain'd by that dark stem alone,
And fading fast, like spell-struck maid of old,
Into white waves dissolving, clear and cold;
When from the grass her dimm'd eye caught a gleam—
'Twas where a sword lay shiver'd by the stream—
Her brother's sword!—she knew it; and she knew
'Twas with a venom'd point that weapon slew!
Woe for young love! But love is strong. There came
Strength upon woman's fragile heart and frame;
There came swift courage! On the dewy ground
She knelt, with all her dark hair floating round
Like a long silken stole; she knelt, and press'd
Her lips of glowing life to Azzo's breast,
Drawing the poison forth. A strange, sad sight!
Pale death, and fearless love, and solemn night!
—So the moon saw them last.
The morn came singing
Through the green forests of the Apennines,
With all her joyous birds their free flight winging,
And steps and voices out amongst the vines.

What found that dayspring here? Two fair forms laid
Like sculptured sleepers; from the myrtle shade
Casting a gleam of beauty o’er the wave,
Still, mournful, sweet. Were such things for the grave?
Could it be so indeed? That radiant girl,
Deck’d as for bridal hours!—long braids of pearl
Amidst her shadowy locks were faintly shining,
As tears might shine, with melancholy light;
And there was gold her slender waist entwining;
And her pale graceful arms—how sadly bright;
And fiery gems upon her breast were lying,
And round her marble brow red roses dying.
But she died first!—the violet’s hue had spread
O’er her sweet eyelids with repose oppress’d;
She had bow’d heavily her gentle head,
And on the youth’s hush’d bosom sunk to rest.
So slept they well!—the poison’s work was done;
Love with true heart had striven—but Death had won.

[346] The tale of Imelda is related in Sismondi’s Histoire des Républiques Italiennes, vol. iii. p. 443.

EDITH.

A TALE OF THE WOODS.[347]

“Du Heilige! rufe dein Kind zuruck
Ich habe genossen das irdische Gluck,

Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.” Wallenstein.

The woods—oh! solemn are the boundless woods
Of the great western world when day declines,
And louder sounds the roll of distant floods,
More deep the rustling of the ancient pines.
When dimness gathers on the stilly air,
And mystery seems o’er every leaf to brood,
Awful it is for human heart to bear
The might and burden of the solitude!
Yet, in that hour, midst those green wastes, there sate
One young and fair; and oh! how desolate!
But undismay’d—while sank the crimson light,
And the high cedars darken’d with the night.
Alone she sate; though many lay around,
They, pale and silent on the bloody ground,
Were sever’d from her need and from her woe,
Far as death severs life. O’er that wild spot
Combat had raged, and brought the valiant low,
And left them, with the history of their lot,
Unto the forest oaks—a fearful scene
For her whose home of other days had been
Midst the fair halls of England! But the love
Which fill’d her soul was strong to cast out fear;
And by its might upborne all else above,

She shrank not—mark’d not that the dead were near.
Of him alone she thought, whose languid head
Faintly upon her wedded bosom fell;
Memory of aught but him on earth was fled,
While heavily she felt his life-blood well
Fast o’er her garments forth, and vainly bound
With her torn robe and hair the streaming wound—
Yet hoped, still hoped! Oh! from such hope how long
Affection woos the whispers that deceive,
Even when the pressure of dismay grows strong!
And we, that weep, watch, tremble, ne’er believe
The blow indeed can fall. So bow’d she there
Over the dying, while unconscious prayer
Fill’d all her soul. Now pour’d the moonlight down,
Veining the pine-stems through the foliage brown,
And fire-flies, kindling up the leafy place,
Cast fitful radiance o’er the warrior’s face.
Whereby she caught its changes. To her eye,
The eye that faded look’d through gathering haze,
Whence love, o’ermastering mortal agony,
Lifted a long, deep, melancholy gaze,
When voice was not; that fond, sad meaning pass’d—
She knew the fulness of her woe at last!
One shriek the forests heard—and mute she lay

And cold, yet clasping still the precious clay
To her scarce-heaving breast. O Love and Death!
Ye have sad meetings on this changeful earth.
Many and sad!—but airs of heavenly breath
Shall melt the links which bind you, for your birth
Is far apart.
Now light, of richer hue
Than the moon sheds, came flushing mist and dew;
The pines grew red with morning; fresh winds play'd;
Bright-colour'd birds with splendour cross'd the shade,
Flitting on flower-like wings; glad murmurs broke
From reed, and spray, and leaf—the living strings
Of earth's Æolian lyre, whose music woke
Into young life and joy all happy things.
And she, too, woke from that long dreamless trance,
The widow'd Edith: fearfully her glance
Fell, as in doubt, on faces dark and strange,
And dusky forms. A sudden sense of change
Flash'd o'er her spirit, even ere memory swept
The tide of anguish back with thoughts that slept;
Yet half instinctively she rose, and spread
Her arms, as 'twere for something lost or fled,
Then faintly sank again. The forest-bough,
With all its whispers, waved not o'er her now.

Where was she? Midst the people of the wild,
By the red hunter’s fire: an aged chief,
Whose home look’d sad—for therein play’d no child—
Had borne her, in the stillness of her grief,
To that lone cabin of the woods; and there,
Won by a form so desolately fair,
Or touch’d with thoughts from some past sorrow sprung,
O’er her low couch an Indian matron hung;
While in grave silence, yet with earnest eye,
The ancient warrior of the waste stood by,
Bending in watchfulness his proud gray head,
And leaning on his bow.
And life return’d—
Life, but with all its memories of the dead,
To Edith’s heart; and well the sufferer learn’d
Her task of meek endurance—well she wore
The chasten’d grief that humbly can adore
Midst blinding tears. But unto that old pair,
Even as a breath of spring’s awakening air,
Her presence was; or as a sweet wild tune
Bringing back tender thoughts, which all too soon
Depart with childhood. Sadly they had seen
A daughter to the land of spirits go;
And ever from that time her fading mien,

And voice, like winds of summer, soft and low,
Had haunted their dim years: but Edith’s face
Now look’d in holy sweetness from her place,
And they again seem’d parents. Oh! the joy,
The rich deep blessedness—though earth’s alloy,
Fear, that still bodes, be there—of pouring forth
The heart’s whole power of love, its wealth and worth
Of strong affection, in one healthful flow,
On something all its own! that kindly glow,
Which to shut inward is consuming pain,
Gives the glad soul its flowering time again,
When, like the sunshine, freed. And gentle cares
Th’ adopted Edith meekly gave for theirs
Who loved her thus. Her spirit dwelt the while
With the departed, and her patient smile
Spoke of farewells to earth; yet still she pray’d,
E’en o’er her soldier’s lowly grave, for aid
One purpose to fulfil, to leave one trace
Brightly recording that her dwelling-place
Had been among the wilds; for well she knew
The secret whisper of her bosom true,
Which warn’d her hence.
And now, by many a word
Link’d unto moments when the heart was stirr’d—

By the sweet mournfulness of many a hymn,
Sung when the woods at eve grew hush’d and dim—
By the persuasion of her fervent eye,
All eloquent with childlike piety—
By the still beauty of her life she strove
To win for heaven, and heaven-born truth, the love
Pour’d out on her so freely. Nor in vain
Was that soft-breathing influence to enchain
The soul in gentle bonds; by slow degrees
Light follow’d on, as when a summer breeze
Parts the deep masses of the forest shade,
And lets the sunbeam through. Her voice was made
Even such a breeze; and she, a lowly guide,
By faith and sorrow raised and purified,
So to the Cross her Indian fosterers led,
Until their prayers were one. When morning spread
O’er the blue lake, and when the sunset’s glow
Touch’d into golden bronze the cypress bough,
And when the quiet of the Sabbath-time
Sank on her heart, though no melodious chime
Waken’d the wilderness, their prayers were one.
Now might she pass in hope—her work was done:
And she was passing from the woods away—
The broken flower of England might not stay

Amidst those alien shades. Her eye was bright
Even yet with something of a starry light,
But her form wasted, and her fair young cheek
Wore oft and patiently a fatal streak,
A rose whose root was death. The parting sigh
Of autumn through the forests had gone by,
And the rich maple o’er her wanderings lone
Its crimson leaves in many a shower had strown,
Flushing the air; and winter’s blast had been
Amidst the pines; and now a softer green
Fringed their dark boughs: for spring again had come,
The sunny spring! but Edith to her home
Was journeying fast. Alas! we think it sad
To part with life when all the earth looks glad
In her young lovely things—when voices break
Into sweet sounds, and leaves and blossoms wake:
Is it not brighter, then, in that far clime
Where graves are not, nor blights of changeful time,
If here such glory dwell with passing blooms,
Such golden sunshine rest around the tombs?
So thought the dying one. ’Twas early day,
And sounds and odours, with the breezes’ play
Whispering of spring-time, through the cabin door,
Unto her couch life’s farewell sweetness bore.

Then with a look where all her hope awoke,
“My father!”—to the gray-hair’d chief she spoke—
“Know’st thou that I depart?” “I know, I know,”
He answer’d mournfully, “that thou must go
To thy beloved, my daughter!” “Sorrow not
For me, kind mother!” with meek smiles once more
She murmur’d in low tones: “one happy lot
Awaits us, friends! upon the better shore;
For we have pray’d together in one trust,
And lifted our frail spirits from the dust
To God, who gave them. Lay me by mine own,
Under the cedar shade: where he is gone,
Thither I go. There will my sisters be,
And the dead parents, lisping at whose knee
My childhood’s prayer was learn’d—the Saviour’s prayer
Which now ye know—and I shall meet you there.
Father and gentle mother! ye have bound
The bruisèd reed, and mercy shall be found
By Mercy’s children.” From the matron’s eye
Dropp’d tears, her sole and passionate reply.
But Edith felt them not; for now a sleep
Solemnly beautiful—a stillness deep,
Fell on her settled face. Then, sad and slow,
And mantling up his stately head in woe,

“Thou’rt passing hence,” he sang, that warrior old,
In sounds like those by plaintive waters roll’d.
“Thou’rt passing from the lake’s green side,
And the hunter’s hearth away:
For the time of flowers, for the summer’s pride,
Daughter! thou canst not stay.
“Thou’rt journeying to thy spirit’s home,
Where the skies are ever clear:
The corn-month’s golden hours will come,
But they shall not find thee here.
“And we shall miss thy voice, my bird!
Under our whispering pine;
Music shall midst the leaves be heard,
But not a song like thine.
“A breeze that roves o’er stream and hill,
Telling of winter gone,
Hath such sweet falls—yet caught we still
A farewell in its tone.
“But thou, my bright one! thou shalt be
Where farewell sounds are o’er;
Thou, in the eyes thou lovest, shalt see
No fear of parting more.
“The mossy grave thy tears have wet,
And the wind’s wild moanings by,

Thou with thy kindred shalt forget,

Midst flowers—not such as die.

“The shadow from thy brow shall melt

The sorrow from thy strain,

But where thine earthly smile hath dwelt

Our hearts shall thirst in vain.

“Dim will our cabin be, and lone,

When thou, its light, art fled;

Yet hath thy step the pathway shown

Unto the happy dead.

“And we will follow thee, our guide!

And join that shining band;

Thou’rt passing from the lake’s green side—

Go to the better land!”

The song had ceased, the list’ners caught no breath:

That lovely sleep had melted into death.

[347] Founded on incidents related in an American work, “Sketches of Connecticut.”

THE INDIAN CITY.[348]

“What deep wounds ever closed without a sear?

The heart’s bleed longest, and but heal to wear

That which disfigures it.” Childe Harold.

[348] From a tale in Forbes’s Oriental Memoirs.

I.

Royal in splendour went down the day
On the plain where an Indian city lay,
With its crown of domes o’er the forest high,
Red, as if fused in the burning sky;
And its deep groves pierced by the rays which made
A bright stream’s way through each long arcade,
Till the pillar’d vaults of the banian stood
Like torch-lit aisles midst the solemn wood;
And the plantain glitter’d with leaves of gold,
As a tree midst the genii gardens old,
And the cypress lifted a blazing spire,
And the stems of the cocoas were shafts of fire.
Many a white pagoda’s gleam
Slept lovely round upon lake and stream,
Broken alone by the lotus flowers,
As they caught the glow of the sun’s last hours,
Like rosy wine in their cups, and shed
Its glory forth on their crystal bed.
Many a graceful Hindoo maid,
With the water-vase from the palmy shade,
Came gliding light as the desert’s roe,
Down marble steps, to the tanks below;
And a cool sweet plashing was ever heard,
As the molten glass of the wave was stirr’d,

And a murmur, thrilling the scented air,
Told where the Bramin bow’d in prayer.
—There wander’d a noble Moslem boy
Through the scene of beauty in breathless joy;
He gazed where the stately city rose,
Like a pageant of clouds, in its red repose;
He turn’d where birds through the gorgeous gloom
Of the woods went glancing on starry plume;
He track’d the brink of the shining lake,
By the tall canes feather’d in tuft and brake;
Till the path he chose, in its mazes, wound
To the very heart of the holy ground.
And there lay the water, as if enshrined
In a rocky urn, from the sun and wind,
Bearing the hues of the grove on high,
Far down through its dark still purity.
The flood beyond, to the fiery west,
Spread out like a metal mirror’s breast;
But that lone bay, in its dimness deep,
Seem’d made for the swimmer’s joyous leap,
For the stag athirst from the noontide chase,
For all free things of the wild wood’s race.
Like a falcon’s glance on the wide blue sky,
Was the kindling flash of the boy’s glad eye;

Like a sea-bird’s flight to the foaming wave,
From the shadowy bank was the bound he gave;
Dashing the spray-drops, cold and white,
O’er the glossy leaves in its young delight,
And bowing his locks to the waters clear—
Alas! he dreamt not that fate was near.
His mother look’d from her tent the while,
O’er heaven and earth with a quiet smile:
She, on her way unto Mecca’s fane,
Had stay’d the march of her pilgrim train,
Calmly to linger a few brief hours
In the Bramin city’s glorious bowers;
For the pomp of the forest, the wave’s bright fall,
The red gold of sunset—she loved them all.

II.

The moon rose clear in the splendour given
To the deep-blue night of an Indian heaven;
The boy from the high-arch’d woods came back—
Oh! what had he met in his lonely track?
The serpent’s glance, through the long reeds bright?
The arrowy spring of the tiger’s might?
No! yet as one by a conflict worn,
With his graceful hair all soil’d and torn,
And a gloom on the lids of his darken’d eye,

And a gash on his bosom—he came to die!
He look’d for the face to his young heart sweet,
And found it, and sank at his mother’s feet.
“Speak to me! whence doth the swift blood run
What hath befallen thee, my child, my son?”
The mist of death on his brow lay pale,
But his voice just linger’d to breathe the tale,
Murmuring faintly of wrongs and scorn,
And wounds from the children of Brahma borne
This was the doom for a Moslem found
With a foot profane on their holy ground—
This was for sullying the pure waves, free
Unto them alone—’twas their god’s decree.
A change came o’er his wandering look—
The mother shriek’d not then nor shook:
Breathless she knelt in her son’s young blood,
Rending her mantle to stanch its flood;
But it rush’d like a river which none may stay,
Bearing a flower to the deep away.
That which our love to the earth would chain,
Fearfully striving with heaven in vain—
That which fades from us, while yet we hold,
Clasp’d to our bosoms, its mortal mould,
Was fleeting before her, afar and fast;

One moment—the soul from the face had pass’d!
Are there no words for that common woe?
Ask of the thousands its depth that know!
The boy had breathed, in his dreaming rest,
Like a low-voiced dove, on her gentle breast;
He had stood, when she sorrow’d, beside her knee,
Painfully stilling his quick heart’s glee;
He had kiss’d from her cheek the widow’s tears,
With the loving lip of his infant years:
He had smiled o’er her path like a bright spring day—
Now in his blood on the earth he lay!
Murder’d! Alas! and we love so well
In a world where anguish like this can dwell!
She bow’d down mutely o’er her dead—
They that stood round her watch’d in dread;
They watch’d—she knew not they were by—
Her soul sat veil’d in its agony.
On the silent lip she press’d no kiss—
Too stern was the grasp of her pangs for this:
She shed no tear, as her face bent low
O’er the shining hair of the lifeless brow;
She look’d but into the half-shut eye
With a gaze that found there no reply,
And, shrieking, mantled her head from sight,

And fell, struck down by her sorrow’s might.

And what deep change, what work of power,

Was wrought on her secret soul that hour?

How rose the lonely one? She rose

Like a prophetess from dark repose!

And proudly flung from her face the veil,

And shook the hair from her forehead pale,

And midst her wondering handmaids stood,

With the sudden glance of a dauntless mood—

Ay, lifting up to the midnight sky

A brow in its regal passion high,

With a close and rigid grasp she press’d

The blood-stain’d robe to her heaving breast,

And said—“Not yet, not yet I weep,

Not yet my spirit shall sink or sleep!

Not till yon city, in ruins rent,

Be piled for its victim’s monument.

Cover his dust! bear it on before!

It shall visit those temple gates once more.”

And away in the train of the dead she turn’d,

The strength of her step was the heart that burn’d;

And the Bramin groves in the starlight smiled,

As the mother pass’d with her slaughter’d child.

III.

Hark! a wild sound of the desert’s horn
Through the woods round the Indian city borne,
A peal of the cymbal and tambour afar—
War! ’tis the gathering of Moslem war!
The Bramin look’d from the leaguer’d towers—
He saw the wild archer amidst his bowers;
And the lake that flash’d through the plantain shade,
As the light of the lances along it play’d;
And the canes that shook as if winds were high,
When the fiery steed of the waste swept by;
And the camp as it lay like a billowy sea,
Wide round the sheltering banian-tree.
There stood one tent from the rest apart—
That was the place of a wounded heart.
Oh! deep is a wounded heart, and strong
A voice that cries against mighty wrong;
And full of death as a hot wind’s blight,
Doth the ire of a crush’d affection light.
Maimuna from realm to realm had pass’d,
And her tale had rung like a trumpet’s blast.
There had been words from her pale lips pour’d,
Each one a spell to unsheath the sword.
The Tartar had sprung from his steed to hear,
And the dark chief of Araby grasp’d his spear,

Till a chain of long lances begirt the wall,
And a vow was recorded that doom’d its fall.
Back with the dust of her son she came,
When her voice had kindled that lightning flame;
She came in the might of a queenly foe,
Banner, and javelin, and bended bow;
But a deeper power on her forehead sate—
There sought the warrior his star of fate:
Her eye’s wild flash through the tented line
Was hail’d as a spirit and a sign,
And the faintest tone from her lip was caught
As a sibyl’s breath of prophetic thought.
Vain, bitter glory!—the gift of grief,
That lights up vengeance to find relief,
Transient and faithless! It cannot fill
So the deep void of the heart, nor still
The yearning left by a broken tie,
That haunted fever of which we die!
Sickening she turn’d from her sad renown,
As a king in death might reject his crown.
Slowly the strength of the walls gave way—
She wither’d faster from day to day:
All the proud sounds of that banner’d plain,
To stay the flight of her soul were vain;

Like an eagle caged, it had striven, and worn
The frail dust, ne’er for such conflicts born,
Till the bars were rent, and the hour was come
For its fearful rushing through darkness home.
The bright sun set in his pomp and pride,
As on that eve when the fair boy died:
She gazed from her couch, and a softness fell
O’er her weary heart with the day’s farewell;
She spoke, and her voice, in its dying tone,
Had an echo of feelings that long seem’d flown.
She murmur’d a low sweet cradle-song,
Strange midst the din of a warrior throng—
A song of the time when her boy’s young cheek
Had glow’d on her breast in its slumber meek.
But something which breathed from that mournful strain
Sent a fitful gust o’er her soul again;
And starting, as if from a dream, she cried—
“Give him proud burial at my side!
There, by yon lake, where the palm-boughs wave,
When the temples are fallen, make there our grave.”
And the temples fell, though the spirit pass’d,
That stay’d not for victory’s voice at last;
When the day was won for the martyr dead,
For the broken heart and the bright blood shed.

Through the gates of the vanquish'd the Tartar steed
Bore in the avenger with foaming speed;
Free swept the flame through the idol fanes,
And the streams glow'd red, as from warrior veins;
And the sword of the Moslem, let loose to slay,
Like the panther leapt on its flying prey,
Till a city of ruin begirt the shade
Where the boy and his mother at rest were laid.
Palace and tower on that plain were left,
Like fallen trees by the lightning cleft;
The wild vine mantled the stately square,
The Rajah's throne was the serpent's lair,
And the jungle grass o'er the altar sprung—
This was the work of one deep heart wrung!

THE PEASANT GIRL OF THE RHONE.

——"There is but one place in the world—
Thither, where he lies buried!
...
There, there is all that still remains of him:
That single spot is the whole earth to me."
Coleridge's "Wallenstein."
"Alas! our young affections run to waste,
Or water but the desert."—Childe Harold.
There went a warrior's funeral through the night,

A waving of tall plumes, a ruddy light
Of torches, fitfully and wildly thrown
From the high woods, along the sweeping Rhone,
Far down the waters. Heavily and dead,
Under the moaning trees, the home-hoof's tread
In muffled sounds upon the greensward fell,
As chieftains pass'd; and solemnly the swell
Of the deep requiem, o'er the gleaming river
Borne with the gale, and with the leaves' low shiver,
Floated and died. Proud mourners there, yet pale,
Wore man's mute anguish sternly;—but of one,
Oh, who shall speak? What words his brow unveil?
A father following to the grave his son!—
That is no grief to picture! Sad and slow,
Through the wood-shadows, moved the knightly train,
With youth's fair form upon the bier laid low—
Fair even when found amidst the bloody slain,
Stretch'd by its broken lance. They reach'd the lone
Baronial chapel, where the forest-gloom
Fell heaviest, for the massy boughs had grown
Into thick archways, as to vault the tomb.
Stately they trode the hollow-ringing aisle,
A strange deep echo shudder'd through the pile,
Till crested heads at last in silence bent

Round the De Coucis' antique monument,
When dust to dust was given:—and Aymer slept
Beneath the drooping banners of his line,
Whose broider'd folds the Syrian wind had swept
Proudly and oft o'er fields of Palestine.
So the sad rite was closed. The sculptor gave
Trophies, ere long, to deck that lordly grave;
And the pale image of a youth, array'd
As warriors are for fight, but calmly laid
In slumber on his shield. Then all was done—
All still around the dead. His name was heard
Perchance when wine-cups flow'd, and hearts were stirr'd
By some old song, or tale of battle won
Told round the hearth. But in his father's breast
Manhood's high passions woke again, and press'd
On to their mark; and in his friend's clear eye
There dwelt no shadow of a dream gone by;
And with the brethren of his fields, the feast
Was gay as when the voice whose sounds had ceased
Mingled with theirs. Even thus life's rushing tide
Bears back affection from the grave's dark side;
Alas! to think of this!—the heart's void place
Fill'd up so soon!—so like a summer cloud,
All that we loved to pass and leave no trace!—

He lay forgotten in his early shroud.
Forgotten?—not of all! The sunny smile
Glancing in play o'er that proud lip erewhile,
And the dark locks, whose breezy waving threw
A gladness round, whene'er their shade withdrew
From the bright brow; and all the sweetness lying
Within that eagle eye's jet radiance deep,
And all the music with that young voice dying,
Whose joyous echoes made the quick heart leap
As at a hunter's bugle—these things lived
Still in one breast, whose silent love survived
The pomps of kindred sorrow. Day by day,
On Aymer's tomb fresh flowers in garlands lay,
Through the dim fane soft summer odours breathing,
And all the pale sepulchral trophies wreathing,
And with a flush of deeper brilliance glowing
In the rich light, like molten rubies flowing
Through storied windows down. The violet there
Might speak of love—a secret love and lowly;
And the rose image all things fleet and fair;
And the faint passion-flower, the sad and holy,
Tell of diviner hopes. But whose light hand,
As for an altar, wove the radiant band?
Whose gentle nurture brought, from hidden dells,

That gem-like wealth of blossoms and sweet bells,
To blush through every season? Blight and chill
Might touch the changing woods; but duly still
For years those gorgeous coronals renew'd,
And brightly clasping marble spear and helm,
Even through mid-winter, fill'd the solitude
With a strange smile—a glow of summer's realm.
Surely some fond and fervent heart was pouring
Its youth's vain worship on the dust, adoring
In lone devotedness!
One spring morn rose,
And found, within that tomb's proud shadow laid—
Oh! not as midst the vineyards, to repose
From the fierce noon—a dark-hair'd peasant maid.
Who could reveal her story? That still face
Had once been fair; for on the clear arch'd brow
And the curved lip there linger'd yet such grace
As sculpture gives its dreams; and long and low
The deep black lashes, o'er the half-shut eye—
For death was on its lids—fell mournfully.
But the cold cheek was sunk, the raven hair
Dimm'd, the slight form all wasted, as by care.
Whence came that early blight? Her kindred's place
Was not amidst the high De Couci race;

Yet there her shrine had been! She grasp’d a wreath,

The tomb’s last garland!—This was love in death.

INDIAN WOMAN’S DEATH-SONG.

[An Indian woman, driven to despair by her husband’s desertion of her for another wife, entered a canoe with her children, and rowed it down the Mississippi towards a cataract. Her voice was heard from the shore singing a mournful death-song, until overpowered by the sound of the waters in which she perished. The tale is related in Long’s “Expedition to the Source of St Peter’s River.”]

“Non, je ne puis vivre avec un cœur brise. Il faut que je retrouve

la joie, et que je m’unisse aux esprits libres de l’air.”

“Bride of Messina.” Translated by Madame de Stael.

“Let not my child be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman.”

“The Prairie.”

Down a broad river of the western wilds,

Piercing thick forest-glooms, a light canoe

Swept with the current: fearful was the speed

Of the frail bark, as by a tempest’s wing

Borne leaf-like on to where the mist of spray

Rose with the cataract’s thunder. Yet within,

Proudly, and dauntlessly, and all alone,

Save that a babe lay sleeping at her breast,

A woman stood! Upon her Indian brow

Sat a strange gladness, and her dark hair waved

As if triumphantly. She press’d her child,

In its bright slumber, to her beating heart,
And lifted her sweet voice, that rose awhile
Above the sound of waters, high and clear,
Wafting a wild proud strain—a song of death.
“Roll swiftly to the spirits’ land, thou mighty stream and free!
Father of ancient waters,[349] roll! and bear our lives with thee!
The weary bird that storms have toss’d would seek the sunshine’s calm,
And the deer that hath the arrow’s hurt flies to the woods of balm.
“Roll on!—my warrior’s eye hath look’d upon another’s face,
And mine hath faded from his soul, as fades a moonbeam’s trace:
My shadow comes not o’er his path, my whisper to his dream—
He flings away the broken reed. Roll swifter yet, thou stream!
“The voice that spoke of other days is hush’d within his breast,
But mine its lonely music haunts, and will not let me rest;
It sings a low and mournful song of gladness that is gone—
I cannot live without that light. Father of waves! roll on!
“Will he not miss the bounding step that met him from the chase?
The heart of love that made his home an ever-sunny place?
The hand that spread the hunter’s board, and deck’d his couch of yore?—
He will not! Roll, dark foaming stream, on to the better shore!
“Some blessed fount amidst the woods of that bright land must flow,
Whose waters from my soul may lave the memory of this woe;
Some gentle wind must whisper there, whose breath may waft away
The burden of the heavy night, the sadness of the day.

“And thou, my babe! though born, like me, for woman’s weary lot,
Smile!—to that wasting of the heart, my own! I leave thee not;
Too bright a thing art thou to pine in aching love away—
Thy mother bears thee far, young fawn! from sorrow and decay.
“She bears thee to the glorious bowers where none are heard to weep,
And where th’ unkind one hath no power again to trouble sleep;
And where the soul shall find its youth, as wakening from a dream:
One moment, and that realm is ours. On, on, dark-rolling stream!”

[349] “Father of waters,” the Indian name for the Mississippi.

JOAN OF ARC IN RHEIMS.

[“Jeanne d’Arc avait eu la joie de voir à Chalons quelques amis de son enfance. Une joie plus ineffable encore l’attendait à Rheims, au sein de son triomphe: Jacques d’Arc, son père, y se trouva, aussitôt que de troupes de Charles VII. y furent entrées; et comme les deux frères de notre héroine l’avaient accompagnée, elle se vit pour un instant au milieu de sa famille, dans les bras d’un père vertueux.”—Vie de Jeanne d’Arc.]

Thou hast a charmed cup, O Fame!
A draught that mantles high,
And seems to lift this earth-born frame
Above mortality:
Away! to me—a woman—bring
Sweet waters from affection’s spring!
That was a joyous day in Rheims of old,
When peal on peal of mighty music roll’d

Forth from her throng’d cathedral; while around,
A multitude, whose billows made no sound,
Chain’d to a hush of wonder, though elate
With victory, listen’d at their temple’s gate.
And what was done within? Within, the light,
Through the rich gloom of pictured windows flowing,
Tinged with soft awfulness a stately sight—
The chivalry of France their proud heads bowing
In martial vassalage! While midst that ring,
And shadow’d by ancestral tombs, a king
Received his birth-right’s crown. For this, the hymn
Swell’d out like rushing waters, and the day
With the sweet censer’s misty breath grew dim,
As through long aisles it floated o’er th’ array
Of arms and sweeping stoles. But who, alone
And unapproach’d, beside the altar-stone,
With the white banner forth like sunshine streaming,
And the gold helm through clouds of fragrance gleaming.
Silent and radiant stood? The helm was raised,
And the fair face reveal’d, that upward gazed,
Intensely worshipping—a still, clear face,
Youthful, but brightly solemn! Woman’s cheek
And brow were there, in deep devotion meek,
Yet glorified, with inspiration’s trace

On its pure paleness; while, enthroned above,
The pictured Virgin, with her smile of love,
Seem’d bending o’er her votaress. That slight form!
Was that the leader through the battle-storm?
Had the soft light in that adoring eye
Guided the warrior where the swords flash’d high?
’Twas so, even so!—and thou, the shepherd’s child,
Joanne, the lowly dreamer of the wild!
Never before, and never since that hour,
Hath woman, mantled with victorious power,
Stood forth as thou beside the shrine didst stand,
Holy amidst the knighthood of the land,
And, beautiful with joy and with renown,
Lift thy white banner o’er the olden crown,
Ransom’d for France by thee!
The rites are done.
Now let the dome with trumpet-notes be shaken,
And bid the echoes of the tomb awaken,
And come thou forth, that heaven’s rejoicing sun
May give thee welcome from thine own blue skies,
Daughter of victory! A triumphant strain,
A proud rich stream of warlike melodies,
Gush’d through the portals of the antique fane,
And forth she came. Then rose a nation’s sound:

Oh! what a power to bid the quick heart bound,
The wind bears onward with the stormy cheer
Man gives to glory on her high career!
Is there indeed such power?—far deeper dwells
In one kind household voice, to reach the cells
Whence happiness flows forth! The shouts that fill'd
The hollow heaven tempestuously, were still'd
One moment; and in that brief pause, the tone,
As of a breeze that o'er her home had blown,
Sank on the bright maid's heart. "Joanne!"—Who spoke
Like those whose childhood with her childhood grew
Under one roof? "Joanne!"—that murmur broke
With sounds of weeping forth! She turn'd—she knew
Beside her, mark'd from all the thousands there,
In the calm beauty of his silver hair,
The stately shepherd; and the youth, whose joy,
From his dark eye flash'd proudly; and the boy,
The youngest born, that ever loved her best:—
"Father! and ye, my brothers!" On the breast
Of that gray sire she sank—and swiftly back,
Even in an instant, to their native track
Her free thoughts flow'd. She saw the pomp no more
The plumes, the banners: to her cabin-door,
And to the Fairy's Fountain in the glade,[350]

Where her young sisters by her side had play’d,
And to her hamlet’s chapel, where it rose
Hallowing the forest unto deep repose,
Her spirit turn’d. The very wood-note, sung
In early spring-time by the bird, which dwelt
Where o’er her father’s roof the beech leaves hung,
Was in her heart; a music heard and felt,
Winning her back to nature. She unbound
The helm of many battles from her head,
And, with her bright locks bow’d to sweep the ground,
Lifting her voice up, wept for joy and said—
“Bless me, my father! bless me! and with thee,
To the still cabin and the beechen tree,
Let me return!”
Oh! never did thine eye
Through the green haunts of happy infancy
Wander again, Joanne! Too much of fame
Had shed its radiance on thy peasant name;
And bought alone by gifts beyond all price—
The trusting heart’s repose, the paradise
Of home, with all its loves—doth fate allow
The crown of glory unto woman’s brow.

[350] A beautiful fountain, near Domremi, believed to be haunted by fairies, and a favourite resort of Jeanne d’Arc in her childhood.

PAULINE.

To die for what we love! Oh! there is power
In the true heart, and pride, and joy, for this:
It is to live without the vanish’d light
That strength is needed.
“Cosi trapassa al trapassar d’un Giorno
Della vita mortal il fiore e’l verde.” Tasso.
Along the starlit Seine went music swelling,
Till the air thrill’d with its exulting mirth;
Proudly it floated, even as if no dwelling
For cares or stricken hearts were found on earth;
And a glad sound the measure lightly beat,
A happy chime of many dancing feet.
For in a palace of the land that night,
Lamps, and fresh roses, and green leaves were hung;
And from the painted walls, a stream of light
On flying forms beneath soft splendour flung;
But loveliest far amidst the revel’s pride
Was one—the lady from the Danube side.[351]
Pauline, the meekly bright! though now no more
Her clear eye flash’d with youth’s all-tameless glee,
Yet something holier than its dayspring wore,
There in soft rest lay beautiful to see;
A charm with graver, tenderer, sweetness fraught—

The blending of deep love and matron thought.
Through the gay throng she moved, serenely fair,
And such calm joy as fills a moonlight sky
Sat on her brow beneath its graceful hair,
As her young daughter in the dance went by,
With the fleet step of one that yet hath known
Smiles and kind voices in this world alone.
Lurk'd there no secret boding in her breast?
Did no faint whisper warn of evil nigh?
Such oft awake when most the heart seems blest
Midst the light laughter of festivity.
Whence come those tones? Alas! enough we know
To mingle fear with all triumphal show!
Who spoke of evil when young feet were flying
In fairy rings around the echoing hall?
Soft airs through braided locks in perfume sighing,
Glad pulses beating unto music's call?
Silence!—the minstrels pause—and hark! a sound,
A strange quick rustling which their notes had drown'd!
And lo! a light upon the dancers breaking—
Not such their clear and silvery lamps had shed!
From the gay dream of revelry awaking,
One moment holds them still in breathless dread.
The wild fierce lustre grows: then bursts a cry—

Fire! through the hall and round it gathering—fly!
And forth they rush, as chased by sword and spear,
To the green coverts of the garden bowers—
A gorgeous masque of pageantry and fear,
Startling the birds and trampling down the flowers:
While from the dome behind, red sparkles driven
Pierce the dark stillness of the midnight heaven.
And where is she—Pauline? The hurrying throng
Have swept her onward, as a stormy blast
Might sweep some faint o'erwearied bird along—
Till now the threshold of that death is past,
And free she stands beneath the starry skies,
Calling her child—but no sweet voice replies.
"Bertha! where art thou? Speak! oh! speak, my own!"
Alas! unconscious of her pangs the while,
The gentle girl, in fear's cold grasp alone,
Powerless had sunk within the blazing pile;
A young bright form, deck'd gloriously for death,
With flowers all shrinking from the flame's fierce breath!
But oh! thy strength, deep love! There is no power
To stay the mother from that rolling grave,
Though fast on high the fiery volumes tower,
And forth like banners from each lattice wave:
Back, back she rushes through a host combined—

Mighty is anguish, with affection twined!
And what bold step may follow, midst the roar
Of the red billows, o’er their prey that rise?
None!—Courage there stood still—and never more
Did those fair forms emerge on human eyes!
Was one bright meeting theirs, one wild farewell?
And died they heart to heart?—Oh! who can tell?
Freshly and cloudlessly the morning broke
On that sad palace, midst its pleasure shades;
Its painted roofs had sunk—yet black with smoke
And lonely stood its marble colonnades:
But yester eve their shafts with wreaths were bound,
Now lay the scene one shrivell’d scroll around!
And bore the ruins no recording trace
Of all that woman’s heart had dared and done?
Yes! there were gems to mark its mortal place,
That forth from dust and ashes dimly shone!
Those had the mother, on her gentle breast,
Worn round her child’s fair image, there at rest.
And they were all!—the tender and the true
Left this alone her sacrifice to prove,
Hallowing the spot where mirth once lightly flew,
To deep lone chasten’d thoughts of grief and love.
Oh! we have need of patient faith below,

To clear away the mysteries of such woe!

[351] The Princess Pauline Schwartzenberg. The story of her fate is beautifully related in L'Allemagne, vol. iii. p. 336.

JUANA.

[Juana, mother of the Emperor Charles V., upon the death of her husband, Philip the Handsome of Austria, who had treated her with uniform neglect, had his body laid upon a bed of state, in a magnificent dress; and being possessed with the idea that it would revive, watched it for a length of time, incessantly waiting for the moment of returning life.]

It is but dust thou look'st upon. This love,

This wild and passionate idolatry,

What doth it in the shadow of the grave?

Gather it back within thy lonely heart,

So must it ever end: too much we give

Unto the things that perish.

The night-wind shook the tapestry round an ancient palace room,

And torches, as it rose and fell, waved through the gorgeous gloom,

And o'er a shadowy regal couch threw fitful gleams and red,

Where a woman with long raven hair sat watching by the dead.

Pale shone the features of the dead, yet glorious still to see,

Like a hunter or a chief struck down while his heart and step were free:

No shroud he wore, no robe of death, but there majestic lay,

Proudly and sadly glittering in royalty's array.

But she that with the dark hair watch'd by the cold slumberer's side,

On her wan cheek no beauty dwelt, and in her garb no pride;
Only her full impassion'd eyes as o'er that clay she bent,
A wildness and a tenderness in strange resplendence blent.
And as the swift thoughts cross'd her soul, like shadows of a cloud,
Amidst the silent room of death the dreamer spoke aloud;
She spoke to him that could not hear, and cried,
"Thou yet wilt wake,
And learn my watchings and my tears, beloved one! for thy sake.
"They told me this was death, but well I knew it could not be;
Fairest and stateliest of the earth! who spoke of death for thee?
They would have wrapp'd the funeral shroud thy gallant form around,
But I forbade—and there thou art, a monarch, robed and crown'd!
"With all thy bright locks gleaming still, their coronal beneath,
And thy brow so proudly beautiful—who said that this was death?
Silence hath been upon thy lips, and stillness round thee long,
But the hopeful spirit in my breast is all undimm'd and strong.
"I know thou hast not loved me yet; I am not fair like thee,
The very glance of whose clear eye threw round a light of glee!
A frail and drooping form is mine—a cold unsmiling cheek—
Oh! I have but a woman's heart wherewith thy heart to seek.
"But when thou wakest, my prince, my lord! and hear'st how I have kept
A lonely vigil by thy side, and o'er thee pray'd and wept—
How in one long deep dream of thee my nights, and days have past—
Surely that humble patient love must win back love at last!

“And thou wilt smile—my own, my own, shall be the sunny smile,
Which brightly fell, and joyously, on all but me erewhile!
No more in vain affection’s thirst my weary soul shall pine—
Oh! years of hope deferr’d were paid by one fond glance of thine!
“Thou’lt meet me with that radiant look when thou comest from the chase—
For me, for me, in festal halls it shall kindle o’er thy face!
Thou’lt reck no more though beauty’s gift mine aspect may not bless;
In thy kind eyes this deep, deep love shall give me loveliness.
“But wake! my heart within me burns, yet once more to rejoice
In the sound to which it ever leap’d, the music of thy voice.
Awake! I sit in solitude, that thy first look and tone,
And the gladness of thine opening eyes, may all be mine alone.”
In the still chambers of the dust, thus pour’d forth day by day,
The passion of that loving dream from a troubled soul found way,
Until the shadows of the grave had swept o’er every grace,
Left midst the awfulness of death on the princely form and face.
And slowly broke the fearful truth upon the watcher’s breast,
And they bore away the royal dead with requiems to his rest,
With banners and with knightly plumes all waving in the wind—
But a woman’s broken heart was left in its lone despair behind.

THE AMERICAN FOREST GIRL.

A fearful gift upon thy heart is laid,
Woman!—a power to suffer and to love;
Therefore thou so canst pity.

Wildly and mournfully the Indian drum
On the deep hush of moonlight forests broke—
“Sing us a death-song, for thine hour is come”—
So the red warriors to their captive spoke.
Still, and amidst those dusky forms alone,
A youth, a fair-hair’d youth of England stood,
Like a king’s son; though from his cheek had flown
The mantling crimson of the island blood,
And his press’d lips look’d marble. Fiercely bright
And high around him blazed the fires of night,
Rocking beneath the cedars to and fro,
As the wind pass’d, and with a fitful glow
Lighting the victim’s face: but who could tell
Of what within his secret heart befell,
Known but to heaven that hour? Perchance a thought
Of his far home then so intensely wrought,
That its full image, pictured to his eye
On the dark ground of mortal agony,
Rose clear as day!—and he might see the band
Of his young sisters wandering hand in hand,
Where the laburnums droop’d; or haply binding
The jasmine up the door’s low pillars winding;
Or, as day closed upon their gentle mirth,
Gathering, with braided hair, around the hearth,

Where sat their mother; and that mother's face
Its grave sweet smile yet wearing in the place
Where so it ever smiled! Perchance the prayer
Learn'd at her knee came back on his despair;
The blessing from her voice, the very tone
Of her "Good-night" might breathe from boyhood gone!
—He started and look'd up: thick cypress boughs,
Full of strange sound, waved o'er him, darkly red
In the broad stormy firelight; savage brows,
With tall plumes crested and wild hues o'erspread,
Girt him like feverish phantoms; and pale stars
Look'd through the branches as through dungeon bars,
Shedding no hope. He knew, he felt his doom—
Oh! what a tale to shadow with its gloom
That happy hall in England. Idle fear!
Would the winds tell it? Who might dream or hear
The secret of the forests? To the stake
They bound him; and that proud young soldier strove
His father's spirit in his breast to wake,
Trusting to die in silence! He, the love
Of many hearts!—the fondly rear'd—the fair,
Gladdening all eyes to see! And fetter'd there
He stood beside his death-pyre, and the brand
Flamed up to light it in the chieftain's hand.

He thought upon his God. Hush! hark! a cry
Breaks on the stern and dread solemnity—
A step hath pierced the ring! Who dares intrude
On the dark hunters in their vengeful mood?
A girl—a young slight girl—a fawn-like child
Of green savannas and the leafy wild,
Springing unmark’d till then, as some lone flower,
Happy because the sunshine is its dower;
Yet one that knew how early tears are shed,
For hers had mourn’d a playmate-brother dead.
She had sat gazing on the victim long,
Until the pity of her soul grew strong;
And, by its passion’s deepening fervour sway’d,
Even to the stake she rush’d, and gently laid
His bright head on her bosom, and around
His form her slender arms to shield it wound
Like close Liannes; then raised her glittering eye,
And clear-toned voice, that said, “He shall not die!”
“He shall not die!”—the gloomy forest thrill’d
To that sweet sound. A sudden wonder fell
On the fierce throng; and heart and hand were still’d,
Struck down as by the whisper of a spell.
They gazed: their dark souls bow’d before the maid,
She of the dancing step in wood and glade!

And, as her cheek flush'd through its olive hue,
As her black tresses to the night-wind flew,
Something o'ermaster'd them from that young mien—
Something of heaven in silence felt and seen;
And seeming, to their childlike faith, a token
That the Great Spirit by her voice had spoken.
They loosed the bonds that held their captive's breath;
From his pale lips they took the cup of death;
They quench'd the brand beneath the cypress tree:
"Away," they cried, "young stranger, thou art free!"

COSTANZA.

Art thou then desolate?
Of friends, of hopes forsaken? Come to me!
I am thine own. Have trusted hearts proved false?
Flatterers deceived thee? Wanderer, come to me!
Why didst thou ever leave me? Know'st thou all
I would have borne, and call'd it joy to bear,
For thy sake? Know'st thou that thy voice hath power
To shake me with a thrill of happiness
By one kind tone?—to fill mine eyes with tears
Of yearning love? And thou—oh! thou didst throw
That crush'd affection back upon my heart
Yet come to me!—it died not.
She knelt in prayer. A stream of sunset fell

Through the stain’d window of her lonely cell,
And with its rich, deep, melancholy glow,
Flushing her cheek and pale Madonna brow,
While o’er her long hair’s flowing jet it threw
Bright waves of gold—the autumn forest’s hue—
Seem’d all a vision’s mist of glory, spread
By painting’s touch around some holy head,
Virgin’s or fairest martyr’s. In her eye
Which glanced as dark clear water to the sky,
What solemn fervour lived! And yet what woe,
Lay like some buried thing, still seen below
The glassy tide! Oh! he that could reveal
What life had taught that chasten’d heart to feel,
Might speak indeed of woman’s blighted years,
And wasted love, and vainly bitter tears!
But she had told her griefs to heaven alone,
And of the gentle saint no more was known,
Than that she fled the world’s cold breath, and made
A temple of the pine and chestnut shade,
Filling its depths with soul, whene’er her hymn
Rose through each murmur of the green, and dim,
And ancient solitude; where hidden streams
Went moaning through the grass, like sounds in dreams—
Music for weary hearts! Midst leaves and flowers

She dwelt, and knew all secrets of their powers,
All nature’s balms, wherewith her gliding tread
To the sick peasant on his lowly bed
Came and brought hope! while scarce of mortal birth
He deem’d the pale fair form that held on earth
Communion but with grief.
Ere long, a cell,
A rock-hewn chapel rose, a cross of stone
Gleam’d through the dark trees o’er a sparkling well;
And a sweet voice, of rich yet mournful tone,
Told the Calabrian wilds that duly there
Costanza lifted her sad heart in prayer.
And now ’twas prayer’s own hour. That voice again
Through the dim foliage sent its heavenly strain,
That made the cypress quiver where it stood,
In day’s last crimson soaring from the wood
Like spiry flame. But as the bright sun set,
Other and wilder sounds in tumult met
The floating song. Strange sounds!—the trumpet’s peal,
Made hollow by the rocks; the clash of steel;
The rallying war-cry. In the mountain pass
There had been combat; blood was on the grass,
Banners had strewn the waters; chiefs lay dying,
And the pine branches crash’d before the flying.

And all was changed within the still retreat,
Costanza's home: there enter'd hurrying feet,
Dark looks of shame and sorrow—mail-clad men,
Stern fugitives from that wild battle-glen,
Scaring the ringdoves from the porch roof, bore
A wounded warrior in. The rocky floor
Gave back deep echoes to his clanging sword,
As there they laid their leader, and implored
The sweet saint's prayers to heal him: then for flight,
Through the wide forest and the mantling night,
Sped breathlessly again. They pass'd; but he,
The stateliest of a host—alas! to see
What mother's eyes have watch'd in rosy sleep,
Till joy, for very fulness, turn'd to weep,
Thus changed!—a fearful thing! His golden crest
Was shiver'd, and the bright scarf on his breast—
Some costly love-gift—rent: but what of these?
There were the clustering raven locks—the breeze,
As it came in through lime and myrtle flowers,
Might scarcely lift them; steep'd in bloody showers,
So heavily upon the pallid clay
Of the damp cheek they hung. The eyes' dark ray,
Where was it? And the lips!—they gasp'd apart,
With their light curve, as from the chisel's art,

Still proudly beautiful! But that white hue—
Was it not death's?—that stillness—that cold dew
On the scarr'd forehead? No! his spirit broke
From its deep trance ere long, yet but awoke
To wander in wild dreams; and there he lay,
By the fierce fever as a green reed shaken,
The haughty chief of thousands—the forsaken
Of all save one. She fled not. Day by day—
Such hours are woman's birthright—she, unknown,
Kept watch beside him, fearless and alone;
Binding his wounds, and oft in silence laving
His brow with tears that mourn'd the strong man's raving.
He felt them not, nor mark'd the light veil'd form
Still hovering nigh! yet sometimes, when that storm
Of frenzy sank, her voice, in tones as low
As a young mother's by the cradle singing,
Would soothe him with sweet aves, gently bringing
Moments of slumber, when the fiery glow
Ebb'd from his hollow cheek.
At last faint gleams
Of memory dawn'd upon the cloud of dreams;
And feebly lifting, as a child, his head,
And gazing round him from his leafy bed,
He murmur'd forth, "Where am I? What soft strain

Pass’d like a breeze across my burning brain?
Back from my youth it floated, with a tone
Of life’s first music, and a thought of one—
Where is she now? and where the gauds of pride,
Whose hollow splendour lured me from her side?
All lost!—and this is death!—I cannot die
Without forgiveness from that mournful eye!
Away! the earth hath lost her. Was she born
To brook abandonment, to strive with scorn?
My first, my holiest love!—her broken heart
Lies low, and I—unpardon’d I depart.”
But then Costanza raised the shadowy veil
From her dark locks and features brightly pale,
And stood before him with a smile—oh! ne’er
Did aught that smiled so much of sadness wear—
And said, “Cesario! look on me; I live
To say my heart hath bled, and can forgive.
I loved thee with such worship, such deep trust,
As should be heaven’s alone—and heaven is just!
I bless thee—be at peace!”
But o’er his frame
Too fast the strong tide rush’d—the sudden shame,
The joy, th’ amaze! He bow’d his head—it fell
On the wrong’d bosom which had loved so well;

And love, still perfect, gave him refuge there—
His last faint breath just waved her floating hair.

MADELINE.

A DOMESTIC TALE.

“Who should it be?—Where shouldst thou look for kindness?
When we are sick, where can we turn for succour;
When we are wretched, where can we complain;
And when the world looks cold and surly on us,
Where can we go to meet a warmer eye
With such sure confidence as to a mother?”—Joanna Baillie.

“My child, my child, thou leavest me! I shall hear
The gentle voice no more that blest mine ear
With its first utterance: I shall miss the sound
Of thy light step amidst the flowers around,
And thy soft-breathing hymn at twilight’s close,
And thy ‘Good-night’ at parting for repose.
Under the vine-leaves I shall sit alone,
And the low breeze will have a mournful tone
Amidst their tendrils, while I think of thee,
My child! and thou, along the moonlight sea,
With a soft sadness haply in thy glance,
Shalt watch thine own, thy pleasant land of France,
Fading to air. Yet blessings with thee go!
Love guard thee, gentlest! and the exile’s woe

From thy young heart be far! And sorrow not
For me, sweet daughter! in my lonely lot,
God shall be with me. Now, farewell! farewell!
Thou that hast been what words may never tell
Unto thy mother’s bosom, since the days
When thou wert pillow’d there, and wont to raise
In sudden laughter thence thy loving eye
That still sought mine: these moments are gone by—
Thou too must go, my flower! Yet with thee dwell
The peace of God! One, one more gaze: farewell!”
This was a mother’s parting with her child—
A young meek bride, on whom fair fortune smiled,
And woo’d her with a voice of love away
From childhood’s home: yet there, with fond delay,
She linger’d on the threshold, heard the note
Of her caged bird through trellis’d rose-leaves float,
And fell upon her mother’s neck and wept,
Whilst old remembrances, that long had slept,
Gush’d o’er her soul, and many a vanish’d day,
As in one picture traced, before her lay.
But the farewell was said; and on the deep,
When its breast heaved in sunset’s golden sleep,
With a calm’d heart, young Madeline ere long
Pour’d forth her own sweet, solemn vesper-song,

Breathing of home. Through stillness heard afar,
And duly rising with the first pale star,
That voice was on the waters; till at last
The sounding ocean solitudes were pass’d,
And the bright land was reach’d, the youthful world
That glows along the West: the sails were furl’d
In its clear sunshine, and the gentle bride
Look’d on the home that promised hearts untried
A bower of bliss to come. Alas! we trace
The map of our own paths, and long ere years
With their dull steps the brilliant lines efface,
On sweeps the storm, and blots them out with tears!
That home was darken’d soon: the summer breeze
Welcomed with death the wanderers from the seas:
Death unto one, and anguish—how forlorn!
To her that, widow’d in her marriage morn,
Sat in her voiceless dwelling, whence with him,
Her bosom’s first beloved, her friend and guide,
Joy had gone forth, and left the green earth dim,
As from the sun shut out on every side
By the close veil of misery. Oh! but ill,
When with rich hopes o’erfraught, the young high heart
Bears its first blow! It knows not yet the part
Which life will teach—to suffer and be still,

And with submissive love to count the flowers
Which yet are spared, and through the future hours
To send no busy dream! She had not learn’d
Of sorrow till that hour, and therefore turn’d
In weariness from life. Then came th’ unrest,
The heart-sick yearning of the exile’s breast,
The haunting sounds of voices far away,
And household steps: until at last she lay
On her lone couch of sickness, lost in dreams
Of the gay vineyards and blue rushing streams
In her own sunny land; and murmuring oft
Familiar names, in accents wild yet soft,
To strangers round that bed, who knew not aught
Of the deep spells wherewith each word was fraught.
To strangers? Oh! could strangers raise the head
Gently as hers was raised? Did strangers shed
The kindly tears which bathed that feverish brow
And wasted cheek with half-unconscious flow?
Something was there that, through the lingering night,
Outwatches patiently the taper’s light—
Something that faints not through the day’s distress,
That fears not toil, that knows not weariness—
Love, true and perfect love! Whence came that power,
Uprearing through the storm the drooping flower?

Whence?—who can ask? The wild delirium pass'd,
And from her eyes the spirit look'd at last
Into her mother's face, and wakening knew
The brow's calm grace, the hair's dear silvery hue,
The kind sweet smile of old!—and had she come,
Thus in life's evening from her distant home,
To save her child? Even so—nor yet in vain;
In that young heart a light sprang up again,
And lovely still, with so much love to give,
Seem'd this fair world, though faded; still to live
Was not to pine forsaken. On the breast
That rock'd her childhood, sinking in soft rest,
"Sweet mother! gentlest mother! can it be?"
The lorn one cried, "and do I look on thee?
Take back thy wanderer from this fatal shore:
Peace shall be ours beneath our vines once more."

THE QUEEN OF PRUSSIA'S TOMB.

["This tomb is in the garden of Charlottenburg, near Berlin. It was not without surprise that I came suddenly, among trees, upon a fair white Doric temple. I might and should have deemed it a mere adornment of the grounds, but the cypress and the willow declare it a habitation of the dead. Upon a sarcophagus of white marble lay a sheet, and the outline of the human form was plainly visible beneath its folds. The person with me reverently turned it back, and displayed the statue of his queen. It is a portrait statue recumbent, said to be a perfect resemblance—not as in death, but when she lived to bless and be blessed. Nothing can be more calm and kind than the

expression of her features. The hands are folded on the bosom; the limbs are sufficiently crossed to show the repose of life. Here the king brings her children annually, to offer garlands at her grave. These hang in withered mournfulness above this living image of their departed mother."—Sherer's Notes and Reflections during a Ramble in Germany.]

"In sweet pride upon that insult keen

She smiled; then drooping mute and brokenhearted,

To the cold comfort of the grave departed." Milman.

It stands where northern willows weep,

A temple fair and lone;

Soft shadows o'er its marble sweep

From cypress branches thrown;

While silently around it spread,

Thou feel'st the presence of the dead.

And what within is richly shrined?

A sculptured woman's form,

Lovely, in perfect rest reclined,

As one beyond the storm:

Yet not of death, but slumber, lies

The solemn sweetness on those eyes.

The folded hands, the calm pure face,

The mantle's quiet flow,

The gentle yet majestic grace

Throned on the matron brow;

These, in that scene of tender gloom,

With a still glory robe the tomb.

There stands an eagle, at the feet

Of the fair image wrought;

A kingly emblem—nor unmeet

To wake yet deeper thought:

She whose high heart finds rest below,

Was royal in her birth and woe.

There are pale garlands hung above,

Of dying scent and hue;

She was a mother—in her love

How sorrowfully true!

Oh! hallow’d long be every leaf,

The record of her children’s grief!

She saw their birthright’s warrior-crown

Of olden glory spoil’d,

The standard of their sires borne down,

The shield’s bright blazon soil’d:

She met the tempest, meekly brave,

Then turn’d o’erwearied to the grave.

She slumber’d: but it came—it came,

Her land’s redeeming hour,

With the glad shout, and signal flame

Sent on from tower to tower!

Fast through the realm a spirit moved—

’Twas hers, the lofty and the loved.

Then was her name a note that rung

To rouse bold hearts from sleep;

Her memory, as a banner flung

Forth by the Baltic deep;

Her grief, a bitter vial pour’d

To sanctify th’ avenger’s sword.

And the crown’d eagle spread again

His pinion to the sun;

And the strong land shook off its chain—

So was the triumph won!

But woe for earth, where sorrow’s tone

Still blends with victory’s!—She was gone!

THE MEMORIAL PILLAR.

[On the road-side, between Penrith and Appleby, stands a small pillar, with this inscription:—“This pillar was erected in the year 1656, by Ann, Countess-Dowager of Pembroke, for a memorial of her last parting, in this place, with her good and pious mother, Margaret, Countess-Dowager of Cumberland, on the 2d April 1616.”—See notes to the Pleasures of Memory.]

Mother and child! whose blending tears

Have sanctified the place,

Where, to the love of many years,

Was given one last embrace—

Oh! ye have shrined a spell of power

Deep in your record of that hour!
A spell to waken solemn thought—
A still, small under tone,
That calls back days of childhood, fraught
With many a treasure gone;
And smites, perchance, the hidden source,
Though long untroubled—of remorse.
For who, that gazes on the stone
Which marks your parting spot,
Who but a mother's love hath known—
The one love changing not?
Alas! and haply learn'd its worth
First with the sound of "Earth to earth!"
But thou, high-hearted daughter! thou,
O'er whose bright honour'd head
Blessings and tears of holiest flow
E'en here were fondly shed—
Thou from the passion of thy grief,
In its full burst, couldst draw relief.
For, oh! though painful be th' excess,
The might wherewith it swells,
In nature's fount no bitterness
Of nature's mingling dwells;
And thou hadst not, by wrong or pride,

Poison’d the free and healthful tide.
But didst thou meet the face no more
Which thy young heart first knew?
And all—was all in this world o’er
With ties thus close and true?
It was! On earth no other eye
Could give thee back thine infancy.
No other voice could pierce the maze
Where, deep within thy breast,
The sounds and dreams of other days
With memory lay at rest;
No other smile to thee could bring
A gladdening, like the breath of spring.
Yet, while thy place of weeping still
Its lone memorial keeps,
While on thy name, midst wood and hill,
The quiet sunshine sleeps,
And touches, in each graven line,
Of reverential thought a sign;
Can I, while yet these tokens wear
The impress of the dead,
Think of the love embodied there
As of a vision fled?
A perish’d thing, the joy and flower

And glory of one earthly hour?
Not so!—I will not bow me so
To thoughts that breathe despair!
A loftier faith we need below,
Life’s farewell words to bear.
Mother and child!—your tears are past—
Surely your hearts have met at last.

THE GRAVE OF A POETESS.[352]

I stood beside thy lowly grave;
Spring odours breathed around,
And music, in the river wave,
Pass’d with a lulling sound.
All happy things that love the sun
In the bright air glanced by,
And a glad murmur seem’d to run
Through the soft azure sky.
Fresh leaves were on the ivy bough
That fringed the ruins near;
Young voices were abroad—but thou
Their sweetness couldst not hear.
And mournful grew my heart for thee!
Thou in whose woman’s mind
The ray that brightens earth and sea,
The light of song, was shrined.

Mournful, that thou wert slumbering low,
With a dread curtain drawn
Between thee and the golden glow
Of this world’s vernal dawn.
Parted from all the song and bloom
Thou wouldst have loved so well,
To thee the sunshine round thy tomb
Was but a broken spell.
The bird, the insect on the wing,
In their bright reckless play,
Might feel the flush and life of spring—
And thou wert pass’d away.
But then, e’en then, a nobler thought
O’er my vain sadness came;
Th’ immortal spirit woke, and wrought
Within my thrilling frame.
Surely on lovelier things, I said,
Thou must have look’d ere now,
Than all that round our pathway shed
Odours and hues below.
The shadows of the tomb are here,
Yet beautiful is earth!
What see’st thou, then, where no dim fear,
No haunting dream hath birth?

Here a vain love to passing flowers

Thou gavest; but where thou art,

The sway is not with changeful hours—

There love and death must part.

Thou hast left sorrow in thy song,

A voice not loud but deep!

The glorious bowers of earth among,

How often didst thou weep?

Where couldst thou fix on mortal ground

Thy tender thoughts and high?—

Now peace the woman's heart hath found,

And joy the poet's eye.

[352] "Extrinsic interest has lately attached to the fine scenery of Woodstock, near Kilkenny, on account of its having been the last residence of the author of Psyche. Her grave is one of many in the churchyard of the village. The river runs smoothly by. The ruins of an ancient abbey, that have been partially converted into a church, reverently throw their mantle of tender shadow over it."—Tales by the O'Hara Family.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE HOMES OF ENGLAND.

"Where's the coward that would not dare

To fight for such a land?" Marmion.

The stately homes of England!

How beautiful they stand,

Amidst their tall ancestral trees,

O’er all the pleasant land!

The deer across their greensward bound,

Through shade and sunny gleam;

And the swan glides past them with the sound

Of some rejoicing stream.

The merry homes of England!

Around their hearths by night,

What gladsome looks of household love

Meet in the ruddy light!

There woman’s voice flows forth in song,

Or childhood’s tale is told,

Or lips move tunefully along

Some glorious page of old.

The blessed homes of England!

How softly on their bowers

Is laid the holy quietness

That breathes from Sabbath hours!

Solemn, yet sweet, the church-bell’s chime

Floats through their woods at morn;

All other sounds, in that still time,

Of breeze and leaf are born.

The cottage homes of England!

By thousands on her plains,
They are smiling o’er the silvery brooks,
And round the hamlet fanes.
Through glowing orchards forth they peep,
Each from its nook of leaves;
And fearless there the lowly sleep,
As the bird beneath their eaves.
The free, fair homes of England!
Long, long, in hut and hall,
May hearts of native proof be rear’d
To guard each hallow’d wall!
And green for ever be the groves,
And bright the flowery sod,
Where first the child’s glad spirit loves
Its country and its God!

THE SICILIAN CAPTIVE.

“I have dreamt thou wert
A captive in thy hopelessness; afar
From the sweet home of thy young infancy,
Whose image unto thee is as a dream
Of fire and slaughter; I can see thee wasting,
Sick for thy native air.” L. E. L.
The champions had come from their fields of war,
Over the crests of the billows far;

They had brought back the spoils of a hundred shores,
Where the deep had foam’d to their flashing oars.
They sat at their feast round the Norse king’s board;
By the glare of the torch-light the mead was pour’d;
The hearth was heap’d with the pine-boughs high,
And it flung a red radiance on shields thrown by.
The Scalds had chanted in Runic rhyme
Their songs of the sword and the olden time;
And a solemn thrill, as the harp-chords rung,
Had breathed from the walls where the bright spears hung.
But the swell was gone from the quivering string,
They had summon’d a softer voice to sing;
And a captive girl, at the warriors’ call,
Stood forth in the midst of that frowning hall.
Lonely she stood,—in her mournful eyes
Lay the clear midnight of southern skies;
And the drooping fringe of their lashes low
Half-veil’d a depth of unfathom’d woe.
Stately she stood—though her fragile frame
Seem’d struck with the blight of some inward flame,
And her proud pale brow had a shade of scorn,
Under the waves of her dark hair worn.
And a deep flush pass’d, like a crimson haze,
O’er her marble cheek by the pine-fire’s blaze—

No soft hue caught from the south wind’s breath,
But a token of fever at strife with death.
She had been torn from her home away,
With her long locks crown’d for her bridal-day,
And brought to die of the burning dreams
That haunt the exile by foreign streams.
They bade her sing of her distant land—
She held its lyre with a trembling hand,
Till the spirit its blue skies had given her woke,
And the stream of her voice into music broke.
Faint was the strain, in its first wild flow—
Troubled its murmur, and sad and low;
But it swell’d into deeper power ere long,
As the breeze that swept o’er her soul grew strong.
“They bid me sing of thee, mine own, my sunny land! of thee!
Am I not parted from thy shores by the mournful-sounding sea?
Doth not thy shadow wrap my soul? In silence let me die,
In a voiceless dream of thy silvery founts, and thy pure, deep sapphire sky:
How should thy lyre give here its wealth of buried sweetness forth—
Its tones of summer’s breathings born, to the wild winds of the north?
“Yet thus it shall be once, once more! My spirit shall awake,
And through the mists of death shine out, my country, for thy sake!
That I may make thee known, with all the beauty and the light,
And the glory never more to bless thy daughter’s yearning sight!

Thy woods shall whisper in my song, thy bright streams warble by,
Thy soul flow o’er my lips again—yet once, my Sicily!
“There are blue heavens—far hence, far hence! but, oh! their glorious blue!
Its very night is beautiful with the hyacinth’s deep hue!
It is above my own fair land, and round my laughing home,
And arching o’er my vintage hills, they hang their cloudless dome;
And making all the waves as gems, that melt along the shore,
And steeping happy hearts in joy—that now is mine no more.
“And there are haunts in that green land—oh! who may dream or tell
Of all the shaded loveliness it hides in grot and dell!
By fountains flinging rainbow-spray on dark and glossy leaves,
And bowers wherein the forest-dove her nest untroubled weaves;
The myrtle dwells there, sending round the richness of its breath,
And the violets gleam like amethysts from the dewy moss beneath.
“And there are floating sounds that fill the skies through night and day—
Sweet sounds! the soul to hear them faints in dreams of heaven away;
They wander through the olive woods, and o’er the shining seas—
They mingle with the orange scents that load the sleepy breeze;
Lute, voice, and bird are blending there,—it were a bliss to die,
As dies a leaf, thy groves among, my flowery Sicily!
“I may not thus depart—farewell! Yet no, my country! no!
Is not love stronger than the grave? I feel it must be so!
My fleeting spirit shall o’ersweep the mountains and the main,
And in thy tender starlight rove, and through thy woods again.

Its passion deepens—it prevails!—I break my chain—I come

To dwell a viewless thing, yet blest—in thy sweet air, my home!”

And her pale arms dropp’d the ringing lyre—

There came a mist o’er her eye’s wild fire—

And her dark rich tresses in many a fold,

Loosed from their braids, down her bosom roll’d.

For her head sank back on the rugged wall—

A silence fell o’er the warriors’ hall;

She had pour’d out her soul with her song’s last tone:

The lyre was broken, the minstrel gone!

IVAN THE CZAR.

[“Ivan le Terrible, étant déjà devenu vieux, assiégait Novgorod. Les Boyards, le voyant affoibli, lui demandèrent s’il ne voulait pas donner le commandement de l’assaut à son fils. Sa fureur fut si grande à cette proposition, que rien ne pût l’appaiser; son fils se prosterna à ses pieds; il le repoussa avec un coup d’une telle violence, que deux jours après le malheureux en mourut. Le père, alors au désespoir, devint indifférent à la guerre comme au pouvoir, et ne survécut que peu de mois à son fils.”—Dix Années d’Exil, par Madame de Stael.]

“Gieb diesen Todten mir heraus. Ich muss

Ihn wieder haben!...

... Trostlose allmacht,

Die nicht einmal in Graber ihren arm

Verlangern, eine kleine Ubereilung

Mit Menschenleben nicht verbessern kann!” Schiller.

He sat in silence on the ground,
The old and haughty Czar,
Lonely, though princes girt him round,
And leaders of the war;
He had cast his jewell’d sabre,
That many a field had won,
To the earth beside his youthful dead—
His fair and first-born son.
With a robe of ermine for its bed
Was laid that form of clay,
Where the light a stormy sunset shed
Through the rich tent made way;
And a sad and solemn beauty
On the pallid face came down,
Which the lord of nations mutely watch’d,
In the dust, with his renown.
Low tones at last, of woe and fear,
From his full bosom broke—
A mournful thing it was to hear
How then the proud man spoke!
The voice that through the combat
Had shouted far and high,
Came forth in strange, dull, hollow tones,
Burden’d with agony.

“There is no crimson on thy cheek,
And on thy lip no breath;
I call thee, and thou dost not speak—
They tell me this is death!
And fearful things are whispering
That I the deed have done—
For the honour of thy father’s name,
Look up, look up, my son!
“Well might I know death’s hue and mien—
But on thine aspect, boy!
What, till this moment, have I seen
Save pride and tameless joy?
Swiftest thou wert to battle,
And bravest there of all—
How could I think a warrior’s frame
Thus like a flower should fall?
“I will not bear that still cold look—
Rise up, thou fierce and free!
Wake as the storm wakes! I will brook
All, save this calm, from thee!
Lift brightly up, and proudly,
Once more thy kindling eyes!
Hath my word lost its power on earth?
I say to thee, arise!

“Didst thou not know I loved thee well?
Thou didst not! and art gone,
In bitterness of soul, to dwell
Where man must dwell alone.
Come back, young fiery spirit!
If but one hour, to learn
The secrets of the folded heart
That seem’d to thee so stern.
“Thou wert the first, the first, fair child
That in mine arms I press’d:
Thou wert the bright one, that hast smiled
Like summer on my breast!
I rear’d thee as an eagle,
To the chase thy steps I led,
I bore thee on my battle-horse,
I look upon thee—dead!
“Lay down my warlike banners here,
Never again to wave,
And bury my red sword and spear,
Chiefs! in my first-born’s grave!
And leave me!—I have conquer’d,
I have slain: my work is done!
Whom have I slain? Ye answer not—
Thou too art mute, my son!”

And thus his wild lament was pour’d

Through the dark resounding night,

And the battle knew no more his sword,

Nor the foaming steed his might.

He heard strange voices moaning

In every wind that sigh’d;

From the searching stars of heaven he shrank—

Humbly the conqueror died.

CAROLAN’S PROPHECY.

[“It is somewhat remarkable that Carolan, the Irish bard, even in his gayest mood, never could compose a planxty for a Miss Brett, in the county of Sligo, whose father’s house he frequented, and where he always met with a reception due to his exquisite taste and mental endowments. One day, after an unsuccessful attempt to compose something in a sprightly strain for this lady, he threw aside his harp with a mixture of rage and grief; and addressing himself in Irish to her mother, ‘Madam,’ said he, ‘I have often, from my great respect to your family, attempted a planxty in order to celebrate your daughter’s perfections, but to no purpose. Some evil genius hovers over me; there is not a string in my harp that does not vibrate a melancholy sound when I set about this task. I fear she is not doomed to remain long among us; nay,’ said he emphatically, ‘she will not survive twelve months.’ The event verified the prediction, and the young lady died within the period limited by the unconsciously prophetic bard.”—Percy Anecdotes.]

Thy cheek too swiftly flushes, o’er thine eye

The lights and shadows come and go too fast;

Thy tears gush forth too soon, and in thy voice

Are sounds of tenderness too passionate
For peace on earth: oh! therefore, child of song!
’Tis well thou shouldst depart.
A sound of music, from amidst the hills,
Came suddenly, and died; a fitful sound
Of mirth, soon lost in wail. Again it rose,
And sank in mournfulness. There sat a bard
By a blue stream of Erin, where it swept
Flashing through rock and wood: the sunset’s light
Was on his wavy, silver-gleaming hair,
And the wind’s whisper in the mountain ash,
Whose clusters droop’d above. His head was bow’d,
His hand was on his harp, yet thence its touch
Had drawn but broken strains; and many stood
Waiting around, in silent earnestness,
Th’ unchaining of his soul, the gush of song—
Many and graceful forms!—yet one alone
Seem’d present to his dream; and she, indeed,
With her pale virgin brow, and changeful cheek,
And the clear starlight of her serious eyes,
Lovely amidst the flowing of dark locks
And pallid braiding flowers, was beautiful,
E’en painfully!—a creature to behold
With trembling midst our joy, lest aught unseen

Should waft the vision from us, leaving earth
Too dim without its brightness! Did such fear
O’ershadow in that hour the gifted one,
By his own rushing stream? Once more he gazed
Upon the radiant girl, and yet once more
From the deep chords his wandering hand brought out
A few short festive notes, an opening strain
Of bridal melody, soon dash’d with grief—
As if some wailing spirit in the strings
Met and o’ermaster’d him; but yielding then
To the strong prophet impulse, mournfully,
Like moaning waters o’er the harp he pour’d
The trouble of his haunted soul, and sang—
“Voice of the grave!
I hear thy thrilling call;
It comes in the dash of the foaming wave,
In the sere leaf’s trembling fall!
In the shiver of the tree,
I hear thee, O thou voice!
And I would thy warning were but for me,
That my spirit might rejoice.
“But thou art sent
For the sad earth’s young and fair,
For the graceful heads that have not bent

To the wintry hand of care!

They hear the wind’s low sigh,

And the river sweeping free,

And the green reeds murmuring heavily,

And the woods—but they hear not thee!

“Long have I striven

With my deep-foreboding soul,

But the full tide now its bounds hath riven,

And darkly on must roll.

There’s a young brow smiling near,

With a bridal white-rose wreath—

Unto me it smiles from a flowery bier,

Touch’d solemnly by death!

“Fair art thou, Morna!

The sadness of thine eye

Is beautiful as silvery clouds

On the dark-blue summer sky!

And thy voice comes like the sound

Of a sweet and hidden rill,

That makes the dim woods tuneful round—

But soon it must be still!

“Silence and dust

On thy sunny lips must lie—

Make not the strength of love thy trust,

A stronger yet is nigh!

No strain of festal flow

That my hand for thee hath tried,

But into dirge-notes wild and low

Its ringing tones have died.

“Young art thou, Morna!

Yet on thy gentle head,

Like heavy dew on the lily’s leaves,

A spirit hath been shed!

And the glance is thine which sees

Through nature’s awful heart—

But bright things go with the summer breeze,

And thou too must depart!

“Yet, shall I weep?

I know that in thy breast

There swells a fount of song too deep,

Too powerful for thy rest!

And the bitterness I know,

And the chill of this world’s breath—

Go—all undimm’d in thy glory, go!

Young and crown’d bride of death!

“Take hence to heaven

Thy holy thoughts and bright,

And soaring hopes, that were not given

For the touch of mortal blight!
Might we follow in thy track,
This parting should not be!
But the spring shall give us violets back,
And every flower but thee!”
There was a burst of tears around the bard:
All wept but one—and she serenely stood,
With her clear brow and dark religious eye
Raised to the first faint star above the hills,
And cloudless; though it might be that her cheek
Was paler than before. So Morna heard
The minstrel’s prophecy.
And spring return’d,
Bringing the earth her lovely things again—
All, save the loveliest far! A voice, a smile,
A young sweet spirit gone.

THE LADY OF THE CASTLE.

FROM THE “PORTRAIT GALLERY,” AN UNFINISHED POEM.

If there be but one spot on thy name,
One eye thou fear’st to meet, one human voice
Whose tones thou shrink’st from—Woman! veil thy face,
And bow thy head—and die!
Thou see’st her pictured with her shining hair,
(Famed were those tresses in Provençal song,)

Half braided, half o’er cheek and bosom fair
Let loose, and pouring sunny waves along
Her gorgeous vest. A child’s light hand is roving
Midst the rich curls; and, oh! how meekly loving
Its earnest looks are lifted to the face
Which bends to meet its lip in laughing grace!
Yet that bright lady’s eye, methinks, hath less
Of deep, and still, and pensive tenderness,
Than might beseem a mother’s; on her brow
Something too much there sits of native scorn,
And her smile kindles with a conscious glow
As from the thought of sovereign beauty born.
These may be dreams—but how shall woman tell
Of woman’s shame, and not with tears? She fell!
That mother left that child!—went hurrying by
Its cradle—haply not without a sigh,
Haply one moment o’er its rest serene
She hung. But no! it could not thus have been,
For she went on!—forsook her home, her hearth,
All pure affection, all sweet household mirth,
To live a gaudy and dishonour’d thing,
Sharing in guilt the splendours of a king.
Her lord, in very weariness of life,
Girt on his sword for scenes of distant strife.

He reck’d no more of glory: grief and shame
Crush’d out his fiery nature, and his name
Died silently. A shadow o’er his halls
Crept year by year: the minstrel pass’d their walls;
The warder’s horn hung mute. Meantime the child
On whose first flowering thoughts no parent smiled,
A gentle girl, and yet deep-hearted, grew
Into sad youth; for well, too well, she knew
Her mother’s tale! Its memory made the sky
Seem all too joyous for her shrinking eye;
Check’d on her lip the flow of song, which fain
Would there have linger’d; flush’d her cheek to pain,
If met by sudden glance; and gave a tone
Of sorrow, as for something lovely gone,
E’en to the spring’s glad voice. Her own was low
And plaintive. Oh! there lie such depths of woe
In a young blighted spirit! Manhood rears
A haughty brow, and age has done with tears;
But youth bows down to misery, in amaze
At the dark cloud o’ermantling its fresh days;—
And thus it was with her. A mournful sight
In one so fair—for she indeed was fair;
Not with her mother’s dazzling eyes of light—
Hers were more shadowy, full of thought and prayer,

And with long lashes o’er a white-rose cheek
Drooping in gloom, yet tender still and meek,
Still that fond child’s—and oh! the brow above
So pale and pure! so form’d for holy love
To gaze upon in silence! But she felt
That love was not for her, though hearts would melt
Where’er she moved, and reverence mutely given
Went with her; and low prayers, that call’d on heaven
To bless the young Isaure.
One sunny morn
With alms before her castle-gate she stood,
Midst peasant groups: when, breathless and o’erworn,
And shrouded in long weeds of widowhood,
A stranger through them broke. The orphan maid,
With her sweet voice and proffer’d hand of aid,
Turn’d to give welcome; but a wild sad look
Met hers—a gaze that all her spirit shook;
And that pale woman, suddenly subdued
By some strong passion, in its gushing mood,
Knelt at her feet, and bathed them with such tears
As rain the hoarded agonies of years
From the heart’s urn; and with her white lips press’d
The ground they trod; then, burying in her vest
Her brow’s deep flush, sobb’d out—“O undefiled!

I am thy mother—spurn me not, my child!”
Isaure had pray’d for that lost mother; wept
O’er her stain’d memory, while the happy slept
In the hush’d midnight; stood with mournful gaze
Before yon picture’s smile of other days,
But never breathed in human ear the name
Which weigh’d her being to the earth with shame.
What marvel if the anguish, the surprise,
The dark remembrances, the alter’d guise,
Awhile o’erpower’d her? From the weeper’s touch
She shrank—’twas but a moment—yet too much
For that all-humbled one; its mortal stroke
Came down like lightning, and her full heart broke
At once in silence. Heavily and prone
She sank, while o’er her castle’s threshold stone,
Those long fair tresses—they still brightly wore
Their early pride, though bound with pearls no more—
Bursting their fillet, in sad beauty roll’d,
And swept the dust with coils of wavy gold.
Her child bent o’er her—call’d her: ’twas too late—
Dead lay the wanderer at her own proud gate!
The joy of courts, the star of knight and bard—
How didst thou fall, O bright-hair’d Ermengarde!

THE MOURNER FOR THE BARMECIDES.

“O good old man! how well in thee appears
The constant service of the antique world!
Thou art not for the fashion of these times.”
As You Like It.

Fallen was the house of Giafar; and its name,
The high romantic name of Barmecide,
A sound forbidden on its own bright shores,
By the swift Tigris’ wave. Stern Haroun’s wrath,
Sweeping the mighty with their fame away,
Had so pass’d sentence: but man’s chainless heart
Hides that within its depths which never yet
Th’ oppressor’s thought could reach.
’Twas desolate
Where Giafar’s halls, beneath the burning sun,
Spread out in ruin lay. The songs had ceased;
The lights, the perfumes, and the genii tales
Had ceased; the guests were gone. Yet still one voice
Was there—the fountain’s; through those Eastern courts,
Over the broken marble and the grass,
Its low clear music shedding mournfully.
And still another voice! An aged man,
Yet with a dark and fervent eye beneath
His silvery hair, came day by day, and sate

On a white column’s fragment; and drew forth,
From the forsaken walls and dim arcades,
A tone that shook them with its answering thrill,
To his deep accents. Many a glorious tale
He told that sad yet stately solitude,
Pouring his memory’s fulness o’er its gloom,
Like waters in the waste; and calling up,
By song or high recital of their deeds,
Bright solemn shadows of its vanish’d race
To people their own halls: with these alone,
In all this rich and breathing world, his thoughts
Held still unbroken converse. He had been
Rear’d in this lordly dwelling, and was now
The ivy of its ruins, unto which
His fading life seem’d bound. Day roll’d on day,
And from that scene the loneliness was fled;
For crowds around the gray-hair’d chronicler
Met as men meet, within whose anxious hearts
Fear with deep feeling strives; till, as a breeze
Wanders through forest branches, and is met
By one quick sound and shiver of the leaves,
The spirit of his passionate lament,
As through their stricken souls it pass’d, awoke
One echoing murmur. But this might not be

Under a despot’s rule, and, summon’d thence,
The dreamer stood before the Caliph’s throne:
Sentenced to death he stood, and deeply pale,
And with his white lips rigidly compress’d;
Till, in submissive tones, he ask’d to speak
Once more, ere thrust from earth’s fair sunshine forth.
Was it to sue for grace? His burning heart
Sprang, with a sudden lightning, to his eye,
And he was changed!—and thus, in rapid words,
Th’ o’ermastering thoughts, more strong than death, found way:—
“And shall I not rejoice to go, when the noble and the brave,
With the glory on their brows, are gone before me to the grave?
What is there left to look on now, what brightness in the land?
I hold in scorn the faded world, that wants their princely band!
“My chiefs! my chiefs! the old man comes that in your halls was nursed—
That follow’d you to many a fight, where flash’d your sabres first—
That bore your children in his arms, your name upon his heart:—
Oh! must the music of that name with him from earth depart?
“It shall not be! A thousand tongues, though human voice were still,
With that high sound the living air triumphantly shall fill;
The wind’s free flight shall bear it on as wandering seeds are sown,
And the starry midnight whisper it with a deep and thrilling tone.
“For it is not as a flower whose scent with the dropping leaves expires,
And it is not as a household lamp, that a breath should quench its fires;

It is written on our battle-fields with the writing of the sword,
It hath left upon our desert-sands a light in blessings pour’d.
“The founts, the many gushing founts which to the wild ye gave,
Of you, my chiefs! shall sing aloud, as they pour a joyous wave;
And the groves, with whose deep lovely gloom ye hung the pilgrim’s way,
Shall send from all their sighing leaves your praises on the day.
“The very walls your bounty rear’d for the stranger’s homeless head,
Shall find a murmur to record your tale, my glorious dead!
Though the grass be where ye feasted once, where lute and cittern rung,
And the serpent in your palaces lie coil’d amidst its young.
“It is enough! Mine eye no more of joy or splendour sees—
I leave your name in lofty faith to the skies and to the breeze!
I go, since earth her flower hath lost, to join the bright and fair,
And call the grave a kingly house, for ye, my chiefs! are there.”
But while the old man sang, a mist of tears
O’er Haroun’s eyes had gather’d, and a thought—
Oh! many a sudden and remorseful thought—
Of his youth’s once-loved friends, the martyr’d race,
O’erflow’d his softening heart. “Live! live!” he cried,
“Thou faithful unto death! Live on, and still
Speak of thy lords—they were a princely band!”

THE SPANISH CHAPEL.[353]

“Weep not for those whom the veil of the tomb,
In life’s early morning, hath hid from our eyes,

Ere sin threw a veil o’er the spirit’s young bloom,

Or earth had profaned what was born for the skies.”

Moore.

I made a mountain brook my guide

Through a wild Spanish glen,

And wander’d on its grassy side,

Far from the homes of men.

It lured me with a singing tone,

And many a sunny glance,

To a green spot of beauty lone,

A haunt for old romance.

A dim and deeply bosom’d grove

Of many an aged tree,

Such as the shadowy violets love,

The fawn and forest bee.

The darkness of the chestnut-bough

There on the waters lay,

The bright stream reverently below

Check’d its exulting play;

And bore a music all subdued,

And led a silvery sheen

On through the breathing solitude

Of that rich leafy scene.

For something viewlessly around

Of solemn influence dwelt,
In the soft gloom and whispery sound,
Not to be told, but felt;
While, sending forth a quiet gleam
Across the wood's repose,
And o'er the twilight of the stream,
A lowly chapel rose.
A pathway to that still retreat
Through many a myrtle wound,
And there a sight—how strangely sweet!
My steps in wonder bound.
For on a brilliant bed of flowers,
E'en at the threshold made,
As if to sleep through sultry hours,
A young fair child was laid.
To sleep?—oh! ne'er, on childhood's eye
And silken lashes press'd,
Did the warm living slumber lie
With such a weight of rest!
Yet still a tender crimson glow
Its cheeks' pure marble dyed—
'Twas but the light's faint streaming flow
Through roses heap'd beside.
I stoop'd—the smooth round arm was chill,

The soft lips' breath was fled,
And the bright ringlets hung so still—
The lovely child was dead!
"Alas!" I cried, "fair faded thing!
Thou hast wrung bitter tears,
And thou hast left a woe, to cling
Round yearning hearts for years!"
But then a voice came sweet and low—
I turn'd, and near me sate
A woman with a mourner's brow,
Pale, yet not desolate.
And in her still, clear, matron face,
All solemnly serene,
A shadow'd image I could trace
Of that young slumberer's mien.
"Stranger! thou pitiest me," she said
With lips that faintly smiled,
"As here I watch beside my dead,
My fair and precious child.
"But know, the time-worn heart may be
By pangs in this world riven,
Keener than theirs who yield, like me,
An angel thus to heaven!"

[353] Suggested by a scene beautifully described in the Recollections of the

Peninsula.

THE KAISER'S FEAST.

[Louis, Emperor of Germany, having put his brother, the Palsgrave Rodolphus, under the ban of the empire in the twelfth century, that unfortunate prince fled to England, where he died in neglect and poverty. "After his decease, his mother Matilda privately invited his children to return to Germany; and, by her mediation, during a season of festivity, when Louis kept wassail in the castle of Heidelberg, the family of his brother presented themselves before him in the garb of suppliants, imploring pity and forgiveness. To this appeal the victor softened."—Miss Benger's Memoirs of the Queen of Bohemia.]

The Kaiser feasted in his hall—
The red wine mantled high;
Banners were trembling on the wall
To the peals of minstrelsy:
And many a gleam and sparkle came
From the armour hung around,
As it caught the glance of the torch's flame,
Or the hearth with pine-boughs crown'd.
Why fell there silence on the chord
Beneath the harper's hand?
And suddenly from that rich board,
Why rose the wassail band?
The strings were hush'd—the knights made way
For the queenly mother's tread,
As up the hall, in dark array,

Two fair-hair’d boys she led.
She led them e’en to the Kaiser’s place,
And still before him stood;
Till, with strange wonder, o’er his face
Flush’d the proud warrior-blood:
And “Speak, my mother! speak!” he cried,
“Wherefore this mourning vest?
And the clinging children by thy side,
In weeds of sadness drest?”
“Well may a mourning vest be mine,
And theirs, my son, my son!
Look on the features of thy line
In each fair little one!
Though grief awhile within their eyes
Hath tamed the dancing glee,
Yet there thine own quick spirit lies—
Thy brother’s children see!
“And where is he, thy brother—where?
He in thy home that grew,
And smiling, with his sunny hair,
Ever to greet thee flew?
How would his arms thy neck entwine,
His fond lips press thy brow!
My son! oh, call these orphans thine!—

Thou hast no brother now!

“What! from their gentle eyes doth naught

Speak of thy childhood’s hours,

And smite thee with a tender thought

Of thy dead father’s towers?

Kind was thy boyish heart and true,

When rear’d together there,

Through the old woods like fawns ye flew—

Where is thy brother—where?

“Well didst thou love him then, and he

Still at thy side was seen!

How is it that such things can be

As though they ne’er had been?

Evil was this world’s breath, which came

Between the good and brave!

Now must the tears of grief and shame

Be offer’d to the grave.

“And let them, let them there be pour’d!

Though all unfelt below—

Thine own wrung heart, to love restored,

Shall soften as they flow.

Oh! death is mighty to make peace;

Now bid his work be done!

So many an inward strife shall cease—

Take, take these babes, my son!”

His eye was dimm’d—the strong man shook

With feelings long suppress’d;

Up in his arms the boys he took,

And strain’d them to his breast.

And a shout from all in the royal hall

Burst forth to hail the sight;

And eyes were wet midst the brave that met

At the Kaiser’s feast that night.

TASSO AND HIS SISTER.

“Devant vous est Sorrente; la demeuroit la sœur de Tasse, quand il vint en pelerin demander a cette obscure amie un asyle contre l’injustice des princes.—Ses longues douleurs avaient presque egare sa raison; il ne lui restoit plus que son genie.”—Corinne.

She sat, where on each wind that sigh’d

The citron’s breath went by,

While the red gold of eventide

Burn’d in the Italian sky.

Her bower was one where daylight’s close

Full oft sweet laughter found,

As thence the voice of childhood rose

To the high vineyards round.

But still and thoughtful at her knee

Her children stood that hour,

Their bursts of song and dancing glee
Hush’d as by words of power.
With bright fix’d wondering eyes, that gazed
Up to their mother’s face,
With brows through parted ringlets raised,
They stood in silent grace.
While she—yet something o’er her look
Of mournfulness was spread—
Forth from a poet’s magic book
The glorious numbers read;
The proud undying lay, which pour’d
Its light on evil years;
His of the gifted pen and sword,[354]
The triumph, and the tears.
She read of fair Erminia’s flight,
Which Venice once might hear
Sung on her glittering seas at night
By many a gondolier:
Of him she read, who broke the charm
That wrapt the myrtle grove;
Of Godfrey’s deeds, of Tancred’s arm,
That slew his Paynim love.
Young cheeks around that bright page glow’d,
Young holy hearts were stirr’d;

And the meek tears of woman flow’d
Fast o’er each burning word.
And sounds of breeze, and fount, and leaf,
Came sweet, each pause between,
When a strange voice of sudden grief
Burst on the gentle scene.
The mother turn’d—a way-worn man,
In pilgrim garb, stood nigh,
Of stately mien, yet wild and wan,
Of proud yet mournful eye.
But drops which would not stay for pride
From that dark eye gush’d free,
As pressing his pale brow, he cried,
“Forgotten! e’en by thee!
“Am I so changed?—and yet we two
Oft hand in hand have play’d;
This brow hath been all bathed in dew
From wreaths which thou hast made;
We have knelt down and said one prayer,
And sung one vesper strain;
My soul is dim with clouds of care—
Tell me those words again!
“Life hath been heavy on my head—
I come a stricken deer,

Bearing the heart, midst crowds that bled,

To bleed in stillness here.”

She gazed, till thoughts that long had slept

Shook all her thrilling frame—

She fell upon his neck and wept,

Murmuring her brother’s name.

Her brother’s name!—and who was he,

The weary one, th’ unknown,

That came, the bitter world to flee,

A stranger to his own?

He was the bard of gifts divine

To sway the souls of men;

He of the song for Salem’s shrine,

He of the sword and pen!

[354] It is scarcely necessary to recall the well-known Italian saying, that Tasso, with his sword and pen, was superior to all men.

ULLA; OR, THE ADJURATION.

“Yet speak to me! I have outwatch’d the stars,

And gazed o’er heaven in vain, in search of thee.

Speak to me! I have wander’d o’er the earth,

And never found thy likeness. Speak to me!

This once—once more!” Manfred.

“Thou’rt gone!—thou’rt slumbering low,

With the sounding seas above thee:

It is but a restless woe,

But a haunting dream to love thee!

Thrice the glad swan has sung

To greet the spring-time hours,

Since thine oar at parting flung

The white spray up in showers.

There’s a shadow of the grave on thy hearth and round thy home;

Come to me from the ocean’s dead!—thou’rt surely of them—come!”

’Twas Ulla’s voice! Alone she stood

In the Iceland summer night,

Far gazing o’er a glassy flood

From a dark rock’s beetling height.

“I know thou hast thy bed

Where the sea-weed’s coil hath bound thee;

The storm sweeps o’er thy head,

But the depths are hush’d around thee.

What wind shall point the way

To the chambers where thou’rt lying?

Come to me thence, and say

If thou thought’st on me in dying?

I will not shrink to see thee with a bloodless lip and cheek.

Come to me from the ocean’s dead!—thou’rt surely of them—speak!”

She listen’d—’twas the wind’s low moan,

’Twas the ripple of the wave,

’Twas the wakening osprey’s cry alone
As it startled from its cave.
“I know each fearful spell
Of the ancient Runic lay,
Whose mutter’d words compel
The tempest to obey.
But I adjure not thee
By magic sign or song;
My voice shall stir the sea
By love—the deep, the strong!
By the might of woman’s tears, by the passion of her sighs,
Come to me from the ocean’s dead!—by the vows we pledged, arise!”
Again she gazed with an eager glance,
Wandering and wildly bright;—
She saw but the sparkling waters dance
To the arrowy northern-light.
“By the slow and struggling death
Of hope that loathed to part,
By the fierce and withering breath
Of despair on youth’s high heart—
By the weight of gloom which clings
To the mantle of the night,
By the heavy dawn which brings
Naught lovely to the sight—

By all that from my weary soul thou hast wrung of grief and fear,
Come to me from the ocean's dead! Awake, arise, appear!"
Was it her yearning spirit's dream?
Or did a pale form rise,
And o'er the hush'd wave glide and gleam,
With bright, still, mournful eyes?
"Have the depths heard? They have!
My voice prevails: thou'rt there,
Dim from thy watery grave—
O thou that wert so fair!
Yet take me to thy rest!
There dwells no fear with love;
Let me slumber on thy breast,
While the billow rolls above!
Where the long-lost things lie hid, where the bright ones have their home,
We will sleep among the ocean's dead. Stay for me, stay!—I come!"
There was a sullen plunge below,
A flashing on the main;
And the wave shut o'er that wild heart's woe—
Shut, and grew still again.

TO WORDSWORTH.

Thine is a strain to read among the hills,
The old and full of voices,—by the source
Of some free stream, whose gladdening presence fills

The solitude with sound; for in its course
Even such is thy deep song, that seems a part
Of those high scenes, a fountain from their heart.
Or its calm spirit fitly may be taken
To the still breast in sunny garden bowers,
Where vernal winds each tree's low tones awaken,
And bud and bell with changes mark the hours.
There let thy thoughts be with me, while the day
Sinks with a golden and serene decay.
Or by some hearth where happy faces meet,
When night hath hush'd the woods with all their birds,
There, from some gentle voice, that lay were sweet
As antique music, link'd with household words;
While in pleased murmurs woman's lip might move,
And the raised eye of childhood shine in love.
Or where the shadows of dark solemn yews
Brood silently o'er some lone burial-ground,
Thy verse hath power that brightly might diffuse
A breath, a kindling, as of spring, around;
From its own glow of hope and courage high,
And steadfast faith's victorious constancy.
True bard and holy!—thou art e'en as one
Who, by some secret gift of soul or eye,
In every spot beneath the smiling sun,

Sees where the springs of living waters lie:

Unseen awhile they sleep—till, touch'd by thee,

Bright healthful waves flow forth, to each glad wanderer free.

[These verses, addressed "To the Author of the Excursion and the Lyrical Ballads," first appeared in the Literary Magnet for April 1826—a clever and tasteful periodical at that time conducted by Mr Alaric A. Watts—who appended to it the following complimentary editorial note:—

"We have much pleasure in presenting to our readers this exquisite address to the poet Wordsworth, with which we have been kindly favoured by its distinguished author. Those who are acquainted with Mr W.'s writings, will readily feel and appreciate the truth and beauty of the tribute."

The same little poem was afterwards inclosed by Mrs Hemans in one of her letters to her accomplished and deeply attached friend, Miss Jewsbury—at whose recommendation the writings of the great poet of the Lakes had become an earnest study with our author, and with what advantage, her compositions subsequent to this time sufficiently testify. In the letter referred to, Mrs Hemans seems proud to avow these obligations.

"The inclosed lines," she says—"an effusion of deep and sincere admiration—will give you some idea of the enjoyment, and I hope I may say advantage, which you have been the means of imparting, by so kindly intrusting me with your precious copy of Wordsworth's Miscellaneous Poems. It has opened to me such a treasure of thought and feeling, that I shall always associate your name with some of my pleasantest recollections, as having introduced me to the knowledge of what I can only regret should have been so long a 'Yarrow unvisited.' I would not write to you sooner, because I wished to tell you that I had really studied these poems, and they have been the daily food of my mind ever since I borrowed them. There is hardly any scene of a happy, though serious, domestic life, or any mood of a reflective

mind, with the spirit of which some one or other of them does not beautifully harmonise. This author is the true poet of home, and of all the lofty feelings which have their root in the soil of home affections. His fine sonnets to Liberty, and indeed all his pieces which have any reference to political interest, remind me of the spirit in which Schiller has conceived the character of William Tell—a calm, single-hearted herdsman of the hills, breaking forth into fiery and indignant eloquence when the sanctity of his hearth is invaded. Then what power Wordsworth condenses into single lines, like Lord Byron's 'curdling a long life into one hour!'

'The still, sad music of humanity'—

'The river glideth at his own sweet will'—

'Over his own sweet voice the stock-dove broods'—

and a thousand others, which we must some time (and I hope not a very distant one) talk over together. Many of these lines quite haunt me: and I have a strange feeling, as if I must have known them in my childhood; they come over me so like old melodies. I can hardly speak of favourites among so many things that delight me; but I think 'The Narrow Glen,' the 'Lines on Corra Linn,' the 'Song for the Feast of Brougham Castle,' 'Yarrow Visited,' and 'The Cuckoo,' are among those which take hold of imagination the soonest, and recur most frequently to memory.

"I know not how I can have so long omitted to mention the Ecclesiastical Sketches, which I have read, and do constantly read, with deep interest. Their beauty grows upon you, and develops as you study it, like that of the old pictures by the Italian masters."]

A MONARCH'S DEATH-BED.

[The Emperor Albert of Hapsburg, who was assassinated by his nephew, afterwards called John the Parricide, was left to die by the wayside, and only supported in his last moments by a female peasant, who happened to be passing.]

A monarch on his deathbed lay—
Did censers waft perfume,
And soft lamps pour their silvery ray,
Through his proud chamber’s gloom?
He lay upon a greensward bed,
Beneath a darkening sky—
A lone tree waving o’er his head,
A swift stream rolling by.
Had he then fallen as warriors fall,
Where spear strikes fire with spear?
Was there a banner for his pall,
A buckler for his bier?
Not so—nor cloven shields nor helms
Had strewn the bloody sod,
Where he, the helpless lord of realms,
Yielded his soul to God.
Were there not friends with words of cheer,
And princely vassals nigh?
And priests, the crucifix to rear
Before the glazing eye?
A peasant girl that royal head
Upon her bosom laid,
And, shrinking not for woman’s dread,
The face of death survey’d.

Alone she sat: from hill and wood
Red sank the mournful sun;
Fast gush'd the fount of noble blood—
Treason its worst had done.
With her long hair she vainly press'd
The wounds, to stanch their tide—
Unknown, on that meek humble breast,
Imperial Albert died!

TO THE MEMORY OF HEBER.

"Umile in tanta gloria."—Petrarch.

If it be sad to speak of treasures gone,
Of sainted genius call'd too soon away,
Of light from this world taken, while it shone
Yet kindling onward to the perfect day—
How shall our grief, if mournful these things be,
Flow forth, O thou of many gifts! for thee?
Hath not thy voice been here amongst us heard
And that deep soul of gentleness and power,
Have we not felt its breath in every word
Wont from thy lip as Hermon's dew to shower?
Yes! in our hearts thy fervent thoughts have burn'd—
Of heaven they were, and thither have return'd.
How shall we mourn thee? With a lofty trust,
Our life's immortal birthright from above!

With a glad faith, whose eye, to track the just,
Through shades and mysteries lifts a glance of love,
And yet can weep!—for nature thus deplores
The friend that leaves us, though for happier shores.
And one high tone of triumph o’er thy bier,
One strain of solemn rapture, be allow’d!
Thou, that rejoicing on thy mid career,
Not to decay, but unto death hast bow’d,
In those bright regions of the rising sun,
Where victory ne’er a crown like thine had won.
Praise! for yet one more name with power endow’d
To cheer and guide us, onward as we press;
Yet one more image on the heart bestow’d
To dwell there, beautiful in holiness!
Thine, Heber, thine! whose memory from the dead
Shines as the star which to the Saviour led!

THE ADOPTED CHILD.

“Why wouldst thou leave me, O gentle child?
Thy home on the mountain is bleak and wild,
A straw-roof’d cabin, with lowly wall—
Mine is a fair and a pillar’d hall,
Where many an image of marble gleams,
And the sunshine of picture for ever streams.”
“Oh! green is the turf where my brothers play,

Through the long bright hours of the summer day;
They find the red cup-moss where they climb,
And they chase the bee o’er the scented thyme,
And the rocks where the heath-flower blooms they know—
Lady, kind lady! oh, let me go!”
“Content thee, boy! in my bower to dwell—
Here are sweet sounds which thou lovest well;
Flutes on the air in the stilly noon,
Harps which the wandering breezes tune,
And the silvery wood-note of many a bird
Whose voice was ne’er in thy mountains heard.”
“Oh! my mother sings, at the twilight’s fall,
A song of the hills far more sweet than all;
She sings it under our own green tree
To the babe half slumbering on her knee:
I dreamt last night of that music low—
Lady, kind lady! oh, let me go!”
“Thy mother is gone, from her cares to rest—
She hath taken the babe on her quiet breast;
Thou wouldst meet her footstep, my boy! no more,
Nor hear the song at the cabin door.
Come thou with me to the vineyards nigh,
And we’ll pluck the grapes of the richest dye.”
“Is my mother gone from her home away?

But I know that my brothers are there at play—
I know they are gathering the foxglove’s bell,
Or the long fern-leaves by the sparkling well;
Or they launch their boats where the bright streams flow—
Lady, kind lady! oh, let me go!”
“Fair child! thy brothers are wanderers now,
They sport no more on the mountain’s brow;
They have left the fern by the spring’s green side,
And the streams where the fairy barks were tried.
Be thou at peace in thy brighter lot,
For thy cabin home is a lonely spot.”
“Are they gone, all gone from the sunny hill?—
But the bird and the blue-fly rove o’er it still;
And the red-deer bound in their gladness free,
And the heath is bent by the singing bee,
And the waters leap, and the fresh winds blow—
Lady, kind lady! oh, let me go!”

INVOCATION.

“I call’d on dreams and visions, to disclose
That which is veil’d from waking thought; conjured
Eternity, as men constrain a ghost
To appear and answer.” Wordsworth.
Answer me, burning stars of night!
Where is the spirit gone,

That past the reach of human sight
As a swift breeze hath flown?
And the stars answer'd me—"We roll
In light and power on high;
But, of the never-dying soul,
Ask that which cannot die."
O many-toned and chainless wind!
Thou art a wanderer free;
Tell me if thou its place canst find,
Far over mount and sea?
And the wind murmur'd in reply—
"The blue deep I have cross'd,
And met its barks and billows high,
But not what thou hast lost."
Ye clouds that gorgeously repose
Around the setting sun,
Answer! have ye a home for those
Whose earthly race is run?
The bright clouds answer'd—"We depart,
We vanish from the sky;
Ask what is deathless in thy heart,
For that which cannot die."
Speak then, thou voice of God within,
Thou of the deep low tone!

Answer me, through life's restless din—

Where is the spirit flown?

And the voice answer'd—"Be thou still!

Enough to know is given:

Clouds, winds, and stars their part fulfil—

Thine is, to trust in Heaven."

KÖRNER AND HIS SISTER.

["Charles Theodore Körner, the celebrated young German poet and soldier, was killed in a skirmish with a detachment of French troops on the 20th of August 1813, a few hours after the composition of his popular piece, The Sword-Song. He was buried at the village of Wöbbelin in Mecklenburg, under a beautiful oak, in a recess of which he had frequently deposited verses composed by him while campaigning in its vicinity. The monument erected to his memory is of cast-iron; and the upper part is wrought into a lyre and sword, a favourite emblem of Körner's, from which one of his works had been entitled. Near the grave of the poet is that of his only sister, who died of grief for his loss, having only survived him long enough to complete his portrait and a drawing of his burial-place. Over the gate of the cemetery is engraved one of his own lines:—

'Vergiss die treuen Todten nicht.'

(Forget not the faithful dead.)"

—See Richardson's Translation of Körner's Life and Works, and Downe's Letters from Mecklenburg.]

Green wave the oak for ever o'er thy rest,

Thou that beneath its crowning foliage sleepest,

And, in the stillness of thy country's breast,

Thy place of memory as an altar keepest;
Brightly thy spirit o’er her hills was pour’d,
Thou of the Lyre and Sword!
Rest, bard! rest, soldier! By the father’s hand
Here shall the child of after years be led,
With his wreath-offering silently to stand
In the hush’d presence of the glorious dead—
Soldier and bard! for thou thy path hast trod
With freedom and with God.
The oak waved proudly o’er thy burial rite,
On thy crown’d bier to slumber warriors bore thee,
And with true hearts thy brethren of the fight
Wept as they veil’d their drooping banners o’er thee;
And the deep guns with rolling peal gave token
That Lyre and Sword were broken.
Thou hast a hero’s tomb: a lowlier bed
Is hers, the gentle girl beside thee lying—
The gentle girl that bow’d her fair young head
When thou wert gone, in silent sorrow dying.
Brother, true friend! the tender and the brave!—
She pined to share thy grave.
Fame was thy gift from others;—but for her,
To whom the wide world held that only spot,
She loved thee!—lovely in your lives ye were,

And in your early deaths divided not.
Thou hast thine oak, thy trophy,—what hath she?
Her own bless’d place by thee!
It was thy spirit, brother! which had made
The bright earth glorious to her youthful eye,
Since first in childhood midst the vines ye play’d,
And sent glad singing through the free blue sky.
Ye were but two—and when that spirit pass’d,
Woe to the one, the last!
Woe, yet not long! She linger’d but to trace
Thine image from the image in her breast—
Once, once again to see that buried face
But smile upon her, ere she went to rest.
Too sad a smile! its living light was o’er—
It answer’d hers no more.
The earth grew silent when thy voice departed,
The home too lonely whence thy step had fled;
What then was left for her the faithful-hearted?
Death, death, to still the yearning for the dead!
Softly she perish’d: be the Flower deplored
Here with the Lyre and Sword!
Have ye not met ere now?—so let those trust
That meet for moments but to part for years—
That weep, watch, pray, to hold back dust from dust—

That love, where love is but a fount of tears.

Brother! sweet sister! peace around ye dwell:

Lyre, Sword, and Flower, farewell![355]

[355] The following lines, addressed to the author of the above, by the venerable father of Körner, who, with the mother, survived the “Lyre, Sword, and Flower,” here commemorated, may not be uninteresting to the German reader:—

“Wohllaut tont aus der Ferne von freundlichen Luften getragen,

Schmeichelt mit lindernder Kraft sich in der Trauernden Ohr,

Starkt den erhebenden Glauben an solcher seelen Verwandschaft,

Die zum Tempel die brust nur fur das Wurdige weihn.

Aus dem Lande zu dem sich stets der gefeyerte Jungling

Hingezogen gefuhlt, wird ihm ein glazender Lohn.

Heil dem Brittischen Volke, wenn ihm das Deutsche nicht fremd ist!

Uber Lander und Meer reichen sich beyde die Hand.”

Theodor Körner’s Vater.

THE DEATH-DAY OF KÖRNER.[356]

A song for the death-day of the brave—

A song of pride!

The youth went down to a hero’s grave,

With the sword, his bride.[357]

He went, with his noble heart unworn,

And pure, and high—

An eagle stooping from clouds of morn,

Only to die.

He went with the lyre, whose lofty tone
Beneath his hand
Had thrill'd to the name of his God alone
And his fatherland.
And with all his glorious feelings yet
In their first glow,
Like a southern stream that no frost hath met
To chain its flow.
A song for the death-day of the brave—
A song of pride!
For him that went to a hero's grave,
With the sword, his bride.
He hath left a voice in his trumpet lays
To turn the flight,
And a guiding spirit for after days,
Like a watch-fire's light.
And a grief in his father's soul to rest,
Midst all high thought;
And a memory unto his mother's breast,
With healing fraught.
And a name and fame above the blight
Of earthly breath,
Beautiful—beautiful and bright,
In life and death!

A song for the death-day of the brave—

A song of pride!

For him that went to a hero's grave,

With the sword, his bride!

[356] On reading part of a letter from Körner's father, addressed to Mr Richardson, the translator of his works, in which he speaks of "The Death-day of his son."

[357] See The Sword Song, composed on the morning of his death.

[As the great German writers at this time, and ever afterwards, exerted a great influence over the mind of Mrs Hemans, it may please the reader to know, on the authority of her sister, the degrees of estimation in which she held some of these. We quote from the Memoir, p. 54-8.

"She in general preferred the writings of Schiller to those of Goethe, and could for ever find fresh beauties in Wallenstein, with which she was equally familiar in its eloquent original, and in Coleridge's magnificent translation, or, as it may truly be called, transfusion. Those most conversant with her literary tastes, will remember her almost actual relation-like love for the characters of Max and Thekla, whom, like many other 'beings of the mind,' she had learned to consider as friends; and her constant quotations of certain passages from this noble tragedy, which peculiarly accorded with her own views and feelings. In the Stimmen der Völker in Lieder of Herder, she found a rich store of thoughts and suggestions; and it was this work which inspired her with the idea of her own 'Lays of Many Lands,' most of which appeared originally in the New Monthly Magazine, then edited by Mr Campbell. She also took great delight in the dreamy beauties of Novalis and Tieck, and in what has been gracefully characterised by Mr Chorley, as the 'moonlight tenderness' of Oehlenschläger. Of the works of the latter, her especial favourite was Coreggio; and of Tieck, Sternbald's Wanderungen, which she often made her out-of-doors companion. It was always an especial mark of her love for a book, and of her

considering it true to nature, and to the best wisdom of the heart,[358] when she promoted it to the list of those with which she would ‘take sweet counsel’ amidst the woods and fields.

“But, amongst all these names of power, none awakened a more lively interest in her mind, than that of the noble-hearted Körner, the young soldier-bard, who, in the words of Professor Bouterwek, ‘would have become a distinguished tragic poet, had he not met with the still more glorious fate of falling on the field of battle, while fighting for the deliverance of Germany.’ The stirring events of his life, the heroism of his early death, and the beautiful tie which subsisted between him and his only sister, whose fate was so touchingly bound up with his own, formed a romance of real life which could not fail to excite feelings of the warmest enthusiasm in a bosom so ready as hers to respond to all things high and holy. The lyric of ‘The Grave of Körner,’ is, perhaps, one of the most impressive Mrs Hemans ever wrote. Her whole heart was in a subject which so peculiarly combined the two strains dearest to her nature, the chivalrous and the tender.

‘They were but two—and when that spirit pass’d,

Woe to the one, the last!’

“That mournful echo—‘They were but two,’ was, by some indefinable association, connected in her mind with another and far differing brother and sister, called into existence by the magic pen of Sir Walter Scott. The affecting ejaculation, ‘There are but two of us!’ so often repeated by the hapless Clara Mowbray in St Ronan’s Well, was frequently quoted by Mrs Hemans as an instance of the deepest pathos. The lyric in question was, it is believed, one of the first tributes which appeared in England to the memory of the author of ‘The Lyre and Sword,’ though his name has since become ‘familiar in our ears as household words.’ A translation of the ‘Life of Körner,’ with selections from his poems, &c., was published in 1827, by G. F. Richardson, Esq., whose politeness in presenting a copy of the work to Mrs Hemans,

inscribed with a dedicatory sonnet, led to an interchange of letters with that gentleman, and was further the means of procuring for her the high gratification of a direct message, full of the most feeling acknowledgment, from the venerable father of the hero, who afterwards addressed to her a poetical tribute from Theodor Körner's Father [see p. 425.] Her pleasure in receiving this genuine offering was thus expressed to Mr Richardson, who had been the medium through which it reached her. 'Theodor Körner's Vater!'—it is, indeed, a title beautifully expressing all the holy pride which the memory of die treuen Todten[359] must inspire; and awakening every good and high feeling to its sound. I shall prize the lines as a relic. Will you be kind enough to assure M. Körner, with my grateful respects, of the value which will be attached to them, a value so greatly enhanced by their being in his own hand. They are very beautiful, I think, in their somewhat antique and treuherzig[360] simplicity, and worthy to have proceeded from Theodor Körner's Vater.

"The following almost literal translation of these lines is given by W. B. Chorley, Esq., in his interesting little volume, 'The Lyre and Sword,' published in 1834:—

'Gently a voice from afar is borne to the ear of the mourner;

Mildly it soundeth, yet strong, grief in his bosom to soothe;

Strong in the soul-cheering faith, that hearts have a share in his sorrow,

In whose depths all things holy and noble are shrined.

From that land once dearly beloved by our brave one, the fallen,

Mourning blent with bright fame—cometh a wreath for his urn.

Hail to thee, England the free! thou see'st in the German no stranger.

Over the earth and the seas, join'd be both lands, heart and hand!'

"There was nothing which delighted Mrs Hemans more in German literature, than the cordial feeling of brotherhood, so conspicuous amongst its most eminent

authors, and their freedom from all the petty rivalries and manœuvres on which she herself looked down with as much of wonder as of contempt. In a letter, in which she speaks of the bitterness, and jealousy, and strife, pervading the tone of many of our own Reviews, she adds, turning to a brighter picture with a feeling of relief, like that of one emerging from the heated atmosphere of a city to breathe the fresh air of the mountains:—'How very different seems the spirit of literary men in Germany! I am just reading a work of Tieck's, which is dedicated to Schlegel; and I am delighted with the beautiful simplicity of these words in the dedication:—Es war eine schöne Zeit meines Lebens, als ich dich und deinen Bruder Friedrich zuerst kennen lernte'; eine noch schönere als wir und Novalis für Kunst und Wissenschaft vereinigt lebten, und uns in mannigfaltigen Bestrebungen begegneten. Jetzt hat uns das Schicksal schon seit vielen Jahren getrennt. Ich kann nur in Geist und in der Erinnerung mit dir leben.[361] 'Is not that union of bright minds, für Kunst und Wissenschaft, a picture on which it is delightful to repose?'"]

[358] "One of our poets says, with equal truth and beauty, 'The heart is wise.' We should be not only happier but better if we attended more to its dictates."—Ethel Churchill, by L. E. L. vol. i. p. 234.

[359] The faithful dead.

[360] True-hearted.

[361] "That was a bright era in my life when I first learned to know you and your brother Frederick; a still brighter, when we and Novalis lived united for art and knowledge, and emulated one another in various competitions. Fate has since, for many years, divided us. I can now live with you only in spirit and in memory."

AN HOUR OF ROMANCE.

"I come

To this sweet place for quiet. Every tree

And bush, and fragrant flower, and hilly path,
And thymy mound that flings unto the winds
Its morning incense, is my friend.”—Barry Cornwall.

There were thick leaves above me and around,
And low sweet sighs like those of childhood’s sleep,
Amidst their dimness, and a fitful sound
As of soft showers on water; dark and deep
Lay the oak shadows o’er the turf, so still
They seem’d but pictured glooms; a hidden rill
Made music, such as haunts us in a dream,
Under the fern-tufts; and a tender gleam
Of soft green light, as by the glow-worm shed,
Came pouring through the woven beech-boughs down,
And steep’d the magic page wherein I read
Of royal chivalry and old renown,
A tale of Palestine.[362] Meanwhile the bee
Swept past me with a tone of summer hours—
A drowsy bugle, wafting thoughts of flowers,
Blue skies, and amber sunshine: brightly free,
On filmy wings, the purple dragon-fly
Shot glancing like a fairy javelin by;
And a sweet voice of sorrow told the dell
Where sat the lone wood-pigeon.
But ere long,

All sense of these things faded, as the spell
Breathing from that high gorgeous tale grew strong
On my chain'd soul. 'Twas not the leaves I heard:—
A Syrian wind the lion-banner stirr'd,
Through its proud floating folds. 'Twas not the brook
Singing in secret through its grassy glen;—
A wild shrill trumpet of the Saracen
Peal'd from the desert's lonely heart, and shook
The burning air. Like clouds when winds are high,
O'er glittering sands flew steeds of Araby,
And tents rose up, and sudden lance and spear
Flash'd where a fountain's diamond wave lay clear,
Shadow'd by graceful palm-trees. Then the shout
Of merry England's joy swell'd freely out,
Sent through an Eastern heaven, whose glorious hue
Made shields dark mirrors to its depths of blue:
And harps were there—I heard their sounding strings,
As the waste echo'd to the mirth of kings.
The bright mask faded. Unto life's worn track,
What call'd me from its flood of glory back?
A voice of happy childhood!—and they pass'd,
Banner, and harp, and Paynim's trumpet's blast.
Yet might I scarce bewail the splendours gone,
My heart so leap'd to that sweet laughter's tone.[363]

[362] The Talisman—Tales of the Crusaders.

[363] See Annotation on “Dramatic Scene between Bronwylfa and Rhyllon,” p. 385.

A VOYAGER’S DREAM OF LAND.

“His very heart athirst
To gaze at nature in her green array,
Upon the ship’s tall side he stands possess’d
With visions prompted by intense desire;
Fair fields appear below, such as he left
Far distant, such as he would die to find:
He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more.”
Cowper.

The hollow dash of waves!—the ceaseless roar!—
Silence, ye billows!—vex my soul no more.
There’s a spring in the woods by my sunny home,
Afar from the dark sea’s tossing foam;
Oh! the fall of that fountain is sweet to hear,
As a song from the shore to the sailor’s ear!
And the sparkle which up to the sun it throws
Through the feathery fern and the olive boughs,
And the gleam on its path as it steals away
Into deeper shades from the sultry day,
And the large water-lilies that o’er its bed
Their pearly leaves to the soft light spread,
They haunt me! I dream of that bright spring’s flow,

I thirst for its rills like a wounded roe!
Be still, thou sea-bird, with thy clanging cry!
My spirit sickens as thy wing sweeps by.
Know ye my home, with the lulling sound
Of leaves from the lime and the chestnut round
Know ye it, brethren! where bower'd it lies
Under the purple of southern skies?
With the streamy gold of the sun that shines
In through the cloud of its clustering vines,
And the summer breath of the myrtle flowers,
Borne from the mountain in dewy hours,
And the fire-fly's glance through the darkening shades,
Like shooting stars in the forest glades,
And the scent of the citron at eve's dim fall—
Speak! have ye known, have ye felt them all?
The heavy-rolling surge! the rocking mast!—
Hush! give my dream's deep music way, thou blast!
Oh, the glad sounds of the joyous earth!
The notes of the singing cicala's mirth,
The murmurs that live in the mountain pines,
The sighing of reeds as the day declines,
The wings flitting home through the crimson glow
That steeps the wood when the sun is low,
The voice of the night-bird that sends a thrill

To the heart of the leaves when the winds are still—
I hear them!—around me they rise, they swell,
They call back my spirit with Hope to dwell—
They come with a breath from the fresh spring-time,
And waken my youth in its hour of prime.
The white foam dashes high—away, away!
Shroud my green land no more, thou blinding spray!
It is there!—down the mountains I see the sweep
Of the chestnut forests, the rich and deep,
With the burden and glory of flowers that they bear
Floating upborne on the blue summer air,
And the light pouring through them in tender gleams,
And the flashing forth of a thousand streams!
Hold me not, brethren! I go, I go
To the hills of my youth, where the myrtles blow,
To the depths of the woods, where the shadows rest,
Massy and still, on the greensward's breast,
To the rocks that resound with the water's play—
I hear the sweet laugh of my fount—give way!
Give way!—the booming surge, the tempest's roar,
The sea-bird's wail shall vex my soul no more.

THE EFFIGIES.

"Der rasche Kampf verewigt einen Mann:
Er falle gleich, so preiset ihn das Lied.

Allein die Thränen, die unendlichen
Der überbliebnen, der verlass’nen Frau,
Zählt keine Nachwelt.” Goethe.

Warrior! whose image on thy tomb,
With shield and crested head,
Sleeps proudly in the purple gloom
By the stain’d window shed;
The records of thy name and race
Have faded from the stone,
Yet, through a cloud of years, I trace
What thou hast been and done.
A banner, from its flashing spear,
Flung out o’er many a fight;
A war-cry ringing far and clear,
And strong to turn the flight;
An arm that bravely bore the lance
On for the holy shrine;
A haughty heart and a kingly glance—
Chief! were not these things thine?
A lofty place where leaders sate
Around the council board;
In festive halls a chair of state
When the blood-red wine was pour’d;
A name that drew a prouder tone

From herald, harp, and bard:

Surely these things were all thine own—

So hadst thou thy reward.

Woman! whose sculptured form at rest

By the arm’d knight is laid,

With meek hands folded o’er a breast

In matron robes array’d;

What was thy tale?—O gentle mate

Of him, the bold and free,

Bound unto his victorious fate,

What bard hath sung of thee?

He woo’d a bright and burning star—

Thine was the void, the gloom,

The straining eye that follow’d far

His fast-receding plume;

The heart-sick listening while his steed

Sent echoes on the breeze;

The pang—but when did Fame take heed

Of griefs obscure as these?

Thy silent and secluded hours

Through many a lonely day

While bending o’er thy broider’d flowers,

With spirits far away;

Thy weeping midnight prayers for him

Who fought on Syrian plains,
Thy watchings till the torch grew dim—
These fill no minstrel strains.
A still, sad life was thine!—long years
With tasks unguerdon’d fraught—
Deep, quiet love, submissive tears,
Vigils of anxious thought;
Prayer at the cross in fervour pour’d,
Alms to the pilgrim given—
Oh! happy, happier than thy lord,
In that lone path to heaven!

THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS IN NEW ENGLAND.

“Look now abroad! Another race has fill’d
Those populous borders—wide the wood recedes,
And towns shoot up, and fertile realms are till’d;
The land is full of harvests and green meads.” Bryant.

The breaking waves dash’d high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches toss’d;
And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o’er,
When a band of exiles moor’d their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted, came;
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame;
Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear;—
They shook the depths of the desert gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.
Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea;
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free!
The ocean eagle soar’d
From his nest by the white wave’s foam;
And the rocking pines of the forest roar’d—
This was their welcome home!
There were men with hoary hair
Amidst that pilgrim band;—
Why had they come to wither there,
Away from their childhood’s land?
There was woman’s fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love’s truth;
There was manhood’s brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?—
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?—
They sought a faith’s pure shrine!
Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trode.
They have left unstain’d what there they found—
Freedom to worship God.

THE SPIRIT’S MYSTERIES.

“And slight, withal, may be the things which bring
Back on the heart the weight which it would fling
Aside for ever;—it may be a sound—
A tone of music—summer’s breath, or spring—
A flower—a leaf—the ocean—which may wound—
Striking th’ electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound.”
Childe Harold.

The power that dwelleth in sweet sounds to waken
Vague yearnings, like the sailor’s for the shore,
And dim remembrances, whose hue seems taken
From some bright former state, our own no more;
Is not this all a mystery? Who shall say
Whence are those thoughts, and whither tends their way?
The sudden images of vanish’d things,
That o’er the spirit flash, we know not why;

Tones from some broken harp’s deserted strings,
Warm sunset hues of summers long gone by;
A rippling wave—the dashing of an oar—
A flower-scent floating past our parents’ door;
A word—scarce noted in its hour perchance,
Yet back returning with a plaintive tone;
A smile—a sunny or a mournful glance,
Full of sweet meanings now from this world flown;
Are not these mysteries when to life they start,
And press vain tears in gushes from the heart?
And the far wanderings of the soul in dreams,
Calling up shrouded faces from the dead,
And with them bringing soft or solemn gleams,
Familiar objects brightly to o’erspread;
And wakening buried love, or joy, or fear—
These are night’s mysteries—who shall make them clear?
And the strange inborn sense of coming ill,
That ofttimes whispers to the haunted breast,
In a low tone which naught can drown or still,
Midst feasts and melodies a secret guest;
Whence doth that murmur wake, that shadow fall?
Why shakes the spirit thus? ’Tis mystery all!
Darkly we move—we press upon the brink
Haply of viewless worlds, and know it not;

Yes! it may be, that nearer than we think
Are those whom death has parted from our lot!
Fearfully, wondrously, our souls are made—
Let us walk humbly on, but undismay'd!
Humbly—for knowledge strives in vain to feel
Her way amidst these marvels of the mind;
Yet undismay'd—for do they not reveal
Th' immortal being with our dust entwin'd?—
So let us deem! and e'en the tears they wake
Shall then be blest, for that high nature's sake.

THE DEPARTED.

"Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings,
The powerful of the earth—the wise—the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulchre." Bryant.

And shrink ye from the way
To the spirit's distant shore?—
Earth's mightiest men, in arm'd array,
Are thither gone before.
The warrior-kings, whose banner
Flew far as eagles fly,
They are gone where swords avail them not,
From the feast of victory.

And the seers who sat of yore
By Orient palm or wave,
They have pass’d with all their starry lore—
Can ye still fear the grave?
We fear! we fear! The sunshine
Is joyous to behold,
And we reck not of the buried kings,
Nor the awful seers of old.
Ye shrink! The bards whose lays
Have made your deep hearts burn,
They have left the sun, and the voice of praise,
For the land whence none return.
And the beautiful, whose record
Is the verse that cannot die,
They too are gone, with their glorious bloom,
From the love of human eye.
Would ye not join that throng
Of the earth’s departed flowers,
And the masters of the mighty song,
In their far and fadeless bowers?
Those songs are high and holy,
But they vanquish not our fear:
Not from our path those flowers are gone—
We fain would linger here!

Linger then yet awhile,
As the last leaves on the bough!—
Ye have loved the light of many a smile
That is taken from you now.
There have been sweet singing voices
In your walks, that now are still;
There are seats left void in your earthly homes,
Which none again may fill.
Soft eyes are seen no more,
That made spring-time in your heart;
Kindred and friends are gone before—
And ye still fear to part?
We fear not now, we fear not!
Though the way through darkness bends;
Our souls are strong to follow them,
Our own familiar friends!

THE PALM-TREE.[364]

It waved not through an eastern sky,
Beside a fount of Araby;
It was not fann’d by southern breeze
In some green isle of Indian seas;
Nor did its graceful shadow sleep
O’er stream of Afric, lone and deep.
But fair the exiled palm-tree grew

Midst foliage of no kindred hue;
Through the laburnum’s dropping gold
Rose the light shaft of orient mould,
And Europe’s violets, faintly sweet,
Purpled the moss-beds at its feet.
Strange look’d it there! The willow stream’d
Where silvery waters near it gleam’d;
The lime-bough lured the honey-bee
To murmur by the desert’s tree,
And showers of snowy roses made
A lustre in its fan-like shade.
There came an eve of festal hours—
Rich music fill’d that garden’s bowers;
Lamps, that from flowering branches hung,
On sparks of dew soft colour flung;
And bright forms glanced—a fairy show—
Under the blossoms to and fro.
But one, a lone one, midst the throng,
Seem’d reckless all of dance or song:
He was a youth of dusky mien,
Whereon the Indian sun had been,
Of crested brow and long black hair—
A stranger, like the palm-tree, there.
And slowly, sadly, moved his plumes,

Glittering athwart the leafy glooms.

He pass’d the pale-green olives by,

Nor won the chestnut flowers his eye;

But when to that sole palm he came,

Then shot a rapture through his frame!

To him, to him its rustling spoke—

The silence of his soul it broke!

It whisper’d of his own bright isle,

That lit the ocean with a smile;

Ay, to his ear that native tone

Had something of the sea-wave’s moan?

His mother’s cabin-home, that lay

Where feathery cocoas fringed the bay;

The dashing of his brethren’s oar—

The conch-note heard along the shore;

All through his wakening bosom swept—

He clasp’d his country’s tree, and wept!

Oh! scorn him not! The strength whereby

The patriot girds himself to die,

Th’ unconquerable power which fills

The freeman battling on his hills,

These have one fountain deep and clear—

The same whence gush’d that childlike tear!

[364] This incident is, I think, recorded by De Lille, in his poem of Les Jardins.

THE CHILD’S LAST SLEEP.

SUGGESTED BY A MONUMENT OF CHANTREY’S.

Thou sleepest—but when wilt thou wake, fair child?
When the fawn awakes in the forest wild?
When the lark’s wing mounts with the breeze of morn?
When the first rich breath of the rose is born?—
Lovely thou sleepest! yet something lies
Too deep and still on thy soft-seal’d eyes;
Mournful, though sweet, is thy rest to see—
When will the hour of thy rising be?
Not when the fawn wakes—not when the lark
On the crimson cloud of the morn floats dark.
Grief with vain passionate tears hath wet
The hair, shedding gleams from thy pale brow yet;
Love, with sad kisses unfelt, hath press’d
Thy meek-dropt eyelids and quiet breast;
And the glad Spring, calling out bird and bee,
Shall colour all blossoms, fair child! but thee.
Thou’rt gone from us, bright one!—that thou shouldst die,
And life be left to the butterfly![365]
Thou’rt gone as a dewdrop is swept from the bough:
Oh! for the world where thy home is now!
How may we love but in doubt and fear,
How may we anchor our fond hearts here;

How should e’en joy but a trembler be,

Beautiful dust! when we look on thee?

[365] A butterfly, as if resting on a flower, is sculptured on the monument.

THE SUNBEAM.

Thou art no lingerer in monarch’s hall—

A joy thou art, and a wealth to all!

A bearer of hope unto land and sea—

Sunbeam! what gift hath the world like thee?

Thou art walking the billows, and ocean smiles;

Thou hast touch’d with glory his thousand isles;

Thou hast lit up the ships and the feathery foam,

And gladden’d the sailor like words from home.

To the solemn depths of the forest-shades,

Thou art streaming on through their green arcades;

And the quivering leaves that have caught thy glow

Like fire-flies glance to the pools below.

I look’d on the mountains—a vapour lay

Folding their heights in its dark array:

Thou brakest forth, and the mist became

A crown and a mantle of living flame.

I look’d on the peasant’s lowly cot—

Something of sadness had wrapt the spot;

But a gleam of thee on its lattice fell,

And it laugh’d into beauty at that bright spell.

To the earth’s wild places a guest thou art,
Flushing the waste like the rose’s heart;
And thou scornest not from thy pomp to shed
A tender smile on the ruin’s head.
Thou tak’st through the dim church-aisle thy way,
And its pillars from twilight flash forth to day,
And its high, pale tombs, with their trophies old,
Are bathed in a flood as of molten gold.
And thou turnest not from the humblest grave,
Where a flower to the sighing winds may wave;
Thou scatter’st its gloom like the dreams of rest,
Thou sleepest in love on its grassy breast.
Sunbeam of summer! oh, what is like thee?
Hope of the wilderness, joy of the sea!—
One thing is like thee to mortals given,
The faith touching all things with hues of heaven!

BREATHINGS OF SPRING.

Thou givest me flowers, thou givest me songs; bring back
The love that I have lost!
What wakest thou, Spring? Sweet voices in the woods,
And reed-like echoes, that have long been mute:
Thou bringest back, to fill the solitudes,
The lark’s clear pipe, the cuckoo’s viewless flute,
Whose tone seems breathing mournfulness or glee,

E’en as our hearts may be.

And the leaves greet thee, Spring!—the joyous leaves,

Whose tremblings gladden many a copse and glade,

Where each young spray a rosy flush receives,

When thy south wind hath pierced the whispery shade,

And happy murmurs, running through the grass,

Tell that thy footsteps pass.

And the bright waters—they too hear thy call,

Spring, the awakener! thou hast burst their sleep!

Amidst the hollows of the rocks their fall

Makes melody, and in the forests deep,

Where sudden sparkles and blue gleams betray

Their windings to the day.

And flowers—the fairy-peopled world of flowers!

Thou from the dust hast set that glory free,

Colouring the cowslip with the sunny hours,

And penciling the wood anemone:

Silent they seem—yet each to thoughtful eye

Glows with mute poesy.

But what awakest thou in the heart, O Spring!

The human heart, with all its dreams and sighs?

Thou that givest back so many a buried thing,

Restorer of forgotten harmonies!

Fresh songs and scents break forth where’er thou art—

What wakest thou in the heart?
Too much, oh! there too much! We know not well
Wherefore it should be thus, yet roused by thee,
What fond, strange yearnings, from the soul's deep cell,
Gush for the faces we no more may see!
How are we haunted, in the wind's low tone,
By voices that are gone!
Looks of familiar love, that never more,
Never on earth, our aching eyes shall meet,
Past words of welcome to our household door,
And vanish'd smiles, and sounds of parted feet—
Spring! midst the murmurs of thy flowering trees,
Why, why revivest thou these?
Vain longings for the dead!—why come they back
With thy young birds, and leaves, and living blooms?
Oh! is it not, that from thine earthly track
Hope to thy world may look beyond the tombs?
Yes, gentle Spring! no sorrow dims thine air,
Breathed by our loved ones there!

THE ILLUMINATED CITY.

The hills all glow'd with a festive light,
For the royal city rejoiced by night:
There were lamps hung forth upon tower and tree,
Banners were lifted and streaming free;

Every tall pillar was wreath’d with fire;
Like a shooting meteor was every spire;
And the outline of many a dome on high
Was traced, as in stars, on the clear dark sky.
I pass’d through the streets. There were throngs on throngs—
Like sounds of the deep were their mingled songs;
There was music forth from each palace borne—
A peal of the cymbal, the harp, and horn;
The forests heard it, the mountains rang,
The hamlets woke to its haughty clang;
Rich and victorious was every tone,
Telling the land of her foes o’erthrown.
Didst thou meet not a mourner for all the slain?
Thousands lie dead on their battle-plain!
Gallant and true were the hearts that fell—
Grief in the homes they have left must dwell:
Grief o’er the aspect of childhood spread,
And bowing the beauty of woman’s head!
Didst thou hear, midst the songs, not one tender moan
For the many brave to their slumbers gone?
I saw not the face of a weeper there—
Too strong, perchance, was the bright lamps’ glare!
I heard not a wail midst the joyous crowd—
The music of victory was all too loud!

Mighty it roll’d on the winds afar,
Shaking the streets like a conqueror’s car—
Through torches and streamers its flood swept by:
How could I listen for moan or sigh?
Turn then away from life’s pageants—turn,
If its deep story thy heart would learn!
Ever too bright is that outward show,
Dazzling the eyes till they see not woe.
But lift the proud mantle which hides from thy view
The things thou shouldst gaze on, the sad and true;
Nor fear to survey what its folds conceal:—
So must thy spirit be taught to feel!

THE SPELLS OF HOME.

“There blend the ties that strengthen
Our hearts in hours of grief,
The silver links that lengthen
Joy’s visits when most brief.”
Bernard Barton.

By the soft green light in the woody glade,
On the banks of moss where thy childhood play’d,
By the household tree through which thine eye
First look’d in love to the summer sky,
By the dewy gleam, by the very breath
Of the primrose-tufts in the grass beneath,

Upon thy heart there is laid a spell,
Holy and precious—oh, guard it well!
By the sleepy ripple of the stream,
Which hath lull’d thee into many a dream,
By the shiver of the ivy leaves
To the wind of morn at thy casement eaves,
By the bee’s deep murmur in the limes,
By the music of the Sabbath chimes,
By every sound of thy native shade,
Stronger and dearer the spell is made.
By the gathering round the winter hearth,
When twilight call’d unto household mirth,
By the fairy tale or the legend old
In that ring of happy faces told,
By the quiet hour when hearts unite
In the parting prayer and the kind “Good-night!”
By the smiling eye, and the loving tone,
Over thy life has the spell been thrown.
And bless that gift!—it hath gentle might,
A guardian power and a guiding light.
It hath led the freeman forth to stand
In the mountain-battles of his land;
It hath brought the wanderer o’er the seas
To die on the hills of his own fresh breeze;

And back to the gates of his father’s hall
It hath led the weeping prodigal.
Yes! when thy heart, in its pride, would stray
From the pure first-loves of its youth away—
When the sullying breath of the world would come
O’er the flowers it brought from its childhood’shome—
Think thou again of the woody glade,
And the sound by the rustling ivy made—
Think of the tree at thy father’s door,
And the kindly spell shall have power once more!

ROMAN GIRL’S SONG.

“Roma, Roma, Roma!
Non e piu come era prima.”
Rome, Rome! thou art no more
As thou hast been!
On thy seven hills of yore
Thou sat’st a queen.
Thou hadst thy triumphs then
Purpling the street,
Leaders and sceptred men
Bow’d at thy feet.
They that thy mantle wore,
As gods were seen—
Rome, Rome! thou art no more

As thou hast been!

Rome! thine imperial brow

Never shall rise:

What hast thou left thee now?—

Thou hast thy skies!

Blue, deeply blue, they are,

Gloriously bright!

Veiling thy wastes afar

With colour’d light.

Thou hast the sunset’s glow,

Rome! for thy dower,

Flushing tall cypress-bough,

Temple and tower!

And all sweet sounds are thine,

Lovely to hear,

While night, o’er tomb and shrine,

Rests darkly clear.

Many a solemn hymn,

By starlight sung,

Sweeps through the arches dim,

Thy wrecks among.

Many a flute’s low swell,

On thy soft air

Lingers and loves to dwell

With summer there.

Thou hast the south’s rich gift

Of sudden song—

A charm’d fountain, swift,

Joyous and strong.

Thou hast fair forms that move

With queenly tread;

Thou hast proud fanes above

Thy mighty dead.

Yet wears thy Tiber’s shore

A mournful mien:—

Rome, Rome! thou art no more

As thou hast been!

THE DISTANT SHIP.

The sea-bird’s wing o’er ocean’s breast

Shoots like a glancing star,

While the red radiance of the west

Spreads kindling fast and far;

And yet that splendour wins thee not—

Thy still and thoughtful eye

Dwells but on one dark distant spot

Of all the main and sky.

Look round thee! O’er the slumbering deep

A solemn glory broods;

A fire hath touch’d the beacon-steep,
And all the golden woods;
A thousand gorgeous clouds on high
Burn with the amber light!—
What spell from that rich pageantry
Chains down thy gazing sight?
A softening thought of human cares,
A feeling link’d to earth!
Is not yon speck a bark which bears
The loved of many a hearth?
Oh! do not Hope, and Grief, and Fear,
Crowd her frail world even now,
And manhood’s prayer and woman’s tear
Follow her venturous prow?
Bright are the floating clouds above,
The glittering seas below;
But we are bound by cords of love
To kindred weal and woe.
Therefore, amidst this wide array
Of glorious things and fair,
My soul is on that bark’s lone way—
For human hearts are there.

THE BIRDS OF PASSAGE.

Birds, joyous birds of the wandering wing!

Whence is it ye come with the flowers of spring?
“We come from the shores of the green old Nile,
From the land where the roses of Sharon smile,
From the palms that wave through the Indian sky,
From the myrrh-trees of glowing Araby.
“We have swept o’er cities in song renown’d—
Silent they lie with the deserts round!
We have cross’d proud rivers, whose tide hath roll’d
All dark with the warrior-blood of old;
And each worn wing hath regain’d its home,
Under peasant’s roof-trees or monarch’s dome.”
And what have ye found in the monarch’s dome,
Since last ye traversed the blue sea’s foam?—
“We have found a change, we have found a pall,
And a gloom o’ershadowing the banquet’s hall,
And a mark on the floor as of life-drops spilt—
Naught looks the same, save the nest we built!”
O joyous birds! it hath still been so;
Through the halls of kings doth the tempest go!
But the huts of the hamlet lie still and deep,
And the hills o’er their quiet a vigil keep:
Say what have ye found in the peasant’s cot,
Since last ye parted from that sweet spot?—
“A change we have found there—and many a change!

Faces and footsteps, and all things strange!
Gone are the heads of the silvery hair,
And the young that were have a brow of care,
And the place is hush’d where the children play’d—
Naught looks the same, save the nest we made!”
Sad is your tale of the beautiful earth,
Birds that o’ersweep it in power and mirth!
Yet through the wastes of the trackless air
Ye have a guide, and shall we despair?
Ye over desert and deep have pass’d—
So may we reach our bright home at last!

THE GRAVES OF A HOUSEHOLD.

They grew in beauty side by side,
They fill’d one home with glee;—
Their graves are sever’d far and wide,
By mount, and stream, and sea.
The same fond mother bent at night
O’er each fair sleeping brow:
She had each folded flower in sight—
Where are those dreamers now?
One, midst the forest of the West,
By a dark stream is laid—
The Indian knows his place of rest,
Far in the cedar-shade.

The sea, the blue lone sea, hath one—
He lies where pearls lie deep;
He was the loved of all, yet none
O’er his low bed may weep.
One sleeps where southern vines are drest
Above the noble slain:
He wrapt his colours round his breast
On a blood-red field of Spain.
And one—o’er her the myrtle showers
Its leaves, by soft winds fann’d;
She faded ’midst Italian flowers—
The last of that bright band.
And parted thus they rest, who play’d
Beneath the same green tree;
Whose voices mingled as they pray’d
Around one parent knee!
They that with smiles lit up the hall,
And cheer’d with song the hearth!—
Alas, for love! if thou wert all,
And naught beyond, O Earth!

MOZART’S REQUIEM.

[A short time before the death of Mozart, a stranger of remarkable appearance, and dressed in deep mourning, called at his house, and requested him to prepare a requiem, in his best style, for the funeral of a distinguished person. The sensitive

imagination of the composer immediately seized upon the circumstance as an omen of his own fate; and the nervous anxiety with which he laboured to fulfil the task, had the effect of realising his impression. He died within a few days after completing this magnificent piece of music, which was performed at his interment.]

“These birds of Paradise but long to flee

Back to their native mansion.”

“Prophecy of Dante.”

A requiem!—and for whom?

For beauty in its bloom?

For valour fallen—a broken rose or sword?

A dirge for king or chief,

With pomp of stately grief,

Banner, and torch, and waving plume deplored?

Not so—it is not so!

The warning voice I know,

From other worlds a strange mysterious tone;

A solemn funeral air

It call’d me to prepare,

And my heart answer’d secretly—my own!

One more then, one more strain,

In links of joy and pain,

Mighty the troubled spirit to enthrall!

And let me breathe my dower

Of passion and of power

Full into that deep lay—the last of all!

The last!—and I must go

From this bright world below,

This realm of sunshine, ringing with sweet sound!

Must leave its festal skies,

With all their melodies,

That ever in my breast glad echoes found!

Yet have I known it long:

Too restless and too strong

Within this clay hath been th’ o’ermastering flame;

Swift thoughts, that came and went,

Like torrents o’er me sent,

Have shaken, as a reed, my thrilling frame.

Like perfumes on the wind,

Which none may stay or bind,

The beautiful comes floating through my soul;

I strive with yearnings vain

The spirit to detain

Of the deep harmonies that past me roll!

Therefore disturbing dreams

Trouble the secret streams

And founts of music that o’erflow my breast;

Something far more divine

Than may on earth be mine,

Haunts my worn heart, and will not let me rest.

Shall I then fear the tone

That breathes from worlds unknown?—

Surely these feverish aspirations there

Shall grasp their full desire,

And this unsettled fire

Burn calmly, brightly, in immortal air.

One more then, one more strain;

To earthly joy and pain

A rich, and deep, and passionate farewell!

I pour each fervent thought,

With fear, hope, trembling, fraught,

Into the notes that o'er my dust shall swell.

[One of the peculiar features of the increased sensitiveness of her temperament at this time, was an awakened enthusiasm for music, which amounted to an absolute passion. "I do not think," she wrote, "that I can bear the burden of my life without music for more than two or three days." Yet, with sensibilities so exquisite as hers, this melomania was a source of far more pain than pleasure; it was so impossible for any earthly strains to approach that ideal and unattainable standard of perfection which existed within her mind, and which she has shadowed forth with a mournful energy in "Mozart's Requiem."

From time to time, however, she had enjoyment of music of a very high character, for much of which she was indebted to her acquaintance with Mr Lodge, the distinguished amateur, by whom so many of her songs have been set to melodies of infinite beauty and feeling. At a somewhat later period she derived much delight from the talents of Mr James Zengheer Herrmann, from whom, for a time, she took

lessons, for the express purpose of studying, and fully understanding, the Stabat Mater of Pergolesi, which had taken an extraordinary hold of her imagination. This fine composition was first brought to her notice by Mr Lodge, to whom she thus expressed her appreciation of it:—"It is quite impossible for me to tell you the impression I have received from that most spiritual music of Pergolesi's, which really haunted me the whole night. How much I have to thank you for introducing me, in such a manner, to so new and glorious a world of musical thought and feeling!"—Memoir, p. 167-8.]

THE IMAGE IN LAVA.[366]

Thou thing of years departed!
What ages have gone by
Since here the mournful seal was set
By love and agony?
Temple and tower have moulder'd,
Empires from earth have pass'd,
And woman's heart hath left a trace
Those glories to outlast!
And childhood's fragile image,
Thus fearfully enshrined,
Survives the proud memorials rear'd
By conquerors of mankind.
Babe! wert thou brightly slumbering
Upon thy mother's breast
When suddenly the fiery tomb
Shut round each gentle guest?

A strange, dark fate o’ertook you,
Fair babe and loving heart!
One moment of a thousand pangs—
Yet better than to part!
Haply of that fond bosom
On ashes here impress’d,
Thou wert the only treasure, child!
Whereon a hope might rest.
Perchance all vainly lavish’d
Its other love had been,
And where it trusted, naught remain’d
But thorns on which to lean.
Far better, then, to perish,
Thy form within its clasp,
Than live and lose thee, precious one!
From that impassion’d grasp.
Oh! I could pass all relics
Left by the pomps of old,
To gaze on this rude monument
Cast in affection’s mould.
Love! human love! what art thou?
Thy print upon the dust
Outlives the cities of renown
Wherein the mighty trust!

Immortal, oh! immortal

Thou art, whose earthly glow

Hath given these ashes holiness—

It must, it must be so!

[366] The impression of a woman's form, with an infant clasped to the bosom, found at the uncovering of Herculaneum.

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

O lovely voices of the sky,

That hymn'd the Saviour's birth!

Are ye not singing still on high,

Ye that sang "Peace on earth?"

To us yet speak the strains

Wherewith, in days gone by,

Ye bless'd the Syrian swains,

O voices of the sky!

O clear and shining light! whose beams

That hour heaven's glory shed

Around the palms, and o'er the streams,

And on the shepherd's head;

Be near, through life and death,

As in that holiest night

Of Hope, and Joy, and Faith,

O clear and shining light!

O star! which led to Him whose love

Brought down man’s ransom free;
Where art thou?—Midst the hosts above
May we still gaze on thee?
In heaven thou art not set,
Thy rays earth might not dim—
Send them to guide us yet,
O star which led to Him!

A FATHER READING THE BIBLE.

’Twas early day, and sunlight stream’d
Soft through a quiet room,
That hush’d, but not forsaken seem’d,
Still, but with naught of gloom.
For there, serene in happy age
Whose hope is from above,
A father communed with the page
Of heaven’s recorded love.
Pure fell the beam, and meekly bright,
On his gray holy hair,
And touch’d the page with tenderest light,
As if its shrine were there!
But oh! that patriarch’s aspect shone
With something lovelier far—
A radiance all the spirit’s own,
Caught not from sun or star.

Some word of life e’en then had met

His calm, benignant eye;

Some ancient promise, breathing yet

Of immortality!

Some martyr’s prayer, wherein the glow

Of quenchless faith survives:

While every feature said—“I know

That my Redeemer lives!”

And silent stood his children by,

Hushing their very breath,

Before the solemn sanctity

Of thoughts o’ersweeping death.

Silent—yet did not each young breast

With love and reverence melt?

Oh! blest be those fair girls, and blest

That home where God is felt!

[This little poem, which, as its Author herself expressed in a letter to Mrs Joanna Baillie, was to her “a thing set apart,” as being the last of her productions ever read to her beloved mother, was written at the request of a young lady, who thus made known her wish “that Mrs Hemans would embody in poetry a picture that so warmed a daughter’s heart:”—

“Upon going into our dear father’s sitting-room this morning, my sister and I found him deeply engaged reading his Bible, and, being unwilling to interrupt such a holy occupation, we retired to the further end of the apartment, to gaze unobserved upon the serene picture. The bright morning sun was beaming on his venerable silver hair,

while his defective sight increased the earnestness with which he perused the blessed book. Our fancy led us to believe that some immortal thought was engaging his mind, for he raised his fine open brow to the light, and we felt we had never loved him more deeply. After an involuntary prayer had passed from our hearts, we whispered to each other, ‘Oh! if Mrs Hemans could only see our father at this moment, her glowing pen would detain the scene; for even as we gaze upon it, the bright gleam is vanishing.’

“December 9, 1826.”

THE MEETING OF THE BROTHERS.[367]

——“His early days

Were with him in his heart.” Wordsworth.

The voices of two forest boys,

In years when hearts entwine,

Had fill’d with childhood’s merry noise

A valley of the Rhine:

To rock and stream that sound was known,

Gladsome as hunter’s bugle-tone.

The sunny laughter of their eyes,

There had each vineyard seen;

Up every cliff whence eagles rise,

Their bounding step had been:

Ay! their bright youth a glory threw

O’er the wild place wherein they grew.

But this, as day-spring’s flush, was brief

As early bloom or dew;
Alas! ’tis but the wither’d leaf
That wears th’ enduring hue!
Those rocks along the Rhine’s fair shore
Might girdle in their world no more.
For now on manhood’s verge they stood,
And heard life’s thrilling call,
As if a silver clarion woo’d
To some high festival;
And parted as young brothers part,
With love in each unsullied heart.
They parted. Soon the paths divide
Wherein our steps were one,
Like river branches, far and wide,
Dissevering as they run;
And making strangers in their course,
Of waves that had the same bright source.
Met they no more? Once more they met,
Those kindred hearts and true!
’Twas on a field of death, where yet
The battle-thunders flew,
Though the fierce day was wellnigh past,
And the red sunset smiled its last.
But as the combat closed, they found

For tender thoughts a space,
And e’en upon that bloody ground
Room for one bright embrace,
And pour’d forth on each other’s neck
Such tears as warriors need not check.
The mists o’er boyhood’s memory spread
All melted with those tears,
The faces of the holy dead
Rose as in vanish’d years;
The Rhine, the Rhine, the ever-blest,
Lifted its voice in each full breast!
Oh! was it then a time to die?
It was!—that not in vain
The soul of childhood’s purity
And peace might turn again.
A ball swept forth—’twas guided well—
Heart unto heart those brothers fell!
Happy, yes, happy thus to go!
Bearing from earth away
Affections, gifted ne’er to know
A shadow—a decay—
A passing touch of change or chill,
A breath of aught whose breath can kill.
And they, between whose sever’d souls,

Once in close union tied,

A gulf is set, a current rolls

For ever to divide;

Well may they envy such a lot,

Whose hearts yearn on—but mingle not.

[367] For the tale on which this little poem is founded, see L’Hermite en Italie.

THE LAST WISH.

Go to the forest-shade,

Seek thou the well-known glade,

Where, heavy with sweet dew, the violets lie,

Gleaming through moss-tufts deep,

Like dark eyes fill’d with sleep,

And bathed in hues of summer’s midnight sky.

Bring me their buds, to shed

Around my dying bed

A breath of May and of the wood’s repose;

For I, in sooth, depart

With a reluctant heart,

That fain would linger where the bright sun glows.

Fain would I stay with thee!—

Alas! this may not be;

Yet bring me still the gifts of happier hours!

Go where the fountain’s breast

Catches, in glassy rest,

The dim green light that pours through laurel bowers.

I know how softly bright,

Steep’d in that tender light,

The water-lilies tremble there e’en now;

Go to the pure stream’s edge,

And from its whispering sedge

Bring me those flowers to cool my fever’d brow!

Then, as in Hope’s young days,

Track thou the antique maze

Of the rich garden to its grassy mound;

There is a lone white rose,

Shedding, in sudden snows,

Its faint leaves o’er the emerald turf around.

Well know’st thou that fair tree—

A murmur of the bee

Dwells ever in the honey’d lime above:

Bring me one pearly flower

Of all its clustering shower—

For on that spot we first reveal’d our love.

Gather one woodbine bough,

Then, from the lattice low

Of the bower’d cottage which I bade thee mark,

When by the hamlet last

Through dim wood-lanes we pass’d,

While dews were glancing to the glowworm’s spark.

Haste! to my pillow bear

Those fragrant things and fair;

My hand no more may bind them up at eve—

Yet shall their odour soft

One bright dream round me waft

Of life, youth, summer—all that I must leave!

And oh! if thou wouldst ask

Wherefore thy steps I task,

The grove, the stream, the hamlet vale to trace—

’Tis that some thought of me,

When I am gone, may be

The spirit bound to each familiar place.

I bid mine image dwell

(Oh! break not thou the spell!)

In the deep wood and by the fountain-side;

Thou must not, my beloved!

Rove where we two have roved,

Forgetting her that in her spring-time died!

FAIRY FAVOURS.

[This little poem was written in the winter of 1827. In writing to a friend shortly afterwards, Mrs Hemans herself thus alludes to it: “I am so glad you liked ‘Fairy Favours.’ It is, indeed, filled with my own true and ever-yearning feeling—that longing for more affection, more confidence, more entire interchange of thought,

than I am ever likely to meet with. However, I will not repine whilst I have friends who love me as you do."]

——Give me but

Something whereunto I may bind my heart;

Something to love, to rest upon, to clasp

Affection's tendrils round.

Wouldst thou wear the gift of immortal bloom?

Wouldst thou smile in scorn at the shadowy tomb?

Drink of this cup! it is richly fraught

With balm from the gardens of Genii brought;

Drink! and the spoiler shall pass thee by,

When the young all scatter'd like rose-leaves lie.

And would not the youth of my soul be gone,

If the loved had left me, one by one?

Take back the cup that may never bless,

The gift that would make me brotherless.

How should I live, with no kindred eye

To reflect mine immortality!

Wouldst thou have empire, by sign or spell,

Over the mighty in air that dwell?

Wouldst thou call the spirits of shore and steep

To fetch thee jewels from ocean's deep?

Wave but this rod, and a viewless band,

Slaves to thy will, shall around thee stand.

And would not fear, at my coming, then
Hush every voice in the homes of men?
Would not bright eyes in my presence quail?
Young cheeks with a nameless thrill turn pale?
No gift be mine that aside would turn
The human love for whose founts I yearn!
Wouldst thou then read through the hearts of those
Upon whose faith thou hast sought repose?
Wear this rich gem! it is charm'd to show
When a change comes over affection's glow:
Look on its flushing or fading hue,
And learn if the trusted be false or true!
Keep, keep the gem, that I still may trust,
Though my heart's wealth be but pour'd on dust!
Let not a doubt in my soul have place,
To dim the light of a loved one's face;
Leave to the earth its warm sunny smile—
That glory would pass could I look on guile!
Say, then, what boon of my power shall be,
Favour'd of spirits! pour'd forth on thee?
Thou scornest the treasures of wave and mine,
Thou wilt not drink of the cup divine,
Thou art fain with a mortal's lot to rest—
Answer me! how may I grace it best?

Oh! give me no sway o’er the powers unseen,

But a human heart where my own may lean!

A friend, one tender and faithful friend,

Whose thoughts’ free current with mine may blend;

And, leaving not either on earth alone,

Bid the bright, calm close of our lives be one!

ANNOTATION ON “RECORDS OF WOMAN,” &C.

[We feel certain that every admirer of the genius of Mrs Hemans will be obliged to us for here reprinting, almost at length, the admirable critique on her writings which appeared in the XCIXth Number of the Edinburgh Review. The acumen, the taste, and elegance of Lord Jeffrey, are evident throughout.

“Women, we fear, cannot do every thing, nor even every thing they attempt. But what they can do, they do, for the most part, excellently—and much more frequently with an absolute and perfect success, than the aspirants of our rougher and more ambitious sex. They cannot, we think, represent naturally the fierce and sullen passions of men—nor their coarser vices—nor even scenes of actual business or contention—and the mixed motives, and strong and faulty characters, by which affairs of moment are usually conducted on the great theatre of the world. For much of this they are disqualified by the delicacy of their training and habits, and the still more disabling delicacy which pervades their conceptions and feelings; and from much they are excluded by their actual inexperience of the realities they might wish to describe—by their substantial and incurable ignorance of business—of the way in which serious affairs are actually managed—and the true nature of the agents and impulses that give movement and direction to the stronger currents of ordinary life. Perhaps they are also incapable of long moral or political investigations, where many complex and indeterminate elements are to be taken into account, and a variety of opposite probabilities to be weighed before coming to a conclusion. They

are generally too impatient to get at the ultimate results, to go well through with such discussions; and either stop short at some imperfect view of the truth, or turn aside to repose in the shadow of some plausible error. This, however, we are persuaded, arises entirely from their being seldom set on such tedious tasks. Their proper and natural business is the practical regulations of private life, in all its bearings, affections, and concerns; and the questions with which they have to deal in that most important department, though often of the utmost difficulty and nicety, involve, for the most part, but few elements; and may generally be better described as delicate than intricate—requiring for their solution rather a quick tact and fine perception, than a patient or laborious examination. For the same reason, they rarely succeed in long works, even on subjects the best suited to their genius; their natural training rendering them equally averse to long doubt and long labour.

"For all other intellectual efforts, however, either of the understanding or the fancy, and requiring a thorough knowledge either of man's strength or his weakness, we apprehend them to be, in all respects, as well qualified as their brethren of the stronger sex; while, in their perceptions of grace, propriety, ridicule—their power of detecting artifice, hypocrisy, and affectation—the force and prompitude of their sympathy, and their capacity of noble and devoted attachment, and of the efforts and sacrifices it may require—they are, beyond all doubt, our superiors.

"Their business being, as we have said, with actual or social life, and the colours it receives from the conduct and dispositions of individuals, they unconsciously acquire, at a very early age, the finest perception of character and manners, and are almost as soon instinctively schooled in the deep and dangerous learning of feeling and emotion; while the very minuteness with which they make and meditate on these interesting observations, and the finer shades and variations of sentiment which are thus treasured and recorded, trains their whole faculties to a nicety and precision of operation, which often discloses itself to advantage in their application to studies of a very different character. When women, accordingly, have turned their

minds—as they have done but too seldom—to the exposition or arrangement of any branch of knowledge, they have commonly exhibited, we think, a more beautiful accuracy, and a more uniform and complete justness of thinking, than their less discriminating brethren. There is a finish and completeness about every thing they put out of their hands, which indicates not only an inherent taste for elegance and neatness, but a habit of nice observation, and singular exactness of judgment.

"It has been so little the fashion, at any time, to encourage women to write for publication, that it is more difficult than it should be to prove these truths by examples. Yet there are enough, within the reach of a very careless and superficial glance over the open field of literature, to enable us to explain, at least, and illustrate, if not entirely to verify, our assertions. No man, we will venture to say, could have written the letters of Madame de Sevigné, or the novels of Miss Austin, or the hymns and early lessons of Mrs Barbauld, or the conversations of Mrs Marcet. These performances, too, are not only essentially and intensely feminine, but they are, in our judgment, decidedly more perfect than any masculine productions with which they can be brought into comparison. They accomplish more completely all the ends at which they aim, and are worked out with a gracefulness and felicity of execution which excludes all idea of failure, and entirely satisfies the expectations they may have raised. We might easily have added to these instances. There are many parts of Miss Edgeworth's earlier stories, and of Miss Mitford's sketches and descriptions, and not a little of Mrs Opie's, that exhibit the same fine and penetrating spirit of observation, the same softness and delicacy of hand, and unerring truth of delineation, to which we have alluded as characterising the pure specimens of female art. The same distinguishing traits of a woman's spirit are visible through the grief and the piety of Lady Russell, and the gaiety, the spite, and the venturesomeness of Lady Mary Wortley. We have not as yet much female poetry; but there is a truly feminine tenderness, purity, and elegance, in the Psyche of Mrs Tighe, and in some of the smaller pieces of Lady Craven. On some of the works of

Madame de Staël—her Corinne especially—there is a still deeper stamp of the genius of her sex. Her pictures of its boundless devotedness—its depth and capacity of suffering—its high aspirations—its painful irritability, and inextinguishable thirst for emotion, are powerful specimens of that morbid anatomy of the heart, which no hand but that of a woman's was fine enough to have laid open, or skilful enough to have recommended to our sympathy and love. There is the same exquisite and inimitable delicacy, if not the same power, in many of the happier passages of Madame de Souza and Madame Cottin—to say nothing of the more lively and yet melancholy records of Madame de Staël, during her long penance in the Court of the Duchesse de Maine.

"But we are preluding too largely; and must come at once to the point, to which the very heading of this article has already admonished the most careless of our readers that we are tending. We think the poetry of Mrs Hemans a fine exemplification of female poetry; and we think it has much of the perfection which we have ventured to ascribe to the happier productions of female genius.

"It may not be the best imaginable poetry, and may not indicate the very highest or most commanding genius, but it embraces a great deal of that which gives the very best poetry its chief power of pleasing; and would strike us, perhaps, as more impassioned and exalted, if it were not regulated and harmonised by the most beautiful taste. It is infinitely sweet, elegant, and tender—touching, perhaps, and contemplative, rather than vehement and overpowering; and not only finished throughout with an exquisite delicacy, and even serenity of execution, but informed with a purity and loftiness of feeling, and a certain sober and humble tone of indulgence and piety, which must satisfy all judgments, and allay the apprehensions of those who are most afraid of the passionate exaggerations of poetry. The diction is always beautiful, harmonious, and free; and the themes, though of infinite variety, uniformly treated with a grace, originality, and judgment, which mark the same master-hand. These themes she has borrowed, with the peculiar interest and imagery

that belong to them, from the legends of different nations, and the most opposite states of society; and has contrived to retain much of what is interesting and peculiar in each of them, without adopting, along with it, any of the revolting or extravagant excesses which may characterise the taste or manners of the people or the age from which it has been derived. She has thus transfused into her German or Scandinavian legends, the imaginative and daring tone of the originals, without the mystical exaggerations of the one, or the painful fierceness and coarseness of the other—she has preserved the clearness and elegance of the French, without their coldness or affectation—and the tenderness and simplicity of the early Italians, without their diffuseness or languor. Though occasionally expatiating, somewhat fondly and at large, amongst the sweets of her own planting, there is, on the whole, a great condensation and brevity in most of her pieces, and, almost without exception, a most judicious and vigorous conclusion. The great merit, however, of her poetry, is undoubtedly in its tenderness and its beautiful imagery. The first requires no explanation; but we must be allowed to add a word as to the peculiar charm and character of the latter.

"It has always been our opinion, that the very essence of poetry, apart from the pathos, the wit, or the brilliant description which may be embodied in it, but may exist equally in prose, consists in the fine perception and vivid expression of that subtle and mysterious analogy which exists between the physical and the moral world—which makes outward things and qualities the natural types and emblems of inward gifts and emotions, and leads us to ascribe life and sentiment to every thing that interests us in the aspects of external nature. The feeling of this analogy, obscure and inexplicable as the theory of it may be, is so deep and universal in our nature, that it has stamped itself on the ordinary language of men of every kindred and speech: and that to such an extent, that one-half of the epithets by which we familiarly designate moral and physical qualities, are in reality so many metaphors, borrowed reciprocally, upon this analogy, from those opposite forms of existence.

The very familiarity, however, of the expression, in these instances, takes away its poetical effect—and indeed, in substance, its metaphorical character. The original sense of the word is entirely forgotten in the derivative one to which it has succeeded; and it requires some etymological recollection to convince us that it was originally nothing else than a typical or analogical illustration. Thus we talk of a penetrating understanding, and a furious blast—a weighty argument, and a gentle stream—without being at all aware that we are speaking in the language of poetry, and transferring qualities from one extremity of the sphere of being to another. In these cases, accordingly, the metaphor, by ceasing to be felt, in reality ceases to exist; and the analogy, being no longer intimated, of course can produce no effect. But whenever it is intimated, it does produce an effect; and that effect, we think, is poetry.

"It has substantially two functions, and operates in two directions. In the first place, it strikes vividly out, and flashes at once on our minds, the conception of an inward feeling or emotion, which it might otherwise have been difficult to convey, by the presentment of some bodily form or quality, which is instantly felt to be its true representative; and enables us to fix and comprehend it with a force and clearness not otherwise attainable: and, in the second place, it vivifies dead and inanimate matter with the attributes of living and sentient mind; and fills the whole visible universe around us with objects of interest and sympathy, by tinging them with the hues of life, and associating them with our own passions and affections. This magical operation the poet, too, performs, for the most part, in one of two ways—either by the direct agency of similes and metaphors, more or less condensed or developed, or by the mere graceful presentment of such visible objects on the scene of his passionate dialogues or adventures, as partake of the character of the emotion he wishes to excite, and thus form an appropriate accompaniment or preparation for its direct indulgence or display. The former of those methods has perhaps been most frequently employed, and certainly has most attracted attention.

But the latter, though less obtrusive, and perhaps less frequently resorted to of set purpose, is, we are inclined to think, the most natural and efficacious of the two, and is often adopted, we believe unconsciously, by poets of the highest order—the predominant emotion of their minds overflowing spontaneously on all the objects which present themselves to their fancy, and calling out from them, and colouring with its own hues, those that are naturally emblematic of its character, and in accordance with its general expression. It would be easy to show how habitually this is done by Shakspeare and Milton especially, and how much many of their finest passages are indebted, both for force and richness of effect, to this general and diffusive harmony of the external character of their scenes with the passions of their living agents—this harmonising and appropriate glow with which they kindle the whole surrounding atmosphere, and bring all that strikes the sense into unison with all that touches the heart.

"But it is more to our present purpose to say, that we think the fair writer before us is eminently a mistress of this poetical secret; and, in truth, it was solely for the purpose of illustrating this great charm and excellence in her imagery, that we have ventured upon this little dissertation. Almost all her poems are rich with fine descriptions, and studded over with images of visible beauty. But these are never idle ornaments: all her pomps have a meaning; and her flowers and her gems are arranged, as they are said to be among Eastern lovers, so as to speak the language of truth and of passion. This is peculiarly remarkable in some little pieces, which seem at first sight to be purely descriptive, but are soon found to tell upon the heart, with a deep moral and pathetic impression. But it is a truth nearly as conspicuous in the greater part of her productions, where we scarcely meet with any striking sentiment that is not ushered in by some such symphony of external nature, and scarcely a lovely picture that does not serve as a foreground to some deep or lofty emotion. We may illustrate this proposition, we think, by opening either of these little volumes at random, and taking what they first present to us. The following exquisite lines, for

example, on a Palm-tree in an English garden:—

‘It waved not through an Eastern sky,

Beside a fount of Araby,’ etc.

“The following, which the author has named, ‘Graves of a Household,’ has rather less of external scenery, but serves, like the others, to show how well the graphic and pathetic may be made to set off each other:—

‘They grew in beauty, side by side,

They fill’d one home with glee,’ etc.

“We have taken these pieces chiefly on account of their shortness; but it would not be fair to Mrs Hemans not to present our readers with one longer specimen, and to give a portion of her graceful narrative along with her pathetic descriptions. This story, of ‘The Lady of the Castle,’ is told, we think, with great force and sweetness:—.

‘Thou see’st her pictured with her shining hair,

(Famed were these tresses in Provençal song,)’ etc.

“The following sketch of ‘Joan of Arc in Rheims,’ is in a loftier and more ambitious vein, but sustained with equal grace, and as touching in its solemn tenderness. We can afford to extract but a part of it:—

——‘Within, the light,

Through the rich gloom of pictured windows flowing,’ etc.

“There are several strains of a more passionate character, especially in the two poetical epistles from Lady Arabella Stuart and Properzia Rossi. We shall venture to give a few lines from the former. The Lady Arabella was of royal descent; and having excited the fears of our pusillanimous James by a secret union with the Lord Seymour, was detained in a cruel captivity, by that heartless monarch, till the close of her life—during which she is supposed to have indited this letter to her lover from

her prison-house:—

‘My friend, my friend! where art thou? Day by day,

Gliding, like some dark mournful stream, away,’ etc.

“The following, though it has no very distinct object or moral, breathes, we think, the very spirit of poetry, in its bright and vague picturings, and is well entitled to the name it bears—‘An Hour of Romance:’

‘There were thick leaves above me and around,

And low sweet sighs, like those of childhood’s sleep,’ etc.

“There is great sweetness in the following portion of a little poem on a ‘Girl’s School:’—

‘Oh! joyous creatures! that will sink to rest

Lightly, when those pure orisons are done,’ etc.

“There is a fine and stately solemnity in these lines on ‘The Lost Pleiad:’

‘Hath the night lost a gem, the regal night?

She wears her crown of old magnificence,’ etc.

“The following on ‘The Dying Improvisatore,’ have a rich lyrical cadence, and glow of deep feeling:—

‘Never, oh! never more,

On thy Rome’s purple heaven mine eye shall dwell,’ etc.

“But we must stop here. There would be no end of our extracts, if we were to yield to the temptation of noting down every beautiful passage which arrests us in turning over the leaves of the volumes before us. We ought to recollect, too, that there are few to whom our pages are likely to come, who are not already familiar with their beauties; and, in fact, we have made these extracts, less with the presumptuous belief that we are introducing Mrs Hemans for the first time to the knowledge or

admiration of our readers, than from a desire of illustrating, by means of them, the singular felicity in the choice and employment of her imagery, of which we have already spoken so much at large;—that fine accord she has established between the world of sense and of soul—that delicate blending of our deep inward emotions with their splendid symbols and emblems without.”]

SONGS OF THE AFFECTIONS.

They tell but dreams—a lonely spirit’s dreams;
Yet ever through their fleeting imagery
Wanders a vein of melancholy love,
An aimless thought of home; as in the song
Of the caged skylark ye may deem there dwells
A passionate memory of blue skies and flowers.
And living streams—far off!

A SPIRIT’S RETURN.

“This is to be a mortal.
And seek the things beyond mortality!” Manfred.
Thy voice prevails—dear friend, my gentle friend!
This long-shut heart for thee shall be unseal’d;
And though thy soft eye mournfully will bend
Over the troubled stream, yet once reveal’d
Shall its freed waters flow; then rocks must close
For evermore, above their dark repose.
Come while the gorgeous mysteries of the sky

Fused in the crimson sea of sunset lie;
Come to the woods, where all strange wandering sound
Is mingled into harmony profound;
Where the leaves thrill with spirit, while the wind
Fills with a viewless being, unconfined,
The trembling reeds and fountains. Our own dell,
With its green dimness and Æolian breath,
Shall suit th' unveiling of dark records well—
Hear me in tenderness and silent faith!
Thou knew'st me not in life's fresh vernal morn—
I would thou hadst!—for then my heart on thine
Had pour'd a worthier love; now, all o'erworn
By its deep thirst for something too divine,
It hath but fitful music to bestow,
Echoes of harp-strings broken long ago.
Yet even in youth companionless I stood,
As a lone forest-bird midst ocean's foam;
For me the silver cords of brotherhood
Were early loosed; the voices from my home
Pass'd one by one, and melody and mirth
Left me a dreamer by a silent hearth.
But, with the fulness of a heart that burn'd
For the deep sympathies of mind, I turn'd
From that unanswering spot, and fondly sought

In all wild scenes with thrilling murmurs fraught,
In every still small voice and sound of power,
And flute-note of the wind through cave and bower,
A perilous delight!—for then first woke
My life’s lone passion, the mysterious quest
Of secret knowledge; and each tone that broke
From the wood-arches or the fountain’s breast,
Making my quick soul vibrate as a lyre,
But minister’d to that strange inborn fire.
Midst the bright silence of the mountain dells,
In noontide-hours or golden summer-eves,
My thoughts have burst forth as a gale that swells
Into a rushing blast, and from the leaves
Shakes out response. O thou rich world unseen!
Thou curtain’d realm of spirits!—thus my cry
Hath troubled air and silence—dost thou lie
Spread all around, yet by some filmy screen
Shut from us ever? The resounding woods,
Do their depths teem with marvels?—and the floods,
And the pure fountains, leading secret veins
Of quenchless melody through rock and hill,
Have they bright dwellers?—are their lone domains
Peopled with beauty, which may never still
Our weary thirst of soul? Cold, weak and cold,

Is earth’s vain language, piercing not one fold
Of our deep being! Oh, for gifts more high!
For a seer’s glance to rend mortality!
For a charm’d rod, to call from each dark shrine
The oracles divine!
I woke from those high fantasies, to know
My kindred with the earth—I woke to love.
O gentle friend! to love in doubt and woe,
Shutting the heart the worshipp’d name above,
Is to love deeply; and my spirit’s dower
Was a sad gift, a melancholy power
Of so adoring—with a buried care,
And with the o’erflowing of a voiceless prayer,
And with a deepening dream, that day by day,
In the still shadow of its lonely sway,
Folded me closer, till the world held naught
Save the one being to my centred thought.
There was no music but his voice to hear,
No joy but such as with his step drew near;
Light was but where he look’d—life where he moved:
Silently, fervently, thus, thus I loved.
Oh! but such love is fearful!—and I knew
Its gathering doom: the soul’s prophetic sight
Even then unfolded in my breast, and threw

O’er all things round a full, strong, vivid light,
Too sorrowfully clear!—an under-tone
Was given to Nature’s harp, for me alone
Whispering of grief. Of grief?—be strong, awake!
Hath not thy love been victory, O my soul?
Hath not its conflict won a voice to shake
Death’s fastnesses?—a magic to control
Worlds far removed?—from o’er the grave to thee
Love hath made answer; and thy tale should be
Sung like a lay of triumph! Now return
And take thy treasure from its bosom’d urn,
And lift it once to light!
In fear, in pain,
I said I loved—but yet a heavenly strain
Of sweetness floated down the tearful stream,
A joy flash’d through the trouble of my dream!
I knew myself beloved! We breathed no vow,
No mingling visions might our fate allow,
As unto happy hearts; but still and deep,
Like a rich jewel gleaming in a grave,
Like golden sand in some dark river’s wave,
So did my soul that costly knowledge keep,
So jealously!—a thing o’er which to shed,
When stars alone beheld the drooping head,

Lone tears! yet ofttimes burden'd with the excess
Of our strange nature's quivering happiness.
But, oh! sweet friend! we dream not of love's might
Till death has robed with soft and solemn light
The image we enshrine! Before that hour,
We have but glimpses of the o'ermastering power
Within us laid!—then doth the spirit-flame
With sword-like lightning rend its mortal frame;
The wings of that which pants to follow fast
Shake their clay-bars, as with a prison'd blast—
The sea is in our souls!
He died—he died
On whom my lone devotedness was cast!
I might not keep one vigil by his side,
I, whose wrung heart watch'd with him to the last!
I might not once his fainting head sustain,
Nor bathe his parch'd lips in the hour of pain,
Nor say to him, "Farewell!" He pass'd away—
Oh! had my love been there, its conquering sway
Had won him back from death! But thus removed,
Borne o'er th' abyss no sounding line hath proved,
Join'd with the unknown, the viewless—he became
Unto my thoughts another, yet the same—
Changed—hallow'd—glorified!—and his low grave

Seem’d a bright mournful altar—mine, all mine:
Brother and friend soon left me that sole shrine,
The birthright of the faithful!—their world’s wave
Soon swept them from its brink. Oh! deem thou not
That on the sad and consecrated spot
My soul grew weak! I tell thee that a power
There kindled heart and lip—a fiery shower
My words were made—a might was given to prayer,
And a strong grasp to passionate despair,
And a dread triumph! Know’st thou what I sought?
For what high boon my struggling spirit wrought?
—Communion with the dead! I sent a cry
Through the veil’d empires of eternity—
A voice to cleave them! By the mournful truth,
By the lost promise of my blighted youth.
By the strong chain a mighty love can bind
On the beloved, the spell of mind o’er mind;
By words, which in themselves are magic high,
Armed, and inspired, and wing’d with agony;
By tears, which comfort not, but burn, and seem
To bear the heart’s blood in their passion-stream;
I summon’d, I adjured!—with quicken’d sense,
With the keen vigil of a life intense.
I watch’d, an answer from the winds to wring,

I listen’d, if perchance the stream might bring
Token from worlds afar; I taught one sound
Unto a thousand echoes—one profound
Imploring accent to the tomb, the sky—
One prayer to night—“Awake! appear! reply!”
Hast thou been told that from the viewless bourne
The dark way never hath allow’d return?
That all, which tears can move, with life is fled—
That earthly love is powerless on the dead?
Believe it not!—There is a large lone star
Now burning o’er yon western hill afar,
And under its clear light there lies a spot
Which well might utter forth—Believe it not!
I sat beneath that planet. I had wept
My woe to stillness; every night-wind slept;
A hush was on the hills; the very streams
Went by like clouds, or noiseless founts in dreams;
And the dark tree o’ershadowing me that hour,
Stood motionless, even as the gray church-tower
Whereon I gazed unconsciously. There came
A low sound, like the tremor of a flame,
Or like the light quick shiver of a wing,
Flitting through twilight woods, across the air;
And I look’d up! Oh! for strong words to bring

Conviction o’er thy thought! Before me there,
He, the departed, stood! Ay, face to face,
So near, and yet how far! His form, his mien,
Gave to remembrance back each burning trace
Within:—Yet something awfully serene,
Pure, sculpture-like, on the pale brow, that wore
Of the once beating heart no token more;
And stillness on the lip—and o’er the hair
A gleam, that trembled through the breathless air;
And an unfathom’d calm, that seem’d to lie
In the grave sweetness of th’ illumined eye,
Told of the gulfs between our being set,
And, as that unsheath’d spirit-glance I met,
Made my soul faint:—with fear? Oh! not with fear!
With the sick feeling that in his far sphere
My love could be as nothing! But he spoke—
How shall I tell thee of the startling thrill
In that low voice, whose breezy tones could fill
My bosom’s infinite? O friend! I woke
Then first to heavenly life! Soft, solemn, clear,
Breathed the mysterious accents on mine ear,
Yet strangely seem’d as if the while they rose
From depths of distance, o’er the wide repose
Of slumbering waters wafted, or the dells

Of mountains, hollow with sweet echo-cells.
But, as they murmur'd on, the mortal chill
Pass'd from me, like a mist before the morn;
And, to that glorious intercourse upborne
By slow degrees, a calm, divinely still,
Possess'd my frame. I sought that lighted eye—
From its intense and searching purity
I drank in soul!—I question'd of the dead—
Of the hush'd, starry shores their footsteps tread,
And I was answer'd. If remembrance there
With dreamy whispers fill the immortal air;
If thought, here piled from many a jewel-heap,
Be treasure in that pensive land to keep;
If love, o'ersweeping change, and blight, and blast,
Find there the music of his home at last:
I ask'd, and I was answer'd. Full and high
Was that communion with eternity—
Too rich for aught so fleeting! Like a knell
Swept o'er my sense its closing words, "Farewell!
On earth we meet no more!" And all was gone—
The pale, bright settled brow—the thrilling tone,
The still and shining eye! and never more
May twilight gloom or midnight hush restore
That radiant guest! One full-fraught hour of heaven,

To earthly passion’s wild implorings given,
Was made my own—the ethereal fire hath shiver’d
The fragile censer in whose mould it quiver’d,
Brightly, consumingly! What now is left?
A faded world, of glory’s hues bereft—
A void, a chain! I dwell midst throngs, apart,
In the cold silence of the stranger’s heart;
A fix’d immortal shadow stands between
My spirit and life’s fast-receding scene;
A gift hath sever’d me from human ties,
A power is gone from all earth’s melodies,
Which never may return: their chords are broken,
The music of another land hath spoken—
No after-sound is sweet! This weary thirst!
And I have heard celestial fountains burst!
What here shall quench it?
Dost thou not rejoice,
When the spring sends forth an awakening voice
Through the young woods? Thou dost! And in that birth
Of early leaves, and flowers, and songs of mirth,
Thousands, like thee, find gladness! Couldst thou know
How every breeze then summons me to go!
How all the light of love and beauty shed
By those rich hours, but woos me to the dead!

The only beautiful that change no more—
The only loved!—the dwellers on the shore
Of spring fulfill'd! The dead! whom call we so?
They that breathe purer air, that feel, that know
Things wrapt from us! Away! within me pent,
That which is barr'd from its own element
Still droops or struggles! But the day will come—
Over the deep the free bird finds its home;
And the stream lingers midst the rocks, yet greets
The sea at last; and the wing'd flower-seed meets
A soil to rest in: shall not I, too, be,
My spirit-love! upborne to dwell with thee?
Yes! by the power whose conquering anguish stirr'd
The tomb, whose cry beyond the stars was heard,
Whose agony of triumph won thee back
Through the dim pass no mortal step may track,
Yet shall we meet! that glimpse of joy divine
Proved thee for ever and for ever mine!

["It was towards the close of the year 1829, that Mrs Hemans began to contemplate the publication of a new volume of poems. She had already made some preparation for this by contributing a series of lyrics under the title of "Songs of the Affections," to Blackwood's Magazine, together with the long ballad, "The Lady of Provence," which, for the glowing pictures it contains, the lofty yet tender affection to which it is consecrated, and the striking but never uncouth changes of its versification, must be considered as one of its author's finest chivalresque poems. She had still,

however, to produce some work of greater importance than these, suitable for the commencement of a volume. The subject at length fixed upon by her, as peculiar as it was almost dangerously fascinating, was suggested by a fireside conversation. It had long been a favourite amusement to wind up our evenings by telling ghost-stories. One night, however, the store of thrilling narratives was exhausted, and we began to talk of the feelings with which the presence and the speech of a visitant from another world, (if indeed a spirit could return,) would be most likely to impress the person so visited. After having exhausted all the common varieties of fear and terror in our speculations, Mrs Hemans said that she thought the predominant sensation at the time must partake of awe and rapture, and resemble the feelings of those who listen to a revelation, and at the same moment know themselves to be favoured above all men, and humbled before a being no longer sharing their own cares or passions; but that the person so visited must thenceforward and for ever be inevitably separated from this world and its concerns: for the soul which had once enjoyed such a strange and spiritual communion, which had been permitted to look, though but for a moment, beyond the mysterious gates of death, must be raised, by its experience, too high for common grief again to perplex, or common joy to enliven. She spoke long and eloquently upon this subject; and I have reason to believe that this conversation settled her wandering fancy, and gave rise to the principal poem in her next volume."—Chorley's Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 69-72.

Mr Chorley, in an after part of the same work, makes the following ingenious and suggestive remarks in reference to the same exquisite poem:—"The coming of the apparition is described with all the plainness and intensity of the most entire conviction, so difficult in these days for a writer to assume—might it not almost be said, so impossible to be assumed by those who have wholly and scornfully cast off those superstitions, so distasteful to reason, but so dear to fancy? It is impossible, in reading Sir Walter Scott's incomparable descriptions of supernatural

visitations,—the episode of the ‘Bodach Glas’ for instance, or ‘Wandering Willie’s tale,’ or the vigil of Master Holdenough in the Mirror Chamber, (though this is afterwards explained away,)—to imagine that the creator of these scenes did not in some measure believe in their possibility, though it might be but with a poetical faith. Were it otherwise, they must strike us as unnaturally as the recent French revivifications of the antique Catholic legends and mysteries—as merely grotesque old fables, adopted as studies by clever artists, for the sake of their glaring contrasts and effective situations.”—Memorials, p. 103.

In conclusion, we add the comparative estimate formed of this production by its author. It is from one of her letters to a friend. “Your opinion of the ‘Spirit’s Return’ has given me particular pleasure, because I prefer that poem to any thing else I have written; but if there be, as my friends say, a greater power in it than I had before evinced, I paid dearly for the discovery, and it almost made me tremble as I sounded ‘the deep places’ of my soul.”]

THE LADY OF PROVENCE.[368]

“Courage was cast about her like a dress
Of solemn comeliness,
A gather’d mind and an untroubled face
Did give her dangers grace.” Donne.

The war-note of the Saracen
Was on the winds of France;
It had still’d the harp of the Troubadour,
And the clash of the tourney’s lance.
The sounds of the sea, and the sounds of the night,
And the hollow echoes of charge and flight,

Were around Clotilde, as she knelt to pray
In a chapel where the mighty lay,
On the old Provençal shore.
Many a Chatillon beneath,
Unstirr'd by the ringing trumpet's breath,
His shroud of armour wore;
And the glimpses of moonlight that went and came
Through the clouds, like bursts of a dying flame,
Gave quivering life to the slumber pale
Of stern forms couch'd in their marble mail,
At rest on the tombs of the knightly race,
The silent throngs of that burial-place.
They were imaged there with helm and spear,
As leaders in many a bold career,
And haughty their stillness look'd and high,
Like a sleep whose dreams were of victory.
But meekly the voice of the lady rose
Through the trophies of their proud repose;
Meekly, yet fervently, calling down aid,
Under their banners of battle she pray'd;
With her pale, fair brow, and her eyes of love,
Upraised to the Virgin's portray'd above,
And her hair flung back, till it swept the grave
Of a Chatillon with its gleamy wave;

And her fragile frame, at every blast,
That full of the savage war-horn pass'd,
Trembling, as trembles a bird's quick heart,
When it vainly strives from its cage to part—
So knelt she in her woe;
A weeper alone with the tearless dead—
Oh! they reck not of tears o'er their quiet shed,
Or the dust had stirr'd below!
Hark! a swift step! she hath caught its tone,
Through the dash of the sea, through the wild wind's moan:
Is her lord return'd with his conquering bands?
No! a breathless vassal before her stands!
—"Hast thou been on the field?—Art thou come from the host?"
—"From the slaughter, lady!—All, all is lost!
Our banners are taken, our knights laid low,
Our spearmen chased by the Paynim foe;
And thy lord," his voice took a sadder sound—
"Thy lord—he is not on the bloody ground!
There are those who tell that the leader's plume
Was seen on the flight through th' gathering gloom."
—A change o'er her mien and her spirit pass'd:
She ruled the heart which had beat so fast,
She dash'd the tears from her kindling eye,
With a glance, as of sudden royalty:

The proud blood sprang in a fiery flow,
Quick o’er bosom, and cheek, and brow,
And her young voice rose till the peasant shook
At the thrilling tone and the falcon-look:
—“Dost thou stand by the tombs of the glorious dead,
And fear not to say that their son hath fled?
—Away! he is lying by lance and shield,—
Point me the path to his battle-field!”
The shadows of the forest
Are about the lady now;
She is hurrying through the midnight on,
Beneath the dark pine-bough.
There’s a murmur of omens in every leaf,
There’s a wail in the stream like the dirge of a chief;
The branches that rock to the tempest strife
Are groaning like things of troubled life;
The wind from the battle seems rushing by
With a funeral-march through the gloomy sky;
The pathway is rugged, and wild, and long,
But her frame in the daring of love is strong,
And her soul as on swelling seas upborne,
And girded all fearful things to scorn.
And fearful things were around her spread,
When she reach’d the field of the warrior-dead;

There lay the noble, the valiant, low—
Ay! but one word speaks of deeper woe;
There lay the loved—on each fallen head
Mothers vain blessings and tears had shed;
Sisters were watching in many a home
For the fetter’d footstep, no more to come;
Names in the prayer of that night were spoken,
Whose claim unto kindred prayer was broken;
And the fire was heap’d, and the bright wine pour’d,
For those, now needing nor hearth nor board;
Only a requiem, a shroud, a knell,
And oh! ye beloved of women, farewell!
Silently, with lips compress’d,
Pale hands clasp’d above her breast,
Stately brow of anguish high,
Deathlike cheek, but dauntless eye;
Silently, o’er that red plain,
Moved the lady midst the slain.
Sometimes it seem’d as a charging-cry,
Or the ringing tramp of a steed, came nigh;
Sometimes a blast of the Paynim horn,
Sudden and shrill from the mountains borne;
And her maidens trembled;—but on her ear
No meaning fell with those sounds of fear;

They had less of mastery to shake her now,
Than the quivering, erewhile, of an aspen bough.
She search’d into many an unclosed eye,
That look’d, without soul, to the starry sky;
She bow’d down o’er many a shatter’d breast,
She lifted up helmet and cloven crest—
Not there, not there he lay!
“Lead where the most hath been dared and done,
Where the heart of the battle hath bled,—lead on!”
And the vassal took the way.
He turn’d to a dark and lonely tree
That waved o’er a fountain red:
Oh! swiftest there had the currents free
From noble veins been shed.
Thickest there the spear-heads gleam’d,
And the scatter’d plumage stream’d,
And the broken shields were toss’d,
And the shiver’d lances cross’d,
And the mail-clad sleepers round
Made the harvest of that ground.
He was there! the leader amidst his band,
Where the faithful had made their last, vain stand;
He was there! but affection’s glance alone
The darkly-changed in that hour had known;

With the falchion yet in his cold hand grasp’d,
And a banner of France to his bosom clasp’d,
And the form that of conflict bore fearful trace,
And the face—oh! speak not of that dead face!
As it lay to answer love’s look no more,
Yet never so proudly loved before!
She quell’d in her soul the deep floods of woe,—
The time was not yet for their waves to flow;
She felt the full presence, the might of death,
Yet there came no sob with her struggling breath;
And a proud smile shone o’er her pale despair,
As she turn’d to his followers—“Your lord is there!
Look on him! know him by scarf and crest!—
Bear him away with his sires to rest!”
Another day, another night,
And the sailor on the deep
Hears the low chant of a funeral rite
From the lordly chapel sweep.
It comes with a broken and muffled tone,
As if that rite were in terror done;
Yet the song midst the seas hath a thrilling power,
And he knows ’tis a chieftain’s burial-hour.
Hurriedly, in fear and woe,
Through the aisle the mourners go;

With a hush’d and stealthy tread,
Bearing on the noble dead;
Sheath’d in armour of the field—
Only his wan face reveal’d,
Whence the still and solemn gleam
Doth a strange, sad contrast seem
To the anxious eyes of that pale band,
With torches wavering in every hand,
For they dread each moment the shout of war
And the burst of the Moslem scimitar.
There is no plumed head o’er the bier to bend,
No brother of battle, no princely friend:
No sound comes back, like the sounds of yore,
Unto sweeping swords from the marble floor;
By the red fountain the valiant lie,
The flower of Provençal chivalry;
But one free step, and one lofty heart,
Bear through that scene to the last their part.
She hath led the death-train of the brave
To the verge of his own ancestral grave;
She hath held o’er her spirit long rigid sway,
But the struggling passion must now have way.
In the cheek, half seen through her mourning veil,
By turns does the swift blood flush and fail;

The pride on the lip is lingering still,
But it shakes as a flame to the blast might thrill;
Anguish and triumph are met at strife,
Rending the cords of her frail young life;
And she sinks at last on her warrior's bier,
Lifting her voice, as if death might hear.
"I have won thy fame from the breath of wrong,
My soul hath risen for thy glory strong!
Now call me hence, by thy side to be,
The world thou leav'st has no place for me.
The light goes with thee, the joy, the worth—
Faithful and tender! Oh! call me forth!
Give me my home on thy noble heart,—
Well have we loved, let us both depart!"—
And pale on the breast of the dead she lay,
The living cheek to the cheek of clay;
The living cheek!—oh! it was not vain,
That strife of the spirit to rend its chain;
She is there at rest in her place of pride,
In death how queen-like—a glorious bride!
Joy for the freed one!—she might not stay
When the crown had fallen from her life away;
She might not linger—a weary thing,
A dove with no home for its broken wing,

Thrown on the harshness of alien skies,

That know not its own land’s melodies.

From the long heart-withering early gone;

She hath lived—she hath loved—her task is done!

[368] Founded on an incident in the early French history.

THE CORONATION OF INEZ DE CASTRO.

“Tableau, ou l’Amour fait alliance avec la Tombe; union redoutable de la mort et de la vie.”—Madame de Stael.

There was music on the midnight—

From a royal fane it roll’d;

And a mighty bell, each pause between,

Sternly and slowly toll’d.

Strange was their mingling in the sky,

It hush’d the listener’s breath;

For the music spoke of triumph high,

The lonely bell—of death!

There was hurrying through the midnight

A sound of many feet;

But they fell with a muffled fearfulness

Along the shadowy street:

And softer, fainter, grew their tread,

As it near’d the minster gate,

Whence a broad and solemn light was shed

From a scene of royal state.

Full glow’d the strong red radiance
In the centre of the nave,
Where the folds of a purple canopy
Swept down in many a wave,
Loading the marble pavement old
With a weight of gorgeous gloom;
For something lay midst their fretted gold,
Like a shadow of the tomb.
And within that rich pavilion,
High on a glittering throne,
A woman’s form sat silently,
Midst the glare of light alone.
Her jewell’d robes fell strangely still—
The drapery on her breast
Seem’d with no pulse beneath to thrill,
So stonelike was its rest!
But a peal of lordly music
Shook e’en the dust below,
When the burning gold of the diadem
Was set on her pallid brow!
Then died away that haughty sound;
And from the encircling band
Stepp’d prince and chief, midst the hush profound,
With homage to her hand.

Why pass'd a faint, cold shuddering
Over each martial frame,
As one by one, to touch that hand,
Noble and leader came?
Was not the settled aspect fair?
Did not a queenly grace,
Under the parted ebon hair,
Sit on the pale still face?
Death! death! canst thou be lovely
Unto the eye of life?
Is not each pulse of the quick high breast
With thy cold mien at strife?
—It was a strange and fearful sight,
The crown upon that head,
The glorious robes, and the blaze of light,
All gather'd round the Dead!
And beside her stood in silence
One with a brow as pale,
And white lips rigidly compress'd,
Lest the strong heart should fail:
King Pedro, with a jealous eye,
Watching the homage done
By the land's flower and chivalry
To her, his martyr'd one.

But on the face he look’d not,
Which once his star had been;
To every form his glance was turn’d,
Save of the breathless queen:
Though something, won from the grave’s embrace,
Of her beauty still was there,
Its hues were all of that shadowy place,
It was not for him to bear.
Alas! the crown, the sceptre,
The treasures of the earth,
And the priceless love that pour’d those gifts,
Alike of wasted worth!
The rites are closed:—bear back the dead
Unto the chamber deep!
Lay down again the royal head,
Dust with the dust to sleep!
There is music on the midnight—
A requiem sad and slow,
As the mourners through the sounding aisle
In dark procession go;
And the ring of state, and the starry crown,
And all the rich array,
Are borne to the house of silence down,
With her, that queen of clay!

And tearlessly and firmly
King Pedro led the train;
But his face was wrapt in his folding robe,
When they lower'd the dust again.
'Tis hush'd at last the tomb above—
Hymns die, and steps depart:
Who call'd thee strong as Death, O Love?
Mightier thou wast and art.

ITALIAN GIRL'S HYMN TO THE VIRGIN.

"O sanctissima, O purissima!
Dulcis Virgo Maria!
Mater amata, intemerata,
Ora, ora pro nobis." Sicilian Mariner's Hymn.

In the deep hour of dreams,
Through the dark woods, and past the moaning sea,
And by the starlight gleams,
Mother of sorrows! lo, I come to thee!
Unto thy shrine I bear
Night-blowing flowers, like my own heart, to lie
All, all unfolded there,
Beneath the meekness of thy pitying eye.
For thou, that once didst move
In thy still beauty through an early home—
Thou know'st the grief, the love,

The fear of woman’s soul;—to thee I come!
Many, and sad, and deep,
Were the thoughts folded in thy silent breast;
Thou, too, couldst watch and weep—
Hear, gentlest mother! hear a heart oppress’d!
There is a wandering bark
Bearing one from me o’er the restless wave:
Oh, let thy soft eye mark
His course! Be with him, holiest! guide and save!
My soul is on that way;
My thoughts are travellers o’er the waters dim;
Through the long weary day
I walk, o’ershadow’d by vain dreams of him.
Aid him—and me, too, aid!
Oh! ’tis not well, this earthly love’s excess!
On thy weak child is laid
The burden of too deep a tenderness.
Too much o’er him is pour’d
My being’s hope—scarce leaving heaven a part;
Too fearfully adored,
Oh! make not him the chastener of my heart!
I tremble with a sense
Of grief to be; I hear a warning low—
Sweet mother! call me hence!

This wild idolatry must end in woe.
The troubled joy of life,
Love’s lightning happiness, my soul hath known;
And, worn with feverish strife,
Would fold its wings: take back, take back thine own!
Hark! how the wind swept by!
The tempest’s voice comes rolling o’er the wave—
Hope of the sailor’s eye,
And maiden’s heart, blest mother! guide and save.

TO A DEPARTED SPIRIT.

From the bright stars, or from the viewless air,
Or from some world unreach’d by human thought,
Spirit, sweet spirit! if thy home be there,
And if thy visions with the past be fraught,
Answer me, answer me!
Have we not communed here of life and death?
Have we not said that love, such love as ours,
Was not to perish as a rose’s breath,
To melt away, like song from festal bowers?
Answer, oh! answer me!
Thine eye’s last light was mine—the soul that shone
Intensely, mournfully, through gathering haze—
Didst thou bear with thee to the shore unknown,
Naught of what lived in that long, earnest gaze?

Hear, hear and answer me!
Thy voice—its low, soft, fervent, farewell tone
Thrill’d through the tempest of the parting strife,
Like a faint breeze: oh! from that music flown,
Send back one sound, if love’s be quenchless life!
But once, oh! answer me!
In the still noontide, in the sunset’s hush,
In the dead hour of night, when thought grows deep,
When the heart’s phantoms from the darkness rush,
Fearfully beautiful, to strive with sleep—
Spirit! then answer me!
By the remembrance of our blended prayer;
By all our tears, whose mingling made them sweet;
By our last hope, the victor o’er despair;—
Speak! if our souls in deathless yearnings meet;
Answer me, answer me!
The grave is silent: and the far-off sky,
And the deep midnight—silent all, and lone!
Oh! if thy buried love make no reply,
What voice has earth? Hear, pity, speak, mine own!
Answer me, answer me!

THE CHAMOIS HUNTER’S LOVE.

“For all his wildness and proud fantasies,
I love him.” Croly.

Thy heart is in the upper world, where fleet the chamois bounds,
Thy heart is where the mountain-fir shakes to the torrent-sounds;
And where the snow-peaks gleam like stars, through the stillness of the air,
And where the Lauwine's[369] peal is heard—hunter! thy heart is there!
I know thou lov'st me well, dear friend! but better, better far,
Thou lovest that high and haughty life, with rocks and storms at war;
In the green, sunny vales with me, thy spirit would but pine—
And yet I will be thine, my love! and yet I will be thine!
And I will not seek to woo thee down from those thy native heights,
With the sweet song, our land's own song, of pastoral delights;
For thou must live as eagles live, thy path is not as mine—
And yet I will be thine, my love! and yet I will be thine.
And I will leave my blessed home, my father's joyous hearth,
With all the voices meeting there in tenderness and mirth,
With all the kind and laughing eyes, that in its firelight shine,
To sit forsaken in thy hut, yet know that thou art mine!
It is my youth, it is my bloom, it is my glad free heart,
That I cast away for thee—for thee, all reckless as thou art!
With tremblings and with vigils lone I bind myself to dwell—
Yet, yet I would not change that lot; oh no! I love too well!
A mournful thing is love which grows to one so wild as thou,
With that bright restlessness of eye, that tameless fire of brow!
Mournful!—but dearer far I call its mingled fear and pride,
And the trouble of its happiness, than aught on earth beside.

To listen for thy step in vain, to start at every breath,
To watch through long, long nights of storm, to sleep and dream of death,
To wake in doubt and loneliness—this doom I know is mine;
And yet I will be thine, my love! and yet I will be thine!
That I may greet thee from thine Alps, when thence thou com’st at last,
That I may hear thy thrilling voice tell o’er each danger past,
That I may kneel and pray for thee, and win thee aid divine—
For this I will be thine, my love! for this I will be thine!
[369] Lauwine, the avalanche.

THE INDIAN WITH HIS DEAD CHILD.[370]

In the silence of the midnight
I journey with my dead;
In the darkness of the forest boughs
A lonely path I tread.
But my heart is high and fearless,
As by mighty wings upborne;
The mountain eagle hath not plumes
So strong as love and scorn.
I have raised thee from the grave-sod,
By the white man’s path defiled;
On to th’ ancestral wilderness,
I bear thy dust, my child!
I have ask’d the ancient deserts
To give my dead a place,

Where the stately footsteps of the free
Alone should leave a trace.
And the tossing pines made answer—
“Go, bring us back thine own!”
And the streams from all the hunters’ hills,
Rush’d with an echoing tone.
Thou shalt rest by sounding waters
That yet untamed may roll;
The voices of that chainless host
With joy shall fill thy soul.
In the silence of the midnight
I journey with the dead,
Where the arrows of my father’s bow
Their falcon-flight have sped.
I have left the spoilers’ dwellings
For evermore behind;
Unmingled with their household sounds,
For me shall sweep the wind.
Alone, amidst their hearth-fires,
I watch’d my child’s decay,
Uncheer’d I saw the spirit-light
From his young eyes fade away.
When his head sank on my bosom,
When the death-sleep o’er him fell,

Was there one to say, “A friend is near?”

There was none!—pale race, farewell!

To the forests, to the cedars,

To the warrior and his bow,

Back, back!—I bore thee laughing thence,

I bear thee slumbering now!

I bear thee unto burial

With the mighty hunters gone;

I shall hear thee in the forest breeze,

Thou wilt speak of joy, my son!

In the silence of the midnight

I journey with the dead;

But my heart is strong, my step is fleet,

My fathers’ path I tread.

[370] An Indian, who had established himself in a township of Maine, feeling indignantly the want of sympathy evinced towards him by the white inhabitants, particularly on the death of his only child, gave up his farm soon afterwards, dug up the body of his child, and carried it with him two hundred miles through the forests to join the Canadian Indians.—See Tudor’s Letters on the Eastern States of America.

SONG OF EMIGRATION.

There was heard a song on the chiming sea.

A mingled breathing of grief and glee;

Man’s voice, unbroken by sighs, was there,

Filling with triumph the sunny air;
Of fresh, green lands, and of pastures new,
It sang, while the bark through the surges flew.
But ever and anon
A murmur of farewell
Told, by its plaintive tone,
That from woman’s lip it fell.
“Away, away o’er the foaming main!”
This was the free and the joyous strain,
“There are clearer skies than ours, afar,
We will shape our course by a brighter star;
There are plains whose verdure no foot hath press’d,
And whose wealth is all for the first brave guest.”
“But, alas! that we should go,”
Sang the farewell voices then,
“From the homesteads, warm and low,
By the brook and in the glen!”
“We will rear new homes under trees that glow
As if gems were the fruitage of every bough;
O’er our white walls we will train the vine,
And sit in its shadow at day’s decline;
And watch our herds, as they range at will
Through the green savannas, all bright and still.
“But woe for that sweet shade

Of the flowering orchard-trees,
Where first our children play’d
Midst the birds and honey-bees!
“All, all our own shall the forests be,
As to the bound of the roebuck free!
None shall say, ‘Hither, no further pass!’
We will track each step through the wavy grass
We will chase the elk in his speed and might,
And bring proud spoils to the hearth at night.”
“But, oh! the gray church-tower,
And the sound of Sabbath bell,
And the shelter’d garden-bower,
We have bid them all farewell!
“We will give the names of our fearless race
To each bright river whose course we trace;
We will leave our memory with mounts and floods,
And the path of our daring in boundless woods;
And our works unto many a lake’s green shore,
Where the Indians’ graves lay, alone, before.”
“But who shall teach the flowers,
Which our children loved, to dwell
In a soil that is not ours?
Home, home and friends, farewell!”

THE KING OF ARRAGON'S LAMENT FOR HIS BROTHER.[371]

"If I could see him, it were well with me!"

Coleridge's "Wallenstein."

There were lights and sounds of revelling in the vanquish'd city's halls,
As by night the feast of victory was held within its walls;
And the conquerors fill'd the wine-cup high, after years of bright blood shed;
But their lord, the King of Arragon, midst the triumph wail'd the dead.
He look'd down from the fortress won, on the tents and flowers below,
The moonlit sea, the torchlit streets—and a gloom came o'er his brow:
The voice of thousands floated up, with the horn and cymbal's tone;
But his heart, midst that proud music, felt more utterly alone.
And he cried, "Thou art mine, fair city! thou city of the sea!
But, oh! what portion of delight is mine at last in thee?—
I am lonely midst thy palaces, while the glad waves past them roll,
And the soft breath of thine orange bowers is mournful to my soul.
"My brother! O my brother! thou art gone—the true and brave,
And the haughty joy of victory hath died upon thy grave.
There are many round my throne to stand, and to march where I lead on;
There was one to love me in the world—my brother! thou art gone!
"In the desert, in the battle, in the ocean-tempest's wrath,
We stood together, side by side—one hope was ours, one path;
Thou hast wrapp'd me in thy soldier's cloak, thou hast fenced me with thy breast;
Thou hast watch'd beside my couch of pain—oh! bravest heart, and best!
"I see the festive lights around,—o'er a dull, sad world they shine;

I hear the voice of victory—my Pedro! where is thine?
The only voice in whose kind tone my spirit found reply!—
O brother! I have bought too dear this hollow pageantry!
“I have hosts and gallant fleets, to spread my glory and my sway,
And chiefs to lead them fearlessly,—my friend hath pass’d away!
For the kindly look, the word of cheer, my heart may thirst in vain;
And the face that was as light to mine—it cannot come again!
“I have made thy blood, thy faithful blood, the offering for a crown;
With love, which earth bestows not twice, I have purchased cold renown;
How often will my weary heart midst the sounds of triumph die,
When I think of thee, my brother! thou flower of chivalry!
“I am lonely—I am lonely! this rest is even as death!
Let me hear again the ringing spears, and the battle-trumpet’s breath;
Let me see the fiery charger foam, and the royal banner wave—
But where art thou, my brother? where? In thy low and early grave!”
And louder swell’d the songs of joy through that victorious night,
And faster flow’d the red wine forth, by the stars’ and torches’ light:
But low and deep, amidst the mirth, was heard the conqueror’s moan—
“My brother! O my brother! best and bravest! thou art gone!”

[371] The grief of Ferdinand, King of Arragon, for the loss of his brother, Don Pedro, who was killed during the siege of Naples, is affectingly described by the historian Mariana. It is also the subject of one of the old Spanish Ballads in Lockhart’s beautiful collection.

THE RETURN.

“Hast thou come with the heart of thy childhood back;
The free, the pure, the kind?”
—So murmur’d the trees in my homeward track,
As they play’d to the mountain wind.
“Hath thy soul been true to its early love”
Whisper’d my native streams;
“Hath the spirit nursed amidst hill and grove
Still revered its first high dreams?”
“Hast thou borne in thy bosom the holy prayer
Of the child in his parent-halls?”
Thus breathed a voice on the thrilling air,
From the old ancestral walls.
“Hast thou kept thy faith with the faithful dead,
Whose place of rest is nigh?
With the father’s blessing o’er thee shed,
With the mother’s trusting eye?”
Then my tears gush’d forth in sudden rain,
As I answer’d—“O ye shades!
I bring not my childhood’s heart again
To the freedom of your glades.
“I have turn’d from my first pure love aside,
O bright and happy streams!
Light after light, in my soul have died
The day-spring’s glorious dreams.

“And the holy prayer from my thoughts hath pass’d—
The prayer at my mother’s knee;
Darken’d and troubled I come at last,
Home of my boyish glee!
“But I bear from my childhood a gift of tears,
To soften and atone;
And oh! ye scenes of those bless’d years,
They shall make me again your own.”

THE VAUDOIS WIFE.[372]

“Clasp me a little longer, on the brink
Of fate! while I can feel thy dear caress;
And when this heart hath ceased to beat, oh! think—
And let it mitigate thy woe’s excess—
That thou hast been to me all tenderness,
And friend, to more than human friendship just.
Oh! by that retrospect of happiness,
And by the hopes of an immortal trust,
God shall assuage thy pangs, when I am laid in dust.”
Gertrude of Wyoming.
Thy voice is in mine ear, beloved!
Thy look is in my heart,
Thy bosom is my resting-place,
And yet I must depart.
Earth on my soul is strong—too strong—

Too precious is its chain,
All woven of thy love, dear friend,
Yet vain—though mighty—vain!
Thou see'st mine eye grow dim, beloved!
Thou see'st my life-blood flow—
Bow to the Chastener silently,
And calmly let me go!
A little while between our hearts
The shadowy gulf must lie,
Yet have we for their communing
Still, still Eternity!
Alas! thy tears are on my cheek,
My spirit they detain;
I know that from thine agony
Is wrung that burning rain.
Best! kindest! weep not—make the pang,
The bitter conflict less—
Oh! sad it is, and yet a joy,
To feel thy love's excess!
But calm thee! let the thought of death
A solemn peace restore!
The voice that must be silent soon
Would speak to thee once more,
That thou may'st bear its blessing on

Through years of after life—
A token of consoling love,
Even from this hour of strife.
I bless thee for the noble heart,
The tender and the true,
Where mine hath found the happiest rest
That e’er fond woman’s knew;
I bless thee, faithful friend and guide!
For my own, my treasured share
In the mournful secrets of thy soul,
In thy sorrow, in thy prayer.
I bless thee for kind looks and words
Shower’d on my path like dew,
For all the love in those deep eyes,
A gladness ever new!
For the voice which ne’er to mine replied
But in kindly tones of cheer;
For every spring of happiness
My soul hath tasted here!
I bless thee for the last rich boon
Won from affection tried—
The right to gaze on death with thee,
To perish by thy side!
And yet more for the glorious hope

Even to these moments given—
Did not thy spirit ever lift
The trust of mine to heaven?
Now be thou strong! Oh, knew we not
Our path must lead to this?
A shadow and a trembling still
Were mingled with our bliss!
We plighted our young hearts when storms
Were dark upon the sky,
In full, deep knowledge of their task
To suffer and to die!
Be strong! I leave the living voice
Of this, my martyr’d blood,
With the thousand echoes of the hills,
With the torrent’s foaming flood,—
A spirit midst the caves to dwell,
A token on the air,
To rouse the valiant from repose,
The fainting from despair.
Hear it, and bear thou on, my love!
Ay, joyously endure!
Our mountains must be altars yet,
Inviolate and pure;
There must our God be worshipp’d still

With the worship of the free:

Farewell!—there’s but one pang in death,

One only,—leaving thee!

[372] The wife of a Vaudois leader, in one of the attacks made on the Protestant hamlets, received a mortal wound, and died in her husband’s arms, exhorting him to courage and endurance.

THE GUERILLA LEADER’S VOW.

“All my pretty ones!

Did you say all?

...

Let us make medicine of this great revenge,

To cure this deadly grief!” Macbeth.

My battle-vow!—no minster walls

Gave back the burning word,

Nor cross nor shrine the low deep tone

Of smother’d vengeance heard:

But the ashes of a ruin’d home

Thrill’d as it sternly rose,

With the mingling voice of blood that shook

The midnight’s dark repose.

I breathed it not o’er kingly tombs,

But where my children lay,

And the startled vulture at my step

Soar’d from their precious clay.

I stood amidst my dead alone—
I kiss’d their lips—I pour’d,
In the strong silence of that hour,
My spirit on my sword.
The roof-tree fallen, the smouldering floor,
The blacken’d threshold-stone,
The bright hair torn, and soil’d with blood,
Whose fountain was my own—
These, and the everlasting hills,
Bore witness that wild night;
Before them rose th’ avenger’s soul
In crush’d affection’s might.
The stars, the searching stars of heaven,
With keen looks would upbraid
If from my heart the fiery vow,
Sear’d on it then, could fade.
They have no cause! Go, ask the streams
That by my paths have swept,
The red waves that unstain’d were born—
How hath my faith been kept?
And other eyes are on my soul,
That never, never close,
The sad, sweet glances of the lost—
They leave me no repose.

Haunting my night-watch midst the rocks,
And by the torrent's foam,
Through the dark-rolling mists they shine,
Full, full of love and home!
Alas! the mountain eagle's heart,
When wrong'd, may yet find rest;
Scorning the place made desolate,
He seeks another nest.
But I—your soft looks wake the thirst
That wins no quenching rain;
Ye drive me back, my beautiful!
To the stormy fight again.

THEKLA AT HER LOVER'S GRAVE.

"Thither where he lies buried!
That single spot is the whole world to me."
Coleridge's "Wallenstein."
Thy voice was in my soul! it call'd me on;
O my lost friend! thy voice was in my soul.
From the cold, faded world whence thou art gone,
To hear no more life's troubled billows roll,
I come! I come!
Now speak to me again! we loved so well—
We loved!—oh! still, I know that still we love!
I have left all things with thy dust to dwell,

Through these dim aisles in dreams of thee to rove:
This is my home!
Speak to me in the thrilling minster's gloom!
Speak! thou hast died, and sent me no farewell!
I will not shrink—oh! mighty is the tomb,
But one thing mightier, which it cannot quell—
This woman's heart!
This lone, full, fragile heart!—the strong alone
In love and grief—of both the burning shrine!
Thou, my soul's friend! with grief hast surely done,
But with the love which made thy spirit mine,
Say, couldst thou part?
I hear the rustling banners; and I hear
The wind's low singing through the fretted stone.
I hear not thee; and yet I feel thee near—
What is this bound that keeps thee from thine own?
Breathe it away.
I wait thee—I adjure thee! Hast thou known
How I have loved thee? couldst thou dream it all?
Am I not here, with night and death alone,
And fearing not? And hath my spirit's call
O'er thine no sway?
Thou canst not come! or thus I should not weep!
Thy love is deathless—but no longer free!

Soon would its wing triumphantly o’ersweep
The viewless barrier, if such power might be,
Soon, soon, and fast!
But I shall come to thee! our souls’ deep dreams,
Our young affections, have not gush’d in vain;
Soon in one tide shall blend the sever’d streams,
The worn heart break its bonds—and death and pain
Be with the past!

THE SISTERS OF SCIO.

“As are our hearts, our way is one,
And cannot be divided. Strong affection
Contends with all things, and o’ercometh all things.
Will I not live with thee? will I not cheer thee?
Wouldst thou be lonely then? wouldst thou be sad?”
Joanna Baillie.

“Sister, sweet sister! let me weep awhile!
Bear with me—give the sudden passion way!
Thoughts of our own lost home, our sunny isle,
Come as a wind that o’er a reed hath sway;
Till my heart dies with yearnings and sick fears—
Oh! could my life melt from me in these tears!
“Our father’s voice, our mother’s gentle eye,
Our brother’s bounding step—where are they, where?
Desolate, desolate our chambers lie!

—How hast thou won thy spirit from despair?
O’er mine swift shadows, gusts of terror, sweep:
I sink away—bear with me—let me weep!”
“Yes! weep my sister! weep, till from thy heart
The weight flow forth in tears; yet sink thou not.
I bind my sorrow to a lofty part,
For thee, my gentle one! our orphan lot
To meet in quenchless trust. My soul is strong:
Thou, too, wilt rise in holy might ere long.
“A breath of our free heavens and noble sires,
A memory of our old victorious dead—
These mantle me with power; and though their fires
In a frail censer briefly may be shed,
Yet shall they light us onward, side by side—
Have the wild birds, and have not we, a guide?
“Cheer, then, beloved! on whose meek brow is set
Our mother’s image—in whose voice a tone,
A faint, sweet sound of hers is lingering yet,
An echo of our childhood’s music gone.
Cheer thee! thy sister’s heart and faith are high:
Our path is one—with thee I live and die!”

[“But who are they that sit, mourning in their loveliness, beneath the shadow of a rock on the surf-beaten shore? The Sisters of Scio ... by Felicia Dorothea Hemans sung. Die—rather let them die in famine amongst sea-sand shells, than ere their

virgin charms be polluted in the harem of the barbarian who has desolated their native isle. Bowed down and half dead, beneath what a load of anguish hangs the orphan's dishevelled head on the knee of a sister, in pensive resignation, and holy faith triumphant over despair, as Felicia happily singeth!"—Professor Wilson, Blackwood's Magazine. Dec. 1829.]

BERNARDO DEL CARPIO.

[The celebrated Spanish champion, Bernardo del Carpio, having made many ineffectual efforts to procure the release of his father, the Count Saldana, who had been imprisoned by King Alfonso of Asturias, almost from the time of Bernardo's birth, at last took up arms in despair. The war which he maintained proved so destructive, that the men of the land gathered round the King, and united in demanding Saldana's liberty. Alfonso, accordingly, offered Bernardo immediate possession of his father's person in exchange for his castle of Carpio. Bernardo, without hesitation, gave up his stronghold, with all his captives; and being assured that his father was then on his way from prison, rode forth with the King to meet him. "And when he saw his father approaching, he exclaimed," says the ancient chronicle, "'Oh, God! is the Count of Saldana indeed coming?'—'Look where he is,' replied the cruel King; 'and now go and greet him whom you have so long desired to see.'" The remainder of the story will be found related in the ballad. The chronicles and romances leave us nearly in the dark as to Bernardo's history after this event.]

The warrior bow'd his crested head, and tamed his heart of fire,

And sued the haughty king to free his long-imprison'd sire:

"I bring thee here my fortress keys, I bring my captive train,

I pledge thee faith, my liege, my lord!—oh, break my father's chain!"

"Rise, rise! even now thy father comes, a ransom'd man this day:

Mount thy good horse, and thou and I will meet him on his way.”
Then lightly rose that loyal son, and bounded on his steed,
And urged, as if with lance in rest, the charger’s foamy speed.
And lo! from far, as on they press’d, there came a glittering band,
With one that midst them stately rode, as a leader in the land;
“Now haste, Bernardo, haste! for there, in very truth, is he,
The father whom thy faithful heart hath yearn’d so long to see.”
His dark eye flash’d, his proud breast heaved, his cheek’s blood came and went;
He reach’d that gray-hair’d chieftain’s side, and there, dismounting, bent;
A lowly knee to earth he bent, his father’s hand he took,—
What was there in its touch that all his fiery spirit shook?
That hand was cold—a frozen thing—it dropp’d from his like lead:
He look’d up to the face above—the face was of the dead!
A plume waved o’er the noble brow—the brow was fix’d and white;
He met at last his father’s eyes—but in them was no sight!
Up from the ground he sprang, and gazed, but who could paint that gaze?
They hush’d their very hearts, that saw its horror and amaze;
They might have chain’d him, as before that stony form he stood,
For the power was stricken from his arm, and from his lip the blood.
“Father!” at length he murmur’d low, and wept like childhood then—
Talk not of grief till thou hast seen the tears of warlike men!—
He thought on all his glorious hopes, and all his young renown,—
He flung the falchion from his side, and in the dust sat down.
Then covering with his steel-gloved hands his darkly mournful brow,

“No more, there is no more,” he said, “to lift the sword for now.—
My king is false, my hope betray’d, my father—oh! the worth,
The glory and the loveliness, are pass’d away from earth!
“I thought to stand where banners waved, my sire! beside thee yet—
I would that there our kindred blood on Spain’s free soil had met!
Thou wouldst have known my spirit then—for thee my fields were won,—
And thou hast perish’d in thy chains, as though thou hadst no son!”
Then, starting from the ground once more, he seized the monarch’s rein,
Amidst the pale and wilder’d looks of all the courtier train;
And with a fierce, o’ermastering grasp, the rearing war-horse led,
And sternly set them face to face—the king before the dead!—
“Came I not forth upon thy pledge, my father’s hand to kiss?—
Be still, and gaze thou on, false king! and tell me what is this!
The voice, the glance, the heart I sought—give answer, where are they?—
If thou wouldst clear thy perjured soul, send life through this cold clay!
“Into these glassy eyes put light——Be still! keep down thine ire,—
Bid these white lips a blessing speak—this earth is not my sire!
Give me back him for whom I strove, for whom my blood was shed,—
Thou canst not—and a king! His dust be mountains on thy head!”
He loosed the steed; his slack hand fell—upon the silent face
He cast one long, deep, troubled look—then turn’d from that sad place:
His hope was crush’d, his after-fate untold in martial strain,—
His banner led the spears no more amidst the hills of Spain.

THE TOMB OF MADAME LANGHANS.

“To a mysteriously consorted pair

This place is consecrate; to death and life,

And to the best affections that proceed

From this conjunction.” Wordsworth.

[At Hindlebank, near Berne, she is represented as bursting from the sepulchre, with her infant in her arms, at the sound of the last trumpet. An inscription on the tomb concludes thus:—“Here am I, O God! with the child whom thou hast given me.”]

How many hopes were borne upon thy bier,

O bride of stricken love! in anguish hither!

Like flowers, the first and fairest of the year,

Pluck’d on the bosom of the dead to wither;

Hopes from their source all holy, though of earth,

All brightly gathering round affection’s hearth.

Of mingled prayer they told; of Sabbath hours;

Of morn’s farewell, and evening’s blessed meeting;

Of childhood’s voice, amidst the household bowers;

And bounding step, and smile of joyous greeting;—

But thou, young mother! to thy gentle heart

Did’st take thy babe, and meekly so depart.

How many hopes have sprung in radiance hence!

Their trace yet lights the dust where thou art sleeping!

A solemn joy comes o’er me, and a sense

Of triumph, blent with nature’s gush of weeping,

As, kindling up the silent stone, I see

The glorious vision, caught by faith, of thee.

Slumberer! love calls thee, for the night is past;

Put on the immortal beauty of thy waking!

Captive! and hear'st thou not the trumpet's blast,

The long, victorious note, thy bondage breaking?

Thou hear'st, thou answer'st, "God of earth and heaven!

Here am I, with the child whom thou hast given!"

THE EXILE'S DIRGE.

"Fear no more the heat o' the sun,

Nor the furious winter's rages;

Thou thy worldly task hast done,

Home art gone and ta'en thy wages." Cymbeline.

["I attended a funeral where there were a number of the German settlers present. After I had performed such service as is usual on similar occasions, a most venerable-looking old man came forward, and asked me if I were willing that they should perform some of their peculiar rites. He opened a very ancient version of Luther's Hymns, and they all began to sing, in German, so loud that the woods echoed the strain. There was something affecting in the singing of these ancient people, carrying one of their brethren to his last home, and using the language and rites which they had brought with them over the sea from the Vaterland, a word which often occurred in this hymn. It was a long, slow, and mournful air, which they sung as they bore the body along: the words 'mein Gott,' 'mein Bruder,' and 'Vaterland,' died away in distant echoes amongst the woods. I shall long remember that funeral hymn."—Flint's Recollections of the Valley of the Mississippi.]

There went a dirge through the forest’s gloom.
—An exile was borne to a lonely tomb.
“Brother!” (so the chant was sung
In the slumberer’s native tongue,)
“Friend and brother! not for thee
Shall the sound of weeping be:
Long the exile’s woe hath lain
On thy life a withering chain;
Music from thine own blue streams
Wander’d through thy fever-dreams;
Voices from thy country’s vines
Met thee midst the alien pines;
And thy time heart died away,
And thy spirit would not stay.”
So swell’d the chant; and the deep wind’s moan,
Seem’d through the cedars to murmur—“Gone!”
“Brother! by the rolling Rhine
Stands the home that once was thine;
Brother! now thy dwelling lies
Where the Indian arrow flies!
He that bless’d thine infant head
Fills a distant greensward bed;
She that heard thy lisping prayer
Slumbers low beside him there;

They that earliest with thee play’d
Rest beneath their own oak-shade,
Far, far hence!—yet sea nor shore
Haply, brother! part ye more;
God hath call’d thee to that band
In the immortal Fatherland!”
“The Fatherland!”—with that sweet word
A burst of tears midst the strain was heard.
“Brother! were we there with thee
Rich would many a meeting be!
Many a broken garland bound,
Many a mourn’d and lost one found!
But our task is still to bear,
Still to breathe in changeful air;
Loved and bright things to resign,
As even now this dust of thine;
Yet to hope!—to hope in heaven,
Though flowers fall, and ties be riven—
Yet to pray! and wait the hand
Beckoning to the Fatherland!”
And the requiem died in the forest’s gloom;
They had reach’d the exile’s lonely tomb.

THE DREAMING CHILD.

“Alas! what kind of grief should thy years know?

Thy brow and cheek are smooth as waters be
When no breath troubles them.”
Beaumont and Fletcher.
And is there sadness in thy dreams, my boy?
What should the cloud be made of? Blessed child!
Thy spirit, borne upon a breeze of joy,
All day hath ranged through sunshine clear, yet mild:
And now thou tremblest!—wherefore?—in thy soul
There lies no past, no future. Thou hast heard
No sound of presage from the distance roll,
Thy heart bears traces of no arrowy word.
From thee no love hath gone; thy mind’s young eye
Hath look’d not into death’s, and thence become
A questioner of mute eternity,
A weary searcher for a viewless home:
Nor hath thy sense been quicken’d unto pain
By feverish watching for some step beloved:
Free are thy thoughts, an ever-changeful train,
Glancing like dewdrops, and as lightly moved.
Yet now, on billows of strange passion toss’d,
How art thou wilder’d in the cave of sleep!
My gentle child! midst what dim phantoms lost,
Thus in mysterious anguish dost thou weep?
Awake! they sadden me—those early tears,

First gushings of the strong, dark river’s flow,
That must o’ersweep thy soul with coming years,
Th’ unfathomable flood of human woe!
Awful to watch, even rolling through a dream,
Forcing wild spray-drops but from childhood’s eyes!
Wake, wake! as yet thy life’s transparent stream
Should wear the tinge of none but summer skies.
Come from the shadow of those realms unknown,
Where now thy thoughts dismay’d and darkling rove;
Come to the kindly region all thine own,
The home still bright for thee with guardian love.
Happy, fair child! that yet a mother’s voice
Can win thee back from visionary strife!—
Oh, shall my soul, thus waken’d to rejoice,
Start from the dreamlike wilderness of life?

THE CHARMED PICTURE.

“Oh! that those lips had language! Life hath pass’d
With me but roughly since I saw thee last.”
Cowper.

Thine eyes are charm’d—thine earnest eyes—
Thou image of the dead!
A spell within their sweetness lies,
A virtue thence is shed.
Oft in their meek blue light enshrined

A blessing seems to be,
And sometimes there my wayward mind
A still reproach can see:
And sometimes pity—soft and deep,
And quivering through a tear;
Even as if love in heaven could weep
For grief left drooping here.
And oh, my spirit needs that balm!
Needs it midst fitful mirth!
And in the night-hour's haunted calm,
And by the lonely hearth.
Look on me thus, when hollow praise
Hath made the weary pine
For one true tone of other days,
One glance of love like thine!
Look on me thus, when sudden glee
Bears my quick heart along,
On wings that struggle to be free,
As bursts of skylark song.
In vain, in vain!—too soon are felt
The wounds they cannot flee:
Better in childlike tears to melt,
Pouring my soul on thee!
Sweet face, that o'er my childhood shone!

Whence is thy power of change,
Thus ever shadowing back my own,
The rapid and the strange?
Whence are they charm’d—those earnest eyes?
—I know the mystery well!
In mine own trembling bosom lies
The spirit of the spell!
Of Memory, Conscience, Love, ’tis born—
Oh! change no longer, thou!
For ever be the blessing worn
On thy pure thoughtful brow!

PARTING WORDS.

“One struggle more, and I am free.”—Byron.

Leave me! oh, leave me! Unto all below
Thy presence binds me with too deep a spell;
Thou makest those mortal regions, whence I go,
Too mighty in their loveliness. Farewell,
That I may part in peace!
Leave me!—thy footstep, with its lightest sound,
The very shadow of thy waving hair,
Wakes in my soul a feeling too profound,
Too strong for aught that loves and dies, to bear—
Oh! bid the conflict cease!
I hear thy whisper—and the warm tears gush

Into mine eyes, the quick pulse thrills my heart;
Thou bid’st the peace, the reverential hush,
The still submission, from my thoughts depart:
Dear one! this must not be.
The past looks on me from thy mournful eye,
The beauty of our free and vernal days;
Our communings with sea, and hill, and sky—
Oh! take that bright world from my spirit’s gaze!
Thou art all earth to me!
Shut out the sunshine from my dying room,
The jasmine’s breath, the murmur of the bee;
Let not the joy of bird-notes pierce the gloom!
They speak of love, of summer, and of thee,
Too much—and death is here!
Doth our own spring make happy music now,
From the old beech-roots flashing into day?
Are the pure lilies imaged in its flow?
Alas! vain thoughts! that fondly thus can stray
From the dread hour so near!
If I could but draw courage from the light
Of thy clear eye, that ever shone to bless!
—Not now! ’twill not be now!—my aching sight,
Drinks from that fount a flood of tenderness,
Bearing all strength away!

Leave me!—thou com’st between my heart and Heaven;
I would be still, in voiceless prayer to die!—
Why must our souls thus love, and then be riven?
Return! thy parting wakes mine agony!
Oh, yet awhile delay!

THE MESSAGE TO THE DEAD.

Thou’rt passing hence, my brother!
O my earliest friend, farewell!
Thou’rt leaving me, without thy voice,
In a lonely home to dwell;
And from the hills, and from the hearth,
And from the household tree,
With thee departs the lingering mirth,
The brightness goes with thee.[373]
But thou, my friend, my brother!
Thou’rt speeding to the shore
Where the dirge-like tone of parting words
Shall smite the soul no more!
And thou wilt see our holy dead,
The lost on earth and main:
Into the sheaf of kindred hearts,
Thou wilt be bound again!
Tell, then, our friend of boyhood
That yet his name is heard

On the blue mountains, whence his youth
Pass’d like a swift, bright bird.
The light of his exulting brow,
The vision of his glee,
Are on me still—oh! still I trust
That smile again to see.
And tell our fair young sister,
The rose cut down in spring,
That yet my gushing soul is fill’d
With lays she loved to sing.
Her soft deep eyes look through my dreams,
Tender and sadly sweet;—
Tell her my heart within me burns
Once more that gaze to meet.
And tell our white-hair’d father,
That in the paths be trode,
The child he loved, the last on earth,
Yet walks and worships God.
Say, that his last fond blessing yet
Rests on my soul like dew,
And by its hallowing might I trust
Once more his face to view.
And tell our gentle mother,
That on her grave I pour

The sorrows of my spirit forth,

As on her breast of yore.

Happy thou art that soon, how soon,

Our good and bright will see!—

O brother, brother! may I dwell,

Ere long, with them and thee!

[373] “Messages from the living to the dead are not uncommon in the Highlands. The Gaels have such a ceaseless consciousness of immortality, that their departed friends are considered as merely absent for a time, and permitted to relieve the hours of separation by occasional intercourse with the objects of their earliest affections.”—See the Notes to Mrs Brunton’s Works.

THE TWO HOMES.

“Oh, if the soul immortal be,

Is not its love immortal too?”

See’st thou my home? ’Tis where yon woods are waving,

In their dark richness, to the summer air,

Where yon blue stream, a thousand flower-banks laving,

Leads down the hills a vein of light,—’tis there!

Midst those green wilds how many a fount lies gleaming,

Fringed with the violet, colour’d with the skies!

My boyhood’s haunt, through days of summer dreaming,

Under young leaves that shook with melodies.

My home! The spirit of its love is breathing

In every wind that blows across my track;

From its white walls the very tendrils wreathing,
Seem with soft links to draw the wanderer back.
There am I loved—there pray'd for—there my mother
Sits by the hearth with meekly thoughtful eye;
There my young sisters watch to greet their brother—
Soon their glad footsteps down the path will fly.
There, in sweet strains of kindred music blending,
All the home-voices meet at day's decline;
One are those tones, as from one heart ascending,
There laughs my home—sad stranger! where is thine?
Ask'st thou of mine? In solemn peace 'tis lying,
Far o'er the deserts and the tombs away;
'Tis where I, too, am loved with love undying,
And fond hearts wait my step—But where are they?
Ask where the earth's departed have their dwelling;
Ask of the clouds, the stars, the trackless air!
I know it not, yet trust the whisper, telling
My lonely heart that love unchanged is there.
And what is home, and where, but with the loving
Happy thou art, that so canst gaze on thine!
My spirit feels but, in its weary roving,
That with the dead, where'er they be, is mine,
Go to thy home, rejoicing son and brother!
Bear in fresh gladness to the household scene!

For me, too, watch the sister and the mother,

I well believe—but dark seas roll between.

THE SOLDIER'S DEATH-BED.

"Wie herrlich die Sonne dort untergeht! da ich noch ein Bube war—war's mein Lieblingsgedanke, wie sie zu leben, wie sie zu sterben!"

Die Rauber.

Like thee to die, thou sun!—My boyhood's dream

Was this; and now my spirit, with thy beam,

Ebbs from a field of victory!—yet the hour

Bears back upon me, with a torrent's power,

Nature's deep longings. Oh! for some kind eye

Wherein to meet love's fervent farewell gaze;

Some breast to pillow life's last agony,

Some voice, to speak of home and better days,

Beyond the pass of shadows! But I go,

I that have been so loved, go hence alone;

And ye, now gathering round my own hearth's glow,

Sweet friends! it may be that a softer tone,

Ev'n in this moment, with your laughing glee,

Mingles its cadence while you speak of me—

Of me, your soldier, midst the mountains lying,

On the red banner of his battles dying,

Far, far away! And oh! your parting prayer—

Will not his name be fondly murmur'd there?

It will!—A blessing on that holy hearth!
Though clouds are darkening to o’ercast its mirth.
Mother! I may not hear thy voice again;
Sisters! ye watch to greet my step in vain;
Young brother, fare thee well!—on each dear head
Blessing and love a thousandfold be shed,
My soul’s last earthly breathings! May your home
Smile for you ever!—May no winter come,
No world, between your hearts! May ev’n your tears,
For my sake, full of long-remember’d years,
Quicken the true affections that entwine
Your lives in one bright bond! I may not sleep
Amidst our fathers, where those tears might shine
Over my slumbers; yet your love will keep
My memory living in th’ ancestral halls,
Where shame hath never trod. The dark night falls,
And I depart. The brave are gone to rest,
The brothers of my combats, on the breast
Of the red field they reap’d:—their work is done—
Thou, too, art set!—farewell, farewell, thou sun!
The last lone watcher of the bloody sod
Offers a trusting spirit up to God.

THE IMAGE IN THE HEART.

TO * * *

“True, indeed, it is,

That they whom death has hidden from our sight,

Are worthiest of the mind’s regard; with them

The future cannot contradict the past—

Mortality’s last exercise and proof

Is undergone.”

Wordsworth.

“The love where death hath set his seal,

Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,

Nor falsehood disavow.”

Byron.

I call thee bless’d!—though now the voice be fled

Which to thy soul brought dayspring with its tone,

And o’er the gentle eyes though dust be spread,

Eyes that ne’er look’d on thine but light was thrown

Far through thy breast:

And though the music of thy life be broken,

Or changed in every chord since he is gone—

Feeling all this, even yet, by many a token,

O thou, the deeply, but the brightly lone!

I call thee bless’d!

For in thy heart there is a holy spot,

As mid the waste an isle of fount and palm,

For ever green!—the world’s breath enters not,

The passion-tempests may not break its calm:
’Tis thine, all thine!
Thither, in trust unbaffled, may’st thou turn
From bitter words, cold greetings, heartless eyes,
Quenching thy soul’s thirst at the hidden urn
That, fill’d with waters of sweet memory, lies
In its own shrine.
Thou hast thy home!—there is no power in change
To reach that temple of the past; no sway,
In all time brings of sudden, dark, or strange,
To sweep the still transparent peace away
From its hush’d air!
And oh! that glorious image of the dead!
Sole thing whereon a deathless love may rest,
And in deep faith and dreamy worship shed
Its high gifts fearlessly! I call thee bless’d,
If only there.
Bless’d, for the beautiful within thee dwelling
Never to fade!—a refuge from distrust,
A spring of purer life, still freshly welling,
To clothe the barrenness of earthly dust
With flowers divine.
And thou hast been beloved!—it is no dream,
No false mirage for thee, the fervent love,

The rainbow still unreach’d, the ideal gleam,
That ever seems before, beyond, above,
Far off to shine.
But thou, from all the daughters of the earth
Singled and mark’d, hast known its home and place;
And the high memory of its holy worth
To this our life a glory and a grace
For thee hath given.
And art thou not still fondly, truly loved?
Thou art!—the love his spirit bore away
Was not for death!—a treasure but removed,
A bright bird parted for a clearer day,—
Thine still in heaven!

THE LAND OF DREAMS.

“And dreams, in their development, have breath,
And tears and tortures, and the touch of joy;
They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
They make us what we were not—what they will,
And shake us with the vision that’s gone by.”
Byron.

O spirit-land! thou land of dreams!
A world thou art of mysterious gleams,
Of startling voices, and sounds at strife—
A world of the dead in the hues of life.

Like a wizard’s magic glass thou art,
When the wavy shadows float by, and part:
Visions of aspects, now loved, now strange,
Glimmering and mingling in ceaseless change.
Thou art like a city of the past,
With its gorgeous halls into fragments cast,
Amidst whose ruins there glide and play
Familiar forms of the world’s to-day.
Thou art like the depths where the seas have birth,
Rich with the wealth that is lost from earth,—
All the sere flowers of our days gone by,
And the buried gems in thy bosom lie.
Yes! thou art like those dim sea-caves,
A realm of treasures, a realm of graves!
And the shapes through thy mysteries that come and go,
Are of beauty and terror, of power and woe.
But for me, O thou picture-land of sleep!
Thou art all one world of affections deep,—
And wrung from my heart is each flushing dye
That sweeps o’er thy chambers of imagery.
And thy bowers are fair—even as Eden fair:
All the beloved of my soul are there!
The forms my spirit most pines to see,
The eyes whose love hath been life to me:

They are there—and each blessed voice I hear,
Kindly, and joyous, and silvery clear;
But under-tones are in each, that say,—
“It is but a dream; it will melt away!”
I walk with sweet friends in the sunset’s glow;
I listen to music of long ago;
But one thought, like an omen, breathes faint through the lay,—
“It is but a dream; it will melt away!”
I sit by the hearth of my early days;
All the home-faces are met by the blaze,—
And the eyes of the mother shine soft, yet say,
“It is but a dream; it will melt away!”
And away, like a flower’s passing breath, ’tis gone,
And I wake more sadly, more deeply lone!
Oh! a haunted heart is a weight to bear,—
Bright faces, kind voices! where are ye, where?
Shadow not forth, O thou land of dreams,
The past, as it fled by my own blue streams!
Make not my spirit within me burn
For the scenes and the hours that may ne’er return!
Call out from the future thy visions bright,
From the world o’er the grave, take thy solemn light,
And oh! with the loved whom no more I see,
Show me my home, as it yet may be!

As it yet may be in some purer sphere,

No cloud, no parting, no sleepless fear;

So my soul may bear on through the long, long day

Till I go where the beautiful melts not away!

WOMAN ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

“Where hath not woman stood

Strong in affection’s might? a reed, upborne

By an o’ermastering current!”

Gentle and lovely form!

What didst thou here,

When the fierce battle-storm

Bore down the spear?

Banner and shiver’d crest,

Beside thee strown,

Tell that amidst the best

Thy work was done!

Yet strangely, sadly fair,

O’er the wild scene,

Gleams, through its golden hair,

That brow serene.

Low lies the stately head,—

Earth-bound the free;

How gave those haughty dead

A place to thee?

Slumberer! thine early bier
Friends should have crown’d,
Many a flower and tear
Shedding around;—
Soft voices, clear and young,
Mingling their swell,
Should o’er thy dust have sung
Earth’s last farewell;—
Sisters, above the grave
Of thy repose,
Should have bid violets wave
With the white rose.
Now must the trumpet’s note,
Savage and shrill,
For requiem o’er thee float,
Thou fair and still!
And the swift charger sweep
In full career,
Trampling thy place of sleep—
Why cam’st thou here?
Why? Ask the true heart why
Woman hath been
Ever where brave men die,
Unshrinking seen?

Unto this harvest ground
Proud reapers came,—
Some, for that stirring sound,
A warrior’s name;
Some for the stormy play
And joy of strife;
And some to fling away
A weary life;—
But thou, pale sleeper! thou
With the slight frame,
And the rich locks, whose glow
Death cannot tame;
Only one thought, one power,
Thee could have led,
So, through the tempest’s hour,
To lift thy head!
Only the true, the strong,
The love, whose trust
Woman’s deep soul too long
Pours on the dust!

THE DESERTED HOUSE.

Gloom is upon thy lonely hearth,
O silent house! once fill’d with mirth;
Sorrow is in the breezy sound

Of thy tall poplars whispering round.
The shadow of departed hours
Hangs dim upon thine early flowers;
Ev’n in thy sunshine seems to brood
Something more deep than solitude.
Fair art thou, fair to a stranger’s gaze,
Mine own sweet home of other days!
My children’s birthplace!—yet for me
It is too much to look on thee.
Too much! for all about thee spread,
I feel the memory of the dead,
And almost linger for the feet
That never more my step shall meet.
The looks, the smiles, all vanish’d now,
Follow me where thy roses blow;
The echoes of kind household-words
Are with me midst thy singing-birds.
Till my heart dies, it dies away
In yearnings for what might not stay;
For love which ne’er deceived my trust,
For all which went with “dust to dust!”
What now is left me, but to raise
From thee, lorn spot! my spirit’s gaze,
To lift through tears my straining eye

Up to my Father’s house on high?
Oh! many are the mansions there,[374]
But not in one hath grief a share!
No haunting shade from things gone by
May there o’ersweep th’ unchanging sky.
And they are there, whose long-loved mien
In earthly home no more is seen;
Whose places, where they smiling sate,
Are left unto us desolate.
We miss them when the board is spread;
We miss them when the prayer is said;
Upon our dreams their dying eyes
In still and mournful fondness rise.
But they are where these longings vain
Trouble no more the heart and brain;
The sadness of this aching love
Dims not our Father’s house above.
Ye are at rest, and I in tears,[375]
Ye dwellers of immortal spheres!
Under the poplar boughs I stand,
And mourn the broken household band.
But, by your life of lowly faith,
And by your joyful hope in death,
Guide me, till on some brighter shore

The sever’d wreath is bound once more!

Holy ye were, and good, and true!

No change can cloud my thoughts of you;

Guide me, like you to live and die,

And reach my Father’s house on high!

[374] “In my father’s house there are many mansions.”—John, chap. xiv.

[375] From an ancient Hebrew dirge:

“Mourn for the mourner, and not for the dead.

For he is at rest, and we in tears!”

THE STRANGER’S HEART.

The stranger’s heart! Oh, wound it not!

A yearning anguish is its lot;

In the green shadow of thy tree,

The stranger finds no rest with thee.

Thou think’st the vine’s low rustling leaves

Glad music round thy household eaves;

To him that sound hath sorrow’s tone—

The stranger’s heart is with his own.

Thou think’st thy children’s laughing play

A lovely sight at fall of day;

Then are the stranger’s thoughts oppress’d—

His mother’s voice comes o’er his breast.

Thou think’st it sweet when friend with friend

Beneath one roof in prayer may blend;

Then doth the stranger’s eye grow dim—

Far, far are those who pray’d with him.

Thy hearth, thy home, thy vintage-land,

The voices of thy kindred band—

Oh! midst them all when bless’d thou art,

Deal gently with the stranger’s heart!

TO A REMEMBERED PICTURE.

[She was singularly impressed by the picture at Holyrood House, shown as that of Rizzio. The authenticity of this designation is more than doubtful; but hers was not a mind for question or cavil on points of this nature. The “local habitation and the name” were in themselves sufficient to awaken her fancy, and to satisfy her faith. As Rizzio’s portrait, it took its place in her imagination; and the train of deep and mournful thoughts it suggested, imbued, as was her wont, with the colouring of her own individual feelings, was embodied in the lines “To a Remembered Picture.”—Memoir, p. 197-8.]

They haunt me still—those calm, pure, holy eyes!

Their piercing sweetness wanders through my dreams;

The soul of music that within them lies

Comes o’er my soul in soft and sudden gleams:

Life—spirit-life—immortal and divine—

Is there; and yet how dark a death was thine!

Could it—oh! could it be—meek child of song?

The might of gentleness on that fair brow—

Was the celestial gift no shield from wrong?

Bore it no talisman to ward the blow?

Ask if a flower, upon the billows cast,
Might brave their strife—a flute-note hush the blast!
Are there not deep, sad oracles to read
In the clear stillness of that radiant face?
Yes! even like thee must gifted spirits bleed,
Thrown on a world, for heavenly things no place!
Bright, exiled birds that visit alien skies,
Pouring on storms their suppliant melodies.
And seeking ever some true, gentle breast,
Whereon their trembling plumage might repose,
And their free song-notes, from that happy nest,
Gush as a fount that forth from sunlight flows:
Vain dream!—the love whose precious balms might save
Still, still denied—they struggle to the grave.
Yet my heart shall not sink!—another doom,
Victim! hath set its promise in thine eye:
A light is there, too quenchless for the tomb,
Bright earnest of a nobler destiny;
Telling of answers, in some far-off sphere,
To the deep souls that find no echo here.

COME HOME!

Come home! There is a sorrowing breath
In music since ye went,
And the early flower-scents wander by

With mournful memories blent.

The tones in every household voice

Are grown more sad and deep;

And the sweet word—brother—wakes a wish

To turn aside and weep.

O ye beloved! come home! The hour

Of many a greeting tone,

The time of hearth-light and of song

Returns—and ye are gone!

And darkly, heavily it falls

On the forsaken room,

Burdening the heart with tenderness,

That deepens midst the gloom.

Where finds it you, ye wandering ones!

With all your boyhood’s glee

Untamed? Beneath the desert’s palm,

Or on the lone mid-sea?

By stormy hills of battles old?

Or where dark rivers foam?—

Oh! life is dim where ye are not—

Back, ye beloved, come home!

Come with the leaves and winds of spring,

And swift birds, o’er the main!

Our love is grown too sorrowful—

Bring us its youth again!

Bring the glad tones to music back!

Still, still your home is fair,

The spirit of your sunny life

Alone is wanting there!

THE FOUNTAIN OF OBLIVION.

“Implora pace!”[376]

One draught, kind fairy! from that fountain deep,

To lay the phantoms of a haunted breast;

And lone affections, which are griefs, to steep

In the cool honey-dews of dreamless rest;

And from the soul the lightning-marks to lave—

One draught of that sweet wave!

Yet, mortal! pause! Within thy mind is laid

Wealth, gather’d long and slowly; thoughts divine

Heap that full treasure-house; and thou hast made

The gems of many a spirit’s ocean thine;—

Shall the dark waters to oblivion bear

A pyramid so fair?

Pour from the fount! and let the draught efface

All the vain lore by memory’s pride amass’d,

So it but sweep along the torrent’s trace,

And fill the hollow channels of the past;

And from the bosom’s inmost folded leaf,

Rase the one master-grief!
Yet pause once more! All, all thy soul hath known,
Loved, felt, rejoiced in, from its grasp must fade!
Is there no voice whose kind, awakening tone
A sense of spring-time in thy heart hath made?
No eye whose glance thy daydreams would recall?
—Think—wouldst thou part with all?
Fill with forgetfulness! There are, there are
Voices whose music I have loved too well—
Eyes of deep gentleness; but they are far—
Never! oh never, in my home to dwell!
Take their soft looks from off my yearning soul—
Fill high th’ oblivious bowl!
Yet pause again! With memory wilt thou cast
The undying hope away, of memory born?
Hope of reunion, heart to heart at last,
No restless doubt between, no rankling thorn?
Wouldst thou erase all records of delight
That make such visions bright?
Fill with forgetfulness, fill high!——Yet stay—
Tis from the past we shadow forth the land
Where smiles, long lost, again shall light our way,
And the soul’s friends be wreath’d in one bright band.
Pour the sweet waters back on their own rill—

I must remember still.

For their sake, for the dead—whose image naught

May dim within the temple of my breast—

For their love's sake, which now no earthly thought

May shake or trouble with its own unrest,

Though the past haunt me as a spirit—yet

I ask not to forget.

[376] Quoted from a letter of Lord Byron's. He describes the impression produced upon him by some tombs at Bologna, bearing this simple inscription, and adds, "When I die, I could wish that some friend would see these words, and no other, placed above my grave,—'Implora pace!'"

["The 'Songs of the Affections' were published in the summer of 1830. This collection of lyrics has been, perhaps, less popular than other of Mrs Hemans's later works. It was hardly, indeed, to be expected that the principal poem, 'A Spirit's Return,' the origin and subject of which we have already described, should appeal to the feelings of so large a circle as had borne witness to the truth of the tales of actual life and sacrifice and suffering contained in the 'Records of Woman.' But there are parts of the poem solemnly and impressively powerful. The passages in which the speaker describes her youth—the disposition born with her to take pleasure in spiritual contemplations, and to listen to that voice in nature which speaks of another state of being beyond this visible world—prepare us most naturally for the agony of her desire—when he, in whom she had devotedly embarked all her earthly hopes and affections—

'——till the world held naught

Save the one being to my centred thought,'

was taken away from her for ever—to see him, if but for a moment—to speak with

him only once again!

As the crisis of interest approaches, the variety given by alternate rhymes to the heroic measure in which the tale was written, is wisely laid aside, and it proceeds with a resistless energy—

‘Hast thou been told, that from the viewless bourne

The dark way never hath allow’d return?’ etc.

“The conclusion of this fine poem is far from fulfilling the promise of its commencement; but it was impossible to imagine any events, or give utterance to any feelings, succeeding those so awful and exciting, which should not appear feeble, and vague, and exhausted. Mrs Hemans would sometimes regret that she had not bestowed more labour upon the close of her work: this, it is true, might have been more carefully elaborated, but, from the nature of her subject, I doubt the possibility of its having been substantially improved.”—Chorley’s Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 101-5.]

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE BRIDAL-DAY.

[On a monument in a Venetian church is an epitaph, recording that the remains beneath are those of a noble lady, who expired suddenly while standing as a bride at the altar.]

“We bear her home! we bear her home!

Over the murmuring salt sea’s foam;

One who has fled from the war of life,

From sorrow, pain, and the fever strife.”

Barry Cornwall.

Bride! upon thy marriage-day,
When thy gems in rich array
Made the glistening mirror seem
As a star-reflecting stream;
When the clustering pearls lay fair
Midst thy braids of sunny hair,
And the white veil o’er thee streaming,
Like a silvery halo gleaming,
Mellow’d all that pomp and light
Into something meekly bright;
Did the fluttering of thy breath
Speak of joy or woe beneath?
And the hue that went and came
O’er thy cheek, like wavering flame,
Flow’d that crimson from th’ unrest
Or the gladness of thy breast?
—Who shall tell us? From thy bower,
Brightly didst thou pass that hour;
With the many-glancing oar,
And the cheer along the shore,
And the wealth of summer flowers
On thy fair head cast in showers,
And the breath of song and flute,
And the clarion’s glad salute,

Swiftly o’er the Adrian tide
Wert thou borne in pomp, young bride!
Mirth and music, sun and sky,
Welcomed thee triumphantly!
Yet, perchance, a chastening thought
In some deeper spirit wrought,
Whispering, as untold it blent
With the sounds of merriment—
“From the home of childhood’s glee,
From the days of laughter free,
From the love of many years,
Thou art gone to cares and fears;
To another path and guide,
To a bosom yet untried!
Bright one! oh, there well may be
Trembling midst our joy for thee!”
Bride! when through the stately fane,
Circled with thy nuptial train,
Midst the banners hung on high
By thy warrior-ancestry,
Midst those mighty fathers dead,
In soft beauty thou wast led;
When before the shrine thy form
Quiver’d to some bosom-storm,

When, like harp-strings with a sigh
Breaking in mid-harmony,
On thy lip the murmurs low
Died with love’s unfinish’d vow;
When, like scatter’d rose-leaves, fled
From thy cheek each tint of red,
And the light forsook thine eye,
And thy head sunk heavily;
Was that drooping but th’ excess
Of thy spirit’s blessedness?
Or did some deep feeling’s might,
Folded in thy heart from sight,
With a sudden tempest-shower
Earthward bear thy life’s young flower?
—Who shall tell us? On thy tongue
Silence, and for ever, hung!
Never to thy lip and cheek
Rush’d again the crimson streak;
Never to thine eye return’d
That which there had beam’d and burn’d!
With the secret none might know,
With thy rapture or thy woe,
With thy marriage robe and wreath,
Thou wert fled, young bride of death!

One, one lightning moment there
Struck down triumph to despair;
Beauty, splendour, hope, and trust,
Into darkness—terror—dust!
There were sounds of weeping o’er thee,
Bride! as forth thy kindred bore thee,
Shrouded in thy gleaming veil,
Deaf to that wild funeral wail.
Yet perchance a chastening thought
In some deeper spirit wrought,
Whispering, while the stern, sad knell
On the air’s bright stillness fell—
“From the power of chill and change
Souls to sever and estrange;
From love’s wane—a death in life,
But to watch—a mortal strife;
From the secret fevers known
To the burning heart alone,
Thou art fled—afar, away—
Where these blights no more have sway!
Bright one! oh, there well may be
Comfort midst our tears for thee!”

THE ANCESTRAL SONG.

“A long war disturb’d your mind—

Here your perfect peace is sign’d;
’Tis now full tide ’twixt night and day—
End your moan, and come away!”
Webster, “Duchess of Malfy.”

There were faint sounds of weeping; fear and gloom
And midnight vigil in a stately room
Of Lusignan’s old halls. Rich odours there
Fill’d the proud chamber as with Indian air,
And soft light fell from lamps of silver, thrown
On jewels that with rainbow lustre shone
Over a gorgeous couch: there emeralds gleam’d,
And deeper crimson from the ruby stream’d
Than in the heart-leaf of the rose is set,
Hiding from sunshine. Many a carcanet
Starry with diamonds, many a burning chain
Of the red gold, sent forth a radiance vain,
And sad, and strange, the canopy beneath
Whose shadowy curtains, round a bed of death,
Hung drooping solemnly,—for there one lay.
Passing from all earth’s glories fast away,
Amidst those queenly treasures. They had been
Gifts of her lord, from far-off Paynim lands;
And for his sake, upon their orient sheen
She had gazed fondly, and with faint, cold hands

Had press’d them to her languid heart once more,
Melting in childlike tears. But this was o’er—
Love’s last, vain clinging unto life; and now
A mist of dreams was hovering o’er her brow;
Her eye was fix’d, her spirit seem’d removed,
Though not from earth, from all it knew or loved,
Far, far away! Her handmaids watch’d around,
In awe, that lent to each low midnight sound
A might, a mystery; and the quivering light
Of wind-sway’d lamps made spectral in their sight
The forms of buried beauty, sad, yet fair,
Gleaming along the walls with braided hair,
Long in the dust grown dim; and she, too, saw,
But with the spirit’s eye of raptured awe,
Those pictured shapes!—a bright, yet solemn train
Beckoning, they floated o’er her dreamy brain,
Clothed in diviner hues; while on her ear
Strange voices fell, which none besides might hear,
—Sweet, yet profoundly mournful, as the sigh
Of winds o’er harp-strings through a midnight sky;
And thus it seem’d, in that low, thrilling tone,
Th’ ancestral shadows call’d away their own.
Come, come, come!
Long thy fainting soul hath yearn’d

For the step that ne’er return’d;
Long thine anxious ear hath listen’d,
And thy watchful eye hath glisten’d
With the hope, whose parting strife
Shook the flower-leaves from thy life.
Now the heavy day is done:
Home awaits thee, wearied one!
Come, come, come!
From the quenchless thoughts that burn
In the seal’d heart’s lonely urn;
From the coil of memory’s chain
Wound about the throbbing brain;
From the veins of sorrow deep,
Winding through the world of sleep;
From the haunted halls and bowers,
Throng’d with ghosts of happier hours!
Come, come, come!
On our dim and distant shore
Aching love is felt no more!
We have loved with earth’s excess—
Past is now that weariness!
We have wept, that weep not now—
Calm is each once-beating brow!
We have known the dreamer’s woes—

All is now one bright repose!

Come, come, come!

Weary heart that long hast bled,

Languid spirit, drooping head,

Restless memory, vain regret,

Pining love whose light is set,

Come away!—’tis hush’d, ’tis well,

Where by shadowy founts we dwell,

All the fever-thirst is still’d,

All the air with peace is fill’d,—

Come, come, come!

And with her spirit wrapt in that wild lay.

She pass’d, as twilight melts to night, away!

THE MAGIC GLASS.

“How lived, how loved, how died they?”—Byron.

“The dead! the glorious dead!—and shall they rise?

Shall they look on thee with their proud bright eyes?

Thou ask’st a fearful spell!

Yet say, from shrine or dim sepulchral hall,

What kingly vision shall obey my call?

The deep grave knows it well!

“Wouldst thou behold earth’s conquerors? shall they pass

Before thee, flushing all the Magic Glass

With triumph’s long array?

Speak! and those dwellers of the marble urn,
Robed for the feast of victory, shall return,
As on their proudest day.
“Or wouldst thou look upon the lords of song?
O’er the dark mirror that immortal throng
Shall waft a solemn gleam!
Passing, with lighted eyes and radiant brows,
Under the foliage of green laurel-boughs,
But silent as a dream.”
“Not these, O mighty master!—though their lays
Be unto man’s free heart, and tears, and praise,
Hallow’d for evermore!
And not the buried conquerors—let them sleep,
And let the flowery earth her sabbaths keep
In joy, from shore to shore!
“But, if the narrow house may so be moved,
Call the bright shadows of the most beloved
Back from their couch of rest!
That I may learn if their meek eyes be fill’d
With peace, if human love hath ever still’d
The yearning human breast.”
“Away, fond youth!—an idle quest is thine:
These have no trophy, no memorial shrine;
I know not of their place!

Midst the dim valleys, with a secret flow,
Their lives, like shepherd reed-notes, faint and low,
Have pass’d, and left no trace.
“Haply, begirt with shadowy woods and hills,
And the wild sounds of melancholy rills,
Their covering turf may bloom;
But ne’er hath fame made relics of its flowers—
Never hath pilgrim sought their household bowers,
Or poet hail’d their tomb.”
“Adieu, then, master of the midnight spell!
Some voice, perchance, by those lone graves may tell
That which I pine to know!
I haste to seek, from woods and valleys deep,
Where the beloved are laid in lowly sleep,
Records of joy and woe.”

CORINNE AT THE CAPITOL.

“Les femmes doivent penser qu’il est dans cette carriere bien peu de sorte qui puissent valoir la plus obscure vie d’une femme aimee et d’une mere heureuse.” Madame de Stael.

Daughter of th’ Italian heaven!
Thou to whom its fires are given,
Joyously thy car hath roll’d
Where the conqueror’s pass’d of old;
And the festal sun that shone

O’er three hundred triumphs gone,[377]
Makes thy day of glory bright
With a shower of golden light.
Now thou tread’st th’ ascending road
Freedom’s foot so proudly trode;
While, from tombs of heroes borne,
From the dust of empire shorn,
Flowers upon thy graceful head,
Chaplets of all hues, are shed,
In a soft and rosy rain,
Touch’d with many a gem-like stain.
Thou hast gain’d the summit now!
Music hails thee from below;
Music, whose rich notes might stir
Ashes of the sepulchre;
Shaking with victorious notes
All the bright air as it floats.
Well may woman’s heart beat high
Unto that proud harmony!
Now afar it rolls—it dies—
And thy voice is heard to rise
With a low and lovely tone,
In its thrilling power alone;
And thy lyre’s deep silvery string,

Touch’d as by a breeze’s wing,
Murmurs tremblingly at first,
Ere the tide of rapture burst.
All the spirit of thy sky
Now hath lit thy large dark eye,
And thy cheek a flush hath caught
From the joy of kindled thought;
And the burning words of song
From thy lip flow fast and strong,
With a rushing stream’s delight
In the freedom of its might.
Radiant daughter of the sun!
Now thy living wreath is won.
Crown’d of Rome!—oh! art thou not
Happy in that glorious lot?—
Happier, happier far than thou,
With the laurel on thy brow,
She that makes the humblest hearth
Lovely but to one on earth!

[377] “The trebly hundred triumphs.”—Byron.

THE RUIN.

“Oh! ’tis the heart that magnifies this life,
Making a truth and beauty of its own.”
Wordsworth.

“Birth has gladden’d it: death has sanctified it.”

Guesses at Truth.

No dower of storied song is thine,
O desolate abode!
Forth from thy gates no glittering line
Of lance and spear hath flow’d.
Banners of knighthood have not flung
Proud drapery o’er thy walls,
Nor bugle-notes to battle rung
Through thy resounding halls.
Nor have rich bowers of pleasaunce here
By courtly hands been dress’d,
For princes, from the chase of deer,
Under green leaves to rest:
Only some rose, yet lingering bright
Beside thy casements lone,
Tells where the spirit of delight
Hath dwelt, and now is gone.
Yet minstrel-tale of harp and sword,
And sovereign beauty’s lot,
House of quench’d light and silent board!
For me thou needest not.
It is enough to know that here,
Where thoughtfully I stand,

Sorrow and love, and hope and fear,
Have link’d one kindred band.
Thou bindest me with mighty spells!
—A solemnising breath,
A presence all around thee dwells
Of human life and death.
I need but pluck yon garden flower
From where the wild weeds rise,
To wake, with strange and sudden power,
A thousand sympathies.
Thou hast heard many sounds, thou hearth!
Deserted now by all!
Voices at eve here met in mirth
Which eve may ne’er recall.
Youth’s buoyant step, and woman’s tone,
And childhood’s laughing glee,
And song and prayer, have all been known,
Hearth of the dead! to thee.
Thou hast heard blessings fondly pour’d
Upon the infant head,
As if in every fervent word
The living soul were shed;
Thou hast seen partings, such as bear
The bloom from life away—

Alas! for love in changeful air,
Where naught beloved can stay!
Here, by the restless bed of pain,
The vigil hath been kept,
Till sunrise, bright with hope in vain,
Burst forth on eyes that wept;
Here hath been felt the hush, the gloom,
The breathless influence, shed
Through the dim dwelling, from the room
Wherein reposed the dead.
The seat left void, the missing face,
Have here been mark’d and mourn’d,
And time hath fill’d the vacant place,
And gladness hath return’d;
Till from the narrowing household chain
The links dropp’d one by one!
And homewards hither, o’er the main,
Came the spring-birds alone.
Is there not cause, then—cause for thought,
Fix’d eye and lingering tread,
Where, with their thousand mysteries fraught,
Even lowliest hearts have bled?
Where, in its ever-haunting thirst
For draughts of purer day,

Man’s soul, with fitful strength, hath burst
The clouds that wrapt its way?
Holy to human nature seems
The long-forsaken spot—
To deep affections, tender dreams,
Hopes of a brighter lot!
Therefore in silent reverence here,
Hearth of the dead! I stand,
Where joy and sorrow, smile and tear,
Have link’d one household band.

THE MINSTER.

Speak low! The place is holy to the breath
Of awful harmonies, of whisper’d prayer:
Tread lightly!—for the sanctity of death
Broods with a voiceless influence on the air,
Stern, yet serene!—a reconciling spell,
Each troubled billow of the soul to quell.
Leave me to linger silently awhile!
—Not for the light that pours its fervid streams
Of rainbow glory down through arch and aisle,
Kindling old banners into haughty gleams,
Flushing proud shrines, or by some warrior’s tomb
Dying away in clouds of gorgeous gloom:
Not for rich music, though in triumph pealing,

Mighty as forest-sounds when winds are high;
Nor yet for torch, and cross, and stole, revealing
Through incense-mists their sainted pageantry,—
Though o’er the spirit each hath charm and power,
Yet not for these I ask one lingering hour.
But by strong sympathies, whose silver cord
Links me to mortal weal, my soul is bound;
Thoughts of the human hearts, that here have pour’d
Their anguish forth, are with me and around;
I look back on the pangs, the burning tears,
Known to these altars of a thousand years.
Send up a murmur from the dust, Remorse!
That here hast bow’d with ashes on thy head;
And thou, still battling with the tempest’s force—
Thou, whose bright spirit through all time has bled—
Speak, wounded Love! if penance here, or prayer,
Hath laid one haunting shadow of despair?
No voice, no breath!—of conflicts past, no trace!
—Doth not this hush give answer to my quest?
Surely the dread religion of the place
By every grief hath made its might confest!—
Oh! that within my heart I could but keep
Holy to heaven, a spot thus pure, and still, and deep!

THE SONG OF NIGHT.[378]

“O night,

And storm, and darkness! ye are wondrous strong,

Yet lovely in your strength!” Byron.

I come to thee, O Earth!

With all my gifts!—for every flower sweet dew

In bell, and urn, and chalice, to renew

The glory of its birth.

Not one which glimmering lies

Far amidst folding hills, or forest leaves,

But, through its veins of beauty, so receives

A spirit of fresh dyes.

I come with every star;

Making thy streams, that on their noon-day track,

Give but the moss, the reed, the lily back,

Mirrors of worlds afar.

I come with peace,—I shed

Sleep through thy wood-walks, o’er the honey-bee,

The lark’s triumphant voice, the fawn’s young glee,

The hyacinth’s meek head.

On my own heart I lay

The weary babe; and sealing with a breath

Its eyes of love, send fairy dreams, beneath

The shadowing lids to play.

I come with mightier things!

Who calls me silent? I have many tones—

The dark skies thrill with low mysterious moans,

Borne on my sweeping wings.

I waft them not alone

From the deep organ of the forest shades,

Or buried streams, unheard amidst their glades

Till the bright day is done;

But in the human breast

A thousand still small voices I awake,

Strong, in their sweetness, from the soul to shake

The mantle of its rest.

I bring them from the past:

From true hearts broken, gentle spirits torn,

From crush’d affections, which, though long o’erborne,

Make their tones heard at last.

I bring them from the tomb:

O’er the sad couch of late repentant love

They pass—though low as murmurs of a dove—

Like trumpets through the gloom.

I come with all my train:

Who calls me lonely? Hosts around me tread,

The intensely bright, the beautiful, the dead—

Phantoms of heart and brain!

Looks from departed eyes,

These are my lightnings!—fill’d with anguish vain,

Or tenderness too piercing to sustain,

They smite with agonies.

I, that with soft control,

Shut the dim violet, hush the woodland song,

I am the avenging one!—the arm’d, the strong—

The searcher of the soul!

I, that shower dewy light

Through slumbering leaves, bring storms—the tempest birth

Of memory, thought, remorse! Be holy, Earth!

I am the solemn Night![379]

[The howling of the wind at night had a very peculiar effect on her nerves—nothing in the least approaching to the sensation of fear, as few were more exempt from that class of alarms usually called nervous; but working upon her imagination to a degree which was always succeeded by a reaction of fatigue and exhaustion. The solemn influences thus mysteriously exercised are alluded to in many of her poems, particularly “The Song of the Night,” and “The Voice of the Wind.”—Memoir, p. 84.]

[378] Suggested by Thorwaldsen’s bas-relief of Night, represented under the form of a winged female figure, with two infants asleep in her arms.

[379] Pietro Mulier, called Il Tempesta, from his surprising pictures of storms. “His compositions,” says Lanzi, “inspire a real horror, presenting to our eyes death-devoted ships overtaken by tempests and darkness—fired by lightning—now rising on the mountain-wave, and again submerged in the abyss of ocean.” During an imprisonment of five years in Genoa, the pictures which he painted in his

dungeon were marked by additional power and gloom.—See Lanzi's History of Painting, translated by Roscoe.

THE STORM-PAINTER IN HIS DUNGEON.

"Where of ye, O tempests, is the goal?
Are ye like those that shake the human breast?
Or do ye find at length, like eagles, some high nest?"
Childe Harold.

Midnight, and silence deep!
—The air is fill'd with sleep,
With the stream's whisper, and the citron's breath;
The fix'd and solemn stars
Gleam through my dungeon-bars—
Wake, rushing winds! this breezeless calm is death!
Ye watch-fires of the skies!
The stillness of your eyes
Looks too intensely through my troubled soul;
I feel this weight of rest
An earth-load on my breast—
Wake, rushing winds, awake! and, dark clouds, roll!
I am your own, your child,
O ye, the fierce, and wild,
And kingly tempests!—will ye not arise?
Hear the bold spirit's voice,
That knows not to rejoice

But in the peal of your strong harmonies.

By sounding ocean-waves,

And dim Calabrian caves,

And flashing torrents, I have been your mate;

And with the rocking pines

Of the olden Apennines,

In your dark path stood fearless and elate.

Your lightnings were as rods,

That smote the deep abodes

Of thought and vision—and the stream gush'd free;

Come! that my soul again

May swell to burst its chain—

Bring me the music of the sweeping sea!

Within me dwells a flame,

An eagle caged and tame,

Till call'd forth by the harping of the blast;

Then is its triumph's hour,

It springs to sudden power,

As mounts the billow o'er the quivering mast.

Then, then, the canvass o'er,

With hurried hand I pour

The lava-waves and gusts of my own soul!

Kindling to fiery life

Dreams, worlds, of pictured strife—

Wake, rushing winds, awake! and, dark clouds, roll!
Wake, rise! the reed may bend,
The shivering leaf descend,
The forest branch give way before your might;
But I, your strong compeer,
Call, summon, wait you here—
Answer, my spirit!—answer, storm and night!

THE TWO VOICES.

Two solemn Voices, in a funeral strain,
Met as rich sunbeams and dark bursts of rain
Meet in the sky:
“Thou art gone hence!” one sang; “our light is flown,
Our beautiful, that seem’d too much our own
Ever to die!
“Thou art gone hence!—our joyous hills among
Never again to pour thy soul in song,
When spring-flowers rise!
Never the friend’s familiar step to meet
With loving laughter, and the welcome sweet
Of thy glad eyes.”
“Thou art gone home, gone home!” then, high and clear,
Warbled that other Voice. “Thou hast no tear
Again to shed;
Never to fold the robe o’er secret pain;

Never, weigh’d down by memory’s clouds, again
To bow thy head.
“Thou art gone home! O early crown’d and blest!
Where could the love of that deep heart find rest
With aught below?
Thou must have seen rich dream by dream decay,
All the bright rose-leaves drop from life away—
Thrice bless’d to go!”
Yet sigh’d again that breeze-like Voice of grief—
“Thou art gone hence! Alas, that aught so brief
So loved should be!
Thou takest our summer hence!—the flower, the tone,
The music of our being, all in one,
Depart with thee!
“Fair form, young spirit, morning vision fled!
Canst thou be of the dead, the awful dead—
The dark unknown?
Yes! to the dwelling where no footsteps fall,
Never again to light up hearth or hall,
Thy smile is gone!”
“Home, home!” once more the exulting Voice arose:
“Thou art gone home!—from that divine repose
Never to roam!
Never to say farewell, to weep in vain,

To read of change, in eyes beloved, again—
Thou art gone home!
“By the bright waters now thy lot is cast—
Joy for thee, happy friend! thy bark hath past
The rough sea’s foam!
Now the long yearnings of thy soul are still’d,
Home! home!—thy peace is won, thy heart is fill’d:
Thou art gone home!”

THE PARTING SHIP.

“A glittering ship, that hath the plain
Of ocean for her own domain.” Wordsworth.
Go, in thy glory, o’er the ancient sea,
Take with thee gentle winds thy sails to swell;
Sunshine and joy upon thy streamers be,
Fare thee well, bark! farewell!
Proudly the flashing billow thou hast cleft,
The breeze yet follows thee with cheer and song;
Who now of storms hath dream or memory left?
And yet the deep is strong!
But go thou triumphing, while still the smiles
Of summer tremble on the water’s breast!
Thou shalt be greeted by a thousand isles,
In lone, wild beauty drest.
To thee a welcome breathing o’er the tide,

The genii groves of Araby shall pour;
Waves that enfold the pearl shall bathe thy side,
On the old Indian shore.
Oft shall the shadow of the palm-tree lie
O’er glassy bays wherein thy sails are furl’d,
And its leaves whisper, as the winds sweep by,
Tales of the elder world.
Oft shall the burning stars of southern skies,
On the mid-ocean see thee chain’d in sleep,
A lonely home for human thoughts and ties,
Between the heavens and deep.
Blue seas that roll on gorgeous coasts renown’d,
By night shall sparkle where thy prow makes way;
Strange creatures of the abyss that none may sound,
In thy broad wake shall play.
From hills unknown, in mingled joy and fear,
Free dusky tribes shall pour, thy flag to mark;—
Blessings go with thee on thy lone career!
Hail, and farewell, thou bark!
A long farewell! Thou wilt not bring us back
All whom thou bearest far from home and hearth:
Many are thine, whose steps no more shall track
Their own sweet native earth!
Some wilt thou leave beneath the plantain’s shade,

Where through the foliage Indian suns look bright;
Some in the snows of wintry regions laid,
By the cold northern light.
And some, far down below the sounding wave.
Still shall they lie, though tempests o’er them sweep;
Never may flower be strewn above their grave,
Never may sister weep!
And thou, the billow’s queen—even thy proud form
On our glad sight no more perchance may swell;
Yet God alike is in the calm and storm—
Fare thee well, bark! farewell!

THE LAST TREE OF THE FOREST.

Whisper, thou Tree, thou lonely Tree,
One, where a thousand stood!
Well might proud tales be told by thee,
Last of the solemn wood!
Dwells there no voice amidst thy boughs,
With leaves yet darkly green?
Stillness is round, and noontide glows—
Tell us what thou hast seen.
“I have seen the forest-shadows lie
Where men now reap the corn;
I have seen the kingly chase rush by
Through the deep glades at morn.

“With the glance of many a gallant spear,
And the wave of many a plume,
And the bounding of a hundred deer,
It has lit the woodland’s gloom.
“I have seen the knight and his train ride past,
With his banner borne on high;
O’er all my leaves there was brightness cast
From his gleaming panoply.
“The pilgrim at my feet hath laid
His palm-branch midst the flowers,
And told his beads, and meekly pray’d,
Kneeling, at vesper hours.
“And the merry men of wild and glen,
In the green array they wore,
Have feasted here, with the red wine’s cheer,
And the hunter’s song of yore.
“And the minstrel, resting in my shade,
Hath made the forest ring
With the lordly tales of the high Crusade,
Once loved by chief and king.
“But now the noble forms are gone
That walk’d the earth of old;
The soft wind has a mournful tone,
The sunny light looks cold.

“There is no glory left us now
Like the glory with the dead;
I would that, where they slumber low,
My latest leaves were shed!”
O thou dark tree, thou lonely tree,
That mournest for the past!
A peasant’s home in thy shades I see,
Embower’d from ever blast.
A lovely and a mirthful sound
Of laughter meets mine ear;
For the poor man’s children sport around
On the turf, with naught to fear.
And roses lend that cabin’s wall
A happy summer-glow:
And the open door stands free to all,
For it recks not of a foe.
And the village bells are on the breeze
That stirs thy leaf, dark tree!
How can I mourn, midst things like these,
For the stormy past, with thee?

THE STREAMS.

“The power, the beauty, and the majesty,
That had their haunts in dale or piny mountain,
Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly spring,

Or chasms and watery depths; all those have vanish’d!
They live no longer in the faith of heaven,
But still the heart doth need a language!”
Coleridge’s “Wallenstein.”
Ye have been holy, O founts and floods!
Ye of the ancient and solemn woods,
Ye that are born of the valleys deep,
With the water-flowers on your breast asleep,
And ye that gush from the sounding caves—
Hallow’d have been your waves.
Hallow’d by man, in his dreams of old,
Unto beings not of this mortal mould—
Viewless and deathless, and wondrous powers,
Whose voice he heard in his lonely hours,
And sought with its fancied sound to still
The heart earth could not fill.
Therefore the flowers of bright summers gone,
O’er your sweet waters, ye streams! were thrown
Thousands of gifts to the sunny sea
Have ye swept along, in your wanderings free,
And thrill’d to the murmur of many a vow—
Where all is silent now!
Nor seems it strange that the heart hath been
So link’d in love to your margins green;

That still, though ruin’d, your early shrines
In beauty gleam through the southern vines,
And the ivied chapels of colder skies
On your wild banks arise.
For the loveliest scenes of the glowing earth
Are those, bright streams! where your springs have birth;
Whether their cavern’d murmur fills,
With a tone of plaint, the hollow hills,
Or the glad sweet laugh of their healthful flow
Is heard midst the hamlets low.
Or whether ye gladden the desert sands
With a joyous music to pilgrim bands,
And a flash from under some ancient rock,
Where a shepherd king might have watch’d his flock,
Where a few lone palm-trees lift their heads,
And a green acacia spreads.
Or whether, in bright old lands renown’d,
The laurels thrill to your first-born sound,
And the shadow, flung from the Grecian pine,
Sweeps with the breeze o’er your gleaming line,
And the tall reeds whisper to your waves,
Beside heroic graves.
Voices and lights of the lonely place!
By the freshest fern your path we trace;

By the brightest cups on the emerald moss,
Whose fairy goblets the turf emboss;
By the rainbow-glancing of insect wings,
In a thousand mazy rings.
There sucks the bee, for the richest flowers
Are all your own through the summer hours;
There the proud stag his fair image knows,
Traced on your glass beneath alder-boughs;
And the halcyon’s breast, like the skies array’d,
Gleams through the willow shade.
But the wild sweet tales that with elves and fays
Peopled your banks in the olden days,
And the memory left by departed love
To your antique founts in glen and grove,
And the glory born of the poet’s dreams—
These are your charms, bright streams!
Now is the time of your flowery rites
Gone by with its dances and young delights:
From your marble urns ye have burst away,
From your chapel-cells to the laughing day;
Low lie your altars with moss o’ergrown,
And the woods again are lone.
Yet holy still be your living springs,
Haunts of all gentle and gladsome things!

Holy, to converse with nature’s lore,
That gives the worn spirit its youth once more,
And to silent thoughts of the love divine,
Making the heart a shrine!

THE VOICE OF THE WIND.

“There is nothing in the wide world so like the voice of a spirit.”
Gray’s “Letters.”

Oh! many a voice is thine, thou Wind! full many a voice is thine!
From every scene thy wing o’ersweeps thou bear’st a sound and sign;
A minstrel wild and strong thou art, with a mastery all thine own,
And the spirit is thy harp, O Wind! that gives the answering tone.
Thou hast been across red fields of war, where shiver’d helmets lie,
And thou bringest thence the thrilling note of a clarion in the sky;
A rustling of proud banner-folds, a peal of stormy drums,—
All these are in thy music met, as when a leader comes.
Thou hast been o’er solitary seas, and from their wastes brought back
Each noise of waters that awoke in the mystery of thy track—
The chime of low, soft, southern waves on some green palmy shore,
The hollow roll of distant surge, the gather’d billows’ roar.
Thou art come from forests dark and deep, thou mighty rushing Wind!
And thou bearest all their unisons in one full swell combined;
The restless pines, the moaning stream, all hidden things and free,
Of the dim, old, sounding wilderness, have lent their soul to thee.
Thou art come from cities lighted up for the conqueror passing by,

Thou art wafting from their streets a sound of haughty revelry;
The rolling of triumphant wheels, the harpings in the hall,
The far-off shout of multitudes, are in thy rise and fall.
Thou art come from kingly tombs and shrines, from ancient minsters vast,
Through the dark aisles of a thousand years thy lonely wing hath pass'd;
Thou hast caught the anthem's billowy swell, the stately dirge's tone,
For a chief, with sword, and shield, and helm, to his place of slumber gone.
Thou art come from long-forsaken homes, wherein our young days flew,
Thou hast found sweet voices lingering there, the loved, the kind, the true;
Thou callest back those melodies, though now all changed and fled—
Be still, be still, and haunt us not with music from the dead!
Are all these notes in thee, wild wind? these many notes in thee?
Far in our own unfathom'd souls their fount must surely be;
Yes! buried, but unsleeping, there thought watches, memory lies,
From whose deep urn the tones are pour'd through all earth's harmonies.

THE VIGIL OF ARMS.[380]

A sounding step was heard by night
In a church where the mighty slept,
As a mail-clad youth, till morning's light,
Midst the tombs his vigil kept.
He walk'd in dreams of power and fame,
He lifted a proud bright eye,
For the hours were few that withheld his name
From the roll of chivalry.

Down the moonlit aisles he paced alone,
With a free and stately tread;
And the floor gave back a muffled tone
From the couches of the dead:
The silent many that round him lay,
The crown’d and helm’d that were,
The haughty chiefs of the war array—
Each in his sepulchre!
But no dim warning of time or fate
That youth’s flush’d hopes could chill;
He moved through the trophies of buried state
With each proud pulse throbbing still.
He heard, as the wind through the chancel sung,
A swell of the trumpet’s breath;
He look’d to the banners on high that hung,
And not to the dust beneath.
And a royal masque of splendour seem’d
Before him to unfold;
Through the solemn arches on it stream’d,
With many a gleam of gold:
There were crested knight, and gorgeous dame,
Glittering athwart the gloom;
And he follow’d, till his bold step came
To his warrior-father’s tomb.

But there the still and shadowy might
Of the monumental stone,
And the holy sleep of the soft lamp’s light
That over its quiet shone,
And the image of that sire, who died
In his noonday of renown—
These had a power unto which the pride
Of fiery life bow’d down.
And a spirit from his early years
Came back o’er his thoughts to move,
Till his eye was fill’d with memory’s tears,
And his heart with childhood’s love!
And he look’d, with a change in his softening glance,
To the armour o’er the grave—
For there they hung, the shield and lance,
And the gauntlet of the brave.
And the sword of many a field was there,
With its cross for the hour of need,
When the knight’s bold war-cry hath sunk in prayer,
And the spear is a broken reed!
—Hush! did a breeze through the armour sigh?
Did the folds of the banner shake?
Not so!—from the tomb’s dark mystery
There seem’d a voice to break!

He had heard that voice bid clarions blow,

He had caught its last blessing’s breath—

’Twas the same—but its awful sweetness now

Had an under-tone of death!

And it said—“The sword hath conquer’d kings,

And the spear through realms hath pass’d;

But the cross, alone, of all these things,

Might aid me at the last.”

[380] The candidate for knighthood was under the necessity of keeping watch, the night before his inauguration, in a church, and completely armed. This was called “the Vigil of Arms.”

THE HEART OF BRUCE IN MELROSE ABBEY.

Heart! that didst press forward still,[381]

Where the trumpet’s note rang shrill,

Where the knightly swords were crossing,

And the plumes like sea-foam tossing,

Leader of the charging spear,

Fiery heart!—and liest thou here?

May this narrow spot inurn

Aught that so could beat and burn?

Heart! that lovedst the clarion’s blast,

Silent is thy place at last;

Silent—save when early bird

Sings where once the mass was heard;

Silent—save when breeze’s moan
Comes through flowers or fretted stone;
And the wild-rose waves around thee,
And the long dark grass hath bound thee,
—Sleep’st thou, as the swain might sleep,
In his nameless valley deep?
No! brave heart! though cold and lone,
Kingly power is yet thine own!
Feel I not thy spirit brood
O’er the whispering solitude?
Lo! at one high thought of thee,
Fast they rise, the bold, the free,
Sweeping past thy lowly bed,
With a mute, yet stately tread.
Shedding their pale armour’s light
Forth upon the breathless night,
Bending every warlike plume
In the prayer o’er saintly tomb.
Is the noble Douglas nigh,
Arm’d to follow thee, or die?
Now, true heart! as thou wert wont
Pass thou to the peril’s front!
Where the banner-spear is gleaming,
And the battle’s red wine streaming,

Till the Paynim quail before thee,

Till the cross wave proudly o’er thee.

—Dreams! the falling of a leaf

Wins me from their splendours brief;

Dreams, yet bright ones! scorn them not,

Thou that seek’st the holy spot;

Nor, amidst its lone domain,

Call the faith in relics vain!

[381] “Now pass thou forward, as thou wert wont, and Douglas will follow thee or die!”—with these words Douglas threw from him the heart of Bruce into mid-battle against the Moors of Spain.

NATURE’S FAREWELL.

“The beautiful is vanish’d, and returns not.”

Coleridge’s “Wallenstein.”

A youth rode forth from his childhood’s home,

Through the crowded paths of the world to roam;

And the green leaves whisper’d, as he pass’d,

“Wherefore, thou dreamer! away so fast?

“Knew’st thou with what thou art parting here,

Long wouldst thou linger in doubt and fear;

Thy heart’s light laughter, thy sunny hours,

Thou hast left in our shades with the spring’s wild flowers.

“Under the arch by our mingling made,

Thou and thy brother have gaily play’d;

Ye may meet again where ye roved of yore,
But as ye have met there—oh! never more!”
On rode the youth—and the boughs among,
Thus the free birds o’er his pathway sung:
“Wherefore so fast unto life away?
Thou art leaving for ever thy joy in our lay!
“Thou may’st come to the summer woods again,
And thy heart have no echo to greet their strain;
Afar from the foliage its love will dwell—
A change must pass o’er thee. Farewell, farewell!”
On rode the youth—and the founts and streams
Thus mingled a voice with his joyous dreams:
“We have been thy playmates through many a day,
Wherefore thus leave us?—oh! yet delay!
“Listen but once to the sound of our mirth!
For thee ’tis a melody passing from earth;
Never again wilt thou find in its flow
The peace it could once on thy heart bestow.
“Thou wilt visit the scenes of thy childhood’s glee,
With the breath of the world on thy spirit free;
Passion and sorrow its depths will have stirr’d,
And the singing of waters be vainly heard.
“Thou wilt bear in our gladsome laugh no part—
What should it do for a burning heart?

Thou wilt bring to the banks of our freshest rill,
Thirst which no fountain on earth may still.
“Farewell!—when thou comest again to thine own,
Thou wilt miss from our music its loveliest tone;
Mournfully true is the tale we tell—
Yet on, fiery dreamer! farewell, farewell!”
And a something of gloom on his spirit weigh’d
As he caught the last sounds of his native shade;
But he knew not, till may a bright spell broke,
How deep were the oracles Nature spoke!

THE BEINGS OF THE MIND.

“The beings of the mind are not of clay;
Essentially immortal, they create
And multiply in us a brighter ray,
And more beloved existence; that which Fate
Prohibits to dull life, in this our state
Of mortal bondage.”
Byron.
Come to me with your triumphs and your woes,
Ye forms, to life by glorious poets brought!
I sit alone with flowers, and vernal boughs,
In the deep shadow of a voiceless thought;
Midst the glad music of the spring alone,
And sorrowful for visions that are gone!

Come to me! make your thrilling whispers heard,
Ye, by those masters of the soul endow’d
With life, and love, and many a burning word,
That bursts from grief like lightning from a cloud,
And smites the heart, till all its chords reply,
As leaves make answer when the wind sweeps by.
Come to me! visit my dim haunt!—the sound
Of hidden springs is in the grass beneath;
The stock-dove’s note above; and all around,
The poesy that with the violet’s breath
Floats through the air, in rich and sudden streams,
Mingling, like music, with the soul’s deep dreams.
Friends, friends!—for such to my lone heart ye are—
Unchanging ones! from whose immortal eyes
The glory melts not as a waning star,
And the sweet kindness never, never dies;
Bright children of the bard! o’er this green dell
Pass once again, and light it with your spell!
Imogen! fair Fidele! meekly blending,
In patient grief, “a smiling with a sigh;”[382]
And thou, Cordelia! faithful daughter, tending
That sire, an outcast to the bitter sky;
Thou of the soft low voice!—thou art not gone!
Still breathes for me its faint and flute-like tone.

And come to me!—sing me thy willow-strain,
Sweet Desdemona! with the sad surprise
In thy beseeching glance, where still, though vain,
Undimm’d, unquenchable affection lies;
Come, bowing thy young head to wrong and scorn,
As a frail hyacinth by showers o’erborne.
And thou, too, fair Ophelia! flowers are here,
That well might win thy footstep to the spot—
Pale cowslips, meet for maiden’s early bier,
And pansies for sad thoughts,[383]—but needed not!
Come with thy wreaths, and all the love and light
In that wild eye still tremulously bright.
And Juliet, vision of the south! enshrining
All gifts that unto its rich heaven belong;
The glow, the sweetness, in its rose combining,
The soul its nightingales pour forth in song,
Thou, making death deep joy!—but could’st thou die?
No!—thy young love hath immortality!
From earth’s bright faces fades the light of morn,
From earth’s glad voices drops the joyous tone;
But ye, the children of the soul, were born
Deathless, and for undying love alone;
And, O ye beautiful! ’tis well, how well,
In the soul’s world, with you, where change is not, to dwell!

[382]

“Nobly he yokes

A smiling with a sigh.”—Cymbeline.

[383]

“Here’s pansies for you—that’s for thoughts.”

Hamlet.

THE LYRE’S LAMENT.

“A large lyre hung in an opening of the rock, and gave forth its melancholy music to the wind—but no human being was to be seen.”

Salathiel.

A deep-toned lyre hung murmuring

To the wild wind of the sea;

“O melancholy wind,” it sigh’d,

“What would thy breath with me?

“Thou canst not wake the spirit

That in me slumbering lies,

Thou strikest not forth th’ electric fire

Of buried melodies.

“Wind of the dark sea-waters!

Thou dost but sweep my strings

Into wild gusts of mournfulness,

With the rushing of thy wings.

“But the spell—the gift—the lightning—

Within my frame conceal’d,

Must I moulder on the rock away
With their triumphs unreveal’d?
“I have power, high power, for freedom
To wake the burning soul!
I have sounds that through the ancient hills
Like a torrent’s voice might roll.
“I have pealing notes of victory
That might welcome kings from war;
I have rich, deep tones to send the wail
For a hero’s death afar.
“I have chords to lift the pæan
From the temple to the sky,
Full as the forest-unisons
When sweeping winds are high.
“And love—for love’s lone sorrow
I have accents that might swell
Through the summer air with the rose’s breath,
Or the violet’s faint farewell:
“Soft—spiritual—mournful—
Sighs in each note enshrined—
But who shall call that sweetness forth?
Thou can’st not, ocean-wind!
“I pass without my glory,
Forgotten I decay—

Where is the touch to give me life?

—Wild, fitful wind, away!”

So sigh’d the broken music

That in gladness had no part—

How like art thou, neglected Lyre!

To many a human heart!

TASSO’S CORONATION.[384]

A crown of victory! a triumphal song!

Oh! call some friend, upon whose pitying heart

The weary one may calmly sink to rest;

Let some kind voice, beside his lowly couch,

Pour the last prayer for mortal agony!

A trumpet’s note is in the sky, in the glorious Roman sky,

Whose dome hath rung, so many an age, to the voice of victory;

There is crowding to the Capitol, the imperial streets along,

For again a conqueror must be crown’d—a kingly child of song:

Yet his chariot lingers,

Yet around his home

Broods a shadow silently,

Midst the joy of Rome.

A thousand, thousand laurel boughs are waving wide and far,

To shed out their triumphal gleams around his rolling car;

A thousand haunts of olden gods have given their wealth of flowers,

To scatter o’er his path of fame bright hues in gem-like showers.

Peace! Within his chamber
Low the mighty lies—
With a cloud of dreams on his noble brow,
And a wandering in his eyes.
Sing, sing for him, the lord of song—for him, whose rushing strain
In mastery o’er the spirit sweeps, like a strong wind o’er the main!
Whose voice lives deep in burning hearts, for ever there to dwell,
As full-toned oracles are shrined in a temple’s holiest cell.
Yes! for him, the victor,
Sing—but low, sing low!
A soft, sad miserere chant
For a soul about to go!
The sun, the sun of Italy is pouring o’er his way,
Where the old three hundred triumphs moved, a flood of golden day;
Streaming through every haughty arch of the Cæsars’ past renown—
Bring forth, in that exulting light, the conqueror for his crown!
Shut the proud, bright sunshine
From the fading sight!
There needs no ray by the bed of death,
Save the holy taper’s light.
The wreath is twined—the way is strewn—the lordly train are met—
The streets are hung with coronals—why stays the minstrel yet?
Shout! as an army shouts in joy around a royal chief—
Bring forth the bard of chivalry, the bard of love and grief!

Silence! forth we bring him,

In his last array;

From love and grief the freed, the flown—

Way for the bier!—make way!

[384] Tasso died at Rome on the day before that appointed for his coronation in the Capitol.

THE BETTER LAND.

“I hear thee speak of the better land,

Thou call’st its children a happy band;

Mother! oh, where is that radiant shore?

Shall we not seek it, and weep no more?

Is it where the flower of the orange blows,

And the fire-flies glance through the myrtle boughs?”

—“Not there, not there, my child!”

“Is it where the feathery palm-trees rise,

And the date grows ripe under sunny skies?

Or midst the green islands of glittering seas,

Where fragrant forests perfume the breeze,

And strange, bright birds on their starry wings

Bear the rich hues of all glorious things?”

—“Not there, not there, my child!”

“Is it far away, in some region old,

Where the rivers wander o’er sands of gold?—

Where the burning rays of the ruby shine,

And the diamond lights up the secret mine,
And the pearl gleams forth from the coral strand?—
Is it there, sweet mother! that better land?”
—“Not there, not there, my child!
“Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy!
Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy;
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair—
Sorrow and death may not enter there:
Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom,
For beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb,
It is there, it is there, my child!”

THE WOUNDED EAGLE.

Eagle! this is not thy sphere!
Warrior-bird! what seek’st thou here?
Wherefore by the fountain’s brink
Doth thy royal pinion sink?
Wherefore on the violet’s bed
Lay’st thou thus thy drooping head?
Thou, that hold’st the blast in scorn,
Thou, that wear’st the wings of morn!
Eagle! wilt thou not arise?
Look upon thine own bright skies!
Lift thy glance! the fiery sun
There his pride of place hath won!

And the mountain lark is there,
And sweet sound hath fill’d the air;
Hast thou left that realm on high?
—Oh! it can be but to die!
Eagle! eagle! thou hast bow’d
From thine empire o’er the cloud!
Thou, that hadst etherial birth,
Thou hast stoop’d too near the earth,
And the hunter’s shaft hath found thee,
And the toils of death have bound thee!
—Wherefore didst thou leave thy place,
Creature of a kingly race?
Wert thou weary of thy throne?
Was thy sky’s dominion lone?
Chill and lone it well might be,
Yet that mighty wing was free!
Now the chain is o’er it cast,
From thy heart the blood flows fast,
—Woe for gifted souls and high!
Is not such their destiny?

SADNESS AND MIRTH.

“Nay, these wild fits of uncurb’d laughter
Athwart the gloomy tenor of your mind,
As it has lower’d of late, so keenly cast,

Unsuited seem, and strange.

Oh, nothing strange!

Did’st thou ne’er see the swallow’s veering breast,

Winging the air beneath some murky cloud,

In the sunn’d glimpses of a troubled day,

Shiver in silvery brightness?

Or boatman’s oar, as vivid lightning, flash

In the faint gleam, that, like a spirit’s path,

Tracks the still waters of some sullen lake?

O gentle friend!

Chide not her mirth, who yesterday was sad,

And may be so to-morrow!” Joanna Baillie.

Ye met at the stately feasts of old,

Where the bright wine foam’d over sculptured gold;

Sadness and Mirth! ye were mingled there

With the sound of the lyre in the scented air;

As the cloud and the lightning are blent on high,

Ye mix’d in the gorgeous revelry.

For there hung o’er those banquets of yore a gloom,

A thought and a shadow of the tomb;

It gave to the flute-notes an under-tone,

To the rose a colouring not its own,

To the breath of the myrtle a mournful power—

Sadness and Mirth! ye had each your dower!

Ye met when the triumph swept proudly by,
With the Roman eagles through the sky!
I know that even then, in his hour of pride,
The soul of the mighty within him died;
That a void in his bosom lay darkly still,
Which the music of victory might never fill!
Thou wert there, O Mirth! swelling on the shout,
Till the temples, like echo-caves, rang out;
Thine were the garlands, the songs, the wine—
All the rich voices in air were thine,
The incense, the sunshine—but, Sadness, thy part,
Deepest of all, was the victor's heart!
Ye meet at the bridal with flower and tear;
Strangely and wildly ye meet by the bier!
As the gleam from a sea-bird's white wing shed
Crosses the storm in its path of dread;
As a dirge meets the breeze of a summer sky—
Sadness and Mirth! so ye come and fly!
Ye meet in the poet's haunted breast,
Darkness and rainbow, alike its guest!
When the breath of the violet is out in spring,
When the woods with the wakening of music ring,
O'er his dreamy spirit your currents pass,
Like shadow and sunlight o'er mountain grass.

When will your parting be, Sadness and Mirth?
Bright stream and dark one! Oh, never on earth!
Never while triumphs and tombs are so near,
While death and love walk the same dim sphere,
While flowers unfold where the storm may sweep,
While the heart of man is a soundless deep!
But there smiles a land, O ye troubled pair!
Where ye have no part in the summer air:
Far from the breathings of changeful skies,
Over the seas and the graves it lies;
Where the day of the lightning and cloud is done,
And joy reigns alone, as the lonely sun!

THE NIGHTINGALE'S DEATH-SONG.

"Willst du nach den Nachtigallen fragen,
Die mit seelenvollen melodie
Dich entzuckten in des Lenzes Tagen?
—Nur so lang sie liebten, waren sie." Schiller.

Mournfully, sing mournfully,
And die away, my heart!
The rose, the glorious rose is gone,
And I, too, will depart.
The skies have lost their splendour,
The waters changed their tone,
And, wherefore, in the faded world,

Should music linger on?
Where is the golden sunshine,
And where the flower-cup’s glow?
And where the joy of the dancing leaves,
And the fountain’s laughing flow?
A voice, in every whisper
Of the wave, the bough, the air,
Comes asking for the beautiful,
And moaning, “Where, oh! where?”
Tell of the brightness parted,
Thou bee, thou lamb at play!
Thou lark, in thy victorious mirth!
—Are ye, too, pass’d away?
Mournfully, sing mournfully!
The royal rose is gone:
Melt from the woods, my spirit! melt
In one deep farewell tone!
Not so!—swell forth triumphantly
The full, rich, fervent strain!
Hence with young love and life I go,
In the summer’s joyous train.
With sunshine, with sweet odour,
With every precious thing,
Upon the last warm southern breeze

My soul its flight shall wing.

Alone I shall not linger,

When the days of hope are past,

To watch the fall of leaf by leaf,

To wait the rushing blast.

Triumphantly, triumphantly!

Sing to the woods, I go!

For me, perchance, in other lands,

The glorious rose may blow.

The sky’s transparent azure,

And the greensward’s violet breath,

And the dance of light leaves in the wind,

May there know naught of death.

No more, no more sing mournfully!

Swell high, then break, my heart!

With love, the spirit of the woods,

With summer I depart!

THE DIVER.

“They learn in suffering what they teach in song.”—Shelley.

Thou hast been where the rocks of coral grow,

Thou hast fought with eddying waves;—

Thy cheek is pale, and thy heart beats low,

Thou searcher of ocean’s caves!

Thou hast look’d on the gleaming wealth of old,

And wrecks where the brave have striven:
The deep is a strong and a fearful hold,
But thou its bar hast riven!
A wild and weary life is thine—
A wasting task and lone,
Though treasure-grots for thee may shine,
To all besides unknown!
A weary life! but a swift decay
Soon, soon shall set thee free;
Thou’rt passing fast from thy toils away,
Thou wrestler with the sea!
In thy dim eye, on thy hollow cheek,
Well are the death-signs read—
Go! for the pearl in its cavern seek,
Ere hope and power be fled!
And bright in beauty’s coronal
That glistening gem shall be;
A star to all in the festive hall—
But who will think on thee?
None!—as it gleams from the queen-like head,
Not one midst throngs will say,
“A life hath been, like a raindrop, shed
For that pale, quivering ray!”
Woe for the wealth thus dearly bought!

—And are not those like thee,
Who win for earth the gems of thought?
O wrestler with the sea!
Down to the gulfs of the soul they go,
Where the passion-fountains burn,
Gathering the jewels far below
From many a buried urn:
Wringing from lava-veins the fire,
That o’er bright words is pour’d;
Learning deep sounds, to make the lyre
A spirit in each chord.
But, oh! the price of bitter tears
Paid for the lonely power
That throws at last, o’er desert years,
A darkly glorious dower!
Like flower-seeds, by the wild wind spread,
So radiant thoughts are strew’d;
—The soul whence those high gifts are shed
May faint in solitude!
And who will think, when the strain is sung
Till a thousand hearts are stirr’d,
What life-drops, from the minstrel wrung,
Have gush’d with every word?
None, none!—his treasures live like thine,

He strives and dies like thee;

—Thou, that hast been to the pearl’s dark shrine,

O wrestler with the sea!

THE REQUIEM OF GENIUS.

“Les poetes, dont l’imagination tient la puissance d’aimer et de souffrir, ne sont-ils pas les bannis d’une autre region?”

Madame de Stael—“De L’Allemagne.”

No tears for thee!—though light be from us gone

With thy soul’s radiance, bright, yet restless one!

No tears for thee!

They that have loved an exile, must not mourn

To see him parting for his native bourne

O’er the dark sea.

All the high music of thy spirit here

Breathed but the language of another sphere,

Unecho’d round;

And strange, though sweet, as midst our weeping skies

Some half-remember’d strain of Paradise

Might sadly sound.

Hast thou been answer’d?—thou, that from the night,

And from the voices of the tempest’s might,

And from the past,

Wert seeking still some oracle’s reply,

To pour the secrets of man’s destiny

Forth on the blast!

Hast thou been answer’d?—thou, that through the gloom,

And shadow, and stern silence of the tomb,

A cry didst send,

So passionate and deep?—to pierce, to move,

To win back token of unburied love

From buried friend!

And hast thou found where living waters burst?

Thou that didst pine amidst us in the thirst

Of fever-dreams!

Are the true fountains thine for evermore?

O lured so long by shining mists that wore

The light of streams!

Speak! is it well with thee? We call, as thou,

With thy lit eye, deep voice, and kindled brow,

Wert wont to call

On the departed! Art thou bless’d and free?

—Alas! the lips earth covers, even to thee

Were silent all!

Yet shall our hope rise fann’d by quenchless faith,

As a flame, foster’d by some warm wind’s breath,

In light upsprings:

Freed soul of song! yes, thou hast found the sought;

Borne to thy home of beauty and of thought,

On morning’s wings.

And we will dream it is thy joy we hear,

When life’s young music, ringing far and clear,

O’erflows the sky.

No tears for thee! the lingering gloom is ours—

Thou art for converse with all glorious powers,

Never to die!

TRIUMPHANT MUSIC.

“Tacete, tacete, O suoni trionfanti

Risvegliate in vano ’l cor che non puo liberarsi.”

Wherefore and whither bear’st thou up my spirit,

On eagle wings, through every plume that thrill?

It hath no crown of victory to inherit—

Be still, triumphant harmony! be still!

Thine are no sounds for earth, thus proudly swelling

Into rich floods of joy. It is but pain

To mount so high, yet find on high no dwelling,

To sink so fast, so heavily again!

No sounds for earth? Yes, to young chieftain dying

On his own battle-field, at set of sun,

With his freed country’s banner o’er him flying,

Well mightst thou speak of fame’s high guerdon won.

No sounds for earth? Yes, for the martyr, leading

Unto victorious death serenely on;

For patriot by his rescued altars bleeding,
Thou hast a voice in each majestic tone.
But speak not thus to one whose heart is beating
Against life’s narrow bound, in conflict vain!
For power, for joy, high hope, and rapturous greeting,
Thou wakest lone thirst—be hush’d, exulting strain!
Be hush’d, or breathe of grief!—of exile yearnings
Under the willows of the stranger-shore;
Breathe of the soul’s untold and restless burnings
For looks, tones, footsteps, that return no more.
Breathe of deep love—a lonely vigil keeping
Through the night-hours, o’er wasted wealth to pine;
Rich thoughts and sad, like faded rose-leaves, heaping
In the shut heart, at once a tomb and shrine.
Or pass as if thy spirit-notes came sighing
From worlds beneath some blue Elysian sky;
Breathe of repose, the pure, the bright, th’ undying—
Of joy no more—bewildering harmony!

SECOND-SIGHT.

“Ne’er err’d the prophet-heart that grief inspired,
Though joy’s illusions mock their votarist.”—Maturin.
A mournful gift is mine, O friends!
A mournful gift is mine!
A murmur of the soul which blends

With the flow of song and wine.

An eye that through the triumph’s hour

Beholds the coming woe,

And dwells upon the faded flower

Midst the rich summer’s glow.

Ye smile to view fair faces bloom

Where the father’s board is spread;

I see the stillness and the gloom

Of a home whence all are fled.

I see the wither’d garlands lie

Forsaken on the earth,

While the lamps yet burn, and the dancers fly

Through the ringing hall of mirth.

I see the blood-red future stain

On the warrior’s gorgeous crest;

And the bier amidst the bridal train

When they come with roses drest.

I hear the still small moan of time

Through the ivy branches made,

Where the palace, in its glory’s prime,

With the sunshine stands array’d.

The thunder of the seas I hear,

The shriek along the wave,

When the bark sweeps forth, and song and cheer

Salute the parting brave.

With every breeze a spirit sends

To me some warning sign,—

A mournful gift is mine, O friends!

A mournful gift is mine!

O prophet-heart! thy grief, thy power,

To all deep souls belong—

The shadow in the sunny hour,

The wail in the mirthful song.

Their sight is all too sadly clear—

For them a veil is riven;

Their piercing thoughts repose not here,

Their home is but in heaven.

THE SEA-BIRD FLYING INLAND.

“Thy path is not as mine;—where thou art blest

My spirit would but wither; mine own grief

Is in mine eyes a richer, holier thing,

Than all thy happiness.”

Hath the summer’s breath on the south-wind borne,

Met the dark seas in their sweeping scorn?

Hath it lured thee, bird! from their sounding caves

To the river shores where the osier waves?

Or art thou come on the hills to dwell,

Where the sweet-voiced echoes have many a cell?

Where the moss bears print of the wild-deer’s tread,
And the heath like a royal robe is spread?
Thou hast done well, O thou bright sea-bird!
There is joy where the song of the lark is heard,
With the dancing of waters through copse and dell,
And the bee’s low tune in the fox-glove’s bell.
Thou hast done well: oh! the seas are lone,
And the voice they send up hath a mournful tone;
A mingling of dirges and wild farewells,
Fitfully breathed through its anthem swells.
The proud bird rose as the words were said—
The rush of his pinion swept o’er my head,
And the glance of his eye, in its bright disdain,
Spoke him a child of the haughty main.
He hath flown from the woods to the ocean’s breast,
To his throne of pride on the billow’s crest.
Oh! who shall say to a spirit free—
“There lies the pathway of bliss for thee?”

THE SLEEPER.

Oh! lightly, lightly tread!
A holy thing is sleep,
On the worn spirit shed,
And eyes that wake to weep.
A holy thing from heaven,

A gracious dewy cloud,
A covering mantle given
The weary to enshroud.
Oh! lightly, lightly tread!
Revere the pale still brow,
The meekly drooping head,
The long hair's willowy flow.
Ye know not what ye do,
That call the slumberer back
From the world unseen by you
Unto life's dim, faded track.
Her soul is far away,
In her childhood's land perchance,
Where her young sisters play,
Where shines her mother's glance.
Some old sweet native sound
Her spirit haply weaves;
A harmony profound
Of woods with all their leaves;
A murmur of the sea,
A laughing tone of streams:—
Long may her sojourn be
In the music-land of dreams!
Each voice of love is there,

Each gleam of beauty fled,

Each lost one still more fair—

Oh! lightly, lightly tread!

THE MIRROR IN THE DESERTED HALL.

O dim, forsaken mirror!

How many a stately throng

Hath o’er thee gleam’d, in vanish’d hours

Of the wine-cup and the song!

The song hath left no echo;

The bright wine hath been quaff’d;

And hush’d is every silvery voice

That lightly here hath laugh’d.

O mirror—lonely mirror!

Thou of the silent hall!

Thou hast been flush’d with beauty’s bloom—

Is this, too, vanish’d all?

It is, with the scatter’d garlands

Of triumphs long ago,

With the melodies of buried lyres,

With the faded rainbow’s glow.

And for all the gorgeous pageants—

For the glance of gem and plume,

For lamp, and harp, and rosy wreath,

And vase of rich perfume—

Now, dim, forsaken mirror!
Thou givest but faintly back
The quiet stars, and the sailing moon,
On her solitary track.
And thus with man’s proud spirit
Thou tellest me ’twill be,
When the forms and hues of this world fade
From his memory, as from thee:
And his heart’s long-troubled waters
At last in stillness lie,
Reflecting but the images
Of the solemn world on high.

TO THE DAUGHTER OF BERNARD BARTON, THE QUAKER POET.

Happy thou art, the child of one
Who in each lowly flower,
Each leaf that glances to the sun,
Or trembles with the shower;
In each soft shadow of the sky,
Or sparkle of the stream,
Will guide thy kindling spirit’s eye
To trace the Love Supreme.
So shall deep quiet fill thy breast,
A joy in wood and wild;
And e’en for this I call thee blest,

The gentle poet’s child!

THE STAR OF THE MINE.

From the deep chambers of a mine,
With heavy gloom o’erspread,
I saw a star at noontide shine
Serenely o’er my head.
I had not seen it midst the glow
Of the rich upper day;
But in that shadowy world below,
How my heart bless’d its ray!
And still, the farther from my sight
Torches and lamps were borne,
The purer, lovelier, seem’d the light
That wore its beams unshorn.
Oh! what is like that heavenly spark?
—A friend’s kind, steadfast eye;
Where, brightest when the world grows dark,
Hope, cheer, and comfort lie!

WASHINGTON’S STATUE.

SENT FROM ENGLAND TO AMERICA.

Yes! rear thy guardian hero’s form
On thy proud soil, thou western world!
A watcher through each sign of storm,

O’er freedom’s flag unfurl’d.
There, as before a shrine, to bow,
Bid thy true sons their children lead:
The language of that noble brow
For all things good shall plead.
The spirit rear’d in patriot fight,
The virtue born of home and hearth,
There calmly throned, a holy light
Shall pour o’er chainless earth.
And let that work of England’s hand,
Sent through the blast and surge’s roar,
So girt with tranquil glory stand
For ages on thy shore!
Such, through all time, the greetings be,
That with the Atlantic billow sweep!
Telling the mighty and the free
Of brothers o’er the deep.

A THOUGHT OF HOME AT SEA.

WRITTEN FOR MUSIC.

’Tis lone on the waters
When eve’s mournful bell
Sends forth to the sunset
A note of farewell;
When, borne with the shadows

And winds as they sweep,
There comes a fond memory
Of home o’er the deep;
When the wing of the sea-bird
Is turn’d to her nest,
And the thought of the sailor
To all he loves best!
’Tis lone on the waters—
That hour hath a spell
To bring back sweet voices,
With words of farewell!

TO THE MEMORY OF A SISTER-IN-LAW.

We miss thy voice while early flowers are blowing,
And the first flush of blossom clothes each bough,
And the spring sunshine round our home is glowing
Soft as thy smile: thou shouldst be with us now.
With us? We wrong thee by the earthly thought:
Could our fond gaze but follow where thou art,
Well might the glories of this world seem naught
To the one promise given the pure in heart.
Yet wert thou blest e’en here—oh! ever blest
In thine own sunny thoughts and tranquil faith!
The silent joy that still o’erflow’d thy breast
Needed but guarding from all change, by death.

So is it seal’d to peace! On thy clear brow
Never was care one fleeting shade to cast;
And thy calm days in brightness were to flow
A holy stream, untroubled to the last.
Farewell! thy life hath left surviving love
A wealth of records, and sweet “feelings given,”
From sorrow’s heart the faintness to remove
By whispers breathing “less of earth than heaven.”[385]
Thus rests thy spirit still on those with whom
Thy step the path of joyous duty trode,
Bidding them make an altar of thy tomb,
Where chasten’d thought may offer praise to God.

[385] Alluding to the lines she herself quoted but an hour before her death:—

“Some feelings are to mortals given
With less of earth in them than heaven.”

TO AN ORPHAN.

Thou hast been rear’d too tenderly,
Beloved too well and long,
Watch’d by too many a gentle eye:
Now look on life—be strong!
Too quiet seem’d thy joys for change,
Too holy and too deep;
Bright clouds, through summer skies that range
Seem ofttimes thus to sleep,—

To sleep in silvery stillness bound,
As things that ne’er may melt;
Yet gaze again—no trace is found
To show thee where they dwelt.
This world hath no more love to give
Like that which thou hast known;
Yet the heart breaks not—we survive
Our treasures—and bear on.
But oh! too beautiful and blest
Thy home of youth hath been!
Where shall thy wing, poor bird! find rest,
Shut out from that sweet scene?
Kind voices from departed years
Must haunt thee many a day;
Looks that will smite the source of tears
Across thy soul must play.
Friends—now the alter’d or the dead,
And music that is gone,
A gladness o’er thy dreams will shed,
And thou shalt wake—alone.
Alone! it is in that deep word
That all thy sorrow lies;
How is the heart to courage stirr’d
By smiles from kindred eyes!

And are these lost?—and have I said
To aught like thee—be strong?
—So bid the willow lift its head,
And brave the tempest’s wrong!
Thou reed! o’er which the storm hath pass’d—
Thou shaken with the wind!
On one, one friend thy weakness cast—
There is but One to bind!

HYMN BY THE SICKBED OF A MOTHER.

Father! that in the olive-shade,
When the dark hour came on,
Didst, with a breath of heavenly aid,
Strengthen thy Son;
Oh! by the anguish of that night,
Send us down bless’d relief;
Or to the chasten’d, let thy might
Hallow this grief!
And Thou, that when the starry sky
Saw the dread strife begun,
Didst teach adoring faith to cry,
“Thy will be done;”
By thy meek spirit, Thou, of all
That e’er have mourn’d, the chief—
Thou Saviour! if the stroke must fall,

Hallow this grief!

WHERE IS THE SEA?

SONG OF THE GREEK ISLANDER IN EXILE.

[A Greek Islander, being taken to the Vale of Tempe, and called upon to admire its beauty, only replied—"The sea—where is it?"]

Where is the sea?—I languish here—

Where is my own blue sea?

With all its barks in fleet career,

And flags, and breezes free?

I miss that voice of waves which first

Awoke my childhood's glee;

The measured chime—the thundering burst—

Where is my own blue sea?

Oh! rich your myrtle's breath may rise,

Soft, soft your winds may be;

Yet my sick heart within me dies—

Where is my own blue sea?

I hear the shepherd's mountain flute,

I hear the whispering tree;

The echoes of my soul are mute,

—Where is my own blue sea?

[All this time, her imagination was at work more busily than ever; new thoughts and fresh fancies seemed to spring up "as willows by the water-courses:" and the facility with which her lyrics were poured forth, approached, in many instances, to actual

improvisation. When confined to her bed, and unable to use a pen, she would often employ the services of those about her, to write down what she had composed. “Felicia has just sent for me,” wrote her amanuensis on one of these occasions, “with pencil and paper, to put down a little song, (‘Where is the Sea?’) which, she said, had come to her like a strain of music, whilst lying in the twilight under the infliction of a blister; and as I really think ‘a scrap’ (as our late eccentric visitor would call it) composed under such circumstances, is, to use the words of Coleridge, a ‘psychological curiosity,’ I cannot resist copying it for you. It was suggested by a story she somewhere read lately, of a Greek islander, carried off to the Vale of Tempe, and pining amidst all its beauties for the sight and sound of his native sea.”—Memoir, p. 134.]

TO MY OWN PORTRAIT.

How is it that before mine eyes,

While gazing on thy mien,

All my past years of life arise,

As in a mirror seen?

What spell within thee hath been shrined

To image back my own deep mind?

Even as a song of other times

Can trouble memory’s springs;

Even as a sound of vesper-chimes

Can wake departed things;

Even as a scent of vernal flowers

Hath records fraught with vanish’d hours,—

Such power is thine! They come, the dead,

From the grave’s bondage free,
And smiling back the changed are led
To look in love on thee;
And voices that are music flown
Speak to me in the heart’s full tone:
Till crowding thoughts my soul oppress—
The thoughts of happier years—
And a vain gush of tenderness
O’erflows in child-like tears;
A passion which I may not stay,
A sudden fount that must have way.
But thou, the while—oh! almost strange,
Mine imaged self! it seems
That on thy brow of peace no change
Reflects my own swift dreams;
Almost I marvel not to trace
Those lights and shadows in thy face.
To see thee calm, while powers thus deep—
Affection, Memory, Grief—
Pass o’er my soul as winds that sweep
O’er a frail aspen leaf!
Oh, that the quiet of thine eye
Might sink there when the storm goes by!
Yet look thou still serenely on,

And if sweet friends there be

That when my song and soul are gone

Shall seek my form in thee,—

Tell them of one for whom ’twas best

To flee away and be at rest!

[In the autumn of 1827, at the urgent request of Mr Alaric Watts, who was then forming a gallery of portraits of the living authors of Great Britain, Mrs Hemans was prevailed upon to sit for her picture. The artist selected on this occasion was Mr W. E. West, an American by birth, who had passed some time in Italy, and painted the last likeness ever taken of Lord Byron, and also one of Madame Guiccioli, which was engraved in one of the annuals. During his stay at Rhyllon, where he remained for some weeks, he finished three several portraits of Mrs Hemans—one for Mr Alaric Watts, one which is now in the possession of Professor Norton, and a third, which he most courteously presented to Mrs Hemans’ sister, to whom it was even then a treasure, and is now become one of inestimable value. This likeness, considered by her family as the best ever taken of her, is the one which suggested Mrs Hemans’s affecting lines, “To my own Portrait.” ... It is, however, only fair to repeat the remark already made, and in which all those who were accustomed to study the play of her features must concur—that there never was a countenance more difficult to transfer to canvass; so varying were its expressions, and so impossible is it to be satisfied with the one which can alone be perpetuated by the artist. The great charm of Mr West’s picture is its perfect freedom from any thing set or constrained in the air; and the sweet, serious expression, so accordant with her maternal character, which recalls her own lines—

“Mother! with thine earnest eye

Ever following silently;”

and which made one of her children remark, in glancing from it to the bust, executed

some years after by Mr Angus Fletcher[386]—"The bust is the poetess, but the picture is all mother."—Memoir, p. 129-130.]

[386] An engraving from Mr Fletcher's admirable bust forms the frontispiece to the present volume.

NO MORE.

No more! A harp-string's deep and breaking tone,
A last, low, summer breeze, a far-off swell,
A dying echo of rich music gone,
Breathe through those words—those murmurs of farewell—
No more!

To dwell in peace, with home-affections bound,
To know the sweetness of a mother's voice,
To feel the spirit of her love around,
And in the blessing of her eye rejoice—
No more!

A dirge-like sound! To greet the early friend
Unto the hearth, his place of many days;
In the glad song with kindred lips to blend,
Or join the household laughter by the blaze—
No more!

Through woods that shadow'd our first years to rove
With all our native music in the air;
To watch the sunset with the eyes we love,
And turn, and read our own heart's answer there—

No more!

Words of despair!—yet earth's, all earth's the woe

Their passion breathes—the desolately deep!

That sound in heaven—oh! image then the flow

Of gladness in its tones—to part, to weep—

No more!

To watch, in dying hope, affection's wane,

To see the beautiful from life depart,

To wear impatiently a secret chain,

To waste the untold riches of the heart—

No more!

Through long, long years to seek, to strive, to yearn

For human love[387]—and never quench that thirst;

To pour the soul out, winning no return,

O'er fragile idols, by delusion nursed—

No more!

On things that fail us, reed by reed, to lean,

To mourn the changed, the far away, the dead;

To send our troubled spirits through the unseen,

Intensely questioning for treasures fled—

No more!

Words of triumphant music! Bear we on

The weight of life, the chain, the ungenial air;

Their deathless meaning, when our tasks are done,

To learn in joy,—to struggle, to despair—

No more!

[387] “Jamais, jamais, je ne serai aimé comme j’aime!” was a mournful expression of Madame de Staël’s.

THOUGHT FROM AN ITALIAN POET.

Where shall I find, in all this fleeting earth,

This world of changes and farewells, a friend

That will not fail me in his love and worth,

Tender and firm, and faithful to the end?

Far hath my spirit sought a place of rest—

Long on vain idols its devotion shed;

Some have forsaken, whom I loved the best,

And some deceived, and some are with the dead.

But thou, my Saviour! thou, my hope and trust,

Faithful art thou when friends and joys depart;

Teach me to lift these yearnings from the dust,

And fix on thee, th’ Unchanging One, my heart!

PASSING AWAY.

“‘Passing away’ is written on the world, and all the world contains.”

It is written on the rose,

In its glory’s full array;

Read what those buds disclose—

“Passing away.”

It is written on the skies
Of the soft blue summer day;
It is traced in sunset’s dyes—
“Passing away.”
It is written on the trees,
As their young leaves glistening play,
And on brighter things than these—
“Passing away.”
It is written on the brow
Where the spirit’s ardent ray
Lives, burns, and triumphs now—
“Passing away.”
It is written on the heart;
Alas! that there Decay
Should claim from Love a part—
“Passing away.”
Friends, friends!—oh! shall we meet
In a land of purer day,
Where lovely things and sweet
Pass not away?
Shall we know each other’s eyes,
And the thoughts that in them lay
When we mingled sympathies
“Passing away?”

Oh! if this may be so,

Speed, speed, thou closing day!

How blest from earth’s vain show

To pass away!

THE ANGLER.[388]

“I in these flowery meads would be;

These crystal streams should solace me;

To whose harmonious bubbling noise

I with my angle would rejoice;

...

And angle on, and beg to have

A quiet passage to a welcome grave.”

Isaac Walton.

Thou that hast loved so long and well

The vale’s deep, quiet streams,

Where the pure water-lilies dwell,

Shedding forth tender gleams;

And o’er the pool the May-fly’s wing

Glances in golden eves of spring!

Oh, lone and lovely haunts are thine!

Soft, soft the river flows,

Wearing the shadow of thy line,

The gloom of alder-boughs;

And in the midst a richer hue,

One gliding vein of heaven’s own blue.

And there but low sweet sounds are heard—

The whisper of the reed,

The plashing trout, the rustling bird,

The scythe upon the mead;

Yet, through the murmuring osiers near,

There steals a step which mortals fear.

’Tis not the stag, that comes to lave

At noon his panting breast;

’Tis not the bittern, by the wave

Seeking her sedgy nest;

The air is fill’d with summer’s breath,

The young flowers laugh—yet look! ’tis Death!

But if, where silvery currents rove,

Thy heart, grown still and sage,

Hath learn’d to read the words of love

That shine o’er nature’s page;

If holy thoughts thy guests have been

Under the shade of willows green;

Then, lover of the silent hour

By deep lone waters pass’d!

Thence hast thou drawn a faith, a power,

To cheer thee through the last;

And, wont on brighter worlds to dwell,

May’st calmly bid thy streams farewell.

[388] This, and the following poem, were originally written for a work entitled Death’s Doings, edited by Mr Alaric Watts.

DEATH AND THE WARRIOR.

“Ay, warrior, arm! and wear thy plume
On a proud and fearless brow!
I am the lord of the lonely tomb,
And a mightier one than thou!

“Bid thy soul’s love farewell, young chief—
Bid her a long farewell!
Like the morning’s dew shall pass that grief:
Thou comest with me to dwell!

“Thy bark may rush through the foaming deep,
Thy steed o’er the breezy hill;
But they bear thee on to a place of sleep,
Narrow, and cold, and chill!”

“Was the voice I heard thy voice, O Death!
And is thy day so near?
Then on the field shall my life’s last breath
Mingle with victory’s cheer!

“Banners shall float, with the trumpet’s note,
Above me as I die!
And the palm-tree wave o’er my noble grave,
Under the Syrian sky.

“High hearts shall burn in the royal hall,
When the minstrel names that spot;
And the eyes I love shall weep my fall.—
Death, Death, I fear thee not!”
“Warrior! thou bear’st a haughty heart,
But I can bend its pride!
How shouldst thou know that thy soul will part
In the hour of victory’s tide?
“It may be far from thy steel-clad bands
That I shall make thee mine;
It may be lone on the desert sands,
Where men for fountains pine!
“It may be deep amidst heavy chains,
In some deep Paynim hold;
I have slow, dull steps and lingering pains
Wherewith to tame the bold!”
“Death, Death! I go to a doom unblest,
If this indeed must be;
But the Cross is bound upon my breast,
And I may not shrink for thee!
“Sound, clarion! sound!—for my vows are given
To the cause of the holy shrine;
I bow my soul to the will of heaven,
O Death!—and not to thine!”

SONG FOR AN AIR BY HUMMEL.

Oh! if thou wilt not give thine heart,

Give back my own to me;

For if in thine I have no part,

Why should mine dwell with thee?[389]

Yet no! this mournful love of mine

I will not from me cast;

Let me but dream ’twill win me thine

By its deep truth at last!

Can aught so fond, so faithful, live

Through years without reply?

—Oh! if thy heart thou wilt not give,

Give me a thought, a sigh!

[389] The first verse of this song is a literal translation from the German.

TO THE MEMORY OF LORD CHARLES MURRAY,

SON OF THE DUKE OF ATHOLL, WHO DIED IN THE CAUSE AND LAMENTED BY THE PEOPLE OF GREECE.

“Time cannot teach forgetfulness,

When grief’s full heart is fed by fame.”—Byron.

Thou shouldst have slept beneath the stately pines,

And with th’ ancestral trophies of thy race;

Thou that hast found, where alien tombs and shrines

Speak of the past, a lonely dwelling-place!

Far from thy brethren hath thy couch been spread,

Thou bright young stranger midst the mighty dead!
Yet to thy name a noble rite was given,
Banner and dirge met proudly o’er thy grave,
Under that old and glorious Grecian heaven,
Which unto death so oft hath lit the brave:
And thy dust blends with mould heroic there,
With all that sanctifies the inspiring air.
Vain voice of fame! sad sound for those that weep!
For her, the mother, in whose bosom lone
Thy childhood dwells—whose thoughts a record keep
Of smiles departed and sweet accents gone;
Of all thine early grace and gentle worth—
A vernal promise, faded now from earth!
But a bright memory claims a proud regret—
A lofty sorrow finds its own deep springs
Of healing balm; and she hath treasures yet
Whose soul can number with love’s holy things,
A name like thine! Now, past all cloud or spot,
A gem is hers, laid up where change is not.

THE BROKEN CHAIN.

I am free!—I have burst through my galling chain,
The life of young eagles is mine again;
I may cleave with my bark the glad sounding sea,
I may rove where the wind roves—my path is free!

The streams dash in joy down the summer hill,
The birds pierce the depths of the sky at will,
The arrow goes forth with the singing breeze,—
And is not my spirit as one of these?
Oh! the green earth with its wealth of flowers,
And the voices that ring through its forest bowers,
And the laughing glance of the founts that shine,
Lighting the valleys—all, all are mine!
I may urge through the desert my foaming steed,
The wings of the morning shall lend him speed;
I may meet the storm in its rushing glee—
Its blasts and its lightnings are not more free!
Captive! and hast thou then rent thy chain?
Art thou free in the wilderness, free on the main?
Yes! there thy spirit may proudly soar,
But must thou not mingle with throngs the more?
The bird when he pineth, may hush his song,
Till the hour when his heart shall again be strong;
But thou—canst thou turn in thy woe aside,
And weep, midst thy brethren? No, not for pride.
May the fiery word from thy lip find way,
When the thoughts burning in thee shall spring to day?
May the care that sits in thy weary breast
Look forth from thine aspect, the revel’s guest?

No! with the shaft in thy bosom borne,

Thou must hide the wound in thy fear of scorn;

Thou must fold thy mantle that none may see,

And mask thee with laughter, and say thou art free.

No! thou art chain’d till thy race is run,

By the power of all in the soul of one;

On thy heart, on thy lip, must the fetter be—

Dreamer! fond dreamer! oh, who is free?

THE SHADOW OF A FLOWER.

“La voila telle que la mort nous l’a faite.”—Bossuet.

[“Never was a philosophical imagination more beautiful than that exquisite one of Kircher, Digby, and others, who discovered in the ashes of plants their primitive forms, which were again raised up by the power of heat. The ashes of roses, say they, will again revive in roses, unsubstantial and unodoriferous; they are not roses which grow on rose-trees, but their delicate apparitions, and, like apparitions, they are seen but for a moment.”—Curiosities of Literature.]

’Twas a dream of olden days

That Art, by some strange power,

The visionary form could raise

From the ashes of a flower.

That a shadow of the rose,

By its own meek beauty bow’d,

Might slowly, leaf by leaf, unclose,

Like pictures in a cloud.

Or the hyacinth, to grace,
As a second rainbow, spring;
Of summer's path a dreary trace,
A fair, yet mournful thing!
For the glory of the bloom
That a flush around it shed,
And the soul within, the rich perfume,
Where were they? Fled, all fled!
Naught but the dim, faint line
To speak of vanish'd hours.—
Memory! what are joys of thine?
—Shadows of buried flowers!

LINES TO A BUTTERFLY RESTING ON A SKULL.

Creature of air and light!
Emblem of that which will not fade or die!
Wilt thou not speed thy flight,
To chase the south wind through the glowing sky?
What lures thee thus to stay
With silence and decay,
Fix'd on the wreck of cold mortality?
The thoughts once chamber'd there,
Have gather'd up their treasures and are gone;—
Will the dust tell thee where
That which hath burst the prison-house is flown?

Rise, nursling of the day!

If thou wouldst trace its way—

Earth has no voice to make the secret known.

Who seeks the vanish’d bird

Near the deserted nest and broken shell?

Far thence, by us unheard,

He sings, rejoicing in the woods to dwell:

Thou of the sunshine born,

Take the bright wings of morn!

Thy hope springs heavenward from yon ruin’d cell.

THE BELL AT SEA.

[The dangerous islet called the Bell Rock, on the coast of Forfarshire, used formerly to be marked only by a bell, which was so placed as to be swung by the motion of the waves, when the tide rose above the rock. A lighthouse has since been erected there.]

When the tide’s billowy swell

Had reach’d its height,

Then toll’d the rock’s lone bell

Sternly by night.

Far over cliff and surge

Swept the deep sound,

Making each wild wind’s dirge

Still more profound.

Yet that funereal tone

The sailor bless’d,

Steering through darkness on

With fearless breast.

E’en so may we, that float

On life’s wide sea,

Welcome each warning note,

Stern though it be![390]

[390] It may be scarcely necessary to remind the reader, that the stealing of this bell by a Pirate forms the subject of Southey’s spirited ballad, “The Inchcape Rock.”

THE SUBTERRANEAN STREAM.

“Thou stream,

Whose source is inaccessibly profound,

Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?

—Thou imagest my life.”

Darkly thou glidest onward,

Thou deep and hidden wave!

The laughing sunshine hath not look’d

Into thy secret cave.

Thy current makes no music—

A hollow sound we hear,

A muffled voice of mystery,

And know that thou art near.

No brighter line of verdure

Follows thy lonely way;

No fairy moss, or lily’s cup
Is freshen’d by thy play.
The halcyon doth not seek thee,
Her glorious wings to lave;
Thou know’st no tint of the summer sky,
Thou dark and hidden wave!
Yet once will day behold thee,
When to the mighty sea,
Fresh bursting from their cavern’d veins,
Leap thy lone waters free.
There wilt thou greet the sunshine
For a moment, and be lost,
With all thy melancholy sounds,
In the ocean’s billowy host.
Oh! art thou not, dark river!
Like the fearful thoughts untold
Which haply, in the hush of night,
O’er many a soul have roll’d?
Those earth-born strange misgivings—
Who hath not felt their power?
Yet who hath breathed them to his friend,
E’en in his fondest hour?
They hold no heart-communion,
They find no voice in song,

They dimly follow far from earth
The grave’s departed throng.
Wild is their course and lonely,
And fruitless in man’s breast;
They come and go, and leave no trace
Of their mysterious guest.
Yet surely must their wanderings
At length be like thy way;
Their shadows, as thy waters, lost
In one bright flood of day!

THE SILENT MULTITUDE.

“For we are many in our solitudes.”—Lament of Tasso.

A mighty and a mingled throng
Were gather’d in one spot;
The dwellers of a thousand homes—
Yet midst them voice was not.
The soldier and his chief were there—
The mother and her child:
The friends, the sisters of one hearth—
None spoke—none moved—none smiled.
There lovers met, between whose lives
Years had swept darkly by;
After that heart-sick hope deferr’d,
They met—but silently.

You might have heard the rustling leaf,
The breeze’s faintest sound,
The shiver of an insect’s wing,
On that thick-peopled ground.
Your voice to whispers would have died
For the deep quiet’s sake;
Your tread the softest moss have sought,
Such stillness not to break.
What held the countless multitude
Bound in that spell of peace?
How could the ever-sounding life
Amid so many cease?
Was it some pageant of the air—
Some glory high above,
That link’d and hush’d those human souls
In reverential love?
Or did some burdening passion’s weight
Hang on their indrawn breath?
Awe—the pale awe that freezes words?
Fear—the strong fear of death?
A mightier thing—Death, Death himself
Lay on each lonely heart!
Kindred were there—yet hermits all,
Thousands—but each apart.

THE ANTIQUE SEPULCHRE.[391]

["Les sarcophages même chez les anciens, ne rapellent que des idées guerrières ou riantes: on voit des jeux, des danses, représentés en bas-relief sur les tombeaux."—Corinne.

O ever-joyous band
Of revellers amidst the southern vines!
On the pale marble, by some gifted hand,
Fix'd in undying lines!
Thou, with the sculptured bowl,
And thou, that wearest the immortal wreath,
And thou, from whose young lip and flute the soul
Of music seems to breathe;
And ye, luxuriant flowers!
Linking the dancers with your graceful ties,
And cluster'd fruitage, born of sunny hours,
Under Italian skies:
Ye, that a thousand springs,
And leafy summers with their odorous breath,
May yet outlast,—what do ye there, bright things!
Mantling the place of death?
Of sunlight and soft air,
And Dorian reeds, and myrtles ever green,
Unto the heart a glowing thought ye bear;—
Why thus, where dust hath been?

Is it to show how slight
The bound that severs festivals and tombs,
Music and silence, roses and the blight,
Crowns and sepulchral glooms?
Or, when the father laid
Haply his child's pale ashes here to sleep,
When the friend visited the cypress shade
Flowers o'er the dead to heap;
Say if the mourners sought,
In these rich images of summer mirth,
These wine-cups and gay wreaths, to lose the thought
Of our last hour on earth?
Ye have no voice, no sound,
Ye flutes and lyres! to tell me what I seek:
Silent ye are, light forms with vine-leaves crown'd,
Yet to my soul ye speak.
Alas! for those that lay
Down in the dust without their hope of old!
Backward they look'd on life's rich banquet-day,
But all beyond was cold.
Every sweet wood-note then,
And through the plane-trees every sunbeam's glow,
And each glad murmur from the homes of men,
Made it more hard to go.

But we, when life grows dim,
When its last melodies float o’er our way,
Its changeful hues before us faintly swim,
Its flitting lights decay;—
E’en though we bid farewell
Unto the spring’s blue skies and budding trees,
Yet may we lift our hearts in hope to dwell
Midst brighter things than these;
And think of deathless flowers,
And of bright streams to glorious valleys given,
And know the while, how little dream of ours
Can shadow forth of heaven.

[391] Transcriber’s Note: Footnote not found on original page 493 footnote 1.

EVENING SONG OF THE TYROLESE PEASANTS.[392]

Come to the sunset tree!
The day is past and gone;
The woodman’s axe lies free,
And the reaper’s work is done.
The twilight star to heaven,
And the summer dew to flowers,
And rest to us, is given
By the cool, soft evening hours.
Sweet is the hour of rest!
Pleasant the wind’s low sigh,

And the gleaming of the west,
And the turf whereon we lie;
When the burden and the heat
Of labour’s task are o’er,
And kindly voices greet
The tired one at his door.
Come to the sunset tree!
The day is past and gone;
The woodman’s axe lies free,
And the reaper’s work is done.
Yes! tuneful is the sound
That dwells in whispering boughs;
Welcome the freshness round,
And the gale that fans our brows!
But rest more sweet and still
Than ever nightfall gave,
Our yearning hearts shall fill
In the world beyond the grave.
There shall no tempest blow,
No scorching noontide heat;
There shall be no more snow,[393]
No weary, wandering feet.
So we lift our trusting eyes
From the hills our fathers trode,

To the quiet of the skies,

To the Sabbath of our God.

Come to the sunset tree!

The day is past and gone;

The woodman’s axe lies free,

And the reaper’s work is done.

[392] “The loved hour of repose is striking. Let us come to the sunset tree.”—See Captain Sherer’s interesting Notes and Reflections during a Ramble in Germany.

[393]

“Wohl ihm, er ist hingegangen

Wo kein Schnee mehr ist.”

Schiller’s Nadowessiche Todtenklage.

THE MEMORY OF THE DEAD.

Forget them not!—though now their name

Be but a mournful sound,

Though by the hearth its utterance claim

A stillness round.

Though for their sake this earth no more

As it hath been may be,

And shadows, never mark’d before,

Brood o’er each tree;

And though their image dim the sky,

Yet, yet forget them not!

Nor, where their love and life went by,

Forsake the spot!
They have a breathing influence there,
A charm, not elsewhere found;
Sad—yet it sanctifies the air,
The stream, the ground.
Then, though the wind an alter'd tone
Through the young foliage bear,
Though every flower, of something gone
A tinge may wear;
Oh! fly it not! No fruitless grief,
Thus in their presence felt,
A record links to every leaf
There, where they dwelt.
Still trace the path which knew their tread,
Still tend their garden-bower,
Still commune with the holy dead
In each lone hour!
The holy dead!—oh! bless'd we are,
That we may call them so,
And to their image look afar
Through all our woe!
Bless'd, that the things they loved on earth
As relics we may hold,
That wake sweet thoughts of parted worth

By springs untold!

Bless’d, that a deep and chastening power

Thus o’er our souls is given,

If but to bird, or song, or flower,

Yet all for heaven!

HE WALKED WITH GOD.

GENESIS, V. XXIV.

[“These two little pieces,” (“He walked with God,” and “The Rod of Aaron,”) says the author in one of her letters, “are part of a collection I think of forming, to be called Sacred Lyrics. They are all to be on scriptural subjects, and to go through the most striking events of the Old Testament, to those far more deeply affecting ones of the New.” Two others (“The Voice of God” and “The Fountain of Marah”) are subjoined, as having been probably intended to form a part of the same series.]

He walk’d with God, in holy joy,

While yet his days were few;

The deep, glad spirit of the boy

To love and reverence grew.

Whether, each nightly star to count,

The ancient hills he trode,

Or sought the flowers by stream and fount—

Alike he walk’d with God.

The graver noon of manhood came,

The full of cares and fears;

One voice was in his heart—the same

It heard through childhood’s years.
Amidst fair tents, and flocks, and swains,
O’er his green pasture-sod,
A shepherd-king on Eastern plains—
The patriarch walk’d with God.
And calmly, brightly, that pure life
Melted from earth away;
No cloud it knew, no parting strife,
No sorrowful decay:
He bow’d him not, like all beside,
Unto the spoiler’s rod,
But join’d at once the glorified,
Where angels walk with God!
So let us walk! The night must come
To us that comes to all;
We through the darkness must go home,
Hearing the trumpet’s call.
Closed is the path for ever more
Which without death he trode;
Not so that way, wherein of yore
His footsteps walk’d with God!

THE ROD OF AARON.

NUMBERS, XVII. VIII.

Was it the sigh of the southern gale

That flush'd the almond bough?

Brightest and first the young spring to hail,

Still its red blossoms glow.

Was it the sunshine that woke its flowers

With a kindling look of love?

Oh! far and deep, and through hidden bowers,

That smile of heaven can rove!

No! from the breeze and the living light

Shut was the sapless rod;

But it felt in the stillness a secret might,

And thrill'd to the breath of God.

E'en so may that breath, like the vernal air,

O'er our glad spirits move;

And all such things as are good and fair

Be the blossoms, its track that prove!

THE VOICE OF GOD.

"I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid."—Gen. iii. 10.

Amidst the thrilling leaves, Thy voice

At evening's fall drew near;

Father! and did not man rejoice

That blessed sound to hear?

Did not his heart within him burn,

Touch'd by the solemn tone?

Not so!—for, never to return,

Its purity was gone.

Therefore, midst holy stream and bower,

His spirit shook with dread,

And call’d the cedars, in that hour,

To veil his conscious head.

Oh! in each wind, each fountain-flow,

Each whisper of the shade,

Grant me, my God! thy voice to know,

And not to be afraid!

THE FOUNTAIN OF MARAH.

“And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.

“And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

“And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.”—Exodus, xv. 23-25.

Where is the tree the prophet threw

Into the bitter wave?

Left it no scion where it grew,

The thirsting soul to save?

Hath nature lost the hidden power

Its precious foliage shed?

Is there no distant Eastern bower

With such sweet leaves o’erspread?

Nay, wherefore ask?—since gifts are ours

Which yet may well imbue
Earth’s many troubled founts with showers
Of heaven’s own balmy dew.
Oh! mingled with the cup of grief
Let faith’s deep spirit be!
And every prayer shall win a leaf
From that bless’d healing tree!

THE PENITENT’S OFFERING.

ST LUKE, VII. XXXVII.-IX.

Thou that with pallid cheek,
And eyes in sadness meek,
And faded locks that humbly swept the ground,
From thy long wanderings won,
Before the all-healing Son,
Did’st bow thee to the earth—O lost and found!
When thou wouldst bathe his feet
With odours richly sweet,
And many a shower of woman’s burning tear,
And dry them with that hair,
Brought low the dust to wear,
From the crown’d beauty of its festal year.
Did He reject thee then,
While the sharp scorn of men
On thy once bright and stately head was cast?

No! from the Saviour’s mien,

A solemn light serene

Bore to thy soul the peace of God at last.

For thee, their smiles no more

Familiar faces wore;

Voices, once kind, had learn’d the stranger’s tone:

Who raised thee up, and bound

Thy silent spirit’s wound?—

He, from all guilt the stainless, He alone!

But which, O erring child,

From home so long beguiled!—

Which of thine offerings won those words of heaven,

That o’er the bruisèd reed,

Condemn’d of earth to bleed,

In music pass’d, “Thy sins are all forgiven?”

Was it that perfume, fraught

With balm and incense, brought

From the sweet woods of Araby the Blest?

Or that fast-flowing rain

Of tears, which not in vain,

To Him who scorn’d not tears, thy woes confess’d?

No! not by these restored

Unto thy Father’s board,

Thy peace, that kindled joy in heaven, was made;

But, costlier in his eyes,

By that bless’d sacrifice,

Thy heart, thy full deep heart, before Him laid.

THE SCULPTURED CHILDREN.

ON CHANTREY’S MONUMENT IN LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL.

[“The monument by Chantrey in Lichfield Cathedral, to the memory of the two children of Mrs Robinson, is one of the most affecting works of art ever executed. He has given a pathos to marble which one who trusts to his natural feelings, and admires and is touched only at their bidding, might have thought, from any previous experience, that it was out of the power of statuary to attain. The monument is executed with all his beautiful simplicity and truth. The two children, two little girls, are represented as lying in each other’s arms, and, at first glance, appear to be sleeping:—

‘But something lies

Too deep and still on those soft-sealed eyes.’

It is while lying in the helplessness of innocent sleep that infancy and childhood are viewed with the most touching interest; and this, and the loveliness of the children, the uncertainty of the expression at first view, the dim shadowing forth of that sleep from which they cannot be awakened—their hovering, as it were, upon the confines of life, as if they might still be recalled—all conspire to render the last feeling, that death is indeed before us, most deeply affecting. They were the only children of their mother, and she was a widow. A tablet commemorative of their father hangs over the monument. This stands at the end of one of the side-aisles of the choir, where there is nothing to distract the attention from it, or weaken its effect. It may be contemplated in silence and alone. The inscription, in that subdued tone of strong feeling which seeks no relief in words, harmonizes with the character of the whole.

It is as follows:—

‘Sacred to the Memory of Ellen Jane and Marianne, only children Of the late Rev. William Robinson, and Ellen Jane, his wife, Their affectionate Mother, In fond remembrance of their heaven-loved innocence, Consigns their resemblance to this sanctuary, In humble gratitude for the glorious assurance That ‘of such is the kingdom of God.’[394] A. N.”]

Fair images of sleep,

Hallow’d, and soft, and deep,

On whose calm lids the dreamy quiet lies,

Like moonlight on shut bells

Of flowers in mossy dells,

Fill’d with the hush of night and summer skies!

How many hearts have felt

Your silent beauty melt

Their strength to gushing tenderness away!

How many sudden tears,

From depths of buried years

All freshly bursting, having confess’d your sway!

How many eyes will shed

Still, o’er your marble bed,

Such drops from memory’s troubled fountains wrung!

While hope hath blights to bear,

While love breathes mortal air,

While roses perish ere to glory sprung!

Yet from a voiceless home,

If some sad mother come
Fondly to linger o’er your lovely rest,
As o’er the cheek’s warm glow,
And the sweet breathings low,
Of babes that grew and faded on her breast;
If then the dove-like tone
Of those faint murmurs gone,
O’er her sick sense too piercingly return;
If for the soft bright hair,
And brow and bosom fair,
And life, now dust, her soul too deeply yearn;
O gentle forms, entwined
Like tendrils, which the wind
May wave, so clasp’d, but never can unlink!
Send from your calm profound
A still, small voice—a sound
Of hope, forbidding that lone heart to sink!
By all the pure, meek mind
In your pale beauty shrined,
By childhood’s love—too bright a bloom to die
O’er her worn spirit shed,
O fairest, holiest dead!
The faith, trust, joy, of immortality!

[394] From The Offering, an American annual.

WOMAN AND FAME.

Thou hast a charmèd cup, O Fame!
A draught that mantles high,
And seems to lift this earthly frame
Above mortality.
Away! to me—a woman—bring
Sweet waters from affection's spring!
Thou hast green laurel leaves, that twine
Into so proud a wreath,
For that resplendent gift of thine
Heroes have smiled in death:
Give me from some kind hand a flower,
The record of one happy hour!
Thou hast a voice, whose thrilling tone
Can bid each life-pulse beat,
As when a trumpet's note hath blown,
Calling the brave to meet:
But mine, let mine—a woman's breast,
By words of home-born love be bless'd.
A hollow sound is in thy song,
A mockery in thine eye,
To the sick heart that doth but long
For aid, for sympathy—
For kindly looks to cheer it on,

For tender accents that are gone.

Fame! Fame! thou canst not be the stay

Unto the drooping reed,

The cool, fresh fountain in the day

Of the soul’s feverish need:

Where must the lone one turn or flee!—

Not unto thee—oh! not to thee!

A THOUGHT OF THE FUTURE.

Dreamer! and wouldst thou know

If love goes with us to the viewless bourne?

Wouldst thou bear hence th’ unfathom’d source of woe

In thy heart’s lonely urn?

What hath it been to thee,

That power, the dweller of thy secret breast?

A dove sent forth across a stormy sea,

Finding no place of rest:

A precious odour cast

On a wild stream, that recklessly swept by;

A voice of music utter’d to the blast,

And winning no reply.

Even were such answer thine,

Wouldst thou be bless’d? Too sleepless, too profound,

Are the soul’s hidden springs; there is no line

Their depth of love to sound.

Do not words faint and fail
When thou wouldst fill them with that ocean’s power?
As thine own cheek, before high thoughts grows pale
In some o’erwhelming hour.
Doth not thy frail form sink
Beneath the chain that binds thee to one spot,
When thy heart strives, held down by many a link,
Where thy beloved are not?
Is not thy very soul
Oft in the gush of powerless blessing shed,
Till a vain tenderness, beyond control,
Bows down thy weary head?
And wouldst thou bear all this—
The burden and the shadow of thy life—
To trouble the blue skies of cloudless bliss
With earthly feelings’ strife?
Not thus, not thus—oh, no!
Not veil’d and mantled with dim clouds of care,
That spirit of my soul should with me go
To breathe celestial air.
But as the skylark springs
To its own sphere, where night afar is driven,
As to its place the flower-seed findeth wings,
So must love mount to heaven!

Vainly it shall not strive
There on weak words to pour a stream of fire;
Thought unto thought shall kindling impulse give,
As light might wake a lyre.
And oh! its blessings there,
Shower'd like rich balsam forth on some dear head,
Powerless no more, a gift shall surely bear,
A joy of sunlight shed.
Let me, then—let me dream
That love goes with us to the shore unknown;
So o'er its burning tears a heavenly gleam
In mercy shall be thrown!

THE VOICE OF MUSIC.

"Striking the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound."
Childe Harold.

Whence is the might of thy master-spell?
Speak to me, voice of sweet sound! and tell:
How canst thou wake, by one gentle breath,
Passionate visions of love and death?
How call'st thou back, with a note, a sigh,
Words and low tones from the days gone by—
A sunny glance, or a fond farewell?—
Speak to me, voice of sweet sound! and tell.
What is thy power, from the soul's deep spring

In sudden gushes the tears to bring?
Even midst the swells of thy festal glee,
Fountains of sorrow are stirr’d by thee!
Vain are those tears!—vain and fruitless all—
Showers that refresh not, yet still must fall;
For a purer bliss while the full heart burns,
For a brighter home while the spirit yearns!
Something of mystery there surely dwells,
Waiting thy touch, in our bosom-cells;
Something that finds not its answer here—
A chain to be clasp’d in another sphere.
Therefore a current of sadness deep
Through the stream of thy triumphs is heard to sweep,
Like a moan of the breeze through a summer sky—
Like a name of the dead when the wind foams high!
Yet speak to me still, though thy tones be fraught
With vain remembrance and troubled thought;
Speak! for thou tellest my soul that its birth
Links it with regions more bright than earth.

THE ANGEL’S GREETING.

“Hark!—they whisper!—Angels say,
Sister spirit! come away.” Pope.
Come to the land of peace!
Come where the tempest hath no longer sway,

The shadow passes from the soul away,
The sounds of weeping cease.
Fear hath no dwelling there!
Come to the mingling of repose and love,
Breathed by the silent spirit of the dove
Through the celestial air.
Come to the bright, and blest,
And crown’d for ever! Midst that shining band,
Gather’d to heaven’s own wreath from every land,
Thy spirit shall find rest!
Thou hast been long alone:
Come to thy mother! On the Sabbath shore,
The heart that rock’d thy childhood, back once more
Shall take its wearied one.
In silence wert thou left:
Come to thy sisters! Joyously again
All the home-voices, blent in one sweet strain,
Shall greet their long bereft.
Over thine orphan head
The storm hath swept, as o’er a willow’s bough:
Come to thy father! It is finish’d now;
Thy tears have all been shed.
In thy divine abode,
Change finds no pathway, memory no dark trace,

And, oh! bright victory—death by love no place.

Come, spirit! to thy God.

A FAREWELL TO WALES,

FOR THE MELODY CALLED “THE ASH GROVE,” ON LEAVING THAT COUNTRY WITH MY CHILDREN.

The sound of thy streams in my spirit I bear—

Farewell, and a blessing be with thee, green land!

On thy hearths, on thy halls, on thy pure mountain air,

On the chords of the harp, and the minstrel’s free hand,

From the love of my soul with my tears it is shed,

As I leave thee, green land of my home and my dead!

I bless thee!—yet not for the beauty which dwells

In the heart of thy hills, on the rocks of thy shore;

And not for the memory set deep in thy dells,

Of the bard and the hero, the mighty of yore;

And not for thy songs of those proud ages fled—

Green land, poet-land of my home and my dead!

I bless thee for all the true bosoms that beat

Where’er a low hamlet smiles up to thy skies;

For thy cottage-hearths burning the stranger to greet,

For the soul that shines forth from thy children’s kind eyes!

May the blessing, like sunshine, about thee be spread,

Green land of my childhood, my home, and my dead!

[“It was about this time (1828) that ‘The Farewell to Wales’ was written.

‘I bless thee for all the true bosoms that beat

Where’er a low hamlet smiles up to thy skies;

For thy cottage-hearths burning the stranger to greet,

For the soul that shines forth from thy children’s kind eyes.’

Mrs Hemans always spoke of this ‘land of her childhood, her home, and her dead,’ with interest and affection. When she sailed from its shore, she covered her face in her cloak, desiring her boys to tell her when the hills were out of sight, that she might then look up. She would often, too, refer to the pain she had suffered—in addition to the sorrow of parting from her kindred and friends, for the first time since her birth, to make actual acquaintance with the daily cares of life—upon taking leave of the simple and homely peasantry of the neighbourhood, by whom she was beloved with that old-fashioned heartiness which yet lingers in some of the nooks and remote places of England. Many of them rushed forward to touch the posts of the gate through which the poetess had passed; and when, three years afterwards, she paid a visit to St Asaph, came and wept over her, and entreated her to return and make her home among them again.”—Chorley’s Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 206-7.]

IMPROMPTU LINES,

ADDRESSED TO MISS F. A. L., ON RECEIVING FROM HER SOME FLOWERS WHEN CONFINED BY ILLNESS.

Ye tell me not of birds and bees,

Not of the summer’s murmuring trees,

Not of the streams and woodland bowers—

A sweeter tale is yours, fair flowers!

Glad tidings to my couch ye bring,

Of one still bright, still flowing spring—

A fount of kindness ever new,

In a friend’s heart, the good and true.

A PARTING SONG.

“O mes amis! rapellez-vous quelquefois mes vers! mon ame y est empreinte.”—Corinne.

When will ye think of me, my friends?

When will ye think of me?—

When the last red light, the farewell of day,

From the rock and the river is passing away—

When the air with a deepening hush is fraught,

And the heart grows burden’d with tender thought,

Then let it be!

When will ye think of me, kind friends?

When will ye think of me?—

When the rose of the rich midsummer-time

Is fill’d with the hues of its glorious prime—

When ye gather its bloom, as in bright hours fled,

From the walks where my footsteps no more may tread—

Then let it be!

When will ye think of me, sweet friends?

When will ye think of me?—

When the sudden tears o’erflow your eye

At the sound of some olden melody—

When ye hear the voice of a mountain stream,

When ye feel the charm of a poet’s dream—

Then let it be!

Thus let my memory be with you, friends!

Thus ever think of me!

Kindly and gently, but as of one

For whom ’tis well to be fled and gone—

As of a bird from a chain unbound,

As of a wanderer whose home is found—

So let it be.

[“The description of her feelings, when the actual parting took place, proves that there was no exaggeration in the affectionate sadness of her ‘Farewell to Wales,’ and the blessing she thus fondly left with it:—

‘The sound of thy streams in my spirit I bear—

Farewell! and a blessing be with thee, green land!

On thy hearths, on thy halls, on thy pure mountain air,

On the chords of the harp, and the minstrel’s free hand,

From the love of my soul with my tears it is shed,

As I leave thee, green land of my home and my dead!

‘Oh! that Tuesday morning!’ (thus she wrote in her first letter to St Asaph.) ‘I literally covered my face all the way from Bronwylfa, until the boys told me we had passed the Clwyd range of hills. Then something of the bitterness was over.

‘Miss P. met me at Bagillt, and on board the packet we found Mr D., who was kinder to me than I can possibly tell you. He really watched over me all the way with a care I shall not soon forget; and notwithstanding all you may say of female

protection, I felt that of a gentleman to be a great comfort, for we had a difficult and disagreeable landing. As we entered the port, a vessel, coming out, struck against ours, and caused a great concussion: there was no danger, I imagine, but it gave one a faint notion of what the meeting must have been between the Comet and the Aire. We had a pretty sight on the water; another packet, loaded, clustered all over with blue-coat boys, sailed past. It was their annual holiday, on which they have a water excursion; and as they went by, all the little fellows waved their hats, and sent forth three cheers, which made our vessel ring again. Only imagine a ship-load of happiness! That word reminds me of my own boys, who are enjoying themselves greatly. Of myself, what can I say to you?... When I look back on the short time that has elapsed since I left this place, I am astonished; I seem in it to have lived an age of deep, strong, vain feeling." —Memoir, p. 151-3.]

WE RETURN NO MORE![395]

"When I stood beneath the fresh green tree,
And saw around me the wide field revive
With fruits and fertile promise; and the Spring
Come forth, her work of gladness to contrive,
With all her reckless birds upon the wing,
I turn'd from all she brought to all she could not bring."
Childe Harold.

"We return!—we return!—we return no more!"
So comes the song to the mountain shore,
From those that are leaving their Highland home
For a world far over the blue sea's foam:
"We return no more!" and through cave and dell

Mournfully wanders that wild farewell.
“We return!—we return!—we return no more!”
So breathe sad voices our spirits o’er;
Murmuring up from the depths of the heart,
Where lovely things with their light depart:
And the inborn sound hath a prophet’s tone,
And we feel that a joy is for ever gone.
“We return!—we return!—we return no more!”
Is it heard when the days of flowers are o’er?
When the passionate soul of the night-bird’s lay
Hath died from the summer woods away?
When the glory from sunset’s robe hath pass’d,
Or the leaves are borne on the rushing blast?
No! It is not the rose that returns no more;—
A breath of spring shall its bloom restore;
And it is not the voice that o’erflows the bowers
With a stream of love through the starry hours;
Nor is it the crimson of sunset hues,
Nor the frail flush’d leaves which the wild wind strews.
“We return!—we return!—we return no more!”
Doth the bird sing thus from a brighter shore?
Those wings that follow the southern breeze,
Float they not homeward o’er vernal seas?
Yes! from the lands of the vine and palm

They come, with the sunshine, when waves grow calm.

“But we!—we return!—we return no more!”

The heart’s young dreams, when their spring is o’er;

The love it hath pour’d so freely forth—

The boundless trust in ideal worth;

The faith in affection—deep, fond, yet vain—

These are the lost that return not again!

[395] Ha til!—ha til!—ha til mi tulidle!—“we return!—we return!—we return no more!”—the burden of the Highland song of emigration.

TO A WANDERING FEMALE SINGER.

Thou hast loved and thou hast suffer’d!

Unto feeling deep and strong,

Thou hast trembled like a harp’s frail string—

I know it by thy song!

Thou hast loved—it may be vainly—

But well—oh, but too well!

Thou hast suffer’d all that woman’s breast

May bear—but must not tell.

Thou hast wept, and thou hast parted,

Thou hast been forsaken long,

Thou hast watch’d for steps that came not back—

I know it by thy song!

By the low, clear silvery gushing

Of its music from thy breast;

By the quivering of its flute-like swell—
A sound of the heart’s unrest;
By its fond and plaintive lingering
On each word of grief so long.
Oh! thou hast loved and suffer’d much—
I know it by thy song!

LIGHTS AND SHADES.

The gloomiest day hath gleams of light;
The darkest wave hath light foam near it;
And twinkles through the cloudiest night
Some solitary star to cheer it.
The gloomiest soul is not all gloom;
The saddest heart is not all sadness;
And sweetly o’er the darkest doom
There shines some lingering beam of gladness.
Despair is never quite despair;
Nor life nor death the future closes;
And round the shadowy brow of Care
Will Hope and Fancy twine their roses.

[These spirited and graceful stanzas appeared in the “For-get-me-Not” for 1829, and are here for the first time admitted into the general collection of the author’s works. In all probability, they are an early effusion, and poured forth when the poetry of Moore was fresh in her mind.]

THE PALMER.

“The faded palm-branch in his hand
Show’d pilgrim from the Holy Land.” Scott.

Art thou come from the far-off land at last?
Thou that hast wander’d long!
Thou art come to a home whence the smile hath pass’d
With the merry voice of song.
For the sunny glance and the bounding heart
Thou wilt seek—but all are gone;
They are parted, e’en as waters part,
To meet in the deep alone!
And thou—from thy lip is fled the glow,
From thine eye the light of morn;
And the shades of thought o’erhang thy brow,
And thy cheek with life is worn.
Say what hast thou brought from the distant shore
For thy wasted youth to pay?
Hast thou treasure to win thee joys once more?
Hast thou vassals to smooth thy way?
“I have brought but the palm-branch in my hand,
Yet I call not my bright youth lost!
I have won but high thought in the Holy Land,
Yet I count not too dear the cost!
“I look on the leaves of the deathless tree—

These records of my track;
And better than youth in its flush of glee,
Are the memories they give me back!
“They speak of toil, and of high emprise,
As in words of solemn cheer;
They speak of lonely victories
O’er pain, and doubt, and fear.
“They speak of scenes which have now become
Bright pictures in my breast;
Where my spirit finds a glorious home,
And the love of my heart can rest.
“The colours pass not from these away,
Like tints of shower or sun;
Oh! beyond all treasures that know decay,
Is the wealth my soul hath won!
“A rich light thence o’er my life’s decline,
An inborn light is cast;
For the sake of the palm from the holy shrine,
I bewail not my bright days past!”

THE CHILD’S FIRST GRIEF.

Oh! call my brother back to me!
I cannot play alone;
The summer comes with flower and bee—
Where is my brother gone?

“The butterfly is glancing bright
Across the sunbeam’s track;
I care not now to chase its flight—
Oh! call my brother back!
“The flowers run wild—the flowers we sow’d
Around our garden tree;
Our vine is drooping with its load—
Oh! call him back to me!”
“He would not hear thy voice, fair child!
He may not come to thee;
The face that once like spring-time smiled,
On earth no more thou’lt see.
“A rose’s brief, bright life of joy,
Such unto him was given:
Go—thou must play alone, my boy!
Thy brother is in heaven.”
“And has he left his birds and flowers;
And must I call in vain?
And through the long, long summer hours,
Will he not come again?
“And by the brook and in the glade
Are all our wanderings o’er?
Oh! while my brother with me play’d,
Would I had loved him more!”

TO THE NEW-BORN.[396]

A blessing on thy head, thou child of many hopes and fears!
A rainbow-welcome thine hath been, of mingled smiles and tears.
Thy father greets thee unto life with a full and chasten’d heart,
For a solemn gift from God thou comest, all precious as thou art!
I see thee not asleep, fair boy! upon thy mother’s breast,
Yet well I know how guarded there shall be thy rosy rest;
And how her soul with love, and prayer, and gladness, will o’erflow,
While bending o’er thy soft-seal’d eyes, thou dear one! well I know.
A blessing on thy gentle head! and bless’d thou art in truth,
For a home where God is felt awaits thy childhood and thy youth:
Around thee pure and holy thoughts shall dwell as light and air,
And steal unto thine heart, and wake the germs now folded there.
Smile on thy mother! while she feels that unto her is given,
In that young day-spring glance, the pledge of a soul to rear for heaven!
Smile! and sweet peace be o’er thy sleep, joy o’er thy wakening shed!
Blessings and blessings evermore, fair boy! upon thy head!

[396] Addressed to the child of her eldest brother.

THE DEATH-SONG OF ALCESTIS.

She came forth in her bridal robes array’d,
And midst the graceful statues, round the hall
Shedding the calm of their celestial mien,
Stood pale yet proudly beautiful as they:
Flowers in her bosom, and the star-like gleam

Of jewels trembling from her braided hair,
And death upon her brow!—but glorious death!
Her own heart's choice, the token and the seal
Of love, o'ermastering love; which, till that hour,
Almost an anguish in the brooding weight
Of its unutterable tenderness,
Had burden'd her full soul. But now, oh! now,
Its time was come—and from the spirit's depths,
The passion and the mighty melody
Of its immortal voice in triumph broke,
Like a strong rushing wind!
The soft pure air
Came floating through that hall—the Grecian air,
Laden with music—flute-notes from the vales,
Echoes of song—the last sweet sounds of life
And the glad sunshine of the golden clime
Stream'd, as a royal mantle, round her form—
The glorified of love! But she—she look'd
Only on him for whom 'twas joy to die,
Deep—deepest, holiest joy! Or if a thought
Of the warm sunlight, and the scented breeze,
And the sweet Dorian songs, o'erswept the tide
Of her unswerving soul—'twas but a thought
That own'd the summer loveliness of life

For him a worthy offering! So she stood,
Wrapt in bright silence, as entranced awhile;
Till her eye kindled, and her quivering frame
With the swift breeze of inspiration shook,
As the pale priestess trembles to the breath
Of inborn oracles! Then flush'd her cheek,
And all the triumph, all the agony,
Borne on the battling waves of love and death,
All from her woman's heart, in sudden song,
Burst like a fount of fire.
"I go, I go!
Thou sun! thou golden sun! I go
Far from thy light to dwell:
Thou shalt not find my place below,
Dim is that world—bright sun of Greece, farewell!
"The laurel and the glorious rose
Thy glad beam yet may see;
But where no purple summer glows,
O'er the dark wave I haste from them and thee.
"Yet doth my spirit faint to part?
—I mourn thee not, O sun!
Joy, solemn joy, o'erflows my heart:
Sing me triumphal songs!—my crown is won!
"Let not a voice of weeping rise—

My heart is girt with power!
Let the green earth and festal skies
Laugh, as to grace a conqueror’s closing hour!
“For thee, for thee, my bosom’s lord!
Thee, my soul’s loved! I die;
Thine is the torch of life restored,
Mine, mine the rapture, mine the victory!
“Now may the boundless love, that lay
Unfathom’d still before,
In one consuming burst find way—
In one bright flood all, all its riches pour!
“Thou know’st, thou know’st what love is now!
Its glory and its might—
Are they not written on my brow?
And will that image ever quit thy sight?
“No! deathless in thy faithful breast,
There shall my memory keep
Its own bright altar-place of rest,
While o’er my grave the cypress branches weep.
“Oh, the glad light!—the light is fair,
The soft breeze warm and free;
And rich notes fill the scented air,
And all are gifts—my love’s last gifts to thee!
“Take me to thy warm heart once more!

Night falls—my pulse beats low:
Seek not to quicken, to restore—
Joy is in every pang. I go, I go!
“I feel thy tears, I feel thy breath,
I meet thy fond look still;
Keen is the strife of love and death;
Faint and yet fainter grows my bosom’s thrill.
“Yet swells the tide of rapture strong,
Though mists o’ershade mine eye!
—Sing, Pæan! sing a conqueror’s song!
For thee, for thee, my spirit’s lord, I die!”

THE HOME OF LOVE.

Thou mov’st in visions, Love! Around thy way,
E’en through this world’s rough path and changeful day,
For ever floats a gleam—
Not from the realms of moonlight or the morn,
But thine own soul’s illumined chambers born—
The colouring of a dream!
Love! shall I read thy dream? Oh! is it not
All of some sheltering wood-embosom’d spot—
A bower for thee and thine?
Yes! lone and lowly is that home; yet there
Something of heaven in the transparent air
Makes every flower divine.

Something that mellows and that glorifies,
Breathes o’er it ever from the tender skies,
As o’er some blessed isle;
E’en like the soft and spiritual glow
Kindling rich woods, whereon th’ ethereal bow
Sleeps lovingly awhile.
The very whispers of the wind have there
A flute-like harmony, that seems to bear
Greeting from some bright shore,
Where none have said farewell!—where no decay
Lends the faint crimson to the dying day;
Where the storm’s might is o’er.
And there thou dreamest of Elysian rest,
In the deep sanctuary of one true breast
Hidden from earthly ill:
There wouldst thou watch the homeward step, whose sound
Wakening all nature to sweet echoes round,
Thine inmost soul can thrill.
There by the hearth should many a glorious page,
From mind to mind the immortal heritage,
For thee its treasures pour;
Or music’s voice at vesper hours be heard,
Or dearer interchange of playful word,
Affection’s household lore.

And the rich unison of mingled prayer,
The melody of hearts in heavenly air,
Thence duly should arise;
Lifting th’ eternal hope, th’ adoring breath,
Of spirits, not to be disjoin’d by death,
Up to the starry skies.
There, dost thou well believe, no storm should come
To mar the stillness of that angel-home;
There should thy slumbers be
Weigh’d down with honey-dew, serenely bless’d,
Like theirs who first in Eden’s grove took rest
Under some balmy tree.
Love! Love! thou passionate in joy and woe!
And canst thou hope for cloudless peace below—
Here, where bright things must die?
O thou! that, wildly worshipping, dost shed
On the frail altar of a mortal head
Gifts of infinity!
Thou must be still a trembler, fearful Love!
Danger seems gathering from beneath, above,
Still round thy precious things;
Thy stately pine-tree, or thy gracious rose,
In their sweet shade can yield thee no repose,
Here, where the blight hath wings.

And as a flower, with some fine sense imbued,
To shrink before the wind’s vicissitude,
So in thy prescient breast
Are lyre-strings quivering with prophetic thrill
To the low footstep of each coming ill:
Oh! canst thou dream of rest?
Bear up thy dream! thou mighty and thou weak!
Heart, strong as death, yet as a reed to break—
As a flame, tempest-sway’d!
He that sits calm on high is yet the source
Whence thy soul’s current hath its troubled course,
He that great deep hath made!
Will He not pity?—He whose searching eye
Reads all the secrets of thine agony?—
Oh! pray to be forgiven
Thy fond idolatry, thy blind excess,
And seek with Him that bower of blessedness.
Love! thy sole home is heaven!

BOOKS AND FLOWERS.

“La vue d’une fleur caresse mon imagination, et flatte mes sens a un point inexprimable. Sous le tranquille abri du toit paternel j’etais nourrie des l’enfance avec des fleurs et des livres; dans l’etroite enceinte d’une prison, au milieu des fers imposies par la tyrannie, j’oublie l’injustice des hommes, leurs sottises et mes maux, avec des livres et des fleurs.”

Come! let me make a sunny realm around thee
Of thought and beauty! Here are books and flowers,
With spells to loose the fetter which hath bound thee
The ravel'd coil of this world's feverish hours.
The soul of song is in these deathless pages,
Even as the odour in the flower enshrined;
Here the crown'd spirits of departed ages
Have left the silent melodies of mind.
Their thoughts, that strove with time, and change, and anguish,
For some high place where faith her wing might rest,
Are burning here—a flame that may not languish—
Still pointing upward to that bright hill's crest!
Their grief, the veil'd infinity exploring
For treasures lost, is here;—their boundless love,
Its mighty streams of gentleness outpouring
On all things round, and clasping all above.
And the bright beings, their own heart's creations,
Bright, yet all human, here are breathing still;
Conflicts, and agonies, and exultations
Are here, and victories of prevailing will!
Listen! oh, listen! let their high words cheer thee!
Their swan-like music ringing through all woes;
Let my voice bring their holy influence near thee—
The Elysian air of their divine repose!

Or would’st thou turn to earth? Not earth all furrow’d
By the old traces of man’s toil and care,
But the green peaceful world that never sorrow’d,
The world of leaves, and dews, and summer air!
Look on these flowers! as o’er an altar shedding,
O’er Milton’s page, soft light from colour’d urns!
They are the links, man’s heart to nature wedding,
When to her breast the prodigal returns.
They are from lone wild places, forest dingles,
Fresh banks of many a low-voiced hidden stream,
Where the sweet star of eve looks down and mingles
Faint lustre with the water-lily’s gleam.
They are from where the soft winds play in gladness,
Covering the turf with flowery blossom-showers;
—Too richly dower’d, O friend! are we for sadness—
Look on an empire—mind and nature—ours!

[“The ‘brightly associated hours’ she passed with Mrs Lawrence, have been alluded to by Mrs Hemans, in the dedication to the ‘National Lyrics,’ and recorded by ‘her friend, and the sister of her friend, Colonel D’Aguilar,’ in her own affectionate ‘Recollections.’ The ‘Books and Flowers’ of Wavertree Hall were ever fondly identified with their dear mistress; and, years after the enjoyment of them had passed away from all senses but memory, she who was then herself, too, ‘passing away,’ thus tenderly alluded to them from her sick couch at Redesdale:—‘When I write to you, my imagination always brightens, and pleasant thoughts of lovely flowers, and dear old books, and strains of antique Italian melody, come floating over me, as

Bacon says the rich scents go ‘to and fro like music in the air.’”]

FOR A PICTURE OF ST CECILIA ATTENDED BY ANGELS.

“How rich that forehead’s calm expanse!
How bright that heaven-directed glance!
—Waft her to glory, winged powers!
Ere sorrow be renew’d,
And intercourse with mortal hours
Bring back a humbler mood!” Wordsworth.

How can that eye, with inspiration beaming,
Wear yet so deep a calm? O child of song!
Is not the music-land a world of dreaming,
Where forms of sad, bewildering beauty throng?
Hath it not sounds from voices long departed?
Echoes of tones that rung in childhood’s ear?
Low haunting whispers, which the weary-hearted,
Stealing midst crowds away, have wept to hear?
No, not to thee! Thy spirit, meek, yet queenly,
On its own starry height, beyond all this,
Floating triumphantly and yet serenely,
Breathes no faint under-tone through songs of bliss.
Say by what strain, through cloudless ether swelling,
Thou hast drawn down those wanderers from the skies?
Bright guests! even such as left of yore their dwelling
For the deep cedar-shades of Paradise!

What strain? Oh! not the nightingale’s, when, showering
Her own heart’s life-drops on the burning lay,
She stirs the young woods in the days of flowering,
And pours her strength, but not her grief, away:
And not the exile’s—when, midst lonely billows,
He wakes the Alpine notes his mother sung,
Or blends them with the sigh of alien willows,
Where, murmuring to the wind, his harp is hung:
And not the pilgrim’s—though his thoughts be holy,
And sweet his avè-song when day grows dim;
Yet, as he journeys, pensively and slowly,
Something of sadness floats through that low hymn.
But thou!—the spirit which at eve is filling
All the hush’d air and reverential sky—
Founts, leaves, and flowers, with solemn rapture thrilling—
This is the soul of thy rich harmony.
This bears up high those breathings of devotion
Wherein the currents of thy heart gush free;
Therefore no world of sad and vain emotion
Is the dream-haunted music-land for thee.

THE BRIGAND LEADER AND HIS WIFE.

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF EASTLAKE’S.

Dark chieftain of the heath and height!
Wild feaster on the hills by night!

See’st thou the stormy sunset’s glow
Flung back by glancing spears below?
Now for one strife of stern despair!
The foe hath track’d thee to thy lair.
Thou, against whom the voice of blood
Hath risen from rock and lonely wood;
And in whose dreams a moan should be,
Not of the water, nor the tree;
Haply thine own last hour is nigh,—
Yet shalt thou not forsaken die.
There’s one that pale beside thee stands,
More true than all thy mountain-bands!
She will not shrink in doubt and dread
When the balls whistle round thy head:
Nor leave thee, though thy closing eye
No longer may to hers reply.
Oh! many a soft and quiet grace
Hath faded from her form and face;
And many a thought, the fitting guest
Of woman’s meek, religious breast,
Hath perish’d in her wanderings wide,
Through the deep forests by thy side.
Yet, mournfully surviving all,
A flower upon a ruin’s wall—

A friendless thing, whose lot is cast
Of lovely ones to be the last—
Sad, but unchanged through good and ill,
Thine is her lone devotion still.
And oh! not wholly lost the heart
Where that undying love hath part;
Not worthless all, though far and long
From home estranged, and guided wrong;
Yet may its depths by heaven be stirr’d,
Its prayer for thee be pour’d and heard!

THE CHILD’S RETURN FROM THE WOODLANDS.

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE’S.

“All good and guiltless as thou art,
Some transient griefs will touch thy heart—
Griefs that along thy alter’d face
Will breathe a more subduing grace,
Than even those looks of joy that lie
On the soft cheek of infancy.” Wilson.

Hast thou been in the woods with the honey-bee?
Hast thou been with the lamb in the pastures free?
With the hare through the copses and dingles wild?
With the butterfly over the heath, fair child?
Yes! the light fall of thy bounding feet
Hath not startled the wren from her mossy seat:

Yet hast thou ranged the green forest-dells,
And brought back a treasure of buds and bells.
Thou know’st not the sweetness, by antique song
Breathed o’er the names of that flowery throng:
The woodbine, the primrose, the violet dim,
The lily that gleams by the fountain’s brim;
These are old words, that have made each grove
A dreaming haunt for romance and love—
Each sunny bank, where faint odours lie,
A place for the gushings of poesy.
Thou know’st not the light wherewith fairy lore
Sprinkles the turf and the daisies o’er:
Enough for thee are the dews that sleep
Like hidden gems in the flower-urns deep;
Enough the rich crimson spots that dwell
Midst the gold of the cowslip’s perfumed cell;
And the scent by the blossoming sweetbriers shed,
And the beauty that bows the wood-hyacinth’s head.
O happy child! in thy fawn-like glee,
What is remembrance or thought to thee?
Fill thy bright locks with those gifts of spring,
O’er thy green pathway their colours fling;
Bind them in chaplet and wild festoon—
What if to droop and to perish soon?

Nature hath mines of such wealth—and thou
Never will prize its delights as now!
For a day is coming to quell the tone
That rings in thy laughter, thou joyous one!
And to dim thy brow with a touch of care,
Under the gloss of its clustering hair;
And to tame the flash of thy cloudless eyes
Into the stillness of autumn skies;
And to teach thee that grief hath her needful part
Midst the hidden things of each human heart.
Yet shall we mourn, gentle child! for this?
Life hath enough of yet holier bliss!
Such be thy portion!—the bliss to look,
With a reverent spirit, through nature's book;
By fount, by forest, by river's line,
To track the paths of a love divine;
To read its deep meanings—to see and hear
God in earth's garden—and not to fear!

THE FAITH OF LOVE.

Thou hast watch'd beside the bed of death,
O fearless human Love!
Thy lip received the last, faint breath,
Ere the spirit fled above.
Thy prayer was heard by the parting bier,

In a low and farewell tone;

Thou hast given the grave both flower and tear—

—O Love! thy task is done.

Then turn thee from each pleasant spot

Where thou wert wont to rove;

For there the friend of thy soul is not,

Nor the joy of thy youth, O Love!

Thou wilt meet but mournful Memory there;

Her dreams in the grove she weaves,

With echoes filling the summer air,

With sighs the trembling leaves.

Then turn thee to the world again,

From those dim, haunted bowers,

And shut thine ear to the wild, sweet strain

That tells of vanish’d hours.

And wear not on thine aching heart

The image of the dead;

For the tie is rent that gave thee part

In the gladness its beauty shed.

And gaze on the pictured smile no more

That thus can life outlast:

All between parted souls is o’er.—

Love! Love! forget the past!

“Voice of vain boding! away, be still!

Strive not against the faith
That yet my bosom with light can fill,
Unquench’d, and undim’d by death.
“From the pictured smile I will not turn,
Though sadly now it shine;
Nor quit the shades that in whispers mourn
For the step once link’d with mine;
“Nor shut mine ear to the song of old,
Though its notes the pang renew.
—Such memories deep in my heart I hold,
To keep it pure and true.
“By the holy instinct of my heart,
By the hope that bears me on,
I have still my own undying part
In the deep affection gone.
“By the presence that about me seems
Through night and day to dwell,
Voice of vain bodings and fearful dreams!
—I have breathed no last farewell!”

THE SISTER’S DREAM.

[Suggested by a picture in which a young girl is represented as sleeping, and visited during her slumbers by the spirits of her departed sisters.]

She sleeps!—but not the free and sunny sleep
That lightly on the brow of childhood lies:

Though happy be her rest, and soft, and deep,
Yet, ere it sank upon her shadow'd eyes,
Thoughts of past scenes and kindred graves o'erswept
Her soul's meek stillness—she had pray'd and wept.
And now in visions to her couch they come,
The early lost—the beautiful—the dead!
That unto her bequeath'd a mournful home,
Whence with their voices all sweet laughter fled
They rise—the sisters of her youth arise,
As from the world where no frail blossom dies.
And well the sleeper knows them not of earth—
Not as they were when binding up the flowers,
Telling wild legends round the winter-hearth,
Braiding their long, fair hair for festal hours:
These things are past—a spiritual gleam,
A solemn glory, robes them in that dream.
Yet, if the glee of life's fresh budding years
In those pure aspects may no more be read,
Thence, too, hath sorrow melted—and the tears
Which o'er their mother's holy dust they shed,
Are all effaced. There earth hath left no sign
Save its deep love, still touching every line.
But oh! more soft, more tender—breathing more
A thought of pity, than in vanish'd days!

While, hovering silently and brightly o’er
The lone one’s head, they meet her spirit’s gaze
With their immortal eyes, that seem to say,
“Yet, sister! yet we love thee—come away!”
’Twill fade, the radiant dream! And will she not
Wake with more painful yearning at her heart?
Will not her home seem yet a lonelier spot,
Her task more sad, when those bright shadows part?
And the green summer after them look dim,
And sorrow’s tone be in the bird’s wild hymn?
But let her hope be strong, and let the dead
Visit her soul in heaven’s calm beauty still;
Be their names utter’d, be their memory spread
Yet round the place they never more may fill!
All is not over with earth’s broken tie—
Where, where should sisters love, if not on high?

A FAREWELL TO ABBOTSFORD.

[These lines were given to Sir Walter Scott, at the gate of Abbotsford, in the summer of 1829. He was then apparently in the vigour of an existence whose energies promised long continuance; and the glance of his quick, smiling eye, and the very sound of his kindly voice, seemed to kindle the gladness of his own sunny and benignant spirit in all who had the happiness of approaching him.]

Home of the gifted! fare thee well,
And a blessing on thee rest!

While the heather waves its purple bell
O’er moor and mountain-crest;
While stream to stream around thee calls,
And braes with broom are drest,
Glad be the harping in thy halls—
A blessing on thee rest!
While the high voice from thee sent forth
Bids rock and cairn reply,
Wakening the spirits of the North
Like a chieftain’s gathering-cry;
While its deep master-tones hold sway
As a king’s o’er every breast,
Home of the Legend and the Lay!
A blessing on thee rest!
Joy to thy hearth, and board, and bower!
Long honours to thy line!
And hearts of proof, and hands of power,
And bright names worthy thine!
By the merry step of childhood, still
May thy free sward be prest!
—While one proud pulse in the land can thrill,
A blessing on thee rest!

O’CONNOR’S CHILD.

[This piece was suggested by a picture in the possession of Mrs Lawrence of

Wavertree Hall. It represents the “Hero’s Child” of Campbell’s Poem, seated beside a solitary tomb of rock, marked with a cross, in a wild and desert place. A tempest seems gathering in the angry skies above her, but the attitude of the drooping figure expresses the utter carelessness of desolation, and the countenance speaks of entire abstraction from all external objects. A bow and quiver lie beside her, amongst the weeds and wild-flowers of the desert.]

“I fled the home of grief
At Connocht Moran’s tomb to fall,
I found the helmet of my chief,
His bow still hanging on our wall;
And took it down, and vow’d to rove
This desert place a huntress bold;
Nor would I change my buried love
For any heart of living mould.”

Campbell.

The sleep of storms is dark upon the skies,
The weight of omens heavy in the cloud:—
Bid the lorn huntress of the desert rise,
And gird the form whose beauty grief hath bow’d,
And leave the tomb, as tombs are left—alone,
To the star’s vigil, and the wind’s wild moan.
Tell her of revelries in bower and hall,
Where gems are glittering, and bright wine is pour’d;
Where to glad measures chiming footsteps fall,
And soul seems gushing from the harp’s full chord;

And richer flowers amid fair tresses wave,
Than the sad Love-lies-bleeding of the grave.
Oh! little know'st thou of th' o'ermastering spell
Wherewith love binds the spirit, strong in pain,
To the spot hallow'd by a wild farewell,
A parting agony,—intense, yet vain,
A look—and darkness when its gleam hath flown,
A voice—and silence when its words are gone!
She hears thee not: her full, deep, fervent heart
Is set in her dark eyes;—and they are bound
Unto that cross, that shrine, that world apart,
Where faithful blood hath sanctified the ground;
And love with death striven long by tear and prayer,
And anguish frozen into still despair.
Yet on her spirit hath arisen at last
A light, a joy, of its own wanderings born;
Around her path a vision's glow is cast,
Back, back her lost one comes in hues of morn![397]
For her the gulf is fill'd—the dark night fled,
Whose mystery parts the living and the dead.
And she can pour forth in such converse high
All her soul's tide of love, the deep, the strong.
Oh! lonelier far, perchance, thy destiny,
And more forlorn, amidst the world's gay throng,

Than hers—the queen of that majestic gloom,

The tempest, and the desert, and the tomb!

[397] “A son of light, a lovely form, He comes, and makes her glad.”—Campbell.

THE PRAYER FOR LIFE.

O sunshine and fair earth!

Sweet is your kindly mirth;

Angel of death! yet, yet awhile delay!

Too sad it is to part,

Thus in my spring of heart,

With all the light and laughter of the day.

For me the falling leaf

Touches no chord of grief,

No dark void in the rose’s bosom lies:

Not one triumphal tone,

One hue of hope, is gone

From song or bloom beneath the summer skies.

Death, Death! ere yet decay,

Call me not hence away!

Over the golden hours no shade is thrown:

The poesy that dwells

Deep in green woods and dells

Still to my spirit speaks of joy alone.

Yet not for this, O Death!

Not for the vernal breath

Of winds that shake forth music from the trees:

Not for the splendour given

To night’s dark, regal heaven,

Spoiler! I ask thee not reprieve for these.

But for the happy love

Whose light, where’er I rove,

Kindles all nature to a sudden smile,

Shedding on branch and flower

A rainbow-tinted shower

Of richer life—spare, spare me yet awhile.

Too soon, too fast thou’rt come!

Too beautiful is home—

A home of gentle voices and kind eyes!

And I the loved of all,

On whom fond blessings fall

From every lip. Oh! wilt thou rend such ties?

Sweet sisters! weave a chain

My spirit to detain:

Hold me to earth with strong affection back;

Bind me with mighty love

Unto the stream, the grove,

Our daily paths—our life’s familiar track.

Stay with me! gird me round!

Your voices bear a sound

Of hope—a light comes with you and departs;
Hush my soul's boding swell,
That murmurs of farewell.
How can I leave this ring of kindest hearts?
Death! grave!—and are there those
That woo your dark repose
Midst the rich beauty of the glowing earth?
Surely about them lies
No world of loving eyes.
Leave me, oh! leave me unto home and hearth!

THE WELCOME TO DEATH.

Thou art welcome, O thou warning voice!
My soul hath pined for thee;
Thou art welcome as sweet sounds from shore
To wanderer on the sea.
I hear thee in the rustling woods,
In the sighing vernal airs;
Thou call'st me from the lonely earth
With a deeper tone than theirs.
The lonely earth! Since kindred steps
From its green paths are fled,
A dimness and a hush have lain
O'er all its beauty spread.
The silence of th' unanswering soul

Is on me and around;
My heart hath echoes but for thee,
Thou still, small, warning sound!
Voice after voice hath died away,
Once in my dwelling heard;
Sweet household name by name hath changed
To grief's forbidden word!
From dreams of night on each I call,
Each of the far removed;
And waken to my own wild cry—
"Where are ye, my beloved?"
Ye left me! and earth's flowers were dim
With records of the past;
And stars pour'd down another light
Than o'er my youth they cast.
Birds will not sing as once they sung,
When ye were at my side,
And mournful tones are in the wind
Which I heard not till ye died!
Thou art welcome, O thou summoner!
Why should the last remain?
What eye can reach my heart of hearts,
Bearing in light again?
E'en could this be, too much of fear

O’er love would now be thrown.—

Away! away! from time, from change,

Once more to meet my own!

THE VICTOR.

“De tout ce qui t’aimoit n’est-il plus rien qui t’aime?”

Lamartine.

Mighty ones, Love and Death!

Ye are the strong in this world of ours;

Ye meet at the banquets, ye dwell midst the flowers,

—Which hath the conqueror’s wreath?

Thou art the victor, Love!

Thou art the fearless, the crown’d, the free,

The strength of the battle is given to thee—

The spirit from above!

Thou hast look’d on Death, and smiled!

Thou hast borne up the reed-like and fragile form

Through the waves of the fight, through the rush of the storm,

On field, and flood, and wild!

No!—Thou art the victor, Death!

Thou comest, and where is that which spoke,

From the depths of the eye, when the spirit woke?

—Gone with the fleeting breath!

Thou comest—and what is left

Of all that loved us, to say if aught

Yet loves—yet answers the burning thought
Of the spirit lone and reft?
Silence is where thou art!
Silently there must kindred meet,
No smile to cheer, and no voice to greet,
No bounding of heart to heart!
Boast not thy victory, Death!
It is but as the cloud’s o’er the sunbeam’s power,
It is but as the winter’s o’er leaf and flower,
That slumber the snow beneath.
It is but as a tyrant’s reign
O’er the voice and the lip which he bids be still;
But the fiery thought and the lofty will
Are not for him to chain!
They shall soar his might above!
And thus with the root whence affection springs,
Though buried, it is not of mortal things—
Thou art the victor, Love!

LINES WRITTEN FOR THE ALBUM AT ROSANNA.[398]

Oh! lightly tread through these deep chestnut-bowers,
Where a sweet spirit once in beauty moved!
And touch with reverent hand these leaves and flowers—
Fair things, which well a gentle heart hath loved!
A gentle heart, of love and grief th’ abode,

Whence the bright stream of song in tear-drops flow’d.

And bid its memory sanctify the scene!

And let th’ ideal presence of the dead

Float round, and touch the woods with softer green,

And o’er the streams a charm, like moonlight, shed,

Through the soul’s depths in holy silence felt—

A spell to raise, to chasten, and to melt!

[398] A beautiful place in the county of Wicklow, formerly the abode of the authoress of “Psyche.”

THE VOICE OF THE WAVES.

WRITTEN NEAR THE SCENE OF A RECENT SHIPWRECK.

“How perfect was the calm! It seem’d no sleep,

No mood which season takes away or brings;

I could have fancied that the mighty deep

Was even the gentlest of all gentle things.

...

But welcome fortitude and patient cheer,

And frequent sights of what is to be borne.”

Wordsworth.

Answer, ye chiming waves

That now in sunshine sweep!

Speak to me from thy hidden caves,

Voice of the solemn deep!

Hath man’s lone spirit here

With storms in battle striven?
Where all is now so calmly clear,
Hath anguish cried to heaven?
—Then the sea’s voice arose
Like an earthquake’s under-tone:
“Mortal! the strife of human woes
Where hath not nature known?
“Here to the quivering mast
Despair hath wildly clung;
The shriek upon the wind hath pass’d,
The midnight sky hath rung.
“And the youthful and the brave,
With their beauty and renown,
To the hollow chambers of the wave
In darkness have gone down.
“They are vanish’d from their place—
Let their homes and hearths make moan!
But the rolling waters keep no trace
Of pang or conflict gone.”
—Alas! thou haughty deep!
The strong, the sounding far!
My heart before thee dies,—I weep
To think on what we are!
To think that so we pass—

High hope, and thought, and mind—
Even as the breath-stain from the glass,
Leaving no sign behind!
Saw’st thou naught else, thou main?
Thou and the midnight sky?
Naught save the struggle, brief and vain,
The parting agony!
—And the sea’s voice replied:
“Here nobler things have been!
Power, with the valiant when they died,
To sanctify the scene:
“Courage, in fragile form,
Faith, trusting to the last,
Prayer, breathing heavenwards thro’ the storm:
But all alike have pass’d.”
Sound on, thou haughty sea!
These have not pass’d in vain;
My soul awakes, my hope springs free
On victor wings again.
Thou, from thine empire driven,
May’st vanish with thy powers;
But, by the hearts that here have striven,
A loftier doom is ours!

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

“I seem like one who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled, whose garlands dead,
And all but me departed.” Moore.

See’st thou yon gray, gleaming hall,
Where the deep elm-shadows fall?
Voices that have left the earth
Long ago,
Still are murmuring round its hearth,
Soft and low:
Ever there;—yet one alone
Hath the gift to hear their tone.
Guests come thither, and depart,
Free of step, and light of heart;
Children, with sweet visions bless’d,
In the haunted chambers rest;
One alone unslumbering lies
When the night hath seal’d all eyes,
One quick heart and watchful ear,
Listening for those whispers clear.
See’st thou where the woodbine-flowers
O’er yon low porch hang in showers?
Startling faces of the dead,

Pale, yet sweet,
One lone woman’s entering tread
There still meet!
Some with young, smooth foreheads fair,
Faintly shining through bright hair;
Some with reverend locks of snow—
All, all buried long ago!
All, from under deep sea-waves,
Or the flowers of foreign graves,
Or the old and banner’d aisle,
Where their high tombs gleam the while;
Rising, wandering, floating by,
Suddenly and silently,
Through their earthly home and place,
But amidst another race.
Wherefore, unto one alone,
Are those sounds and visions known?
Wherefore hath that spell of power
Dark and dread,
On her soul, a baleful dower,
Thus been shed?
Oh! in those deep-seeing eyes,
No strange gift of mystery lies!
She is lone where once she moved

Fair, and happy, and beloved!

Sunny smiles were glancing round her,

Tendrils of kind hearts had bound her.

Now those silver chords are broken,

Those bright looks have left no token—

Not one trace on all the earth,

Save her memory of their mirth.

She is lone and lingering now,

Dreams have gather'd o'er her brow,

Midst gay songs and children's play,

She is dwelling far away,

Seeing what none else may see—

Haunted still her place must be!

["Mrs Hemans resided in the immediate vicinity of this old house (in the village of Wavertree) for nearly three years': it (Wavertree Hall) suggested her beautiful poem, 'Books and Flowers;' and one of her most exquisite lyrics, 'The Haunted House,' describes its local scenery, and gives 'a brief abstract' of the sufferings and feelings of one of its inhabitants."—Recollections of Mrs Hemans, by Mrs Lawrence.

The same subject has been treated by the late lamented Thomas Hood in a poem under a similar title.—Vide Poems, vol. i. p. 48. It is worth referring to, if for nothing else than observing how it has been dealt with by two ingenious and original minds. Mrs Hemans's lyric was first published.]

THE SHEPHERD-POET OF THE ALPS.

"God gave him reverence of laws,

Yet stirring blood in freedom's cause—

A spirit to his rocks akin,
The eye of the hawk, and the fire therein!” Coleridge.
Singing of the free blue sky,
And the wild-flower glens that lie
Far amidst the ancient hills,
Which the fountain-music fills;
Singing of the snow-peaks bright,
And the royal eagle’s flight,
And the courage and the grace
Foster’d by the chamois-chase;
In his fetters, day by day,
So the Shepherd-poet lay.
Wherefore, from a dungeon-cell
Did those notes of freedom swell,
Breathing sadness not their own
Forth with every Alpine tone?
Wherefore!—can a tyrant’s ear
Brook the mountain-winds to hear,
When each blast goes pealing by
With a song of liberty?
Darkly hung th’ oppressor’s hand
O’er the Shepherd-poet’s land;
Sounding there the waters gush’d,
While the lip of man was hush’d;

There the falcon pierced the cloud,
While the fiery heart was bow’d.
But this might not long endure,
Where the mountain-homes were pure;
And a valiant voice arose,
Thrilling all the silent snows;
His—now singing far and lone,
Where the young breeze ne’er was known;
Singing of the glad blue sky,
Wildly—and how mournfully!
Are none but the Wind and the Lammer-Geyer
To be free where the hills unto heaven aspire?
Is the soul of song from the deep glens past,
Now that their poet is chain’d at last?—
Think of the mountains, and deem not so!
Soon shall each blast like a clarion blow!
Yes! though forbidden be every word
Wherewith that spirit the Alps hath stirr’d,
Yet even as a buried stream through earth
Rolls on to another and brighter birth,
So shall the voice that hath seem’d to die
Burst forth with the anthem of liberty!
And another power is moving
In a bosom fondly loving:

Oh! a sister’s heart is deep,
And her spirit strong to keep
Each light link of early hours,
All sweet scents of childhood’s flowers!
Thus each lay by Erni sung,
Rocks and crystal caves among,
Or beneath the linden-leaves,
Or the cabin’s vine-hung eaves,
Rapid though as bird-notes gushing,
Transient as a wan cheek’s flushing,
Each in young Teresa’s breast
Left its fiery words impress’d;
Treasured there lay every line,
As a rich book on a hidden shrine.
Fair was that lone girl, and meek,
With a pale, transparent cheek,
And a deep-fringed violet eye
Seeking in sweet shade to lie,
Or, if raised to glance above,
Dim with its own dews of love;
And a pure Madonna brow,
And a silvery voice and low,
Like the echo of a flute,
Even the last, ere all be mute.

But a loftier soul was seen
In the orphan sister’s mien,
From that hour when chains defiled
Him, the high Alps’ noble child.
Tones in her quivering voice awoke,
As if a harp of battle spoke;
Light, that seem’d born of an eagle’s nest,
Flash’d from her soft eyes unrepress’d;
And her form, like a spreading water-flower,
When its frail cup swells with a sudden shower,
Seem’d all dilated with love and pride,
And grief for that brother, her young heart’s guide.
Well might they love!—those two had grown
Orphans together and alone:
The silence of the Alpine sky
Had hush’d their hearts to piety;
The turf, o’er their dead mother laid,
Had been their altar when they pray’d;
There, more in tenderness than woe,
The stars had seen their young tears flow;
The clouds, in spirit-like descent,
Their deep thoughts by one touch had blent,
And the wild storms link’d them to each other—
How dear can peril make a brother!

Now is their hearth a forsaken spot,
The vine waves unpruned o’er their mountain cot:
Away, in that holy affection’s might,
The maiden is gone, like a breeze of the night.
She is gone forth alone, but her lighted face,
Filling with soul every secret place,
Hath a dower from heaven, and a gift of sway,
To arouse brave hearts in its hidden way,
Like the sudden flinging forth on high
Of a banner, that startleth silently!
She hath wander’d through many a hamlet-vale,
Telling its children her brother’s tale;
And the strains by his spirit pour’d away
Freely as fountains might shower their spray,
From her fervent lip a new life have caught,
And a power to kindle yet bolder thought;
While sometimes a melody, all her own,
Like a gush of tears in its plaintive tone,
May be heard midst the lonely rocks to flow,
Clear through the water-chimes—clear, yet low
“Thou’rt not where wild-flowers wave
O’er crag and sparry cave;
Thou’rt not where pines are sounding,
Or joyous torrents bounding—

Alas, my brother!

“Thou’rt not where green, on high,

The brighter pastures lie;

Ev’n those, thine own wild places,

Bear of our chain dark traces:

Alas, my brother!

“Far hath the sunbeam spread,

Nor found thy lonely bed;

Long hath the fresh wind sought thee,

Nor one sweet whisper brought thee—

Alas, my brother!

“Thou, that for joy wert born,

Free as the wings of morn!

Will aught thy young life cherish,

Where the Alpine rose would perish?—

Alas, my brother!

“Canst thou be singing still,

As once on every hill?

Is not thy soul forsaken,

And the bright gift from thee taken?—

Alas, alas, my brother!”

And was the bright gift from the captive fled?

Like the fire on his hearth, was his spirit dead?

Not so!—but as rooted in stillness deep,

The pure stream-lily its place will keep,
Though its tearful urns to the blast may quiver,
While the red waves rush down the foaming river;
So freedom’s faith in his bosom lay,
Trembling, yet not to be borne away!
He thought of the Alps and their breezy air,
And felt that his country no chains might bear;
He thought of the hunter’s haughty life,
And knew there must yet be noble strife.
But, oh! when he thought of that orphan maid,
His high heart melted—he wept and pray’d!
For he saw her not as she moved e’en then,
A wakener of heroes in every glen,
With a glance inspired which no grief could tame,
Bearing on hope like a torch’s flame;
While the strengthening voice of mighty wrongs
Gave echoes back to her thrilling songs.
But his dreams were fill’d by a haunting tone,
Sad as a sleeping infant’s moan;
And his soul was pierced by a mournful eye,
Which look’d on it—oh! how beseechingly!
And there floated past him a fragile form,
With a willowy droop, as beneath the storm;
Till wakening in anguish, his faint heart strove

In vain with its burden of helpless love!
Thus woke the dreamer one weary night—
There flash'd through his dungeon a swift strong light;
He sprang up—he climb'd to the grating-bars.
—It was not the rising of moon or stars,
But a signal-flame from a peak of snow,
Rock'd through the dark skies to and fro!
There shot forth another—another still—
A hundred answers of hill to hill!
Tossing like pines in the tempest's way,
Joyously, wildly, the bright spires play,
And each is hail'd with a pealing shout,
For the high Alps waving their banners out!
Erni! young Erni! the land hath risen!—
Alas! to be lone in thy narrow prison!
Those free streamers glancing, and thou not there!
—Is the moment of rapture, or fierce despair?
—Hark! there's a tumult that shakes his cell,
At the gates of the mountain citadel!
Hark! a clear voice through the rude sounds ringing!
Doth he know the strain, and the wild, sweet singing?
"There may not long be fetters,
Where the cloud is earth's array,
And the bright floods leap from cave and steep,

Like a hunter on the prey!

“There may not long be fetters,

Where the white Alps have their towers;

Unto Eagle-homes, if the arrow comes,

The chain is not for ours!”

It is she! She is come like a dayspring beam,

She that so mournfully shadow’d his dream!

With her shining eyes and her buoyant form,

She is come! her tears on his cheek are warm;

And oh! the thrill in that weeping voice!

“My brother! my brother! come forth, rejoice!”

Poet! the land of thy love is free,—

Sister! thy brother is won by thee!

TO THE MOUNTAIN WINDS.

——“How divine

The liberty, for frail, for mortal man,

To roam at large among unpeopled glens,

And mountainous retirements, only trod

By devious footsteps!—Regions consecrate

To oldest time! And reckless of the storm

That keeps the raven quiet in his nest,

Be as a presence or a motion—One

Among the many there.” Wordsworth.

Mountain winds! oh, whither do ye call me?

Vainly, vainly would my steps pursue!
Chains of care to lower earth enthrall me,
Wherefore thus my weary spirit woo?
Oh! the strife of this divided being!
Is there peace where ye are born on high?
Could we soar to your proud eyries fleeing,
In our hearts would haunting memories die?
Those wild places are not as a dwelling
Whence the footsteps of the loved are gone!
Never from those rocky halls came swelling
Voice of kindness in familiar tone!
Surely music of oblivion sweepeth
In the pathway of your wanderings free;
And the torrent, wildly as it leapeth,
Sings of no lost home amidst its glee.
There the rushing of the falcon's pinion
Is not from some hidden pang to fly;
All things breathe of power and stern dominion—
Not of hearts that in vain yearnings die.
Mountain winds! oh! is it, is it only
Where man's trace hath been that so we pine!
Bear me up, to grow in thought less lonely,
Even at nature's deepest, loneliest shrine!
Wild, and mighty, and mysterious singers!

At whose tone my heart within me burns;

Bear me where the last red sunbeam lingers,

Where the waters have their secret urns!

There to commune with a loftier spirit

Than the troubling shadows of regret;

There the wings of freedom to inherit,

Where the enduring and the wing'd are met.

Hush, proud voices! gentle be your falling!

Woman's lot thus chainless may not be;

Hush! the heart your trumpet-sounds are calling,

Darkly still may grow—but never free!

THE PROCESSION.

"'The peace which passeth all understanding,' disclosed itself in her looks and movements. It lay on her countenance like a steady unshadowed moonlight."—Coleridge.

There were trampling sounds of many feet,

And music rush'd through the crowded street:

Proud music, such as tells the sky

Of a chief return'd from victory.

There were banners to the winds unroll'd,

With haughty words on each blazon'd fold;

High battle-names, which had rung of yore

When lances clash'd on the Syrian shore.

Borne from their dwellings, green and lone,

There were flowers of the woods on the pathway strown;
And wheels that crush’d as they swept along;—
Oh! what doth the violet amidst the throng?
I saw where a bright procession pass’d
The gates of a minster old and vast;
And a king to his crowning-place was led,
Through a sculptured line of the warrior-dead.
I saw, far gleaming, the long array
Of trophies, on those high tombs that lay,
And the colour’d light, that wrapp’d them all,
Rich, deep, and sad, as a royal pall.
But a lowlier grave soon won mine eye
Away from th’ ancestral pageantry—
A grave by the lordly minster’s gate,
Unhonour’d, and yet not desolate.
It was a dewy greensward bed,
Meet for the rest of a peasant head;
But Love—oh, lovelier than all beside!—
That lone place guarded and glorified.
For a gentle form stood watching there,
Young—but how sorrowfully fair!
Keeping the flowers of the holy spot,
That reckless feet might profane them not.
Clear, pale and clear, was the tender cheek,

And her eye, though tearful, serenely meek;
And I deem’d, by its lifted gaze of love,
That her sad heart’s treasure was all above.
For alone she seem’d midst the throng to be,
Like a bird of the waves far away at sea;
Alone, in a mourner’s vest array’d,
And with folded hands, e’en as if she pray’d.
It faded before me, that mask of pride,
The haughty swell of the music died;
Banner, and armour, and tossing plume,
All melted away in the twilight’s gloom.
But that orphan form, with its willowy grace,
And the speaking prayer in that pale, calm face,
Still, still o’er my thoughts in the night-hour glide—
—Oh! Love is lovelier than all beside!

THE BROKEN LUTE.

“When the lamp is shatter’d,
The light in the dust lies dead;
When the cloud is scatter’d,
The rainbow’s glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet sounds are remember’d not;
When the words are spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and lute,
The heart’s echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute.” Shelley.
She dwelt in proud Venetian halls,
Midst forms that breathed from the pictured walls
But a glow of beauty like her own,
There had no dream of the painter thrown.
Lit from within was her noble brow,
As an urn, whence rays from a lamp may flow;
Her young, clear cheek, had a changeful hue,
As if ye might see how the soul wrought through,
And every flash of her fervent eye
Seem’d the bright wakening of Poesy.
Even thus it was! From her childhood’s years
A being of sudden smiles and tears—
Passionate visions, quick light and shade—
Such was that high-born Italian maid!
And the spirit of song in her bosom-cell
Dwelt, as the odours in violets dwell,
Or as the sounds in Æolian strings,
Or in aspen-leaves the quiverings;
There, ever there, with the life enshrined,
Waiting the call of the faintest wind.

Oft, on the wave of the Adrian sea,
In the city's hour of moonlight glee—
Oft would that gift of the southern sky
O'erflow from her lips in melody;
Oft amid festal halls it came,
Like the springing forth of a sudden flame—
Till the dance was hush'd, and the silvery tone
Of her inspiration was heard alone.
And fame went with her, the bright, the crown'd,
And music floated her steps around;
And every lay of her soul was borne
Through the sunny land, as on wings of morn.
And was the daughter of Venice blest,
With a power so deep in her youthful breast?
Could she be happy, o'er whose dark eye
So many changes and dreams went by?
And in whose cheek the swift crimson wrought
As if but born from the rush of thought?
Yes! in the brightness of joy awhile
She moved as a bark in the sunbeam's smile;
For her spirit, as over her lyre's full chord,
All, all on a happy love was pour'd!
How loves a heart whence the stream of song
Flows, like the life-blood, quick, bright, and strong?

How loves a heart, which hath never proved
One breath of the world? Even so she loved;
Bless’d, though the lord of her soul, afar,
Was charging the foremost in Moslem war,
Bearing the flag of St Mark’s on high,
As a ruling star in the Grecian sky.
Proud music breathed in her song, when fame
Gave a tone more thrilling to his name;
And her trust in his love was a woman’s faith—
Perfect, and fearing no change but death.
But the fields are won from the Othman host,
In the land that quell’d the Persian’s boast,
And a thousand hearts in Venice burn
For the day of triumph and return!
The day is come! the flashing deep
Foams where the galleys of victory sweep;
And the sceptred city of the wave
With her festal splendour greets the brave;
Cymbal, and clarion, and voice, around,
Make the air one stream of exulting sound;
While the beautiful, with their sunny smiles,
Look from each hall of the hundred isles.
But happiest and brightest that day of all,
Robed for her warrior’s festival,

Moving a queen midst the radiant throng,
Was she, th’ inspired one, the maid of song!
The lute he loved on her arm she bore,
As she rush’d in her joy to the crowded shore;
With a hue on her cheek like the damask glow
By the sunset given unto mountain snow,
And her eye all fill’d with the spirit’s play,
Like the flash of a gem to the changeful day,
And her long hair waving in ringlets bright—
So came that being of hope and light!
One moment, Erminia! one moment more,
And life, all the beauty of life, is o’er!
The bark of her lover hath touch’d the strand—
Whom leads he forth with a gentle hand?
—A young fair form, whose nymph-like grace
Accorded well with the Grecian face,
And the eye, in its clear, soft darkness meek,
And the lashes that droop’d o’er a pale rose cheek,
And he look’d on that beauty with tender pride—
The warrior hath brought back an Eastern bride!
But how stood she, the forsaken, there,
Struck by the lightning of swift despair?
Still, as amazed with grief, she stood,
And her cheek to her heart sent back the blood;

And there came from her quivering lip no word,
Only the fall of her lute was heard,
As it dropp'd from her hand at her rival's feet,
Into fragments, whose dying thrill was sweet!
What more remaineth? Her day was done;
Her fate and the Broken Lute's were one!
The light, the vision, the gift of power,
Pass'd from her soul in that mortal hour,
Like the rich sound from the shatter'd string
Whence the gush of sweetness no more might spring!
As an eagle struck in his upward flight.
So was her hope from its radiant height;
And her song went with it for evermore,
A gladness taken from sea and shore!
She had moved to the echoing sound of fame—
Silently, silently, died her name!
Silently melted her life away,
As ye have seen a young flower decay,
Or a lamp that hath swiftly burn'd expire,
Or a bright stream shrink from the summer's fire,
Leaving its channel all dry and mute—
Woe for the Broken Heart and Lute!

THE BURIAL IN THE DESERT.

"How weeps yon gallant band

O’er him their valour could not save!
For the bayonet is red with gore,
And he, the beautiful and brave,
Now sleeps in Egypt’s sand.” Wilson.
In the shadow of the Pyramid
Our brother’s grave we made,
When the battle-day was done,
And the desert’s parting sun
A field of death survey’d.
The blood-red sky above us
Was darkening into night,
And the Arab watching silently
Our sad and hurried rite;
The voice of Egypt’s river
Came hollow and profound;
And one lone palm-tree, where we stood,
Rock’d with a shivery sound:
While the shadow of the Pyramid
Hung o’er the grave we made,
When the battle-day was done,
And the desert’s parting sun
A field of death survey’d.
The fathers of our brother
Were borne to knightly tombs,

With torch-light and with anthem-note,
And many waving plumes:
But he, the last and noblest
Of that high Norman race,
With a few brief words of soldier-love
Was gather’d to his place;
In the shadow of the Pyramid,
Where his youthful form we laid,
When the battle-day was done,
And the desert’s parting sun
A field of death survey’d.
But let him, let him slumber
By the old Egyptian wave!
It is well with those who bear their fame
Unsullied to the grave!
When brightest names are breathed on,
When loftiest fall so fast,
We would not call our brother back
On dark days to be cast,—
From the shadow of the Pyramid,
Where his noble heart we laid,
When the battle-day was done,
And the desert’s parting sun
A field of death survey’d.

[“Mrs Hemans’ funeral poems are among her most impressive works: the music of her verse, through which an under-current of sadness may always be traced, was never more happily employed than in lamenting the beloved and early called, or in bidding

‘Hope to the world to look beyond the tombs.’

I need only mention a few lyrics, ‘The Farewell to the Dead,’ (in the Lays of Many Lands;) ‘The Exile’s Dirge,’ (in the Songs of the Affections;) ‘The Burial of an Emigrant’s Child in the Forest,’ (in the Scenes and Hymns of Life;) and the ‘Burial in the Desert,’ a noble poem, published among her poetical remains. The introduction of the two following stanzas of a more concise and monumental character,[399] though they have already appeared in print, will not, I am sure, be objected to as illustrating the above remark.”—Chorley’s Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 26-7.]

[399] Vide “Monumental Inscription,” p. 356.

TO A PICTURE OF THE MADONNA.

“Ave Maria! May our spirits dare

Look up to thine, and to thy Son’s above?” Byron.

Fair vision! thou’rt from sunny skies,

Born where the rose hath richest dyes;

To thee a southern heart hath given

That glow of love, that calm of heaven,

And round thee cast th’ ideal gleam,

The light that is but of a dream.

Far hence, where wandering music fills

The haunted air of Roman hills,

Or where Venetian waves of yore
Heard melodies, they hear no more,
Some proud old minster’s gorgeous aisle
Hath known the sweetness of thy smile.
Or haply, from a lone, dim shrine
Mid forests of the Apennine,
Whose breezy sounds of cave and dell
Pass like a floating anthem-swell,
Thy soft eyes o’er the pilgrim’s way
Shed blessings with their gentle ray.
Or gleaming through a chestnut wood,
Perchance thine island-chapel stood,
Where from the blue Sicilian sea
The sailor’s hymn hath risen to thee,
And bless’d thy power to guide, to save,
Madonna! watcher of the wave!
Oh! might a voice, a whisper low,
Forth from those lips of beauty flow!
Couldst thou but speak of all the tears,
The conflicts, and the pangs of years,
Which, at thy secret shrine reveal’d,
Have gush’d from human hearts unseal’d!
Surely to thee hath woman come,
As a tired wanderer back to home!

Unveiling many a timid guest
And treasured sorrow of her breast,
A buried love—a wasting care—
Oh! did those griefs win peace from prayer?
And did the poet’s fervid soul
To thee lay bare its inmost scroll?
Those thoughts, which pour’d their quenchless fire
And passion o’er th’ Italian lyre,
Did they to still submission die
Beneath thy calm, religious eye?
And hath the crested helmet bow’d
Before thee, midst the incense-cloud?
Hath the crown’d leader’s bosom lone
To thee its haughty griefs made known?
Did thy glance break their frozen sleep,
And win th’ unconquer’d one to weep?
Hush’d is the anthem, closed the vow,
The votive garland wither’d now;
Yet holy still to me thou art,
Thou that hath soothed so many a heart!
And still must blessed influence flow
From the meek glory of thy brow.
Still speak to suffering woman’s love,
Of rest for gentle hearts above;

Of hope, that hath its treasure there,
Of home, that knows no changeful air.
Bright form! lit up with thoughts divine,
Ave! such power be ever thine!

A THOUGHT OF THE ROSE.

How much of memory dwells amidst thy bloom,
Rose! ever wearing beauty for thy dower!
The bridal-day—the festival—the tomb—
Thou hast thy part in each, thou stateliest flower!
Therefore with thy soft breath come floating by
A thousand images of love and grief,
Dreams, fill’d with tokens of mortality,
Deep thoughts of all things beautiful and brief.
Not such thy spells o’er those that hail’d thee first,
In the clear light of Eden’s golden day!
There thy rich leaves to crimson glory burst,
Link’d with no dim remembrance of decay.
Rose! for the banquet gather’d, and the bier;
Rose! colour’d now by human hope and pain
Surely where death is not—nor change, nor fear,
Yet may we meet thee, joy’s own flower again!

DREAMS OF HEAVEN.

“We colour heaven with our own human thoughts,

Our vain aspirings, fond remembrances,
Our passionate love, that seems unto itself
An Immortality.”
Dream’st thou of heaven? What dreams are thine?
Fair child, fair gladsome child?
With eyes that like the dewdrop shine,
And bounding footsteps wild!
Tell me what hues th’ immortal shore
Can wear, my bird! to thee?
Ere yet one shadow hath pass’d o’er
Thy glance and spirit free?
“Oh! beautiful is heaven, and bright
With long, long summer days;
I see its lilies gleam in light
Where many a fountain plays.
“And there uncheck’d, methinks, I rove,
And seek where young flowers lie,
In vale and golden-fruited grove—
Flowers that are not to die!”
Thou poet of the lonely thought,
Sad heir of gifts divine!
Say with what solemn glory fraught
Is heaven in dreams of thine?
“Oh! where the living waters flow

Along that radiant shore,
My soul, a wanderer here, shall know
The exile-thirst no more.
“The burden of the stranger’s heart
Which here alone I bear,
Like the night-shadow shall depart,
With my first wakening there.
“And borne on eagle wings afar,
Free thought shall claim its dower,
From every realm, from every star,
Of glory and of power.”
O woman! with the soft sad eye,
Of spiritual gleam,
Tell me of those bright worlds on high,
How doth thy fond heart dream?
By the sweet mournful voice I know,
On thy pale brow I see,
That thou hast loved, in fear, and woe—
Say what is heaven to thee?
“Oh! heaven is where no secret dread
May haunt love’s meeting hour,
Where from the past no gloom is shed
O’er the heart’s chosen bower:
“Where every sever’d wreath is bound—

Where none have heard the knell
That smites the heart with that deep sound—
Farewell, beloved!—farewell!”

THE WISH.

Come to me, when my soul
Hath but a few dim hours to linger here;
When earthly chains are as a shrivel’d scroll,
Oh! let me feel thy presence! be but near!
That I may look once more
Into thine eyes, which never changed for me;
That I may speak to thee of that bright shore
Where, with our treasure, we have long’d to be.
Thou friend of many days!
Of sadness and of joy, of home and hearth!
Will not thy spirit aid me then to raise
The trembling pinions of my hope from earth?
By every solemn thought
Which on our hearts hath sunk in days gone by,
From the deep voices of the mountains caught,
O’er all th’ adoring silence of the sky;
By every lofty theme
Whereon, in low-toned reverence we have spoken;
By our communion in each fervent dream
That sought from realms beyond the grave a token;

And by our tears for those
Whose loss hath touch’d our world with hues of death;
And by the hopes that with their dust repose,
As flowers await the south-wind’s vernal breath;
Come to me in that day—
The one—the sever’d from all days—O friend!
Even then, if human thought may then have sway
My soul with thine shall yet rejoice to blend.
Nor then, nor there alone:
I ask my heart if all indeed must die—
All that of holiest feelings it hath known?
And my heart’s voice replies—Eternity?

WRITTEN AFTER VISITING A TOMB,

NEAR WOODSTOCK, IN THE COUNTY OF KILKENNY.[400]

“Yes! hide beneath the mouldering heap,
The undelighted, slighted thing;
There in the cold earth, buried deep,
In silence let it wait the Spring.”
Mrs Tighe’s “Poem on the Lily.”

I stood where the lip of song lay low,
Where the dust had gather’d on Beauty’s brow;
Where stillness hung on the heart of Love,
And a marble weeper kept watch above.
I stood in the silence of lonely thought,

Of deep affections that inly wrought,
Troubled, and dreamy, and dim with fear—
They knew themselves exiled spirits here!
Then didst thou pass me in radiance by,
Child of the sunbeam, bright butterfly!
Thou that dost bear, on thy fairy wings,
No burden of mortal sufferings.
Thou wert flitting past that solemn tomb,
Over a bright world of joy and bloom;
And strangely I felt, as I saw thee shine,
The all that sever'd thy life and mine.
Mine, with its inborn mysterious things,
Of love and grief its unfathom'd springs;
And quick thoughts wandering o'er earth and sky,
With voices to question eternity!
Thine, in its reckless and joyous way,
Like an embodied breeze at play!
Child of the sunlight!—thou wing'd and free!
One moment, one moment, I envied thee!
Thou art not lonely, though born to roam,
Thou hast no longings that pine for home;
Thou seek'st not the haunts of the bee and bird,
To fly from the sickness of hope deferr'd:
In thy brief being no strife of mind,

No boundless passion, is deeply shrined;
While I, as I gazed on thy swift flight by,
One hour of my soul seem’d infinity!
And she, that voiceless below me slept,
Flow’d not her song from a heart that wept?
—O Love and Song! though of heaven your powers,
Dark is your fate in this world of ours.
Yet, ere I turn’d from that silent place,
Or ceased from watching thy sunny race,
Thou, even thou, on those glancing wings,
Didst waft me visions of brighter things!
Thou that dost image the freed soul’s birth,
And its flight away o’er the mists of earth,
Oh! fitly thy path is through flowers that rise
Round the dark chamber where Genius lies!

[400] See the “Grave of a Poetess,” p. 411, on the same subject, and written several years previously to visiting the scene.

EPITAPH.

Farewell, beloved and mourn’d! We miss awhile
Thy tender gentleness of voice and smile,
And that bless’d gift of heaven, to cheer us lent—
That thrilling touch, divinely eloquent,
Which breathed the soul of prayer, deep, fervent, high,
Through thy rich strains of sacred harmony.

Yet from those very memories there is born
A soft light, pointing to celestial morn:
Oh! bid it guide us where thy footsteps trode,
To meet at last “the pure in heart” with God!

PROLOGUE TO THE TRAGEDY OF FIESCO,

AS TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF SCHILLER, BY COLONEL D’AGUILAR, AND PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE-ROYAL, DUBLIN, DECEMBER 1832.

Too long apart, a bright but sever’d band,
The mighty minstrels of the Rhine’s fair land
Majestic strains, but not for us, had sung—
Moulding to melody a stranger tongue.
Brave hearts leap’d proudly to their words of power,
As a true sword bounds forth in battle’s hour;
Fair eyes rain’d homage o’er th’ impassion’d lays,
In loving tears, more eloquent than praise;
While we, far distant, knew not, dream’d not aught
Of the high marvels by that magic wrought.
But let the barriers of the sea give way,
When mind sweeps onward with a conqueror’s sway!
And let the Rhine divide high souls no more
From mingling on its old heroic shore,
Which, e’en like ours, brave deeds through many an age
Have made the poet’s own free heritage!

To us, though faintly, may a wandering tone
Of the far minstrelsy at last be known;
Sounds which the thrilling pulse, the burning tear,
Have sprung to greet, must not be strangers here.
And if by one, more used on march and heath
To the shrill bugle than the muse's breath,
With a warm heart the offering hath been brought,
And in a trusting loyalty of thought,
So let it be received!—a soldier's hand
Bears to the breast of no ungenerous land
A seed of foreign shores. O'er this fair clime,
Since Tara heard the harp of ancient time,
Hath song held empire; then, if not with fame,
Let the green isle with kindness bless his aim,
The joy, the power, of kindred song to spread,
Where once that harp "the soul of music shed!"

TO GIULIO REGONDI,

THE BOY GUITARIST.

Blessing and love be round thee still, fair boy!
Never may suffering wake a deeper tone
Than genius now, in its first fearless joy,
Calls forth exulting from the chords which own
Thy fairy touch! Oh! may'st thou ne'er be taught
The power whose fountain is in troubled thought!

For in the light of those confiding eyes,
And on th’ ingenuous calm of that clear brow,
A dower, more precious e’en than genius lies,
A pure mind’s worth, a warm heart’s vernal glow!
God, who hath graced thee thus, O gentle child!
Keep midst the world thy brightness undefiled!

O YE HOURS!

O ye hours! ye sunny hours!
Floating lightly by,
Are ye come with birds and flowers,
Odours and blue sky?
“Yes! we come, again we come,
Through the wood-paths free:
Bringing many a wanderer home,
With the bird and bee.”
O ye hours! ye sunny hours!
Are ye wafting song?
Doth wild music stream in showers
All the groves among?
“Yes! the nightingale is there
While the starlight reigns,
Making young leaves and sweet air
Tremble with her strains.”
O ye hours! ye sunny hours!

In your silent flow,
Ye are mighty, mighty powers!
Bring ye bliss or woe?
“Ask not this—oh! seek not this!
Yield your hearts awhile
To the soft wind’s balmy kiss,
And the heavens’ bright smile.
“Throw not shades of anxious thought
O’er the glowing flowers!
We are come with sunshine fraught,
Question not the hours!”

THE FREED BIRD.

Return, return, my bird!
I have dress’d thy cage with flowers;
’Tis lovely as a violet bank
In the heart of forest bowers.
“I am free, I am free—I return no more!
The weary time of the cage is o’er;
Through the rolling clouds I can soar on high,
The sky is around me—the blue, bright sky!
The hills lie beneath me, spread far and clear,
With their glowing heath-flowers and bounding deer;
I see the waves flash on the sunny shore—
I am free, I am free—I return no more!”

Alas, alas! my bird!
Why seek’st thou to be free?
Wert thou not bless’d in thy little bower,
When thy song breathed naught but glee?
“Did my song of the summer breathe naught but glee?
Did the voice of the captive seem sweet to thee?
—Oh! hadst thou known its deep meaning well,
It had tales of a burning heart to tell!
From a dream of the forest that music sprang,
Through its notes the peal of a torrent rang;
And its dying fall, when it sooth’d thee best,
Sigh’d for wild-flowers and a leafy nest.”
Was it with thee thus, my bird?
Yet thine eye flash’d clear and bright;
I have seen the glance of sudden joy
In its quick and dewy light.
“It flash’d with the fire of a tameless race,
With the soul of the wild-wood, my native place!
With the spirit that panted through heaven to soar:
Woo me not back—I return no more!
My home is high, amidst rocking trees,
My kindred things are the star and the breeze,
And the fount uncheck’d in its lonely play,
And the odours that wander afar away!”

Farewell—farewell, then, bird!
I have call’d on spirits gone,
And it may be they joy’d, like thee, to part—
Like thee, that wert all my own!
“If they were captives, and pined like me,
Though love may guard them, they joy’d to be free;
They sprang from the earth with a burst of power,
To the strength of their wings, to their triumph’s hour!
Call them not back when the chain is riven,
When the way of the pinion is all through heaven!
Farewell!—with my song through the clouds I soar,
I pierce the blue skies—I am earth’s no more!”

MARGUERITE OF FRANCE.[401]

“Thou falcon-hearted dove!”—Coleridge.

The Moslem spears were gleaming
Round Damietta’s towers,
Though a Christian banner from her wall
Waved free its lily-flowers.
Ay, proudly did the banner wave,
As queen of earth and air;
But faint hearts throb’d beneath its folds
In anguish and despair.
Deep, deep in Paynim dungeon
Their kingly chieftain lay,

And low on many an Eastern field
Their knighthood’s best array.
’Twas mournful, when at feasts they met,
The wine-cup round to send;
For each that touch’d it silently
Then miss’d a gallant friend!
And mournful was their vigil
On the beleaguer’d wall,
And dark their slumber, dark with dreams
Of slow defeat and fall.
Yet a few hearts of chivalry
Rose high to breast the storm,
And one—of all the loftiest there—
Thrill’d in a woman’s form.
A woman, meekly bending
O’er the slumber of her child,
With her soft, sad eyes of weeping love,
As the Virgin Mother’s mild.
Oh! roughly cradled was thy babe,
Midst the clash of spear and lance,
And a strange, wild bower was thine, young queen!
Fair Marguerite of France!
A dark and vaulted chamber,
Like a scene for wizard-spell,

Deep in the Saracenic gloom
Of the warrior citadel;
And there midst arms the couch was spread,
And with banners curtain’d o’er,
For the daughter of the minstrel-land,
The gay Provençal shore!
For the bright queen of St Louis,
The star of court and hall!
But the deep strength of the gentle heart
Wakes to the tempest’s call!
Her lord was in the Paynim’s hold,
His soul with grief oppress’d,
Yet calmly lay the desolate,
With her young babe on her breast!
There were voices in the city,
Voices of wrath and fear—
“The walls grow weak, the strife is vain—
We will not perish here!
Yield! yield! and let the Crescent gleam
O’er tower and bastion high!
Our distant homes are beautiful—
We stay not here to die!”
They bore those fearful tidings
To the sad queen where she lay—

They told a tale of wavering hearts,

Of treason and dismay:

The blood rush’d through her pearly cheek,

The sparkle to her eye—

“Now call me hither those recreant knights

From the bands of Italy!”[402]

Then through the vaulted chambers

Stern iron footsteps rang;

And heavily the sounding floor

Gave back the sabre’s clang.

They stood around her—steel-clad men,

Moulded for storm and fight,

But they quail’d before the loftier soul

In that pale aspect bright.

Yes! as before the falcon shrinks

The bird of meaner wing,

So shrank they from th’ imperial glance

Of her—that fragile thing!

And her flute-like voice rose clear and high

Through the din of arms around—

Sweet, and yet stirring to the soul,

As a silver clarion’s sound.

“The honour of the Lily

Is in your hands to keep,

And the banner of the Cross, for Him
Who died on Calvary’s steep;
And the city which for Christian prayer
Hath heard the holy bell—
And is it these your hearts would yield
To the godless infidel?
“Then bring me here a breastplate
And a helm, before ye fly,
And I will gird my woman’s form,
And on the ramparts die!
And the boy whom I have borne for woe,
But never for disgrace,
Shall go within mine arms to death
Meet for his royal race.
“Look on him as he slumbers
In the shadow of the lance!
Then go, and with the Cross forsake
The princely babe of France!
But tell your homes ye left one heart
To perish undefiled;
A woman, and a queen, to guard
Her honour and her child!”
Before her words they thrill’d, like leaves
When winds are in the wood;

And a deepening murmur told of men

Roused to a loftier mood.

And her babe awoke to flashing swords,

Unsheath’d in many a hand,

As they gather’d round the helpless One,

Again a noble band!

“We are thy warriors, lady!

True to the Cross and thee;

The spirit of thy kindling words

On every sword shall be!

Rest, with thy fair child on thy breast!

Rest—we will guard thee well!

St Denis for the Lily-flower

And the Christian citadel!”

[401] Queen of St Louis. Whilst besieged by the Turks in Damietta, during the captivity of the king her husband, she there gave birth to a son, whom she named Tristan, in commemoration of her misfortunes. Information being conveyed to her, that the knights intrusted with the defence of the city had resolved on capitulation, she had them summoned to her apartment; and, by her heroic words, so wrought upon their spirits, that they vowed to defend her and the Cross to the last extremity.

[402] The proposal to capitulate is attributed by the French historian to the Knights of Pisa.

THE WANDERER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF SCHMIDT VON LUBECK.

I come down from the hills alone;
Mist wraps the vale, the billows moan!
I wander on in thoughtful care,
For ever asking, sighing—where?
The sunshine round seems dim and cold,
And flowers are pale, and life is old,
And words fall soulless on my ear—
Oh, I am still a stranger here!
Where art thou, land, sweet land, mine own!
Still sought for, long'd for, never known?
The land, the land of hope, of light,
Where glow my roses freshly bright,
And where my friends the green paths tread,
And where in beauty rise my dead;
The land that speaks my native speech,
The blessed land I may not reach!
I wander on in thoughtful care,
For ever asking, sighing—where?
And spirit-sounds come answering this—
"There, where thou art not, there is bliss!"

THE LAST WORDS OF THE LAST WASP OF SCOTLAND,

—A jeu-d'esprit produced at this time, which owed its origin to a simple remark on the unseasonableness of the weather, made by Mrs Hemans to Mr Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, whom she was in the habit of seeing at Sir David Wedderburn's.

"It is so little like summer," she said, "that I have not even seen a butterfly." "A butterfly!" retorted Mr Sharpe, "I have not even seen a wasp!" The next morning, as if in confutation of this calumny, a wasp made its appearance at Lady Wedderburn's breakfast table. Mrs Hemans immediately proposed that it should be made a prisoner, inclosed in a bottle, and sent to Mr Sharpe: this was accordingly done, and the piquant missive was acknowledged by him as follows:—

"SONNET TO A WASP, IN THE MANNER OF MILTON, &c., BUT MUCH SUPERIOR.

Poor insect! rash as rare!—Thy sovereign,[403] sure,
Hath driven thee to Siberia in disgrace—
Else what delusion could thy sense allure
To buzz and sting in this unwholesome place,
Where e'en the hornet's hoarser, and the race
Of filmy wing are feeble? Honey here
(Scarce as its rhyme) thou find'st not. Ah, beware
Thy golden mail, to starved Arachne dear![404]
Though fingers famed, that thrill the immortal lyre,
Have pent thee up, a second Asmodeus,
I wail thy doom—I warm thee by the fire,
And blab our secrets—do not thou betray us!
I give thee liberty, I give thee breath,
To fly from Athens, Eurus, Doctors, Death!!"

To this Mrs Hemans returned the following rejoinder:—

Sooth'd by the strain, the Wasp thus made reply—
(The first, last time he spoke not waspishly)—

“Too late, kind Poet! comes thine aid, thy song,
To aught first starved, then bottled up so long.
Yet, for the warmth of this thy genial fire,
Take a Wasp’s blessing ere his race expire:—
Never may provost’s foot find entrance here!
Never may bailie’s voice invade thine ear!
Never may housemaid wipe the verd antique
From coin of thine—Assyrian, Celt, or Greek!
Never may Eurus cross thy path!—to thee
May winds and wynds[405] alike propitious be!
And when thou diest—(live a thousand years!)—
May friends fill classic bottles[406] with their tears!
I can no more—receive my parting gasp!—
Bid Scotland mourn the last, last lingering Wasp!”

[403] Beelzebub is the king of flies.

[404] A beautiful allusion to our starving weavers.

[405] Alluding to antiquarian visits to these renowned closes.

[406] Referring to certain precious lachrymatories in the possession of Mr Sharpe.

TO CAROLINE.

When thy bounding step I hear,
And thy soft voice, low and clear;
When thy glancing eyes I meet,
In their sudden laughter sweet—
Thou, I dream, wert surely born

For a path by care unworn!

Thou must be a shelter’d flower,

With but sunshine for thy dower.

Ah, fair child! not e’en for thee

May this lot of brightness be;

Yet, if grief must add a tone

To thine accents now unknown;

If within that cloudless eye

Sadder thought must one day lie,

Still I trust the signs which tell

On thy life a light shall dwell,

Light—thy gentle spirit’s own,

From within around thee thrown.

THE FLOWER OF THE DESERT.

“Who does not recollect the exultation of Valiant over a flower in the torrid wastes of Africa? The affecting mention of the influence of a flower upon the mind, by Mungo Park, in a time of suffering and despondency, in the heart of the same savage country, is familiar to every one.”—Howitt’s “Book of the Seasons.”

Why art thou thus in thy beauty cast,

O lonely, loneliest flower!

Where the sound of song hath never pass’d

From human hearth or bower?

I pity thee, for thy heart of love,

For that glowing heart, that fain

Would breathe out joy with each wind to rove—
In vain, lost thing! in vain!
I pity thee, for thy wasted bloom,
For thy glory’s fleeting hour,
For the desert place, thy living tomb—
O lonely, loneliest flower!
I said—but a low voice made reply,
“Lament not for the flower!
Though its blossoms all unmark’d must die,
They have had a glorious dower.
“Though it bloom afar from the minstrel’s way,
And the paths where lovers tread;
Yet strength and hope, like an inborn day,
By its odours have been shed.
“Yes! dews more sweet than ever fell
O’er island of the blest,
Were shaken forth, from its purple bell,
On a suffering human breast.
“A wanderer came, as a stricken deer,
O’er the waste of burning sand,
He bore the wound of an Arab spear,
He fled from a ruthless band.
“And dreams of home in a troubled tide
Swept o’er his darkening eye,

As he lay down by the fountain-side,

In his mute despair to die.

“But his glance was caught by the desert’s flower,

The precious boon of heaven;

And sudden hope, like a vernal shower,

To his fainting heart was given.

“For the bright flower spoke of One above—

Of the presence felt to brood,

With a spirit of pervading love,

O’er the wildest solitude.

“Oh! the seed was thrown those wastes among

In a bless’d and gracious hour,

For the lorn one rose in heart made strong

By the lonely, loneliest flower!”

CRITIQUE BY PROFESSOR NORTON.

“The [American] collection of Mrs Hemans’ Miscellaneous Poems opens with verses in honour of the Pilgrim Fathers. She has celebrated with solemnity and truth the circumstances which gave sublimity to the glorious scene of their landing; and their descendants cannot be but pleased to see the devotedness displayed by them introduced into poetry, and incorporated among the bright examples held up by the inventive as well as the historic muse for the admiration of mankind.

“Freedom, not licentiousness—religious freedom, not the absence of religious rites—was the object for which the fathers came. An air of earnestness was thus originally imparted to the character of the country, and succeeding ages have not worn it away. Though it may suit the humour of moralisers to declaim against the

degeneracy of the times, we believe that the country has of late years made advances in moral worth. We infer this from the more general diffusion of intelligence, and the higher standard of learning; from the spirit of healthy action pervading all classes; from the diminished number of crimes; from the general security of property; from the rapid multiplication of Sabbath schools, than which no discovery of our age has been more important for the moral education of the people; from the philanthropy which seeks for the sources of vice, and restrains it by removing its causes; from the active and compassionate benevolence, which does not allow itself to consider any class so vicious or so degraded as to have forfeited its claim to humane attention—which seeks and relieves misery wherever it is concealed, and, embracing every continent in its regard, has its messengers in the remotest regions of the world. Religious freedom is the last right which, even in our days, the inhabitants of this country would surrender. It would be easier to drive them from their houses and their lands, than to take from them the liberty of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience. There is no general assertion of this right, and no energetic display of zeal in maintaining it, solely because it is menaced by no alarming danger.

"In a state of society like ours, there may be little room for the exercise of those arts of which it is the chief aim to amuse and delight; and yet attention is by no means confined to those objects which are directly connected with the advancement of personal or public wealth. For the costly luxuries of life, and even for its elegant pleasures, there may as yet be little room; and still the morality of the nation be far from forming itself on the new system of morals devised by our political economists. There has been no age—we assert it with confidence—there has been no people, where the efforts of mind, directly connected with the preservation of elevated feeling and religious earnestness, are more valued than they are by the better part of our own community. We can no support, or we hold it not best to support, an expensive religious establishment; but every where the voice of religious

homage and instruction is heard: we cannot set apart large estates to give splendour to literary distinction; but you will hardly find a retired nook, where only a few families seek their shelter near each other, so destitute, that the elements of knowledge are not freely taught: we cannot establish galleries for the various works of the arts of design; but the eye that can see the beauties of nature is common with us, and the recital of deeds of high worth meets with ready listeners. The luxuries, which are for display, are exceedingly little known; but the highest value is set on every effort of mind connected with the investigation of truth, or the nurture of generous and elevated sentiments.

“Where the public mind had been thus formed, the poetry of Mrs Hemans was sure to find admirers. The exercise of genius, if connected with no respect for virtue, might have remained unnoticed; the theory, which treats of beauty as of something independent of moral effect, is still without advocates among us. It has thus far been an undisputed axiom that, if a production is indecent or immoral, it for that very reason cannot claim to be considered beautiful.

“We do not go so far as to assert, that there can be no merit in works of which the general tendency is immoral; but the merit, if there is any, does not lie in the immoral part, in the charm that is thrown round vice, but rather in an occasional gleam of better principles, in nature occasionally making her voice heard above the din of the dissolute, in the pictures of loveliness and moral truth that shine out through the darkness. Amidst all the horrors and depravity of superstition, the strange and the abominable vagaries of the human imagination, exercised on religion in heathenish ignorance, the observing mind may yet recognise the spirit that connects man with a better world. And so it is with poetry: amidst all the confusion which is manifest where the heavenly gift is under the control of a corrupted judgment, something of its native lustre will still appear. When we see the poet of transcendent genius delineating any thing but the higher part of our nature; when we observe how, after borrowing fiendish colours, he describes states of mind with

which devils only should have sympathy, rails at human nature in a style which spiteful misanthropy alone can approve, or gives descriptions of sensuality fit only for the revels of Comus; when we see him ‘hurried down the adulterate age, adding pollutions of his own,’ we can have little to say to excuse or to justify an admiration of poetic talent, till we are reconciled to human nature and the muse by the pure lustre of better-guided minds.

“In what view of the subject can it be held a proper design of poetry to render man hateful to himself? How can it delight or instruct us to see our fellow-men ranged under the two classes of designing villains and weak dupes? Or what sources of poetic inspiration are left, if all the relations of social life are held up to derision, and every generous impulse scorned as the result of deluded confidence?

“To demand that what is called poetical justice should be found in every performance may be unreasonable, since the events of life do not warrant us in expecting it; but we may demand what is of much more importance, moral justice—a consistency of character, a conformity of the mind to its career of action. It may not be inconsistent with reality, though it is with probability, that an unprincipled miscreant, governing himself in his gratifications by the narrowest selfishness, should be successful in his pursuits; but it is unnatural and false to give to such a nature any of the attributes of goodness. Vice is essentially mean and low; it has no dignity, no courage, no beauty; and while the poet can never impart to a production, tending to promote vice, the power and interest which belong to the worthy delineation of honourable actions, he can never invest a false heart with the noble qualities of a generous one. Observe in this respect the manner of the dramatic poet, who is acknowledged to have delineated the passions with the greatest fidelity. Shakspeare describes the mind as gradually sinking under the influence of the master-passion. It stamps itself on the whole soul, and obliterates all the finer traces in which humanity had written a witness of gentler qualities. Macbeth is a moral picture of terrific sublimity, and an illustration of that moral justice which we

contend should never be wanting. The one strong passion moulds the character, and blasts every tender sentiment. When once Othello is jealous, his judgment is gone; the selfishness of Richard leads to wanton cruelty. In one of Shakspeare's tragedies, not a crime, but a fault is the foundation of the moral interest. Here, too, he is consistent; and the irresolution of Hamlet leaves his mind without energy, and his contending passions without terror. We might explain our views by examples from the comedies of the great dramatist, but Macbeth and Richard furnish the clearest illustration of them. And it is in such exhibitions of the power of vice to degrade, that 'gorgeous tragedy' performs her severest office; lifting up the pall which hides the ghastliness of unprincipled depravity, and showing us, where vice gains control, the features, that before may have been resplendent with loveliness, marred and despoiled of all their sweet expression.

"There can, then, be no more hideous fault in a literary work than profligacy. Levity is next in order. The disposition to trifle with topics of the highest moment—to apply the levelling principle to the emotions of the human mind, to hold up to ridicule the exalted thoughts and kindling aspirations of which human nature is capable—can at best charm those only who have failed to enter the true avenues to happiness. Such works may be popular, because the character of the public mind may for a season be corrupt. A literature, consisting of such works, is the greatest evil with which a nation can be cursed. National poverty is nothing in comparison, for poverty is remedied by prudent enterprise; but such works poison the life-blood of the people, the moral vigour, which alone can strive for liberty and honour. The apologists for this class of compositions, in which Voltaire and La Fontaine are the greatest masters, defend it on the ground that it is well adapted to give pleasure to minds which have been accustomed to it, and that foreigners need only a different moral education to be able to enjoy it. Now, without wasting a word on the enormity of defending what is intrinsically sensual, we reply merely on the score of effect. He who adapts his inventions to a particular state of society, can please no further; he

depends on circumstances for his popularity; he does not appeal to man, but to accidental habits, a fleeting state of the public mind; he is the poet, not of nature, but of a transient fashion. The attraction which comes from the strangeness or novelty of the manner is of very little value. On the most brilliant night a meteor would be followed by all eyes for a while; and why? Because it is as evanescent as bright; we must gaze at once, or it will be too late. Yet the mind soon returns to the contemplation of the eternal stars which light up the heavens with enduring lustre. Any popularity, obtained by gratifying a perverse taste, is essentially transitory; while all that is benevolent and social, all that favours truth and goodness, is of universal and perpetual interest.

"These are but plain inferences from facts in the history of literature. The plays of Dryden were written to please an audience of a vicious taste; they may have been received with boisterous applause, but nobody likes them now, though in their form not unsuited to the stage; and as for the grossest scenes, any merit in the invention is never spoken of as compensating for their abominable coarseness. On the other hand, Milton's Comus, though in its form entirely antiquated, has the beautiful freshness of everlasting youth, delights the ardent admirer of good poetry, and is always showing new attractions to the careful critic. And where lies this immense difference in the lasting effect of these two writers? Dryden, it is true, fell far short of Milton in poetic genius; but the true cause lies in this,—virtue, which is the soul of song, is wanting in the plays of Dryden, while the poetry of Milton bears the impress of his own magnanimity.

"We are contending for no sickly morality: we would shut out the poet from the haunts of libertinism, not from the haunts of men; we would have him associate with his fellows, hold intercourse with the great minds that light up the gloom of ages, and share in the best impulses of human nature, and not, under the influence of a too delicate sensibility, treat only of the harmless flowers, and the innocent birds, and the exhilarating charm of agreeable scenery; and still less, in the spirit of a sullen

misanthropy, delight in obscure abstractions, find comfort only in solitude, and rejoice, or pretend to rejoice, chiefly in the mountains, and the ocean, and the low places of the earth. Their pursuit of moral beauty does not lead to an affected admiration, or an improper idolatry of the visible creation. The genius of the poet can impart a portion of its eloquence to the external world, and elevate creation by connecting it with moral associations. But descriptions, except of scenes where moral beings are to move, possess little interest. If landscape-painting is an inferior branch of that art, though the splendid works of Claude demand praise without measure, landscape poetry is a kind of affectation, an unnatural result of excessive refinement. Description is important, but subordinate. The external world, with all its gorgeousness and varied forms of beauty; the cataract, 'with its glory of reflected light;' the forests, as they wave in the brilliancy of early summer; the flowers, that are crowded in gardens, or waste their sweetness on the desert air; 'the noise of the hidden brook, that all night long in the leafy months sings its quiet tune to the sleeping woods;' the ocean, whether reposing in tranquil majesty or tossed by the tempest; night, when the heavens are glittering with the splendour of the constellations; morning, when one perfect splendour beams in the sky, and is reflected in a thousand colours from the guttering earth—these are not the sublimest themes that awaken the energies of the muse. It is mind, and mind only, which can exhibit the highest beauty. The hymn of martyrdom, the strength by which the patriot girds himself to die, 'God's breath in the soul of man,' the unconquerable power of generous passion, the hopes and sorrows of humanity—love, devotion, and all the deep and bright springs of affection—these are higher themes of permanent interest and exalted character.

"Here, too, we find an analogy between poetic and religious feeling. The image of God is to be sought for, not so much in the outward world as in the mind. No combination of inanimate matter can equal the sublimity and wonderful power of life. To impart organic life, with the power of reproduction, is a brighter display of

Omnipotence than any arrangement of the inanimate, material world. A swarm of flies, as through their short existence they buzz and wheel in the summer's sun, offer as clear, and, to some minds, a clearer demonstration of Omnipotence, than the everlasting, but silent, courses of the planets. But moral life is the highest creation of divine power. We, at least, know and can conceive of none higher. We are, therefore, not to look for God among the rivers and the forests, nor yet among the planets and the stars, but in the hearts of men; he is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

"Those who accord with the general views which we have here maintained, will be prepared to express unqualified approbation of the literary career of Mrs Hemans. Had her writings been merely harmless, we should not have entered into an analysis of them; but the moral charm which is spread over them is so peculiar, so full of nature, and truth, and deep feeling, that her productions claim at once the praise of exquisite purity and poetic excellence. She adds the dignity of her sex to a high sense of the duties of a poet; she writes with buoyancy, yet with earnestness; her poems bear the impress of a character worthy of admiration. In the pursuit of literary renown, she never forgets what is due to feminine reserve. We perceive a mind endowed with powers to aspire, and are still further pleased to find no unsatisfied cravings, no passionate pursuit of remote objects, but high endowments, graced by contentment. There is plainly the consciousness of the various sorrow to which life is exposed, and with it the spirit of resignation. She sets before herself a clear and exalted idea of what a female writer should be, and is on the way to realise her own idea of excellence. Living in domestic retirement, in a beautiful part of Wales, it is her own feelings and her own experience which she communicates to us. We cannot illustrate our meaning better, than by introducing our readers at once to Mrs Hemans herself, as she describes to us the occupations of a day.

AN HOUR OF ROMANCE.

‘There were thick leaves above me and around,

And low sweet sighs, like those of childhood’s sleep,

Amidst their dimness, and a fitful sound

As of soft showers on water,’ etc. etc.

“The poetry is here as beautiful as the scene described is quiet and pleasing. It forms an amiable picture of the occupations of a contemplative mind. The language, versification, and imagery, are of great merit, the beauties of nature described by a careful observer; the English scene is placed in happy contrast with the Eastern, and the dream of romance pleasantly disturbed by the cheerfulness of life. But we make but sorry work at commenting on what the reader must feel.

“It has been said that religion can never be made a subject of interest in poetry. The position is a false one, refuted by the close alliance between poetic inspiration and sacred enthusiasm. Irreligion has certainly no place in poetry. There may have been Atheist philosophers; an Atheist poet is an impossibility. The poet may doubt and reason like Hamlet, but the moment he acquiesces in unbelief, there is an end to the magic of poetry. Imagination can no longer throw lively hues over the creation: the forests cease to be haunted; the sea, and the air, and the heavens, to teem with life. The highest interest, we think, attaches to Mrs Hemans’s writings, from the spirit of Christianity which pervades them.

“The poetry of our author is tranquillising in its character, calm and serene. We beg pardon of the lovers of excitement, but we are seriously led to take notice of this quality as of a high merit. A great deal has been said of the sublimity of directing the passions; we hold it a much more difficult and a much more elevated task, to restrain them. It may be sublime to ride on the whirlwind, and direct the storm; but it seems to us still more sublime to appease the storm, and still the whirlwind. Virgil, no mean authority, was of this opinion. The French are reported to be particularly fond of effect and display; but we remember to have read that, even in the splendid days

of Napoleon, the simplicity of vocal music surpassed in effect the magnificence of a numerous band. It was when Napoleon was crowned Emperor in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. The Parisians, wishing to distinguish the occasion by some novel exhibition, and to produce a great effect, filled the orchestra with eighty harps, which were all struck together with unequalled skill. The fashionable world was in raptures. Presently the Pope entered, and some thirty of his singers, who came with him from Rome, received him with the powerful Tu es Petrus of the old-fashioned Scarlatti; and the simple majesty of the air, assisted by no instruments, annihilated in a moment the whole effect of the preceding fanfaronade. And in literature the public taste seems to us already weary of those productions which aim at astonishing and producing a great effect, and there is now an opportunity of pleasing by the serenity of contemplative excellence.

"It is the high praise of Mrs Hemans's poetry that it is feminine. The sex may well be pleased with her productions, for they could hardly have a better representative in the career of letters. All her works seem to come from the heart, to be natural and true. The poet can give us nothing but the form under which the objects he describes present themselves to his own mind. That form must be noble, or it is not worthy of our consideration; it must be consistent, or it will fail to be true. Now, in the writings of Mrs Hemans, we are shown how life and its concerns appear to woman, and hear a mother intrusting to verse her experience and observation. So, in 'The Hebrew Mother,' 'the spring-tide of nature' swells high as she parts from her son, on devoting him to the service of the Temple:—

'Alas, my boy! thy gentle grasp is on me,

The bright tears quiver in thy pleading eyes;

And now fond thoughts arise,

And silver cords again to earth have won me,

And like a vine thou claspest my full heart—

How shall I hence depart?

‘And oh! the home whence thy bright smile hath parted,

Will it not seem as if the sunny day

Turn’d from its door away?

While through its chambers wandering, weary-hearted,

I languish for thy voice, which past me still

Went like a singing rill?

‘I give thee to thy God—the God that gave thee,

A well-spring of deep gladness to my heart!

And, precious as thou art,

And pure as dew of Hermon, He shall have thee,

My own, my beautiful, my undefiled!

And thou shalt be His child.

‘Therefore, farewell! I go—my soul may fail me,

As the hart panteth for the water-brooks,

Yearning for thy sweet looks.

But thou, my first-born! droop not, nor bewail me;

Thou in the Shadow of the Rock shalt dwell,

The Rock of Strength.—Farewell!’

“The same high feeling of maternal duty and love inspires the little poem, ‘The Wreck,’ which every one has read. ‘The Lady of the Castle,’ ‘The Grave of Körner,’ ‘The Graves of a Household,’ are all on domestic subjects. But why do we allude to poems which are in every one’s hands? The mother’s voice breaks out again in the piece entitled ‘Elysium.’ Children, according to the heathen mythology, were banished to the infernal regions, and religious faith had no consolation for a

mourning parent.

‘Calm, on its leaf-strewn bier,

Unlike a gift of Nature to Decay,

Too roselike still, too beautiful, too dear,

The child at rest before its mother lay;

E’en so to pass away,

With its bright smile! Elysium! what wert thou

To her who wept o’er that young slumberer’s brow?

‘Thou hadst no home, green land!

For the fair creature from her bosom gone,

With life’s fresh flowers just opening in its hand,

And all the lovely thoughts and dreams unknown,

Which in its clear eye shone

Like spring’s first wakening! But that light was past—

—Where went the dewdrop swept before the blast?

‘Not where thy soft winds play’d,

Not where thy waters lay in glassy sleep!—

Fade with thy bowers, thou land of visions! fade!

From thee no voice came o’er the gloomy deep,

And bade man cease to weep!

Fade, with the amaranth plain, the myrtle grove,

Which could not yield one hope to sorrowing love!

‘For the most loved are they

Of whom Fame speaks not with her clarion voice

In regal halls! The shades o’erhang their way;

The vale, with its deep fountains, is their choice,

And gentle hearts rejoice

Around their steps; till silently they die,

As a stream shrinks from summer’s burning eye.

‘And the world knows not then—

Not then, nor ever, what pure thoughts are fled!

Yet these are they, who on the souls of men

Come back, when night her folding veil hath spread,

The long-remember’d dead!

But not with thee might aught save glory dwell—

Fade, fade away, thou shore of asphodel!’

“And the same feelings of a woman and mother dictated ‘The Evening Prayer at a Girls’ School,’—a poem which merits to be considered in connexion with Gray’s ‘Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.’

‘O joyous creatures! that will sink to rest,

Lightly, when those pure orisons are done,” etc.

“Of other spirited, and lively, and pathetic short poems of Mrs Hemans, which form some of the brightest ornaments of the lyric poetry of the language, we take no particular notice—for in what part of the United States are they not known? So general has been the attention to those of her pieces adapted to the purposes of a newspaper, we hardly fear to assert that, throughout a great part of this country, there is not a family of the middling class in which some of them have not been read. The praise which was not sparingly bestowed upon her, when her shorter first productions became generally known among us, has been often repeated on a careful

examination of her works; and could we hope that our remarks might one day fall under her eye, we should hope she would not be indifferent to the good wishes which are offered her from America, but feel herself cheered and encouraged in her efforts, by the prospect of an enlarged and almost unlimited field of useful influence, opened to her among the descendants of her country in an independent land. The ocean divides us from the fashions as well as the commotions of Europe. The voice of America, deciding on the literature of England, resembles the voice of posterity more nearly than any thing else, that is contemporaneous, can do. We believe that the general attention which has been given to Mrs Hemans's works among us, may be regarded as a pledge that they will not be received with indifference by posterity."—North American Review.

[At the conclusion of "The Records" we gave the opinions of one of our most celebrated Cisatlantic critics regarding the poetry of Mrs Hemans, and we think it but right to show now (as has just been done) the general estimate in which her genius is held in America, as evidenced by the North American Review, the best-known and most widely-circulated of the Transatlantic periodicals.

Judging from the state of feeling in America—from the ideas of practical philosophy entertained there—and from the pervading utilitarian bias of its prose literature, we must confess that, had we been asked to name any votary of the British muse more likely than another to be appreciated in that country, we should have had very little hesitation in fixing upon Crabbe. And why? Because his poetry is characterised by a stern adherence to the realities of life, as contradistinguished from romance, and because his characters and situations are taken from existing aspects of society, appreciable by all. In this theory it appears we are wrong; and Professor Norton has here done his best to account for it. We are most given to admire what is least attainable; and therefore it is that the spiritual glow which Mrs Hemans has blent with human sentiment—the imaginative beauty with which she has clothed "the shows of earth and heaven,"—and the leaven of romance which she has infused into

the communications of daily life, have, as lucus a non lucendo, been elements of, and not the impediments to, her American popularity.]

HYMNS FOR CHILDHOOD.

[We are quite aware that the Hymns for Childhood were written at a much earlier period than that which we have here chronologically assigned them. They had been sent to Professor Norton for the use of his children, and were printed under his auspices at Boston, New England, so early as 1827. Not, however, having had an opportunity of seeing the original American edition, we are in the dark as to whether the hymns in it were the same in number as those published in Dublin under the eye of the author, or whether she afterwards revised and altered them. It has been therefore judged best to place them here in the order of publication, and as they appeared in this country under the supervision of Mrs Hemans herself. The hymns (as they deserved to be) were very favourably received by the public, and it is only to be regretted that Mrs Hemans did not from time to time add to their number. She thus wrote to Mrs Lawrence with a presentation copy of her little book:—"I send you the fairy volume of hymns. You will immediately see how unpretending a little book it is; but it will give you pleasure to know that it has been received in the most gratifying manner, having seemed (as a playful child might have done) to win criticism into a benignant smile."—Vide Letter to Mrs Lawrence, Recollections, p. 354.]

INTRODUCTORY VERSES.

Oh! blest art thou whose steps may rove

Through the green paths of vale and grove,

Or, leaving all their charms below,

Climb the wild mountain's airy brow;

And gaze afar o’er cultured plains,
And cities with their stately fanes,
And forests, that beneath thee lie,
And ocean mingling with the sky.
For man can show thee naught so fair
As Nature’s varied marvels there;
And if thy pure and artless breast
Can feel their grandeur, thou art blest!
For thee the stream in beauty flows,
For thee the gale of summer blows;
And, in deep glen and wood-walk free,
Voices of joy still breathe for thee.
But happier far, if then thy soul
Can soar to Him who made the whole.
If to thine eye the simplest flower
Portray His bounty and His power!
If, in whate’er is bright or grand,
Thy mind can trace His viewless hand;
If Nature’s music bid thee raise
Thy song of gratitude and praise;
If heaven and earth, with beauty fraught,
Lead to His throne thy raptured thought;
If there thou lovest His love to read—
Then, wanderer! thou art blest indeed.

THE RAINBOW.

“I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.”—Genesis, ix. 13.

Soft falls the mild, reviving shower
From April’s changeful skies,
And rain-drops bend each trembling flower
They tinge with richer dyes.
Soon shall their genial influence call
A thousand buds to day,
Which, waiting but that balmy fall,
In hidden beauty lay.
E’en now full many a blossom’s bell
With fragrance fills the shade;
And verdure clothes each grassy dell,
In brighter tints array’d.
But mark! what arch of varied hue
From heaven to earth is bow’d?
Haste, ere it vanish!—haste to view
The rainbow in the cloud!
How bright its glory! there behold
The emerald’s verdant rays,
The topaz blends its hue of gold
With the deep ruby’s blaze.
Yet not alone to charm thy sight

Was given the vision fair—
Gaze on that arch of colour’d light,
And read God’s mercy there.
It tells us that the mighty deep,
Fast by the Eternal chain’d,
No more o’er earth’s domain shall sweep,
Awful and unrestrain’d.
It tells that seasons, heat and cold,
Fix’d by his sovereign will,
Shall, in their course, bid man behold
Seed-time and harvest still;
That still the flower shall deck the field,
When vernal zephyrs blow,
That still the vine its fruit shall yield,
When autumn sunbeams glow.
Then, child of that fair earth! which yet
Smiles with each charm endow’d,
Bless thou His name, whose mercy set
The rainbow in the cloud!

THE SUN.

The Sun comes forth: each mountain-height
Glows with a tinge of rosy light,
And flowers that slumber’d through the night
Their dewy leaves unfold;

A flood of splendour bursts on high,
And ocean’s breast gives back a sky
All steep’d in molten gold.
Oh! thou art glorious, orb of day!
Exulting nations hail thy ray,
Creation swells a choral lay
To welcome thy return;
From thee all nature draws her hues,
Thy beams the insect’s wing suffuse,
And in the diamond burn.
Yet must thou fade! When earth and heaven
By fire and tempest shall be riven,
Thou, from thy sphere of radiance driven,
O Sun! must fall at last;
Another heaven, another earth,
New power, new glory shall have birth,
When all we see is past.
But He who gave the word of might,
“Let there be light,”—and there was light,
Who bade thee chase the gloom of night,
And beam the world to bless;
For ever bright, for ever pure,
Alone unchanging shall endure,
The Sun of Righteousness!

THE RIVERS.

Go! trace th’ unnumber’d streams, o’er earth
That wind their devious course,
That draw from Alpine heights their birth,
Deep vale, or cavern-source.
Some by majestic cities glide,
Proud scenes of man’s renown;
Some lead their solitary tide
Where pathless forests frown.
Some calmly roll o’er golden sands,
Where Afric’s deserts lie;
Or spread, to clothe rejoicing lands
With rich fertility.
These bear the bark, whose stately sail
Exulting seems to swell;
While these, scarce rippled by a gale,
Sleep in the lonely dell.
Yet on, alike, though swift or slow
Their various waves may sweep,
Through cities or through shades, they flow
To the same boundless deep.
Oh! thus, whate’er our path of life,
Through sunshine or through gloom,
Through scenes of quiet or of strife,

Its end is still the tomb.

The chief whose mighty deeds we hail,

The monarch throned on high,

The peasant in his native vale—

All journey on to die!

But if Thy guardian care, my God!

The pilgrim’s course attend,

I will not fear the dark abode

To which my footsteps bend.

For thence thine all-redeeming Son,

Who died the world to save,

In light, in triumph, rose, and won

The victory from the grave!

THE STARS.

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work.”—Psalm xix. 1.

No cloud obscures the summer sky,

The moon in brightness walks on high;

And, set in azure, every star

Shines, a pure gem of heaven, afar!

Child of the earth! oh, lift thy glance

To yon bright firmament’s expanse;

The glories of its realm explore,

And gaze, and wonder, and adore!

Doth it not speak to every sense
The marvels of Omnipotence?
Seest thou not there the Almighty name
Inscribed in characters of flame?
Count o’er these lamps of quenchless light,
That sparkle through the shades of night:
Behold them! can a mortal boast
To number that celestial host?
Mark well each little star, whose rays
In distant splendour meet thy gaze:
Each is a world, by Him sustain’d
Who from eternity hath reign’d.
Each, kindled not for earth alone,
Hath circling planets of its own,
And beings, whose existence springs
From Him, the all-powerful King of kings.
Haply, those glorious beings know
No stain of guilt, or tear of woe;
But, raising still the adoring voice,
For ever in their God rejoice.
What then art thou, O child of clay!
Amid creation’s grandeur, say?
E’en as an insect on the breeze,
E’en as a dew-drop, lost in seas!

Yet fear thou not! The sovereign hand
Which spread the ocean and the land,
And hung the rolling spheres in air,
Hath, e’en for thee, a Father’s care!
Be thou at peace! The all-seeing Eye,
Pervading earth, and air, and sky—
The searching glance which none may flee,
Is still in mercy turn’d on thee.

THE OCEAN.

“They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.”—Psalm cvii. 23, 24.

He that in venturous barks hath been
A wanderer on the deep,
Can tell of many an awful scene,
Where storms for ever sweep.
For many a fair, majestic sight
Hath met his wandering eye,
Beneath the streaming northern light,
Or blaze of Indian sky.
Go! ask him of the whirlpool’s roar,
Whose echoing thunder peals
Loud, as if rush’d along the shore
An army’s chariot-wheels;
Of icebergs, floating o’er the main,

Or fix’d upon the coast,
Like glittering citadel or fane,
Mid the bright realms of frost;
Of coral rocks from waves below
In steep ascent that tower,
And, fraught with peril, daily grow,
Form’d by an insect’s power;
Of sea-fires, which at dead of night
Shine o’er the tides afar,
And make the expanse of ocean bright,
As heaven with many a star.
O God! thy name they well may praise
Who to the deep go down,
And trace the wonders of thy ways
Where rocks and billows frown!
If glorious be that awful deep
No human power can bind,
What then art Thou, who bid’st it keep
Within its bounds confined!
Let heaven and earth in praise unite!
Eternal praise to Thee,
Whose word can rouse the tempest’s might,
Or still the raging sea!

THE THUNDER-STORM.

Deep, fiery clouds o’ercast the sky,
Dead stillness reigns in air;
There is not e’en a breeze, on high
The gossamer to bear.
The woods are hush’d, the waves at rest,
The lake is dark and still,
Reflecting on its shadowy breast
Each form of rock and hill.
The lime-leaf waves not in the grove,
The rose-tree in the bower;
The birds have ceased their songs of love,
Awed by the threatening hour.
’Tis noon;—yet nature’s calm profound
Seems as at midnight deep:
But hark! what peal of awful sound
Breaks on creation’s sleep?
The thunder-burst!—its rolling might
Seems the firm hills to shake;
And in terrific splendour bright
The gather’d lightnings break.
Yet fear not, shrink not thou, my child!
Though by the bolt’s descent
Were the tall cliffs in ruins piled,

And the wide forests rent.

Doth not thy God behold thee still,

With all-surveying eye?

Doth not his power all nature fill,

Around, beneath, on high?

Know, hadst thou eagle-pinions free,

To track the realms of air,

Thou couldst not reach a spot, where He

Would not be with thee there!

In the wide city's peopled towers,

On the vast ocean's plains,

Midst the deep woodland's loneliest bowers,

Alike the Almighty reigns!

Then fear not, though the angry sky

A thousand darts should cast;

Why should we tremble, e'en to die,

And be with Him at last?

THE BIRDS.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings; and not one of them is forgotten before God?"—St Luke, xii. 6.

Tribes of the air! whose favour'd race

May wander through the realms of space,

Free guests of earth and sky;

In form, in plumage, and in song,

What gifts of nature mark your throng
With bright variety!
Nor differ less your forms, your flight,
Your dwellings hid from hostile sight,
And the wild haunts ye love;
Birds of the gentle beak![407] how dear
Your wood-note to the wanderer’s ear,
In shadowy vale or grove!
Far other scenes, remote, sublime,
Where swain or hunter may not climb
The mountain-eagle seeks;
Alone he reigns a monarch there,
Scarce will the chamois’ footstep dare
Ascend his Alpine peaks.
Others there are that make their home
Where the white billows roar and foam
Around the o’erhanging rock;
Fearless they skim the angry wave,
Or, shelter’d in their sea-beat cave,
The tempest’s fury mock.
Where Afric’s burning realm expands,
The ostrich haunts the desert-sands,
Parch’d by the blaze of day;
The swan, where northern rivers glide,

Through the tall reeds that fringe their tide
Floats graceful on her way.
The condor, where the Andes tower,
Spreads his broad wing of pride and power,
And many a storm defies;
Bright in the Orient realms of morn,
All beauty's richest hues adorn
The bird of paradise.
Some, amidst India's groves of palm,
And spicy forests breathing balm,
Weave soft their pendant nest;
Some, deep in Western wilds, display
Their fairy form and plumage gay,
In rainbow colours drest.
Others no varied song may pour,
May boast no eagle-plume to soar,
No tints of light may wear;
Yet know, our Heavenly Father guides
The least of these, and well provides
For each, with tenderest care.
Shall He not then thy guardian be?
Will not His aid extend to thee?
Oh, safely may'st thou rest!—
Trust in His love; and e'en should pain,

Should sorrow, tempt thee to complain,

Know what He wills is best!

[407] The Italians call all singing-birds, birds of the gentle beak.

THE SKYLARK.

CHILD’S MORNING HYMN.

The skylark, when the dews of morn

Hang tremulous on flower and thorn,

And violets round his nest exhale

Their fragrance on the early gale,

To the first sunbeam spreads his wings,

Buoyant with joy, and soars and sings.

He rests not on the leafy spray

To warble his exulting lay;

But high above the morning cloud

Mounts in triumphant freedom proud,

And swells, when nearest to the sky,

His notes of sweetest ecstasy.

Thus, my Creator! thus the more

My spirit’s wing to Thee can soar,

The more she triumphs to behold

Thy love in all thy works unfold,

And bids her hymns of rapture be

Most glad, when rising most to Thee!

THE NIGHTINGALE.

CHILD’S EVENING HYMN.

When twilight’s gray and pensive hour
Brings the low breeze, and shuts the flower,
And bids the solitary star
Shine in pale beauty from afar;
When gathering shades the landscape veil,
And peasants seek their village-dale,
And mists from river-wave arise,
And dew in every blossom lies;
When evening’s primrose opes to shed
Soft fragrance round her grassy bed;
When glow-worms in the wood-walk light
Their lamp to cheer the traveller’s sight;—
At that calm hour, so still, so pale,
Awakes the lonely nightingale;
And from a hermitage of shade
Fills with her voice the forest glade.
And sweeter far that melting voice
Than all which through the day rejoice;
And still shall bard and wanderer love
The twilight music of the grove.
Father in heaven! oh, thus when day
With all its cares hath pass’d away,

And silent hours waft peace on earth,
And hush the louder strains of mirth;
Thus may sweet songs of praise and prayer
To Thee my spirit's offering bear—
Yon star, my signal, set on high,
For vesper-hymns of piety.
So may Thy mercy and Thy power
Protect me through the midnight hour,
And balmy sleep and visions blest
Smile on Thy servant's bed of rest.

THE NORTHERN SPRING.

When the soft breath of Spring goes forth
Far o'er the mountains of the North,
How soon those wastes of dazzling snow
With life, and bloom, and beauty glow!
Then bursts the verdure of the plains,
Then break the streams from icy chains;
And the glad reindeer seeks no more
Amidst deep snows his mossy store.
Then the dark pine-wood's boughs are seen
Fringed tenderly with living green;
And roses, in their brightest dyes,
By Lapland's founts and lakes arise.
Thus, in a moment, from the gloom

And the cold fetters of the tomb,

Thus shall the blest Redeemer's voice

Call forth his servants to rejoice.

For He, whose word is truth, hath said,

His power to life shall wake the dead,

And summon those he loves on high,

To "put on immortality!"

Then, all its transient sufferings o'er,

On wings of light the soul shall soar,

Exulting, to that blest abode

Where tears of sorrow never flow'd.

Early in the year 1834, the little volume of Hymns for Childhood (which, though written many years before, had never been published in England) was brought out by Messrs Curry of Dublin, who were also the publishers of the National Lyrics, which appeared in a collected form about the same time. Of the latter, Mrs Hemans thus wrote to her friend Mrs Lawrence, in the note which accompanied the volume:—"I think you will love my little book, though it contains but the broken music of a troubled heart—for all the hours it will recall to you beam fresh and bright as ever in my memory, though I have passed through but too many of sad and deep excitement since that period."—Memoir, p. 269.]

PARAPHRASE OF PSALM CXLVIII.

"Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights."

Praise ye the Lord! on every height

Songs to his glory raise!

Ye angel-hosts, ye stars of night,

Join in immortal praise!

O heaven of heavens! let praise far-swelling

From all thine orbs be sent!

Join in the strain, ye waters, dwelling!

Above the firmament!

For His the word which gave you birth,

And majesty and might:

Praise to the Highest from the earth,

And let the deeps unite!

O fire and vapour, hail and snow!

Ye servants of His will;

O stormy winds! that only blow

His mandates to fulfil;

Mountains and rocks, to heaven that rise!

Fair cedars of the wood!

Creatures of life that wing the skies,

Or track the plains for food!

Judges of nations! kings, whose hand

Waves the proud sceptre high!

O youths and virgins of the land!

O age and infancy!

Praise ye His name, to whom alone

All homage should be given;

Whose glory from the eternal throne

Spreads wide o’er earth and heaven!

NATIONAL LYRICS, AND SONGS FOR MUSIC. TO MRS LAWRENCE

OF WAVERTREE HALL, HER FRIEND, AND THE SISTER OF HER FRIEND COLONEL D’AGUILAR, THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED IN REMEMBRANCE OF MANY BRIGHTLY ASSOCIATED HOURS, BY FELICIA HEMANS.

NATIONAL LYRICS.

THE THEMES OF SONG.

“Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love, and hope,

And melancholy fear subdued by faith.” Wordsworth.

Where shall the minstrel find a theme?

—Where’er, for freedom shed,

Brave blood hath dyed some ancient stream,

Amidst the mountains, red.

Where’er a rock, a fount, a grove,

Bears record to the faith

Of love—deep, holy, fervent love,

Victor o’er fear and death.

Where’er a chieftain’s crested brow

Too soon hath been struck down,

Or a bright virgin head laid low,

Wearing its youth’s first crown.

Where’er a spire points up to heaven,
Through storm and summer air,
Telling, that all around have striven
Man’s heart, and hope, and prayer.
Where’er a blessed home hath been,
That now is home no more:
A place of ivy, darkly green,
Where laughter’s light is o’er.
Where’er by some forsaken grave,
Some nameless greensward heap,
A bird may sing, a wild-flower wave,
A star its vigil keep.
Or where a yearning heart of old,
A dream of shepherd men,
With forms of more than earthly mould
Hath peopled grot or glen.
There may the bard’s high themes be found—
We die, we pass away;
But faith, love, pity—these are bound
To earth without decay.
The heart that burns, the cheek that glows,
The tear from hidden springs,
The thorn and glory of the rose—
These are undying things.

Wave after wave of mighty stream

To the deep sea hath gone:

Yet not the less, like youth’s bright dream,

The exhaustless flood rolls on.

RHINE SONG OF THE GERMAN SOLDIERS AFTER VICTORY.

TO THE AIR OF “AM RHEIN, AM RHEIN.”

SINGLE VOICE.

It is the Rhine! our mountain vineyards laving,

I see the bright flood shine! (bis.)

Sing on the march with every banner waving—

Sing, brothers! ’tis the Rhine! (bis.)

CHORUS.

The Rhine! the Rhine! our own imperial river!

Be glory on thy track!

We left thy shores, to die or to deliver—

We bear thee freedom back!

SINGLE VOICE.

Hail! hail! my childhood knew thy rush of water,

Even as my mother’s song;

That sound went past me on the field of slaughter,

And heart and arm grew strong!

CHORUS.

Roll proudly on!—brave blood is with thee sweeping,

Pour’d out by sons of thine,

Where sword and spirit forth in joy were leaping,

Like thee, victorious Rhine!

SINGLE VOICE.

Home! Home! Thy glad wave hath a tone of greeting,

Thy path is by my home,

Even now my children count the hours till meeting:

O ransom'd ones! I come.

CHORUS.

Go tell the seas, that chain shall bind thee never!

Sound on by hearth and shrine!

Sing through the hills that thou art free for ever—

Lift up thy voice, O Rhine!

["I wish you could have heard Sir Walter Scott describe a glorious sight, which had been witnessed by a friend of his!—the crossing of the Rhine, at Ehrenbreitstein, by the German army of Liberators on their victorious return from France. 'At the first gleam of the river,' he said, 'they all burst forth into the national chant, Am Rhein! Am Rhein!' They were two days passing over; and the rocks and the castle were ringing to the song the whole time—for each band renewed it while crossing; and even the Cossacks, with the clash and the clang, and the roll of their stormy war-music, catching the enthusiasm of the scene, swelled forth the chorus, 'Am Rhein! Am Rhein!'"—Manuscript letter.

This anecdote, (on which was founded Mrs Hemans's own "Rhine Song,") and the look and tone with which it was related, made an impression on her memory which nothing could efface. The very name of the "Father Rhine," the "exulting and abounding river," (how often would she quote that magnificent line of Lord Byron's!) had always worked upon her like a spell, conjuring up a thousand visions

of romance and beauty; and Haydn's inspiring Rheinweinlied, with its fine, rich tide of flowing harmony, was one of the airs she most delighted in. "You are quite right," she wrote to a friend who had echoed her enthusiasm, "it was the description of that noble Rhine scene which interested me more than any part of Sir Walter's conversation; and I wished more that you could have heard it than all the high legends and solemn scenes of which we spoke that day."]

A SONG OF DELOS.

[The Island of Delos was considered of such peculiar sanctity by the ancients, that they did not allow it to be desecrated by the events of birth or death. In the following poem, a young priestess of Apollo is supposed to be conveyed from its shores during the last hours of a mortal sickness, and to bid the scenes of her youth farewell in a sudden flow of unpremeditated song.]

"Terre, soleil, vallons, belle et douce nature,

Je vous dois une larme aux bords de mon tombeau;

L'air est si parfume! la lumiere est si pure!

Aux regards d'un Mourant le soleil est si beau!" Lamartine.

A song was heard of old—a low, sweet song,

On the blue seas by Delos. From that isle,

The Sun-god's own domain, a gentle girl—

Gentle, yet all inspired of soul, of mien,

Lit with a life too perilously bright—

Was borne away to die. How beautiful

Seems this world to the dying!—but for her,

The child of beauty and of poesy,

And of soft Grecian skies—oh! who may dream

Of all that from her changeful eye flash’d forth,
Or glanced more quiveringly through starry tears,
As on her land’s rich vision, fane o’er fane
Colour’d with loving light, she gazed her last,
Her young life’s last, that hour! From her pale brow
And burning cheek she threw the ringlets back,
And bending forward, as the spirit sway’d
The reed-like form still to the shore beloved,
Breathed the swan-music of her wild farewell
O’er dancing waves:—“Oh, linger yet!” she cried,
“Oh, linger, linger on the oar!
Oh, pause upon the deep!
That I may gaze yet once, once more,
Where floats the golden day o’er fane and steep!
Never so brightly smiled mine own sweet shore—
Oh! linger, linger on the parting oar!
“I see the laurels fling back showers
Of soft light still on many a shrine;
I see the path to haunts of flowers
Through the dim olives lead its gleaming line;
I hear a sound of flutes—a swell of song—
Mine is too low to reach that joyous throng!
“Oh! linger, linger on the oar
Beneath my native sky!

Let my life part from that bright shore
With day’s last crimson—gazing let me die!
Thou bark, glide slowly!—slowly should be borne
The voyager that never shall return.
“A fatal gift hath been thy dower,
Lord of the Lyre! to me;
With song and wreath from bower to bower,
Sisters went bounding like young Oreads free;
While I, through long, lone, voiceless hours apart,
Have lain and listen’d to my beating heart.
“Now, wasted by the inborn fire,
I sink to early rest;
The ray that lit the incense-pyre
Leaves unto death its temple in my breast.
—O sunshine, skies, rich flowers! too soon I go,
While round me thus triumphantly ye glow!
“Bright isle! might but thine echoes keep
A tone of my farewell,
One tender accent, low and deep,
Shrined midst thy founts and haunted rocks to dwell!
Might my last breath send music to thy shore!
—Oh, linger, seamen! linger on the oar!”

ANCIENT GREEK CHANT OF VICTORY.

“Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

Our virgins dance beneath the shade.” Byron.

Io! they come, they come!

Garlands for every shrine!

Strike lyres to greet them home;

Bring roses, pour ye wine!

Swell, swell the Dorian flute

Through the blue triumphant sky!

Let the cittern’s tone salute

The sons of victory.

With the offering of bright blood

They have ransom’d hearth and tomb,

Vineyard, and field, and flood;—

Io! they come, they come!

Sing it where olives wave,

And by the glittering sea,

And o’er each hero’s grave—

Sing, sing, the land is free!

Mark ye the flashing oars,

And the spears that light the deep?

How the festal sunshine pours

Where the lords of battle sweep!

Each hath brought back his shield;—

Maid, greet thy lover home!

Mother, from that proud field,

Io! thy son is come!

Who murmur’d of the dead?

Hush, boding voice! We know

That many a shining head

Lies in its glory low.

Breathe not those names to-day!

They shall have their praise ere long,

And a power all hearts to sway,

In ever-burning song.

But now shed flowers, pour wine,

To hail the conquerors home!

Bring wreaths for every shrine—

Io! they come, they come!

NAPLES.

A SONG OF THE SYREN.

“Then gentle winds arose,

With many a mingled close

Of wild Æolian sound and mountain-odour keen,

Where the clear Baian ocean

Welters with air-like motion

Within, above, around its bowers of starry green.”

Shelley.

Still is the Syren warbling on thy shore,

Bright city of the waves! Her magic song

Still, with a dreamy sense of ecstasy,
Fills thy soft summer air:—and while my glance
Dwells on thy pictured loveliness, that lay
Floats thus o’er fancy’s ear; and thus to thee,
Daughter of sunshine! doth the Syren sing.
“Thine is the glad wave’s flashing play,
Thine is the laugh of the golden day—
The golden day, and the glorious night,
And the vine with its clusters all bathed in light!
—Forget, forget, that thou art not free!
Queen of the Summer sea.
“Favour’d and crown’d of the earth and sky!
Thine are all voices of melody,
Wandering in moonlight through fane and tower,
Floating o’er fountain and myrtle bower;
Hark! how they melt o’er thy glittering sea—
Forget that thou art not free!
“Let the wine flow in thy marble halls!
Let the lute answer thy fountain-falls!
And deck thy feasts with the myrtle bough,
And cover with roses thy glowing brow!
Queen of the day and the summer sea,
Forget that thou art not free!”
So doth the Syren sing, while sparkling waves

Dance to her chant. But sternly, mournfully,

O city of the deep! from Sybil grots

And Roman tombs, the echoes of thy shore

Take up the cadence of her strain alone,

Murmuring—“Thou, art not free!”

THE FALL OF D’ASSAS.

A BALLAD OF FRANCE.

[The Chevalier D’Assas, called the French Decius, fell nobly whilst reconnoitring a wood, near Closterkamp, by night. He had left his regiment, that of Auvergne, at a short distance, and was suddenly surrounded by an ambuscade of the enemy, who threatened him with instant death if he made the least sign of their vicinity. With their bayonets at his breast, he raised his voice, and calling aloud “A moi, Auvergne! ces sont les ennemis!” fell, pierced with mortal blows.]

Alone through gloomy forest-shades

A soldier went by night;

No moonbeam pierced the dusky glades,

No star shed guiding light.

Yet on his vigil’s midnight round

The youth all cheerly pass’d;

Uncheck’d by aught of boding sound

That mutter’d in the blast.

Where were his thoughts that lonely hour?

—In his far home, perchance;

His father’s hall, his mother’s bower,

Midst the gay vines of France:

Wandering from battles lost and won,
To hear and bless again
The rolling of the wide Garonne,
Or murmur of the Seine.
Hush! hark!—did stealing steps go by?
Came not faint whispers near?
No! the wild wind hath many a sigh,
Amidst the foliage sere.
Hark, yet again!—and from his hand,
What grasp hath wrench’d the blade?
—Oh, single midst a hostile band,
Young soldier! thou’rt betray’d!
“Silence!” in under-tones they cry—
“No whisper—not a breath!
The sound that warns thy comrades nigh
Shall sentence thee to death.”
Still, at the bayonet’s point he stood,
And strong to meet the blow;
And shouted, midst his rushing blood,
“Arm, arm, Auvergne! the foe!”
The stir, the tramp, the bugle-call—
He heard their tumults grow;
And sent his dying voice through all—
“Auvergne, Auvergne! the foe!”

THE BURIAL OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR,

AT CAEN IN NORMANDY—1087.

["At the day appointed for the king's interment, Prince Henry, his third son, the Norman prelates, and a multitude of clergy and people, assembled in the church of St Stephen, which the Conqueror had founded. The mass had been performed, the corpse was placed on the bier, and the Bishop of Evreux had pronounced the panegyric on the deceased, when a voice from the crowd exclaimed,—'He whom you have praised was a robber. The very land on which you stand is mine. By violence he took it from my father; and, in the name of God, I forbid you to bury him in it.' The speaker was Asceline Fitz-Arthur, who had often, but fruitlessly, sought reparation from the justice of William. After some debate, the prelates called him to them, paid him sixty shillings for the grave, and promised that he should receive the full value of his land. The ceremony was then continued, and the body of the king deposited in a coffin of stone."—Lingard, vol. ii. p. 98.]

Lowly upon his bier

The royal conqueror lay;

Baron and chief stood near,

Silent in war-array.

Down the long minster's aisle

Crowds mutely gazing stream'd;

Altar and tomb the while

Through mists of incense gleam'd.

And, by the torches' blaze,

The stately priest had said

High words of power and praise

To the glory of the dead.

They lower’d him, with the sound
Of requiems, to repose;
When from the throngs around
A solemn voice arose:—
“Forbear! forbear!” it cried;
“In the holiest name, forbear!
He hath conquer’d regions wide,
But he shall not slumber there!
“By the violated hearth
Which made way for yon proud shrine;
By the harvests which this earth
Hath borne for me and mine;
“By the house e’en here o’erthrown,
On my brethren’s native spot;
Hence! with his dark renown,
Cumber our birthplace not!
“Will my sire’s unransom’d field,
O’er which your censers wave,
To the buried spoiler yield
Soft slumbers in the grave!
“The tree before him fell
Which we cherish’d many a year;
But its deep root yet shall swell,
And heave against his bier.

“The land that I have till’d
Hath yet its brooding breast
With my home’s white ashes fill’d,
And it shall not give him rest!
“Each pillar’s massy bed
Hath been wet by weeping eyes—
Away! bestow your dead
Where no wrong against him cries.”
Shame glow’d on each dark face
Of those proud and steel-girt men,
And they bought with gold a place
For their leader’s dust e’en then.
A little earth for him
Whose banner flew so far!
And a peasant’s tale could dim
The name, a nation’s star!
One deep voice thus arose
From a heart which wrongs had riven:
Oh! who shall number those
That were but heard in heaven?

SONGS OF A GUARDIAN SPIRIT.

NEAR THEE, STILL NEAR THEE![408]

Near thee, still near thee!—o’er thy pathway gliding,
Unseen I pass thee with the wind’s low sigh;

Life’s veil enfolds thee still, our eyes dividing,
Yet viewless love floats round thee silently!
Not midst the festal throng,
In halls of mirth and song;
But when thy thoughts are deepest,
When holy tears thou weepest,
Know then that love is nigh!
When the night’s whisper o’er thy harp-strings creeping,
Or the sea-music on the sounding shore,
Or breezy anthems through the forest sweeping,
Shall move thy trembling spirit to adore;
When every thought and prayer
We loved to breathe and share,
On thy full heart returning,
Shall wake its voiceless yearning;
Then feel me near once more!
Near thee, still near thee!—trust thy soul’s deep dreaming!
Oh! love is not an earthly rose to die!
Even when I soar where fiery stars are beaming,
Thine image wanders with me through the sky.
The fields of air are free,
Yet lonely, wanting thee;
But when thy chains are falling,
When heaven its own is calling,

Know then, thy guide is nigh!

[408] This piece has been set to music of most impressive beauty by John Lodge, Esq., for whose compositions several of the author's songs were written.

OH! DROOP THOU NOT.

"They sin who tell us love can die!

With life all other passions fly—

All others are but vanity.

In heaven ambition cannot dwell,

Nor avarice in the vaults of hell;

Earthly these passions, as of earth—

They perish where they drew their birth.

But love is indestructible!

Its holy flame for ever burneth—

From heaven it came, to heaven returneth." Southey.

Oh! droop thou not, my gentle earthly love!

Mine still to be!

I bore through death, to brighter lands above,

My thoughts of thee.

Yes! the deep memory of our holy tears,

Our mingled prayer,

Our suffering love, through long devoted years,

Went with me there.

It was not vain, the hallow'd and the tried—

It was not vain!

Still, though unseen, still hovering at thy side,
I watch again!
From our own paths, our love’s attesting bowers,
I am not gone;
In the deep calm of midnight’s whispering hours,
Thou art not lone:
Not lone, when by the haunted stream thou weepest
—That stream whose tone
Murmurs of thoughts, the richest and the deepest,
We two have known:
Not lone, when mournfully some strain awaking
Of days long past,
From thy soft eyes the sudden tears are breaking,
Silent and fast:
Not lone, when upwards in fond visions turning
Thy dreamy glance,
Thou seek’st my home, where solemn stars are burning
O’er night’s expanse.
My home is near thee, loved one! and around thee,
Where’er thou art;
Though still mortality’s thick cloud hath bound thee,
Doubt not thy heart!
Hear its low voice, nor deem thyself forsaken:
Let faith be given

To the still tones which oft our being waken—

They are of heaven.

SONGS OF SPAIN.

[Written for a set of airs, entitled Peninsular Melodies, selected by Colonel Hodges, and published by Messrs Goulding and D'Almaine, who have permitted the reappearance of the words in this volume.]

ANCIENT BATTLE-SONG.

Fling forth the proud banner of Leon again!

Let the high word Castile! go resounding through Spain!

And thou, free Asturias! encamp'd on the height,

Pour down thy dark sons to the vintage of fight!

Wake, wake! the old soil where thy children repose

Sounds hollow and deep to the trampling of foes!

The voices are mighty that swell from the past,

With Arragon's cry on the shrill mountain-blast;

The ancient sierras give strength to our tread,

Their pines murmur song where bright blood hath been shed.

—Fling forth the proud banner of Leon again,

And shout ye "Castile! to the rescue for Spain!"

THE ZEGRI MAID.

[The Zegris were one of the most illustrious Moorish tribes. Their exploits and feuds with their celebrated rivals, the Abencerrages, form the subject of many ancient Spanish romances.]

The summer leaves were sighing

Around the Zegri maid,
To her low, sad song replying
As it fill’d the olive shade.
“Alas! for her that loveth
Her land’s, her kindred’s foe!
Where a Christian Spaniard roveth,
Should a Zegri’s spirit go?
“From thy glance, my gentle mother!
I sink, with shame oppress’d,
And the dark eye of my brother
Is an arrow to my breast.”—
Where summer leaves were sighing
Thus sang the Zegri maid,
While the crimson day was dying
In the whispery olive shade.
“And for all this heart’s wealth wasted,
This woe in secret borne,
This flower of young life blasted,
Should I win back aught but scorn?
By aught but daily dying
Would my lone truth be repaid?”—
Where the olive leaves were sighing,
Thus sang the Zegri maid.

THE RIO VERDE SONG.

[The Rio Verde, a small river of Spain, is celebrated in the old ballad romances of that country for the frequent combats on its banks between Moor and Christian. The ballad referring to this stream in Percy's Reliques will be remembered by many readers.

"Gentle river, gentle river!

Lo! thy streams are stain'd with gore."]

Flow, Rio Verde!

In melody flow;

Win her that weepeth

To slumber from woe;

Bid thy wave's music

Roll through her dreams—

Grief ever loveth

The kind voice of streams.

Bear her lone spirit

Afar on the sound

Back to her childhood,

Her life's fairy ground;

Pass like the whisper

Of love that is gone—

Flow, Rio Verde!

Softly flow on!

Dark glassy water

So crimson'd of yore!

Love, death, and sorrow

Know thy green shore.

Thou shouldst have echoes

For grief’s deepest tone—

Flow, Rio Verde!

Softly flow on!

SEEK BY THE SILVERY DARRO.

Seek by the silvery Darro,

Where jasmine flowers have blown:

There hath she left no footsteps?

—Weep, weep! the maid is gone!

Seek where Our Lady’s image

Smiles o’er the pine-hung steep:

Hear ye not there her vespers?

—Weep for the parted, weep!

Seek in the porch where vine-leaves

O’ershade her father’s head:

Are his gray hairs left lonely?

—Weep! her bright soul is fled.

SPANISH EVENING HYMN.

Ave! now let prayer and music

Meet in love on earth and sea!

Now, sweet Mother! may the weary

Turn from this cold world to thee!

From the wide and restless waters
Hear the sailor’s hymn arise?
From his watch-fire midst the mountains,
Lo! to thee the shepherd cries!
Yet, when thus full hearts find voices,
If o’erburden’d souls there be,
Dark and silent in their anguish,
Aid those captives! set them free!
Touch them, every fount unsealing
Where the frozen tears lie deep;
Thou, the Mother of all sorrows,
Aid! oh, aid to pray and weep!

BIRD THAT ART SINGING ON EBRO’S SIDE!

Bird that art singing on Ebro’s side!
Where myrtle shadows make dim the tide,
Doth sorrow dwell midst the leaves with thee?
Doth song avail thy full heart to free?
—Bird of the midnight’s purple sky!
Teach me the spell of thy melody.
Bird! is it blighted affection’s pain
Whence the sad sweetness flows through thy strain?
And is the wound of that arrow still’d
When thy lone music the leaves hath fill’d?
—Bird of the midnight’s purple sky!

Teach me the spell of thy melody.

MOORISH GATHERING-SONG.

ZORZICO.[409]

Chains on the cities! gloom in the air!

Come to the hills! fresh breezes are there.

Silence and fear in the rich orange bowers!

Come to the rocks where freedom hath towers.

Come from the Darro!—changed is its tone;

Come where the streams no bondage have known;

Wildly and proudly foaming they leap,

Singing of freedom from steep to steep.

Come from Alhambra!—garden and grove

Now may not shelter beauty or love.

Blood on the waters! death midst the flowers!

—Only the spear and the rock are ours.

[409] The Zorzico is an extremely wild and singularly antique Moorish melody.

THE SONG OF MINA’S SOLDIERS.

We heard thy name, O Mina!

Far through our hills it rang;

A sound more strong than tempests,

More keen than armour’s clang.

The peasant left his vintage,

The shepherd grasp’d the spear—

We heard thy name, O Mina!

—The mountain-bands are here.

As eagles to the dayspring,

As torrents to the sea,

From every dark sierra

So rush’d our hearts to thee.

Thy spirit is our banner,

Thine eye our beacon-sign,

Thy name our trumpet, Mina!

—The mountain-bands are thine.

MOTHER! OH, SING ME TO REST.

A CANCION.

Mother! oh, sing me to rest

As in my bright days departed:

Sing to thy child, the sick-hearted,

Songs for a spirit oppress’d.

Lay this tired head on thy breast!

Flowers from the night-dew are closing,

Pilgrims and mourners reposing:

Mother! oh, sing me to rest!

Take back thy bird to its nest!

Weary is young life when blighted,

Heavy this love unrequited;

—Mother, oh! sing me to rest!

THERE ARE SOUNDS IN THE DARK RONCESVALLES.

There are sounds in the dark Roncesvalles,
There are echoes on Biscay's wild shore;
There are murmurs—but not of the torrent,
Nor the wind, nor the pine-forest's roar.
'Tis a day of the spear and the banner,
Of armings and hurried farewells;
Rise, rise on your mountains, ye Spaniards!
Or start from your old battle-dells.
There are streams of unconquer'd Asturias
That have roll'd with your father's free blood:
Oh! leave on the graves of the mighty
Proud marks where their children have stood!

SONGS FOR SUMMER HOURS.

AND I TOO IN ARCADIA.

[A celebrated picture of Poussin represents a band of shepherd-youths and maidens suddenly checked in their wanderings, and affected with various emotions, by the sight of a tomb which bears this inscription—"Et in Arcadia ego."]

They have wander'd in their glee
With the butterfly and bee;
They have climb'd o'er heathery swells,
They have wound through forest dells;
Mountain-moss hath felt their tread,
Woodland streams their way have led;
Flowers, in deepest shadowy nooks,

Nurslings of the loneliest brooks,

Unto them have yielded up

Fragrant bell and starry cup:

Chaplets are on every brow—

What hath staid the wanderers now?

Lo! a gray and rustic tomb,

Bower’d amidst the rich wood-gloom;

Whence these words their stricken spirits melt,

—“I too, Shepherds! in Arcadia dwelt.”

There is many a summer sound

That pale sepulchre around;

Through the shade young birds are glancing,

Insect-wings in sun-streaks dancing;

Glimpses of blue festal skies

Pouring in when soft winds rise;

Violets o’er the turf below

Shedding out their warmest glow;

Yet a spirit not its own

O’er the greenwood now is thrown!

Something of an under-note

Through its music seems to float,

Something of a stillness gray

Creeps across the laughing day:

Something dimly from those old words felt,

—“I too, Shepherds! in Arcadia dwelt.”

Was some gentle kindred maid

In that grave with dirges laid?

Some fair creature, with the tone

Of whose voice a joy is gone,

Leaving melody and mirth

Poorer on this alter’d earth?

Is it thus? that so they stand,

Dropping flowers from every hand—

Flowers, and lyres, and gather’d store

Of red wild-fruit prized no more?

—No! from that bright band of morn

Not one link hath yet been torn:

’Tis the shadow of the tomb

Falling o’er the summer-bloom—

O’er the flush of love and life

Passing with a sudden strife;

’Tis the low prophetic breath

Murmuring from that house of death,

Whose faint whisper thus their hearts can melt,

—“I too, Shepherds! in Arcadia dwelt.”

THE WANDERING WIND.

The Wind, the wandering Wind

Of the golden summer eves—

Whence is the thrilling magic
Of its tones among the leaves?
Oh! is it from the waters,
Or from the long tall grass?
Or is it from the hollow rocks
Through which its breathings pass?
Or is it from the voices
Of all in one combined,
That it wins the tone of mastery?
The Wind, the wandering Wind!
No, no! the strange, sweet accents
That with it come and go,
They are not from the osiers,
Nor the fir-trees whispering low;
They are not of the waters,
Nor of the cavern’d hill:
’Tis the human love within us
That gives them power to thrill.
They touch the links of memory
Around our spirits twined,
And we start, and weep, and tremble,
To the Wind, the wandering Wind!

YE ARE NOT MISS’D, FAIR FLOWERS!

Ye are not miss’d, fair flowers, that late were spreading

The summer’s glow by fount and breezy grot;
There falls the dew, its fairy favours shedding—
The leaves dance on, the young birds miss you not.
Still plays the sparkle o’er the rippling water,
O lily! whence thy cup of pearl is gone;
The bright wave mourns not for its loveliest daughter,
There is no sorrow in the wind’s low tone.
And thou, meek hyacinth! afar is roving
The bee that oft thy trembling bells hath kiss’d.
Cradled ye were, fair flowers! ’midst all things loving,
A joy to all—yet, yet, ye are not miss’d!
Ye, that were born to lend the sunbeam gladness,
And the winds fragrance, wandering where they list,
Oh! it were breathing words too deep in sadness,
To say earth’s human flowers not more are miss’d.

THE WILLOW SONG.

Willow! in thy breezy moan,
I can hear a deeper tone;
Through thy leaves come whispering low,
Faint, sweet sounds of long ago.
Willow, sighing willow!
Many a mournful tale of old
Heart-sick love to thee hath told,
Gathering from thy golden bough

Leaves to cool his burning brow.

Willow! sighing willow!

Many a swan-like song to thee

Hath been sung, thou gentle tree!

Many a lute its last lament

Down thy moonlight stream hath sent.

Willow! sighing willow!

Therefore, wave and murmur on!

Sigh for sweet affections gone,

And for tuneful voices fled,

And for love, whose heart hath bled,

Ever, willow! willow!

LEAVE ME NOT YET.

Leave me not yet! through rosy skies from far,

But now the song-birds to their nests return;

The quivering image of the first pale star

On the dim lake scarce yet begins to burn:

Leave me not yet!

Not yet! oh, hark! low tones from hidden streams,

Piercing the shivery leaves, even now arise;

Their voices mingle not with daylight dreams,

They are of vesper’s hymns and harmonies:

Leave me not yet!

My thoughts are like those gentle sounds, dear love!

By day shut up in their own still recess;

They wait for dews on earth, for stars above,

Then to breathe out their soul of tenderness:

Leave me not yet!

THE ORANGE BOUGH.

Oh! bring me one sweet orange-bough,

To fan my cheek, to cool my brow;

One bough, with pearly blossoms drest,

And bind it, mother! on my breast!

Go, seek the grove along the shore,

Whose odours I must breathe no more;

The grove where every scented tree

Thrills to the deep voice of the sea.

Oh! Love’s fond sighs, and fervent prayer,

And wild farewell, are lingering there:

Each leaf’s light whisper hath a tone

My faint heart, even in death, would own.

Then bear me thence one bough, to shed

Life’s parting sweetness round my head;

And bind it, mother! on my breast

When I am laid in lonely rest.

THE STREAM SET FREE.

Flow on, rejoice, make music,

Bright living stream set free!

The troubled haunts of care and strife
Were not for thee!
The woodland is thy country,
Thou art all its own again;
The wild birds are thy kindred race,
That fear no chain.
Flow on, rejoice, make music
Unto the glistening leaves!
Thou, the beloved of balmy winds
And golden eaves!
Once more the holy starlight
Sleeps calm upon thy breast,
Whose brightness bears no token more
Of man’s unrest.
Flow, and let freeborn music
Flow with thy wavy line,
While the stock-dove’s lingering, loving voice
Comes blent with thine.
And the green reeds quivering o’er thee,
Strings of the forest-lyre,
All fill’d with answering spirit-sounds,
In joy respire.
Yet, midst thy song’s glad changes,
Oh! keep one pitying tone

For gentle hearts, that bear to thee
Their sadness lone.
One sound, of all the deepest,
To bring, like healing dew,
A sense that nature ne’er forsakes
The meek and true.
Then, then, rejoice, make music,
Thou stream, thou glad and free!
The shadows of all glorious flowers
Be set in thee!

THE SUMMER’S CALL.[410]

Come away! The sunny hours
Woo thee far to founts and bowers!
O’er the very waters now,
In their play,
Flowers are shedding beauty’s glow—
Come away!
Where the lily’s tender gleam
Quivers on the glancing stream,
Come away!
All the air is fill’d with sound,
Soft, and sultry, and profound;
Murmurs through the shadowy grass
Lightly stray;

Faint winds whisper as they pass—

Come away!

Where the bee’s deep music swells

From the trembling foxglove bells,

Come away!

In the skies the sapphire blue

Now hath won its richest hue;

In the woods the breath of song

Night and day

Floats with leafy scents along—

Come away!

Where the boughs with dewy gloom

Darken each thick bed of bloom,

Come away!

In the deep heart of the rose

Now the crimson love-hue glows;

Now the glow-worm’s lamp by night

Sheds a ray,

Dreamy, starry, greenly bright—

Come away!

Where the fairy cup-moss lies,

With the wild-wood strawberries,

Come away!

Now each tree by summer crown’d,

Sheds its own rich twilight round;

Glancing there from sun to shade,

Bright wings play;

There the deer its couch hath made—

Come away!

Where the smooth leaves of the lime

Glisten in their honey-time,

Come away—away![411]

[410] "The Summer's Call."—This faculty for realising images of the distant and the beautiful, amidst outward circumstances of apparently the most adverse influence, is thus gracefully illustrated by Washington Irving in the "Royal Poet" of his Sketch-Book:—"Some minds corrode and grow inactive under the loss of personal liberty; others grow morbid and irritable; but it is the nature of the poet to become tender and imaginative in the loneliness of confinement. He banquets upon the honey of his own thoughts, and, like the captive bird, pours forth his soul in melody.

'Have you not seen the nightingale,

A pilgrim cooped into a cage,

How doth she chant her wonted tale

In that her lonely hermitage?

Even there her charming melody doth prove,

That all her boughs are trees, her cage a grove.'"

Roger L'Estrange.

Indeed, it is the divine attribute of the imagination, that it is irrepressible, unconfinable; and that, when the real world is shut out, it can create a world for

itself, and with a necromantic power can conjure up glorious shapes and forms, and irradiate the gloom of the dungeon. Such was the world of pomp and pageant that lived ’round Tasso in his dismal cell at Ferrara, when he conceived the splendid scenes of his Jerusalem; and we may consider The King’s Quair, composed by James of Scotland during his captivity at Windsor, as another of those beautiful breakings forth of the soul from the restraint and gloom of the prison-house.”

[411] “In my literary pursuits,” wrote Mrs Hemans at this time to a friend, “I fear I shall be obliged to look out for an amanuensis. I sometimes retain a piece of poetry several weeks in my memory, from actual dread of writing it down.... I was so glad you liked my little summer breathing strain, (‘The Summer’s Call.’) I assure you it quite consoled me for the want of natural objects of beauty around, to heap up their remembered images in one wild strain.”

OH! SKYLARK, FOR THY WING.

Oh! Skylark, for thy wing!
Thou bird of joy and light,
That I might soar and sing
At heaven’s empyreal height!
With the heathery hills beneath me,
Whence the streams in glory spring,
And the pearly clouds to wreathe me,
O Skylark! on thy wing!
Free, free, from earth-born fear,
I would range the blessed skies,
Through the blue divinely clear,
Where the low mists cannot rise!

And a thousand joyous measures
From my chainless heart should spring,
Like the bright rain’s vernal treasures,
As I wander’d on thy wing.
But oh! the silver cords
That around the heart are spun,
From gentle tones and words,
And kind eyes that make our sun!
To some low, sweet nest returning,
How soon my love would bring
There, there the dews of morning,
O Skylark! on thy wing!

SONGS OF CAPTIVITY.

[These songs (with the exception of the fifth) have all been set to music by the author’s sister, and are in the possession of Mr Willis, by whose permission they are here published.]

INTRODUCTION.

One hour for distant homes to weep
Midst Afric’s burnings sands,
One silent sunset hour was given
To the slaves of many lands.
They sat beneath a lonely palm,
In the gardens of their lord;
And, mingling with the fountain’s tune,

Their songs of exile pour’d.
And strangely, sadly did those lays
Of Alp and ocean sound,
With Afric’s wild, red skies above,
And solemn wastes around.
Broken with tears were oft their tones,
And most when most they tried
To breathe of hope and liberty,
From hearts that inly died.
So met the sons of many lands,
Parted by mount and main;
So did they sing in brotherhood,
Made kindred by the chain.

THE BROTHER’S DIRGE.

In the proud old fanes of England
My warrior-fathers lie,
Banners hang drooping o’er their dust
With gorgeous blazonry.
But thou, but thou, my brother!
O’er thee dark billows sweep—
The best and bravest heart of all
Is shrouded by the deep.
In the old high wars of England
My noble fathers bled;

For her lion-kings of lance and spear,

They went down to the dead.

But thou, but thou, my brother!

Thy life-drops flow'd for me—

Would I were with thee in thy rest,

Young sleeper of the sea!

In a shelter'd home of England

Our sister dwells alone,

With quick heart listening for the sound

Of footsteps that are gone.

She little dreams, my brother!

Of the wild fate we have found;

I, midst the Afric sands a slave,

Thou, by the dark seas bound.

THE ALPINE HORN.

The Alpine horn! the Alpine horn!

Oh! through my native sky,

Might I but hear its deep notes borne

Once more—but once—and die!

Yet, no! Midst breezy hills thy breath,

So full of hope and morn,

Would win me from the bed of death—

O joyous Alpine horn!

But here the echo of that blast,

To many a battle known,

Seems mournfully to wander past,

A wild, shrill, wailing tone!

Haunt me no more! for slavery’s air

Thy proud notes were not born;

The dream but deepens my despair—

Be hush’d, thou Alpine horn!

O YE VOICES!

O ye voices round my own hearth singing,

As the winds of May to memory sweet!

Might I yet return, a worn heart bringing,

Would those vernal tones the wanderer greet,

Once again?

Never, never! Spring hath smiled and parted

Oft since then your fond farewell was said;

O’er the green turf of the gentle-hearted

Summer’s hand the rose-leaves may have shed,

Oft again!

Or if still around my heart ye linger,

Yet, sweet voices! there must change have come:

Years have quell’d the free soul of the singer,

Vernal tones shall greet the wanderer home

Ne’er again!

I DREAM OF ALL THINGS FREE.

I dream of all things free!
Of a gallant, gallant bark
That sweeps through storm and sea,
Like an arrow to its mark!
Of a stag that o’er the hills
Goes bounding in his glee;
Of a thousand flashing rills—
Of all things glad and free.
I dream of some proud bird,
A bright-eyed mountain-king!
In my visions I have heard
The rushing of his wing.
I follow some wild river,
On whose breast no sail may be;
Dark woods around it shiver—
I dream of all things free!
Of a happy forest child,
With the fawns and flowers at play;
Of an Indian midst the wild,
With the stars to guide his way;
Of a chief his warriors leading,
Of an archer’s greenwood tree—
My heart in chains is bleeding,
And I dream of all things free!

FAR O’ER THE SEA.

Where are the vintage songs
Wandering in glee?
Where dance the peasant bands
Joyous and free?
Under a kind blue sky,
Where doth my birthplace lie?
—Far o’er the sea.

Where floats the myrtle-scent
O’er vale and lea,
When evening calls the dove
Homewards to flee!
Where doth the orange gleam
Soft on my native stream?
—Far o’er the sea!

Where are sweet eyes of love
Watching for me?
Where o’er the cabin roof
Waves the green tree?
Where speaks the vesper-chime
Still of a holy time?
—Far o’er the sea.

Dance on, ye vintage bands!
Fearless and free;

Still fresh and greenly wave,

My father’s tree!

Still smile, ye kind, blue skies!

Though your son pines and dies

Far o’er the sea!

THE INVOCATION.

Oh! art thou still on earth, my love?

My only love!

Or smiling in a brighter home,

Far, far above?

Oh! is thy sweet voice fled, my love?

Thy light step gone?

And art thou not, in earth or heaven,

Still, still my own?

I see thee with thy gleaming hair,

In midnight dreams!

But cold, and clear, and spirit-like,

Thy soft eye seems.

Peace in thy saddest hour, my love!

Dwelt on thy brow;

But something mournfully divine

There shineth now!

And silent ever is thy lip,

And pale thy cheek;—

Oh! art thou earth’s, or art thou heaven’s?

Speak to me, speak!

THE SONG OF HOPE.

Droop not, my brothers! I hear a glad strain—

We shall burst forth like streams from the winter night’s chain;

A flag is unfurl’d, a bright star of the sea,

A ransom approaches—we yet shall be free!

Where the pines wave, where the light chamois leaps,

Where the lone eagle hath built on the steeps;

Where the snows glisten, the mountain-rills foam,

Free as the falcon’s wing, yet shall we roam.

Where the hearth shines, where the kind looks are met,

Where the smiles mingle, our place shall be yet!

Crossing the desert, o’ersweeping the sea—

Droop not, my brothers! we yet shall be free!

MISCELLANEOUS LYRICS.

THE CALL TO BATTLE.

“Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro,

And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,

And there were sudden partings, such as press

The life from out young hearts, and choking signs,

Which ne’er might be repeated.” Byron.

The vesper-bell, from church and tower,

Had sent its dying sound;

And the household, in the hush of eve,
Were met their porch around.
A voice rang through the olive-wood, with a sudden trumpet's power—
"We rise on all our hills! Come forth! 'tis thy country's gathering-hour:
There's a gleam of spears by every stream in each old battle-dell.
Come forth, young Juan! Bid thy home a brief and proud farewell!"
Then the father gave his son the sword
Which a hundred fights had seen—
"Away! and bear it back, my boy!
All that it still hath been!
"Haste, haste! The hunters of the foe are up: and who shall stand
The lion-like awakening of the roused indignant land?
Our chase shall sound through each defile where swept the clarion's blast,
With the flying footsteps of the Moor, in stormy ages past."
Then the mother kiss'd her son with tears
That o'er his dark locks fell:
"I bless, I bless thee o'er and o'er,
Yet I stay thee not—Farewell!"
"One moment! but one moment give to parting thought or word!
It is no time for woman's tears when manhood's heart is stirr'd.
Bear but the memory of my love about thee in the fight,
To breathe upon th' avenging sword a spell of keener might.
And a maiden's fond adieu was heard,
Though deep, yet brief and low:

“In the vigil, in the conflict, love!

My prayer shall with thee go!”

“Come forth! come as the torrent comes when the winter’s chain is burst!

So rushes on the land’s revenge, in night and silence nursed.

The night is pass’d, the silence o’er—on all our hills we rise:

We wait thee, youth! sleep, dream no more! the voice of battle cries.”

There were sad hearts in a darken’d home,

When the brave had left their bower;

But the strength of prayer and sacrifice

Was with them in that hour.

MIGNON’S SONG.

TRANSLATED FROM GOETHE.

[Mignon, a young and enthusiastic girl, (the character in one of Goethe’s romances, from which Sir Walter Scott’s Fenella is partially imitated,) has been stolen away, in early childhood, from Italy. Her vague recollections of that land, and of her early home, with its graceful sculptures and pictured saloons, are perpetually haunting her, and at times break forth into the following song. The original has been set to exquisite music, by Zelter, the friend of Goethe.]

“Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen bluhn?”

Know’st thou the land where bloom the citron bowers,

Where the gold-orange lights the dusky grove?

High waves the laurel there, the myrtle flowers,

And through a still blue heaven the sweet winds rove.

Know’st thou it well?

There, there, with thee,

O friend! O loved one! fain my steps would flee.

Know’st thou the dwelling? There the pillars rise,

Soft shines the hall, the painted chambers glow;

And forms of marble seem with pitying eyes

To say—“Poor child! what thus hath wrought thee woe?”

Know’st thou it well?

There, there with thee,

O my protector! homewards might I flee!

Know’st thou the mountain? High its bridge is hung,

Where the mule seeks through mist and cloud his way;

There lurk the dragon-race, deep caves among,

O’er beetling rocks there foams the torrent-spray.

Know’st thou it well?

With thee, with thee,

There lies my path, O father! let us flee!

THE SISTERS.[412]

A BALLAD.

“I go, sweet sister! yet, my heart would linger with thee fain,

And unto every parting gift some deep remembrance chain:

Take, then, the braid of Eastern pearls which once I loved to wear,

And with it bind for festal scenes the dark waves of thy hair!

Its pale, pure brightness will beseem those raven tresses well,

And I shall need such pomp no more in my lone convent-cell.”

“Oh, speak not thus, my Leonor! why part from kindred love?

Through festive scenes, when thou art gone, my steps no more shall move!
How could I bear a lonely heart amid a reckless throng?
I should but miss earth’s dearest voice in every tone of song.
Keep, keep the braid of Eastern pearls, or let me proudly twine
Its wreath once more around that brow, that queenly brow of thine.”
“Oh, wouldst thou strive a wounded bird from shelter to detain?
Or wouldst thou call a spirit freed to weary life again?
Sweet sister! take the golden cross that I have worn so long,
And bathed with many a burning tear for secret woe and wrong.
It could not still my beating heart! but may it be a sign
Of peace and hope, my gentle one! when meekly press’d to thine.”
“Take back, take back the cross of gold, our mother’s gift to thee—
It would but of this parting hour a bitter token be;
With funeral splendour to mine eye, it would but sadly shine,
And tell of early treasures lost, of joy no longer mine.
O sister! if thy heart be thus with buried grief oppress’d,
Where wouldst thou pour it forth so well as on my faithful breast?”
“Urge me no more! A blight hath fallen upon my summer years!
I should but darken thy young life with fruitless pangs and fears.
But take at least the lute I loved, and guard it for my sake,
And sometimes from its silvery strings one tone of memory wake!
Sing to those chords by starlight’s gleam our own sweet vesper-hymn,
And think that I too chant it then, far in my cloister dim.”
“Yes! I will take the silvery lute—and I will sing to thee

A song we heard in childhood’s days, even from our father’s knee.

O sister! sister! are these notes amid forgotten things?

Do they not linger as in love, on the familiar strings?

Seems not our sainted mother’s voice to murmur in the strain?

Kind sister! gentlest Leonor! say shall it plead in vain?”

[412] This ballad was composed for a kind of dramatic recitative, relieved by music. It was thus performed by two graceful and highly accomplished sisters.

SONG.

“Leave us not, leave us not!

Say not adieu!

Have we not been to thee

Tender and true?

“Take not thy sunny smile

Far from our hearth!

With that sweet light will fade

Summer and mirth.

“Leave us not, leave us not!

Can thy heart roam?

Wilt thou not pine to hear

Voices from home?

“Too sad our love would be

If thou wert gone!

Turn to us, leave us not!

Thou art our own!”

“O sister! hush that thrilling lute!—oh, cease that haunting lay!

Too deeply pierce those wild, sweet notes—yet, yet I cannot stay:

For weary, weary is my heart! I hear a whisper’d call

In every breeze that stirs the leaf and bids the blossom fall.

I cannot breathe in freedom here, my spirit pines to dwell

Where the world’s voice can reach no more! Oh, calm thee!—Fare thee well!”

[“Mrs Hemans played very pleasingly, and was passionately fond of music. She has described in—perhaps the finest of her lyrics—the ‘Requiem of Mozart’ the manner in which she herself felt its thrilling influences.

“It was after having listened with great delight one evening to some sweet and loved voices (that are now but very seldom heard within these walls) singing those words of hers, composed from Sir Walter Scott’s dictation, for one of the old Rhine songs, that she brought with her, on the next, her lines on ‘Triumphant Music;’ and triumphant they really were, in the splendour of their effect, as she repeated them. She wrote, for these same voices, the little drama, or rather scena, ‘The Sisters,’ which formed, as it was represented[413] with extraordinary research and elegance, and with the advantage of Mr Lodge’s music, one of the most perfect private exhibitions of the kind that can be imagined. One could not help reverting to the times of Ludlow Castle, and the Bridgewater family, when the youthful performers in Milton’s exquisite masque were as pure, and as noble, and as beautiful, as the ideal personages they represented.”—Recollections of Mrs Hemans, by Mrs Lawrence of Wavertree Hall, p. 339-340.]

[413] At a beautiful residence in Needwood Forest.

THE LAST SONG OF SAPPHO.

[Suggested by a beautiful sketch, the design of the younger Westmacott. It represents Sappho sitting on a rock above the sea, with her lyre cast at her feet.

There is a desolate grace about the whole figure, which seems penetrated with the feeling of utter abandonment.]

Sound on, thou dark, unslumbering sea!

My dirge is in thy moan;

My spirit finds response in thee

To its own ceaseless cry—“Alone, alone!”

Yet send me back one other word,

Ye tones that never cease!

Oh! let your secret caves be stirr’d,

And say, dark waters! will ye give me peace?

Away! my weary soul hath sought

In vain one echoing sigh,

One answer to consuming thought

In human hearts—and will the wave reply?

Sound on, thou dark unslumbering sea!

Sound in thy scorn and pride!

I ask not, alien world! from thee

What my own kindred earth hath still denied.

And yet I loved that earth so well,

With all its lovely things!

Was it for this the death-wind fell

On my rich lyre, and quench’d its living strings?

Let them lie silent at my feet!

Since, broken even as they,

The heart whose music made them sweet

Hath pour’d on desert sands its wealth away.

Yet glory’s light hath touch’d my name,

The laurel-wreath is mine—

With a lone heart, a weary frame—

O restless deep! I come to make them thine!

Give to that crown, that burning crown,

Place in thy darkest hold!

Bury my anguish, my renown,

With hidden wrecks, lost gems, and wasted gold.

Thou sea-bird on the billow’s crest!

Thou hast thy love, thy home;

They wait thee in the quiet nest,

And I, th’ unsought, unwatch’d-for—I too come!

I, with this wingèd nature fraught,

These visions wildly free,

This boundless love, this fiery thought—

Alone I come—oh! give me peace, dark sea!

DIRGE.

Where shall we make her grave?

Oh! where the wild-flowers wave

In the free air!

Where shower and singing-bird

Midst the young leaves are heard—

There—lay her there!
Harsh was the world to her—
Now may sleep minister
Balm for each ill:
Low on sweet nature’s breast
Let the meek heart find rest,
Deep, deep and still!
Murmur, glad waters! by;
Faint gales! with happy sigh,
Come wandering o’er
That green and mossy bed,
Where, on a gentle head,
Storms beat no more!
What though for her in vain
Falls now the bright spring-rain,
Plays the soft wind?
Yet still, from where she lies,
Should blessed breathings rise,
Gracious and kind.
Therefore let song and dew
Thence in the heart renew
Life’s vernal glow!
And o’er that holy earth
Scents of the violet’s birth

Still come and go!

Oh! then, where wild flowers wave

Make ye her mossy grave,

In the free air!

Where shower and singing-bird

Midst the young leaves are heard—

There—lay her there!

A SONG OF THE ROSE.

“Cosi fior diverrai che non soggiace

All ’acqua, al gelo, al vento ed allo scherno

D’ una stagion volubile e fugace;

E a piu fido Cultor posto in governo,

Unir potrai nella tranquilla pace,

Ad eterna Bellezza odore eterno.” Metastasio.

Rose! what dost thou here?

Bridal, royal rose!

How, midst grief and fear,

Canst thou thus disclose

That fervid hue of love, which to thy heart-leaf glows?

Rose! too much array’d

For triumphal hours,

Look’st thou through the shade

Of these mortal bowers,

Not to disturb my soul, thou crown’d one of all flowers!

As an eagle soaring
Through a sunny sky,
As a clarion pouring
Notes of victory,
So dost thou kindle thoughts, for earthly life too high.
Thoughts of rapture, flushing
Youthful poet’s cheek;
Thoughts of glory, rushing
Forth in song to break,
But finding the spring-tide of rapid song too weak.
Yet, O festal rose!
I have seen thee lying
In thy bright repose
Pillow’d with the dying,
Thy crimson by the lip whence life’s quick blood was flying.
Summer, hope, and love
O’er that bed of pain,
Met in thee, yet wove
Too, too frail a chain
In its embracing links the lovely to detain.
Smilest thou, gorgeous flower?
Oh! within the spells
Of thy beauty’s power,
Something dimly dwells,

At variance with a world of sorrows and farewells.

All the soul forth flowing

In that rich perfume,

All the proud life glowing

In that radiant bloom—

Have they no place but here, beneath th’ o’ershadowing tomb?

Crown’st thou but the daughters

Of our tearful race?

Heaven’s own purest waters

Well might wear the trace

Of thy consummate form, melting to softer grace.

Will that clime enfold thee

With immortal air?

Shall we not behold thee

Bright and deathless there?

In spirit-lustre clothed, transcendantly more fair!

Yes! my fancy sees thee

In that light disclose,

And its dream thus frees thee

From the mist of woes,

Darkening thine earthly bowers, O bridal royal rose!

NIGHT-BLOWING FLOWERS.

Children of night! unfolding meekly, slowly,

To the sweet breathings of the shadowy hours,

When dark-blue heavens look softest and most holy,
And glow-worm light is in the forest bowers;
To solemn things and deep,
To spirit-haunted sleep,
To thoughts, all purified
From earth, ye seem allied;
O dedicated flowers!
Ye, from the gaze of crowds your beauty veiling,
Keep in dim vestal urns the sweetness shrined;
Till the mild moon, on high serenely sailing,
Looks on you tenderly and sadly kind.
—So doth love's dreaming heart
Dwell from the throng apart,
And but to shades disclose
The inmost thought, which glows
With its pure life entwined.
Shut from the sounds wherein the day rejoices,
To no triumphant song your petals thrill,
But send forth odours with the faint, soft voices
Rising from hidden streams, when all is still.
—So doth lone prayer arise,
Mingling with secret sighs,
When grief unfolds, like you,
Her breast, for heavenly dew

In silent hours to fill.

THE WANDERER AND THE NIGHT-FLOWERS.

“Call back your odours, lovely flowers!

From the night-winds call them back;

And fold your leaves till the laughing hours

Come forth in the sunbeam’s track!

“The lark lies couch’d in her grassy nest,

And the honey-bee is gone,

And all bright things are away to rest—

Why watch ye here alone?

“Is not your world a mournful one,

When your sisters close their eyes,

And your soft breath meets not a lingering tone

Of song in the starry skies?

“Take ye no joy in the dayspring’s birth

When it kindles the sparks of dew?

And the thousand strains of the forest’s mirth,

Shall they gladden all but you?

“Shut your sweet bells till the fawn comes out

On the sunny turf to play,

And the woodland child with a fairy shout

Goes dancing on its way!”

“Nay! let our shadowy beauty bloom

When the stars give quiet light,

And let us offer our faint perfume

On the silent shrine of night.

“Call it not wasted, the scent we lend

To the breeze, when no step is nigh:

Oh, thus for ever the earth should send

Her grateful breath on high!

“And love us as emblems, night’s dewy flowers,

Of hopes unto sorrow given,

That spring through the gloom of the darkest hours

Looking alone to heaven!”

ECHO-SONG.

In thy cavern-hall,

Echo! art thou sleeping?

By the fountain’s fall

Dreamy silence keeping?

Yet one soft note borne

From the shepherd’s horn,

Wakes thee, Echo! into music leaping!

—Strange, sweet Echo! into music leaping.

Then the woods rejoice,

Then glad sounds are swelling

From each sister-voice

Round thy rocky dwelling;

And their sweetness fills

All the hollow hills,

With a thousand notes, of one life telling!

—Softly mingled notes, of one life telling.

Echo! in my heart

Thus deep thoughts are lying,

Silent and apart,

Buried, yet undying;

Till some gentle tone

Wakening haply one,

Calls a thousand forth, like thee replying!

—Strange, sweet Echo! even like thee replying.[414]

[414] This song is in the possession of Mr Power.

THE MUFFLED DRUM.[415]

The muffled drum was heard

In the Pyrenees by night,

With a dull, deep rolling sound,

Which told the hamlets round

Of a soldier’s burial-rite.

But it told them not how dear,

In a home beyond the main,

Was the warrior-youth laid low that hour

By a mountain-stream of Spain.

The oaks of England waved

O’er the slumbers of his race,

But a pine of the Ronceval made moan
Above his last, lone place;
When the muffled drum was heard
In the Pyrenees by night,
With a dull, deep rolling sound,
Which call’d strange echoes round
To the soldier’s burial-rite.
Brief was the sorrowing there,
By the stream from battle red,
And tossing on its wave the plumes
Of many a stately head:
But a mother—soon to die,
And a sister—long to weep,
Even then were breathing prayers for him
In that home beyond the deep;
While the muffled drum was heard
In the Pyrenees by night,
With a dull, deep rolling sound,
And the dark pines mourn’d round,
O’er the soldier’s burial-rite.

[415] Set to beautiful music by John Lodge, Esq.

THE SWAN AND THE SKYLARK.

“Adieu, adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now ’tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades.” Keats.

“Higher still and higher

From the earth thou springest

Like a cloud of fire;

The blue deep thou wingest,

And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.”

Shelley.

Midst the long reeds that o’er a Grecian stream

Unto the faint wind sigh’d melodiously,

And where the sculpture of a broken shrine

Sent out thro’ shadowy grass and thick wild-flowers

Dim alabaster gleams—a lonely swan

Warbled his death-chant; and a poet stood

Listening to that strange music, as it shook

The lilies on the wave; and made the pines

And all the laurels of the haunted shore

Thrill to its passion. Oh! the tones were sweet,

Even painfully—as with the sweetness wrung

From parting love; and to the poet’s thought

This was their language.

“Summer! I depart—

O light and laughing summer! fare thee well:

No song the less through thy rich woods will swell,

For one, one broken heart.

“And fare ye well, young flowers!

Ye will not mourn! ye will shed odour still,

And wave in glory, colouring every rill,

Known to my youth’s fresh hours.

“And ye, bright founts! that lie

Far in the whispering forests, lone and deep,

My wing no more shall stir your shadowy sleep—

Sweet waters! I must die.

“Will ye not send one tone

Of sorrow through the pines?—one murmur low?

Shall not the green leaves from your voices know

That I, your child, am gone?

“No! ever glad and free

Ye have no sounds a tale of death to tell:

Waves, joyous waves! flow on, and fare ye well?

Ye will not mourn for me.

“But thou, sweet boon! too late

Pour’d on my parting breath, vain gift of song!

Why com’st thou thus, o’ermastering, rich and strong,

In the dark hour of fate?

“Only to wake the sighs

Of echo-voices from their sparry cell;

Only to say—O sunshine and blue skies!

O life and love! farewell.”
Thus flow’d the death-chant on; while mournfully
Low winds and waves made answer, and the tones
Buried in rocks along the Grecian stream—
Rocks and dim caverns of old Prophecy—
Woke to respond: and all the air was fill’d
With that one sighing sound—Farewell! farewell!
Fill’d with that sound? High in the calm blue heav’n
Even then a skylark hung; soft summer clouds
Were floating round him, all transpierced with light,
And midst that pearly radiance his dark wings
Quiver’d with song: such free, triumphant song,
As if tears were not,—as if breaking hearts
Had not a place below; and thus that strain
Spoke to the poet’s ear exultingly:—
“The summer is come; she hath said Rejoice!
The wild-woods thrill to her merry voice;
Her sweet breath is wandering around, on high:
Sing, sing through the echoing sky!
“There is joy in the mountains! The bright waves leap
Like the bounding stag when he breaks from sleep;
Mirthfully, wildly, they flash along—
Let the heavens ring with song!
“There is joy in the forests! The bird of night

Hath made the leaves tremble with deep delight;
But mine is the glory to sunshine given—
Sing, sing through the echoing heaven!
“Mine are the wings of the soaring morn,
Mine are the fresh gales with dayspring born:
Only young rapture can mount so high—
Sing, sing through the echoing sky!”
So those two voices met; so Joy and Death
Mingled their accents; and, amidst the rush
Of many thoughts, the listening poet cried,—
“Oh! thou art mighty, thou art wonderful,
Mysterious nature! Not in thy free range
Of woods and wilds alone, thou blendest thus
The dirge-note and the song of festival;
But in one heart, one changeful human heart—
Ay, and within one hour of that strange world—
Thou call’st their music forth, with all its tones,
To startle and to pierce!—the dying swan’s,
And the glad skylark’s—triumph and despair!”

THE CURFEW-SONG OF ENGLAND.

Hark! from the dim church-tower,
The deep, slow Curfew’s chime!
—A heavy sound unto hall and bower
In England’s olden time!

Sadly ’twas heard by him who came
From the fields of his toil at night,
And who might not see his own hearth-flame
In his children’s eyes make light.
Sternly and sadly heard,
As it quench’d the wood-fire’s glow,
Which had cheer’d the board with the mirthful word,
And the red wine’s foaming flow!
Until that sullen, boding knell,
Flung out from every fane,
On harp, and lip, and spirit, fell,
With a weight and with a chain.
Woe for the pilgrim then
In the wild-deer’s forest far!
No cottage lamp, to the haunts of men,
Might guide him, as a star.
And woe for him whose wakeful soul,
With lone aspirings fill’d,
Would have lived o’er some immortal scroll,
While the sounds of earth were still’d!
And yet a deeper woe
For the watcher by the bed,
Where the fondly-loved in pain lay low,
In pain and sleepless dread!

For the mother, doom’d unseen to keep
By the dying babe, her place,
And to feel its flitting pulse, and weep,
Yet not behold its face!
Darkness in chieftain’s hall!
Darkness in peasant’s cot!
While freedom, under that shadowy pall,
Sat mourning o’er her lot.
Oh! the fireside’s peace we well may prize!
For blood hath flow’d like rain,
Pour’d forth to make sweet sanctuaries
Of England’s homes again.
Heap the yule-faggots high
Till the red light fills the room!
It is home’s own hour when the stormy sky
Grows thick with evening gloom.
Gather ye round the holy hearth,
And by its gladdening blaze,
Unto thankful bliss we will change our mirth,
With a thought of the olden days!

GENIUS SINGING TO LOVE.

“That voice re-measures
Whatever tones and melancholy pleasures
The things of nature utter; birds or trees,

Or where the tall grass mid the heath-plant waves,
Murmur and music thin of sudden breeze.” Coleridge.

I heard a song upon the wandering wind,
A song of many tones—though one full soul
Breathed through them all imploringly; and made
All nature as they pass’d, all quivering leaves
And low responsive reeds and waters, thrill
As with the consciousness of human prayer.
—At times the passion-kindled melody
Might seem to gush from Sappho’s fervent heart,
Over the wild sea-wave;—at times the strain
Flow’d with more plaintive sweetness, as if born
Of Petrarch’s voice, beside the lone Vaucluse;
And sometimes, with its melancholy swell,
A graver sound was mingled, a deep note
Of Tasso’s holy lyre. Yet still the tones
Were of a suppliant—“Leave me not!” was still
The burden of their music; and I knew
The lay which Genius, in its loneliness,
Its own still world, amidst th’ o’erpeopled world,
Hath ever breathed to Love.
“They crown me with the glistening crown,
Borne from a deathless tree;
I hear the pealing music of renown—

O Love! forsake me not!

Mine were a lone, dark lot,

Bereft of thee!

They tell me that my soul can throw

A glory o’er the earth;

From thee, from thee, is caught that golden glow!

Shed by thy gentle eyes,

It gives to flower and skies

A bright, new birth!

“Thence gleams the path of morning

Over the kindling hills, a sunny zone!

Thence to its heart of hearts the rose is burning

With lustre not its own!

Thence every wood-recess

Is fill’d with loveliness,

Each bower, to ring-doves and dim violets known.

“I see all beauty by the ray

That streameth from thy smile;=

Oh! bear it, bear it not away!

Can that sweet light beguile?

Too pure, too spirit-like, it seems,

To linger long by earthly streams;

I clasp it with th’ alloy

Of fear midst quivering joy.

Yet must I perish if the gift depart—

Leave me not, Love! to mine own beating heart!

“The music from my lyre

With thy swift step would flee;

The world’s cold breath would quench the starry fire

In my deep soul—a temple fill’d with thee!

Seal’d would the fountains lie,

The waves of harmony,

Which thou alone canst free!

“Like a shrine midst rocks forsaken,

Whence the oracle hath fled;

Like a harp which none might waken

But a mighty master dead;

Like the vase of a perfume scatter’d.

Such would my spirit be—

So mute, so void, so shatter’d,

Bereft of thee!

“Leave me not, Love! or if this earth

Yield not for thee a home,

If the bright summer-land of thy pure birth

Send thee a silvery voice that whispers ‘Come!’

Then, with the glory from the rose,

With the sparkle from the stream,

With the light thy rainbow-presence throws

Over the poet’s dream;

With all th’ Elysian hues

Thy pathway that suffuse,

With joy, with music, from the fading grove,

Take me, too, heavenward on thy wing, sweet Love!”

MUSIC AT A DEATHBED.

“Music! why thy power employ

Only for the sons of joy?

Only for the smiling guests

At natal or at nuptial feasts?

Rather thy lenient numbers pour

On those whom secret griefs devour;

And with some softly-whisper’d air

Smooth the brow of dumb despair!”

Warton from Euripides.

Bring music! stir the brooding air

With an ethereal breath!

Bring sounds, my struggling soul to bear

Up from the couch of death!

A voice, a flute, a dreamy lay,

Such as the southern breeze

Might waft, at golden fall of day,

O’er blue, transparent seas!

Oh, no! not such! That lingering spell

Would lure me back to life,
When my wean’d heart hath said farewell,
And pass’d the gates of strife.
Let not a sigh of human love
Blend with the song its tone!
Let no disturbing echo move
One that must die alone!
But pour a solemn-breathing strain
Fill’d with the soul of prayer!
Let a life’s conflict, fear, and pain,
And trembling hope be there.
Deeper, yet deeper! In my thought
Lies more prevailing sound,
A harmony intensely fraught
With pleading more profound:
A passion unto music given,
A sweet, yet piercing cry;
A breaking heart’s appeal to Heaven,
A bright faith’s victory!
Deeper! Oh! may no richer power
Be in those notes enshrined?
Can all which crowds on earth’s last hour
No fuller language find?
Away! and hush the feeble song,

And let the chord be still'd!

Far in another land ere long

My dream shall be fulfill'd.

MARSHAL SCHWERIN'S GRAVE.

["I came upon the tomb of Marshal Schwerin—a plain, quiet cenotaph, erected in the middle of a wide corn-field, on the very spot where he closed a long, faithful, and glorious career in arms. He fell here, at eighty years of age, at the head of his own regiment, the standard of it waving in his hand. His seat was in the leathern saddle—his foot in the iron stirrup—his fingers reined the young war-horse to the last."—Notes and Reflections during a Ramble into Germany.]

Thou didst fall in the field with thy silver hair,

And a banner in thy hand;

Thou wert laid to rest from thy battles there,

By a proudly mournful band.

In the camp, on the steed, to the bugle's blast,

Thy long bright years had sped;

And a warrior's bier was thine at last,

When the snows had crown'd thy head.

Many had fallen by thy side, old chief!

Brothers and friends, perchance;

But thou wert yet as the fadeless leaf,

And light was in thy glance.

The soldier's heart at thy step leapt high,

And thy voice the war-horse knew;

And the first to arm, when the foe was nigh,

Wert thou, the bold and true.

Now may’st thou slumber—thy work is done—

Thou of the well-worn sword!

From the stormy fight in thy fame thou’rt gone,

But not to the festal board.

The corn-sheaves whisper thy grave around,

Where fiery blood hath flow’d:

O lover of battle and trumpet-sound!

Thou art couch’d in a still abode!

A quiet home from the noonday’s glare,

And the breath of the wintry blast—

Didst thou toil through the days of thy silvery hair

To win thee but this at last?

THE FALLEN LIME-TREE.

O joy of the peasant! O stately lime!

Thou art fall’n in thy golden honey-time!

Thou whose wavy shadows,

Long and long ago,

Screen’d our gray forefathers

From the noontide’s glow;

Thou, beneath whose branches,

Touch’d with moonlight gleams,

Lay our early poets

Wrapt in fairy dreams.

O tree of our fathers! O hallow’d tree!

A glory is gone from our home with thee.

Where shall now the weary

Rest through summer eves?

Or the bee find honey,

As on thy sweet leaves?

Where shall now the ringdove

Build again her nest?

She so long the inmate

Of thy fragrant breast!

But the sons of the peasant have lost in thee

Far more than the ringdove, far more than the bee!

These may yet find coverts

Leafy and profound,

Full of dewy dimness,

Odour, and soft sound:

But the gentle memories

Clinging all to thee,

When shall they be gather’d

Round another tree?

O pride of our fathers! O hallow’d tree!

The crown of the hamlet is fallen in thee!

THE BIRD AT SEA.

Bird of the greenwood!

Oh, why art thou here?
Leaves dance not o’er thee,
Flowers bloom not near.
All the sweet waters
Far hence are at play—
Bird of the greenwood!
Away, away!
Where the mast quivers
Thy place will not be,
As midst the waving
Of wild-rose and tree.
How shouldst thou battle
With storm and with spray?
Bird of the greenwood!
Away, away!
Or art thou seeking
Some brighter land,
Where by the south wind
Vine leaves are fann’d?
’Midst the wild billows
Why then delay?
Bird of the greenwood!
Away, away!
“Chide not my lingering

Where storms are dark;

A hand that hath nursed me

Is in the bark—

A heart that hath cherish’d

Through winter’s long day:

So I turn from the greenwood,

Away, away!”

THE DYING GIRL AND FLOWERS.

“I desire as I look on these, the ornaments and children of earth, to know whether, indeed, such things I shall see no more?—whether they have no likeness, no archetype in the world in which my future home is to be cast? or whether they have their images above, only wrought in a more wondrous and delightful mould.”—

“Conversations with an ambitious Student in ill health.”

Bear them not from grassy dells

Where wild bees have honey-cells;

Not from where sweet water-sounds

Thrill the greenwood to its bounds;

Not to waste their scented breath

On the silent room of Death!

Kindred to the breeze they are,

And the glow-worm’s emerald star,

And the bird whose song is free,

And the many-whispering tree:

Oh! too deep a love, and vain,

They would win to earth again.
Spread them not before the eyes
Closing fast on summer skies!
Woo thou not the spirit back
From its lone and viewless track,
With the bright things which have birth
Wide o’er all the colour’d earth!
With the violet’s breath would rise
Thoughts too sad for her who dies;
From the lily’s pearl-cup shed,
Dreams too sweet would haunt her bed;
Dreams of youth—of spring-time’s eves—
Music—beauty—all she leaves!
Hush! ’tis thou that dreaming art,
Calmer is her gentle heart.
Yes! o’er fountain, vale, and grove,
Leaf and flower, hath gush’d her love;
But that passion, deep and true,
Knows not of a last adieu.
Types of lovelier forms than these
In their fragile mould she sees;
Shadows of yet richer things,
Born beside immortal springs,
Into fuller glory wrought,

Kindled by surpassing thought!

Therefore, in the lily’s leaf,

She can read no word of grief;

O’er the woodbine she can dwell,

Murmuring not—Farewell! farewell!

And her dim, yet speaking eye

Greets the violet solemnly.

Therefore once, and yet again,

Strew them o’er her bed of pain;

From her chamber take the gloom

With a light and flush of bloom:

So should one depart, who goes

Where no death can touch the rose!

THE IVY-SONG.[416]

Oh! how could fancy crown with thee,

In ancient days, the God of Wine,

And bid thee at the banquet be

Companion of the Vine?

Ivy! thy home is where each sound

Of revelry hath long been o’er;

Where song and beaker once went round,

But now are known no more;

Where long-fallen gods recline,

There the place is thine.

The Roman, on his battle-plains,
Where kings before his eagles bent,
With thee, amidst exulting strains,
Shadow’d the victor’s tent.
Though, shining there in deathless green,
Triumphantly thy boughs might wave,
Better thou lovest the silent scene
Around the victor’s grave—
Urn and sculpture half divine
Yield their place to thine.
The cold halls of the regal dead,
Where lone the Italian sunbeams dwell,
Where hollow sounds the lightest tread—
Ivy! they know thee well!
And far above the festal vine
Thou wavest where once proud banners hung,
Where mouldering turrets crest the Rhine—
The Rhine, still fresh and young!
Tower and rampart o’er the Rhine,
Ivy! all are thine!
High from the fields of air look down
Those eyries of a vanish’d race,
Where harp, and battle, and renown,
Have pass’d, and left no trace.

But thou art there!—serenely bright,

Meeting the mountain-storms with bloom,

Thou that wilt climb the loftiest height,

Or crown the lowliest tomb!

Ivy! Ivy! all are thine,

Palace, hearth, and shrine.

’Tis still the same: our pilgrim-tread

O’er classic plains, through deserts free,

On the mute path of ages fled,

Still meets decay and thee.

And still let man his fabrics rear,

August in beauty, stern in power—

Days pass—thou Ivy never sere,[417]

And thou shalt have thy dower.

All are thine, or must be thine—

Temple, pillar, shrine!

[416] This song, as originally written, the reader will have met with in an earlier part of this publication, (p. 354.) Being afterwards completely remodelled by Mrs Hemans, perhaps no apology is requisite for its re-insertion here.

[417] “Ye myrtles brown, and ivy never sere.”—Lycidas.

THE MUSIC OF ST PATRICK’S.

[The choral music of St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin, is almost unrivalled in its combined powers of voice, organ, and scientific skill. The majestic harmony of effect thus produced is not a little deepened by the character of the church itself, which, though small, yet with its dark rich fretwork, knightly helmets and banners,

and old monumental effigies, seems all filled and overshadowed by the spirit of chivalrous antiquity. The imagination never fails to recognise it as a fitting scene for high solemnities of old—a place to witness the solitary vigil of arms, or to resound with the funeral march at the burial of some warlike king.]

"All the choir

Sang Hallelujah, as the sound of seas."—Milton.

Again! oh! send that anthem-peal again

Through the arch'd roof in triumph to the sky!

Bid the old tombs ring proudly to the strain,

The banners thrill as if with victory!

Such sounds the warrior awe-struck might have heard,

While arm'd for fields of chivalrous renown:

Such the high hearts of kings might well have stirr'd,

While throbbing still beneath the recent crown!

Those notes once more!—they bear my soul away,

They lend the wings of morning to its flight;

No earthly passion in th' exulting lay

Whispers one tone to win me from that height.

All is of Heaven! Yet wherefore to mine eye

Gush the vain tears unbidden from their source,

Even while the waves of that strong harmony

Roll with my spirit on their sounding course?

Wherefore must rapture its full heart reveal

Thus by the burst of sorrow's token shower!

—Oh! is it not, that humbly we may feel

Our nature's limit in its proudest hour?

[The mention of Neukomm's magnificent organ-playing brings to remembrance one great enjoyment of Mrs Hemans's residence in Dublin—the exquisite "Music of St Patrick's," of which she has recorded her impressions in the little poem so entitled. Its effect is, indeed, such as, once heard, can never be forgotten. If ever earthly music can be satisfying, it must surely be such as this, bringing home to our bosoms the solemn beauty of our own holy liturgy, with all its precious and endeared associations, in tones that make the heart swell with ecstasy, and the eyes overflow with unbidden tears. There was one anthem, frequently heard within those ancient walls, which Mrs Hemans used to speak of with peculiar enthusiasm—that from the 3d Psalm—"Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!" The consummate skill exhibited in the adaptation of sound to sense in this noble composition is, in truth, most admirable. The symphony to the 5th verse—"I laid me down and slept"—with its soft, dreamy vibrations, gentle as the hovering of an angel's wing—the utter abandon, the melting into slumber, implied by the half-whispered words that came breathing as from a world of spirits—almost "steep the senses in forgetfulness," when a sudden outbreak, as it were, of life and light, bursts forth with the glad announcement, "I awaked, for the Lord sustained me;" then the old sombre arches ring with an almost overpowering peal of triumph, bearing to Heaven's gate the exulting chorus of the 6th and 8th verses.—Memoir, p. 260-1.]

KEENE; OR, LAMENT OF AN IRISH MOTHER OVER HER SON.

[This lament is intended to imitate the peculiar style of the Irish Keenes, many of which are distinguished by a wild and deep pathos, and other characteristics analogous to those of the national music.]

Darkly the cloud of night comes rolling on;

Darker is thy repose, my fair-hair'd son!

Silent and dark!
There is blood upon the threshold
Whence thy step went forth at morn
Like a dancer’s in its fleetness,
O my bright first-born!
At the glad sound of that footstep
My heart within me smiled;—
Thou wert brought me back all silent
On thy bier, my child!
Darkly the cloud of night comes rolling on;
Darker is thy repose, my fair-hair’d son!
Silent and dark!
I thought to see thy children
Laugh on me with thine eyes;
But my sorrow’s voice is lonely
Where my life’s flower lies.
I shall go to sit beside thee,
Thy kindred’s graves among;
I shall hear the tall grass whisper—
I shall not hear it long.
Darkly the cloud of night comes rolling on;
Darker is thy repose, my fair-hair’d son!
Silent and dark!
And I, too, shall find slumber

With my lost one in the earth;—

Let none light up the ashes

Again on our hearth!

Let the roof go down!—let silence

On the home for ever fall,

Where my boy lay cold, and heard not

His lone mother’s call!

Darkly the cloud of night comes rolling on;

Darker is thy repose, my fair-hair’d son!

Silent and dark!

FAR AWAY.[418]

Far away!—my home is far away,

Where the blue sea laves a mountain-shore;

In the woods I hear my brothers play,

Midst the flowers my sister sings once more,

Far away!

Far away!—my dreams are far away,

When at midnight stars and shadows reign:

“Gentle child!” my mother seems to say,

“Follow me where home shall smile again,

Far away!”

Far away!—my hope is far away,

Where love’s voice young gladness may restore.

—O thou dove! now soaring through the day,

Lend me wings to reach that better shore,

Far away!

[418] This, and the five following songs, have been set to music of great merit, by J. Zeugheer Herrmann and H. F. Chorley, Esq., and are published in a set by Mr Power, who has given permission for the appearance of the words in this volume.

THE LYRE AND FLOWER.

A lyre its plaintive sweetness pour’d

Forth on the wild wind’s track;

The stormy wanderer jarr’d the chord,

But gave no music back.—

O child of song!

Bear hence to heaven thy fire:

What hopest thou from the reckless throng?

Be not like that lost lyre!

Not like that lyre!

A flower its leaves and odours cast

On a swift-rolling wave;

Th’ unheeding torrent darkly pass’d,

And back no treasure gave.—

O heart of love!

Waste not thy precious dower:

Turn to thine only home above!

Be not like that lost flower!

Not like that flower!

SISTER! SINCE I MET THEE LAST.

Sister! since I met thee last,
O’er thy brow a change hath past.
In the softness of thine eyes,
Deep and still a shadow lies;
From thy voice there thrills a tone
Never to thy childhood known;
Through thy soul a storm hath moved,
—Gentle sister! thou hast loved!
Yes! thy varying cheek hath caught
Hues too bright from troubled thought;
Far along the wandering stream
Thou art follow’d by a dream;
In the woods and valleys lone
Music haunts thee, not thine own:
Wherefore fall thy tears like rain?
—Sister! thou hast loved in vain!
Tell me not the tale, my flower!
On my bosom pour that shower!
Tell me not of kind thoughts wasted;
Tell me not of young hopes blasted;
Wring not forth one burning word,
Let thy heart no more be stirr’d!
Home alone can give thee rest.

—Weep, sweet sister! on my breast!

THE LONELY BIRD.

From a ruin thou art singing,

O lonely, lonely bird!

The soft blue air is ringing,

By thy summer music stirr’d.

But all is dark and cold beneath,

Where harps no more are heard:

Whence win’st thou that exulting breath,

O lonely, lonely bird?

Thy songs flow richly swelling

To a triumph of glad sounds,

As from its cavern-dwelling

A stream in glory bounds!

Though the castle-echoes catch no tone

Of human step or word,

Though the fires be quench’d and the feasting done,

O lonely, lonely bird?

How can that flood of gladness

Rush through thy fiery lay,

From the haunted place of sadness,

From the bosom of decay—

While the dirge-notes in the breeze’s moan,

Through the ivy garlands heard,

Come blent with thy rejoicing tone,

O lonely, lonely bird?

There’s many a heart, wild singer!

Like thy forsaken tower,

Where joy no more may linger,

Where Love hath left his bower:

And there’s many a spirit e’en like thee,

To mirth as lightly stirr’d,

Though it soar from ruins in its glee,

O lonely, lonely bird!

DIRGE AT SEA.

Sleep!—we give thee to the wave,

Red with life-blood from the brave.

Thou shalt find a noble grave.

Fare thee well!

Sleep! thy billowy field is won:

Proudly may the funeral gun,

Midst the hush at set of sun,

Boom thy knell!

Lonely, lonely is thy bed,

Never there may flower be shed,

Marble rear’d, or brother’s head

Bow’d to weep.

Yet thy record on the sea,

Borne through battle high and free,

Long the red-cross flag shall be.

Sleep! oh, sleep!

PILGRIM’S SONG TO THE EVENING STAR.

O soft star of the west!

Gleaming far,

Thou’rt guiding all things home,

Gentle star!

Thou bring’st from rock and wave

The sea-bird to her nest,

The hunter from the hills,

The fisher back to rest.

Light of a thousand streams,

Gleaming far!

O soft star of the west!

Blessed star!

No bowery roof is mine,

No hearth of love and rest,

Yet guide me to my shrine,

O soft star of the west!

There, there my home shall be,

Heaven’s dew shall cool my breast,

When prayer and tear gush free,

O soft star of the west!

O soft star of the west,

Gleaming far!

Thou’rt guiding all things home,

Gentle star!

Shine from thy rosy heaven,

Pour joy on earth and sea!

Shine on, though no sweet eyes

Look forth to watch for me!

Light of a thousand streams,

Gleaming afar!

O soft star of the west!

Blessed star!

THE MEETING OF THE SHIPS.

“We take each other by the hand, and we exchange a few words and looks of kindness, and we rejoice together for a few short moments: and then days, months, years intervene, and we see and know nothing of each other.”—Washington Irving.

Two barks met on the deep mid-sea,

When calms had still’d the tide;

A few bright days of summer glee

There found them side by side.

And voices of the fair and brave

Rose mingling thence in mirth;

And sweetly floated o’er the wave

The melodies of earth.

Moonlight on that lone Indian main
Cloudless and lovely slept;
While dancing step, and festive strain
Each deck in triumph swept.
And hands were link’d, and answering eyes
With kindly meaning shone;
Oh! brief and passing sympathies,
Like leaves together blown!
A little while such joy was cast
Over the deep’s repose,
Till the loud singing winds at last
Like trumpet-music rose.
And proudly, freely on their way
The parting vessels bore;
In calm or storm, by rock or bay,
To meet—oh, never more!
Never to blend in victory’s cheer,
To aid in hours of woe:
And thus bright spirits mingle here,
Such ties are form’d below!

COME AWAY.

Come away!—the child, where flowers are springing
Round its footsteps on the mountain-slope,
Hears a glad voice from the upland singing,

Like the skylark’s with its tone of hope:

Come away!

Bounding on, with sunny lands before him,

All the wealth of glowing life outspread,

Ere the shadow of a cloud comes o’er him,

By that strain the youth in joy is led:

Come away!

Slowly, sadly, heavy change is falling

O’er the sweetness of the voice within;

Yet its tones, on restless manhood calling,

Urge the hunter still to chase, to win:

Come away!

Come away!—the heart at last forsaken,

Smile by smile, hath proved each hope untrue;

Yet a breath can still those words awaken,

Though to other shores far hence they woo:

Come away!

In the light leaves, in the reed’s faint sighing,

In the low, sweet sounds of early spring,

Still their music wanders—till the dying

Hears them pass, as on a spirit’s wing:

Come away!

FAIR HELEN OF KIRKCONNEL.

[“Fair Helen of Kirkconnel,” as she is called in the Scottish Minstrelsy, throwing

herself between her betrothed lover and a rival by whom his life was assailed, received a mortal wound, and died in the arms of the former.]

Hold me upon thy faithful heart,

Keep back my flitting breath;

’Tis early, early to depart,

Beloved!—yet this is death!

Look on me still—let that kind eye

Be the last light I see!

Oh! sad it is in spring to die,

But yet I die for thee!

For thee, my own!—thy stately head

Was never thus to bow:

Give tears when with me love hath fled,

True love, thou know’st it now!

Oh, the free streams look’d bright, where’er

We in our gladness roved;

And the blue skies were very fair,

O friend! because we loved.

Farewell!—I bless thee—live thou on

When this young heart is low!

Surely my blood thy life hath won—

Clasp me once more—I go!

MUSIC FROM SHORE.

A sound comes on the rising breeze,

A sweet and lovely sound!
Piercing the tumult of the seas
That wildly dash around.
From land, from sunny land it comes,
From hills with murmuring trees,
From paths by still and happy homes—
That sweet sound on the breeze.
Why should its faint and passing sigh
Thus bid my quick pulse leap?
No part in earth's glad melody
Is mine upon the deep.
Yet blessing, blessing on the spot
Whence those rich breathings flow!
Kind hearts, although they know me not,
Like mine there beat and glow.
And blessing, from the bark that roams
O'er solitary seas,
To those that far in happy homes
Give sweet sounds to the breeze!

LOOK ON ME WITH THY CLOUDLESS EYES.

Look on me with thy cloudless eyes,
Truth in their dark transparence lies;
Their sweetness gives me back the tears
And the free trust of early years,

My gentle child!

The spirit of my infant prayer

Shines in the depths of quiet there;

And home and love once more are mine.

Found in that dewy calm divine,

My gentle child!

Oh! heaven is with thee in thy dreams,

Its light by day around thee gleams—

Thy smile hath gifts from vernal skies:

Look on me with thy cloudless eyes,

My gentle child!

IF THOU HAST CRUSH'D A FLOWER.

"Oh, cast thou not

Affection from thee! In this bitter world

Hold to thy heart that only treasure fast;

Watch—guard it—suffer not a breath to dim

The bright gem's purity!"

If thou hast crush'd a flower,

The root may not be blighted;

If thou hast quench'd a lamp,

Once more it may be lighted:

But on thy harp, or on thy lute,

The string which thou hast broken

Shall never in sweet sound again

Give to thy touch a token!
If thou hast loosed a bird
Whose voice of song could cheer thee,
Still, still he may be won
From the skies to warble near thee:
But if upon the troubled sea
Thou hast thrown a gem unheeded,
Hope not that wind or wave will bring
The treasure back when needed.
If thou hast bruised a vine,
The summer's breath is healing,
And its clusters yet may glow
Through the leaves their bloom revealing:
But if thou hast a cup o'erthrown
With a bright draught fill'd—oh! never
Shall earth give back that lavish'd wealth
To cool thy parch'd lip's fever!
The heart is like that cup,
If thou waste the love it bore thee;
And like that jewel gone,
Which the deep will not restore thee;
And like that string of harp or lute
Whence the sweet sound is scatter'd,—
Gently, oh! gently touch the chords,

So soon for ever shatter’d!

BRIGHTLY HAST THOU FLED.

Brightly, brightly hast thou fled!

Ere one grief had bow’d thy head!

Brightly didst thou part!

With thy young thoughts pure from spot,

With thy fond love wasted not,

With thy bounding heart.

Ne’er by sorrow to be wet,

Calmly smiles thy pale cheek yet,

Ere with dust o’erspread:

Lilies ne’er by tempest blown,

White rose which no stain hath known,

Be about thee shed!

So we give thee to the earth,

And the primrose shall have birth

O’er thy gentle head;

Thou that, like a dewdrop borne

On a sudden breeze of morn,

Brightly thus hast fled!

THE BED OF HEATH.

“Soldier, awake! the night is past;

Hear’st thou not the bugle’s blast?

Feel’st thou not the dayspring’s breath?

Rouse thee from thy bed of heath!
Arm, thou bold and strong!
Soldier! what deep spell hath bound thee?
Fiery steeds are neighing round thee—
Banners to the fresh wind play:
Rise, and arm—'tis day,'tis day!
And thou hast slumber'd long."
"Brother! on the heathery lea
Longer yet my sleep must be;
Though the morn of battle rise,
Darkly night rolls o'er my eyes—
Brother, this is death!
Call me not when bugles sound,
Call me not when wine flows round;
Name me but amidst the brave,
Give me but a soldier's grave—
But my bed of heath!"

FAIRY SONG.

Have ye left the greenwood lone,
Are your steps for ever gone?
Fairy King and Elfin Queen,
Come ye to the sylvan scene,
From your dim and distant shore,
Never more?

Shall the pilgrim never hear
With a thrill of joy and fear,
In the hush of moonlight hours,
Voices from the folded flowers,
Faint, sweet flute-notes as of yore,
Never more?
“Mortal! ne’er shall bowers of earth
Hear again our midnight mirth:
By our brooks and dingles green
Since unhallow’d steps have been,
Ours shall thread the forests hoar
Never more.
“Ne’er on earth-born lily’s stem
Will we hang the dewdrop’s gem;
Ne’er shall reed or cowslip’s head
Quiver to our dancing tread,
By sweet fount or murmuring shore—
Never more!”

WHAT WOKE THE BURIED SOUND.

What woke the buried sound that lay
In Memnon’s harp of yore?
What spirit on its viewless way
Along the Nile’s green shore?
Oh! not the night, and not the storm,

And not the lightning’s fire;
But sunlight’s torch, the kind, the warm—
This, this awoke the lyre.
What wins the heart’s deep chords to pour
Thus music forth on life—
Like a sweet voice prevailing o’er
The truant sounds of strife?
Oh! not the conflict midst the throng,
Not e’en the trumpet’s hour;
Love is the gifted and the strong,
To wake that music’s power!

SING TO ME, GONDOLIER!

Sing to me, Gondolier!
Sing words from Tasso’s lay;
While blue, and still, and clear,
Night seems but softer day.
The gale is gently falling,
As if it paused to hear
Some strain the past recalling—
Sing to me, Gondolier!
“Oh, ask me not to wake
The memory of the brave;
Bid no high numbers break
The silence of the wave.

Gone are the noble-hearted,

Closed the bright pageants here;

And the glad song is departed

From the mournful Gondolier!”

LOOK ON ME THUS NO MORE.

It is thy pity makes me weep,

My soul was strong before;

Silent, yet strong its griefs to keep

From vainly gushing o’er.

Turn from me, turn those gentle eyes!

In this fond gaze my spirit dies:

Look on me thus no more!

Too late that softness comes to bless,

My heart’s glad life is o’er;

It will but break with tenderness,

Which cannot now restore!

The lyre-strings have been jarr’d too long,

Winter hath touch’d the source of song!

Look on me thus no more!

O’ER THE FAR BLUE MOUNTAINS.

O’er the far blue mountains,

O’er the white sea-foam,

Come, thou long-parted one!

Back to thine home.

When the bright fire shineth,

Sad looks thy place,

While the true heart pineth

Missing thy face.

Music is sorrowful

Since thou art gone;

Sisters are mourning thee—

Come to thine own!

Hark! the home-voices call

Back to thy rest;

Come to thy father’s hall,

Thy mother’s breast!

O’er the far blue mountains,

O’er the white sea-foam,

Come, thou long-parted one!

Back to thine home.

O THOU BREEZE OF SPRING!

O thou breeze of spring,

Gladdening sea and shore!

Wake the woods to sing,

Wake my heart no more!

Streams have felt the sighing

Of thy scented wing,

Let each fount replying

Hail thee, breeze of spring!

Once more!

O’er long-buried flowers

Passing not in vain,

Odours in soft showers

Thou hast brought again.

Let the primrose greet thee,

Let the violet pour

Incense forth to meet thee—

Wake my heart no more!

No more!

From a funeral urn

Bower’d in leafy gloom,

Even thy soft return

Calls not song or bloom.

Leave my spirit sleeping

Like that silent thing;

Stir the founts of weeping

There, O breeze of spring!

No more!

COME TO ME, DREAMS OF HEAVEN!

Come to me, dreams of heaven!

My fainting spirit bear

On your bright wings, by morning given,

Up to celestial air.

Away—far, far away,

From bowers by tempests riven,

Fold me in blue, still, cloudless day,

O blessed dreams of heaven!

Come but for one brief hour,

Sweet dreams! and yet again

O’er burning thought and memory shower

Your soft effacing rain!

Waft me where gales divine,

With dark clouds ne’er have striven,

Where living founts for ever shine—

O blessed dreams of heaven!

GOOD-NIGHT.

Day is past!

Stars have set their watch at last;

Founts that through the deep woods flow

Make sweet sounds, unheard till now;

Flowers have shut with fading light—

Good-night!

Go to rest!

Sleep sit dove-like on thy breast!

If within that secret cell

One dark form of memory dwell,

Be it mantled from thy sight—

Good-night!

Joy be thine!

Kind looks o’er thy slumbers shine!

Go, and in the spirit-land

Meet thy home’s long-parted band;

Be their eyes all love and light—

Good-night!

Peace to all!

Dreams of heaven on mourners fall!

Exile! o’er thy couch may gleams

Pass from thine own mountain-streams;

Bard! away to worlds more bright—

Good-night!

LET HER DEPART.

Her home is far, oh! far away!

The clear light in her eyes

Hath naught to do with earthly day—

’Tis kindled from the skies.

Let her depart!

She looks upon the things of earth,

Even as some gentle star

Seems gazing down on grief or mirth,

How softly, yet how far!

Let her depart!

Her spirit's hope—her bosom's love—

Oh! could they mount and fly!

She never sees a wandering dove,

But for its wings to sigh.

Let her depart!

She never hears a soft wind bear

Low music on its way,

But deems it sent from heavenly air

For her who cannot stay.

Let her depart!

Wrapt in a cloud of glorious dreams,

She breathes and moves alone,

Pining for those bright bowers and streams

Where her beloved is gone.

Let her depart!

HOW CAN THAT LOVE SO DEEP, SO LONE.

How can that love so deep, so lone,

So faithful unto death,

Thus fitfully in laughing tone,

In airy word, find breath?

Nay! ask how on the dark wave's breast,

The lily's cup may gleam,

Though many a mournful secret rest

Low in the unfathom’d stream.

That stream is like my hidden love,

In its deep current’s power;

And like the play of words above,

That lily’s trembling flower.

WATER-LILIES.

A FAIRY SONG.

Come away, elves!—while the dew is sweet,

Come to the dingles where fairies meet!

Know that the lilies have spread their bells

O’er all the pools in our forest dells;

Stilly and lightly their vases rest

On the quivering sleep of the water’s breast,

Catching the sunshine through leaves that throw

To their scented bosoms an emerald glow;

And a star from the depth of each pearly cup,

A golden star unto heaven looks up,

As if seeking its kindred where bright they lie,

Set in the blue of the summer sky.

Come away! Under arching boughs we’ll float,

Making those urns each a fairy boat;

We’ll row them with reeds o’er the fountains free,

And a tall flag-leaf shall our streamer be;

And we’ll send out wild music so sweet and low,

It shall seem from the bright flower’s heart to flow,
As if ’twere a breeze with a flute’s low sigh,
Or water-drops train’d into melody.
Come away! for the midsummer sun grows strong,
And the life of the lily may not be long.

THE BROKEN FLOWER.

Oh! wear it on thy heart, my love!
Still, still a little while!
Sweetness is lingering in its leaves,
Though faded be their smile.
Yet, for the sake of what hath been,
Oh, cast it not away!
’Twas born to grace a summer scene,
A long, bright, golden day,
My love!
A long, bright, golden day!
A little while around thee, love!
Its fragrance yet shall cling,
Telling, that on thy heart hath lain
A fair, though faded thing.
But not even that warm heart hath power
To win it back from fate,—
Oh! I am like thy broken flower,
Cherish’d too late, too late,

My love!

Cherish’d alas! too late!

I WOULD WE HAD NOT MET AGAIN.

I would we had not met again!

I had a dream of thee,

Lovely, though sad, on desert-plain—

Mournful on midnight sea.

What though it haunted me by night,

And troubled through the day?

It touch’d all earth with spirit-light,

It glorified my way!

Oh! what shall now my faith restore

In holy things and fair?

We met—I saw thy soul once more—

The world’s breath had been there!

Yes! it was sad on desert-plain,

Mournful on midnight sea;

Yet would I buy with life again

That one deep dream of thee!

FAIRIES’ RECALL.

While the blue is richest

In the starry sky,

While the softest shadows

On the greensward lie,

While the moonlight slumbers
In the lily’s urn,
Bright elves of the wild-wood!
Oh! return, return!
Round the forest-fountain,
On the river-shore,
Let your silvery laughter
Echo yet once more;
While the joyous bounding
Of your dewy feet
Rings to that old chorus—
“The daisy is so sweet!”[419]
Oberon! Titania!
Did your starlight mirth
With the song of Avon
Quit this work-day earth?
Yet, while green leaves glisten,
And while bright stars burn,
By that magic memory,
Oh! return, return!

[419] See the fairies’ chorus in Chaucer’s “Flower and the Leaf.”

THE ROCK BESIDE THE SEA.

Oh! tell me not the woods are fair
Now Spring is on her way!

Well, well I know how brightly there
In joy the young leaves play;
How sweet on winds of morn or eve
The violet’s breath may be;—
Yet ask me, woo me not to leave
My lone rock by the sea.
The wild wave’s thunder on the shore,
The curlew’s restless cries,
Unto my watching heart are more
Than all earth’s melodies.
Come back, my ocean rover! come!
There’s but one place for me,
Till I can greet thy swift sail home—
My lone rock by the sea!

O YE VOICES GONE!

O ye voices gone!
Sounds of other years!
Hush that haunting tone,
Melt me not to tears!
All around forget,
All who loved you well;
Yet, sweet voices! yet
O’er my soul ye swell.
With the winds of spring,

With the breath of flowers,

Floating back, ye bring

Thoughts of vanished hours.

Hence your music take,

O ye voices gone!

This lonely heart ye make

But more deeply lone.

BY A MOUNTAIN-STREAM AT REST.

By a mountain-stream at rest,

We found the warrior lying,

And around his noble breast

A banner clasp’d in dying:

Dark and still

Was every hill,

And the winds of night were sighing.

Last of his noble race

To a lonely bed we bore him—

’Twas a green, still, solemn place.

Where the mountain-heath waves o’er him,

Woods alone

Seem to moan,

Wild streams to deplore him.

Yet, from festive hall and lay

Our sad thoughts oft are flying

To those dark hills far away,

Where in death we found him lying;

On his breast

A banner press’d,

And the night-wind o’er him sighing.

IS THERE SOME SPIRIT SIGHING?

Is there some Spirit sighing

With sorrow in the air?

Can weary hearts be dying,

Vain love repining there?

If not, then how can that wild wail,

O sad Æeolian lyre!

Be drawn forth by the wandering gale

From thy deep thrilling wire?

No, no!—thou dost not borrow

That sadness from the wind,

Nor are those tones of sorrow

In thee, O harp! enshrined;

But in our own hearts deeply set

Lies the true quivering lyre,

Whence love, and memory, and regret

Wake answers from thy wire.

THE NAME OF ENGLAND.

The trumpet of the battle

Hath a high and thrilling tone;

And the first, deep gun of an ocean-fight

Dread music all its own.

But a mightier power, my England!

Is in that name of thine,

To strike the fire from every heart

Along the banner’d line.

Proudly it woke the spirits

Of yore, the brave and true,

When the bow was bent on Cressy’s field,

And the yeoman’s arrow flew.

And proudly hath it floated

Through the battles of the sea,

When the red-cross flag o’er smoke-wreaths play’d

Like the lightning in its glee.

On rock, on wave, on bastion,

Its echoes have been known;

By a thousand streams the hearts lie low

That have answer’d to its tone.

A thousand ancient mountains

Its pealing note hath stirr’d,—

Sound on, and on, for evermore,

O thou victorious word!

OLD NORWAY.

A MOUNTAIN WAR-SONG.

[“To a Norwegian, the words Gamlé Norgé (Old Norway) have a spell in them immediate and powerful; they cannot be resisted. Gamlé Norgé is heard, in an instant, repeated by every voice; the glasses are filled, raised, and drained—not a drop is left; and then bursts forth the simultaneous chorus ‘For Norgé!’ the national song of Norway. Here, (at Christiansand,) and in a hundred other instances in Norway, I have seen the character of a company entirely changed by the chance introduction of the expression Gamlé Norgé. The gravest discussion is instantly interrupted; and one might suppose for the moment that the party was a party of patriots, assembled to commemorate some national anniversary of freedom.”—Derwent Conway’s Personal Narrative of a Journey through Norway and Sweden.

The following words have been published, as arranged to the spirited national air of Norway, by Charles Graves, Esq.]

Arise! Old Norway sends the word
Of battle on the blast;
Her voice the forest pines hath stirr’d,
As if a storm went past;
Her thousand hills the call have heard,
And forth their fire-flags cast.

Arm, arm, free hunters! for the chase,
The kingly chase of foes!
’Tis not the bear or wild wolf’s race
Whose trampling shakes the snows:
Arm, arm! ’tis on a nobler trace
The northern spearman goes.

Our hills have dark and strong defiles,

With many an icy bed;

Heap there the rocks for funeral piles

Above the invader's head!

Or let the seas, that guard our isles,

Give burial to his dead!

COME TO ME, GENTLE SLEEP!

["Mrs Hemans writes for all tastes and for all ages, as well as for all nations, and therefore she may do well to write in all sorts of style and manner. And, at all events, she who pleases others so well, may be allowed at times to please herself. Such strains as the following might soothe the ear of Rhadamanthus, and charm Cerberus to slumber."—Eclectic Review, 1834.]

Come to me, gentle Sleep!

I pine, I pine for thee;

Come with thy spells, the soft, the deep,

And set my spirit free!

Each lonely, burning thought

In twilight languor steep—

Come to the full heart, long o'erwrought,

O gentle, gentle Sleep!

Come with thine urn of dew,

Sleep, gentle Sleep! yet bring

No voice, love's yearning to renew,

No vision on thy wing!

Come, as to folding flowers,

To birds in forests deep—

Long, dark, and dreamless be thine hours,

O gentle, gentle Sleep!

SCENES AND HYMNS OF LIFE,

TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, ESQ.,

IN TOKEN OF DEEP RESPECT FOR HIS CHARACTER, AND FERVENT GRATITUDE FOR MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL BENEFIT DERIVED FROM REVERENTIAL COMMUNION WITH THE SPIRIT OF HIS POETRY, THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY FELICIA HEMANS.[420]

Preface.—I trust I shall not be accused of presumption for the endeavour which I have here made to enlarge, in some degree, the sphere of religious poetry, by associating with its themes more of the emotions, the affections, and even the purer imaginative enjoyments of daily life, than may have been hitherto admitted within the hallowed circle.

It has been my wish to portray the religious spirit, not alone in its meditative joys and solitary aspirations, (the poetic embodying of which seems to require from the reader a state of mind already separated and exalted,) but likewise in those active influences upon human life, so often called into victorious energy by trial and conflict, though too often also, like the upward-striving flame of a mountain watch-fire, borne down by tempest-showers, or swayed by the current of opposing winds.

I have sought to represent that spirit as penetrating the gloom of the prison and the deathbed, bearing “healing on its wings” to the agony of parting love—strengthening the heart of the wayfarer for “perils in the wilderness”—gladdening the domestic walk through field and woodland—and

springing to life in the soul of childhood, along with its earliest rejoicing perceptions of natural beauty.

Circumstances not altogether under my own control have, for the present, interfered to prevent the fuller development of a plan which I yet hope more worthily to mature; and I lay this little volume before the public with that deep sense of deficiency which cannot be more impressively taught to human powers than by their reverential application to things divine.—Felicia Hemans.

1834.

[420] The long-contemplated collection of Scenes and Hymns of Life was published soon after the two little volumes above alluded to. In her original dedication of this work to Mr Wordsworth, Mrs Hemans had given free scope to the expression of her sentiments, not only of veneration for the poet, but of deep and grateful regard for the friend. From a fear, however, that delicacy on Mr Wordsworth's part might prevent his wishing to receive, in a public form, a testimonial of so much private feeling from a living individual, the intended letter was suppressed, and its substantial ideas conveyed in the brief inscription which was finally prefixed to the volume. It is now hoped that all such objections to its publication have vanished, and that the revered friend to whom it was addressed will receive it as the heart-tribute of one to whom flattery was unknown—as consecrated by the solemn truth of a voice from the grave.

Intended Dedication of the "Scenes and Hymns of Life," to William Wordsworth, Esq.

"My dear Sir,

"I earnestly wish that the little volume here inscribed to you, in token of affectionate veneration, were pervaded by more numerous traces of those strengthening and elevating influences which breathe from all your poetry 'a power to virtue friendly.' I wish, too, that such a token could more adequately convey my deep sense of

gratitude for moral and intellectual benefit long derived from the study of that poetry—for the perpetual fountains of ‘serious faith and inward glee’ which I have never failed to discover amidst its pure and lofty regions—for the fresh green places of refuge which it has offered me in many an hour, when

‘The fretful stir

Unprofitable, and the fever of the world

Have hung upon the beatings of my heart;’

and when I have found in your thoughts and images such relief as the vision of your ‘Sylvan Wye’ may, at similar times, have afforded to yourself.

“May I be permitted, on the present occasion, to record my unfading recollections of enjoyment from your society—of delight in having heard from your own lips, and amidst your own lovely mountain-land, many of those compositions, the remembrance of which will ever spread over its hills and waters a softer colouring of spiritual beauty? Let me also express to you, as to a dear and most honoured friend, my fervent wishes for your long enjoyment of a widely-extended influence, which cannot but be blessed—of a domestic life, encircling you with yet nearer and deeper sources of happiness; and of those eternal hopes, on whose foundation you have built, as a Christian poet, the noble structure of your works.

“I rely upon your kindness, my dear Sir, for an indulgent reception of my offering, however lowly, since you will feel assured of the sincerity with which it is presented by your ever grateful and affectionate Felicia Hemans.”

THE ENGLISH MARTYRS;

A SCENE OF THE DAYS OF QUEEN MARY.

“Thy face

Is all at once spread over with a calm

More beautiful than sleep, or mirth, or joy!

I am no more disconsolate.” Wilson.

Scene I.—A Prison.

Edith alone.

Edith. Morn once again! Morn in the lone, dim cell,
The cavern of the prisoner’s fever-dream;
And morn on all the green, rejoicing hills,
And the bright waters round the prisoner’s home,
Far, far away! Now wakes the early bird,
That in the lime’s transparent foliage sings,
Close to my cottage-lattice—he awakes,
To stir the young leaves with his gushing soul,
And to call forth rich answers of delight
From voices buried in a thousand trees
Through the dim, starry hours. Now doth the lake
Darken and flash in rapid interchange
Unto the matin breeze; and the blue mist
Rolls, like a furling banner, from the brows
Of the forth-gleaming hills and woods that rise
As if new-born. Bright world! and I am here!
And thou, O thou! the awakening thought of whom
Was more than dayspring, dearer than the sun,
Herbert! the very glance of whose clear eye
Made my soul melt away to one pure fount
Of living, bounding gladness!—where art thou?

My friend! my only and my blessed love!

Herbert, my soul’s companion!

Gomez, a Spanish Priest, enters.

Gom. Daughter, hail!

I bring thee tidings.

Ed. Heaven will aid my soul

Calmly to meet whate’er thy lips announce.

Gom. Nay, lift a song of thanksgiving to heaven,

And bow thy knee down for deliverance won!

Hast thou not pray’d for life? and wouldst thou not

Once more be free!

Ed. Have I not pray’d for life?

I, that am so beloved! that love again

With such a heart of tendrils? Heaven! thou know’st

The gushings of my prayer! And would I not

Once more be free? I that have been a child

Of breezy hills, a playmate of the fawn

In ancient woodlands from mine infancy!

A watcher of the clouds and of the stars,

Beneath the adoring silence of the night;

And a glad wanderer with the happy streams,

Whose laughter fills the mountains! Oh! to hear

Their blessed sounds again!

Gom. Rejoice, rejoice!

Our queen hath pity, maiden! on thy youth;
She wills not thou shouldst perish. I am come
To loose thy bonds.
Ed. And shall I see his face,
And shall I listen to his voice again,
And lay my head upon his faithful breast,
Weeping there in my gladness? Will this be?
Blessings upon thee, father! my quick heart
Hath deem'd thee stern—say, wilt thou not forgive
The wayward child, too long in sunshine rear'd—
Too long unused to chastening? Wilt thou not?
But Herbert, Herbert! Oh, my soul hath rush'd
On a swift gust of sudden joy away,
Forgetting all beside! Speak, father! speak!
Herbert—is he, too, free?
Gom. His freedom lies
In his own choice—a boon like thine.
Ed. Thy words
Fall changed and cold upon my boding heart.
Leave not this dim suspense o'ershadowing me;
Let all be told.
Gom. The monarchs of the earth
Shower not their mighty gifts without a claim
Unto some token of true vassalage,

Some mark of homage.

Ed. Oh! unlike to Him

Who freely pours the joy of sunshine forth,

And the bright, quickening rain, on those who serve

And those who heed Him not!

Gom. (laying a paper before her.) Is it so much

That thine own hand should set the crowning seal

To thy deliverance? Look, thy task is here!

Sign but these words for liberty and life.

Ed. (examining and then throwing it from her.)

Sign but these words! and wherefore saidst thou not

—"Be but a traitor to God's light within?"

Cruel, oh cruel! thy dark sport hath been

With a young bosom's hope! Farewell, glad life!

Bright opening path to love and home, farewell!

And thou—now leave me with my God alone!

Gom. Dost thou reject heaven's mercy?

Ed. Heaven's! doth heaven

Woo the free spirit for dishonour'd breath

To sell its birthright?—doth heaven set a price

On the clear jewel of unsullied faith,

And the bright calm of conscience? Priest, away!

God hath been with me midst the holiness

Of England's mountains. Not in sport alone

I trod their heath-flowers; but high thoughts rose up
From the broad shadow of the enduring rocks,
And wander'd with me into solemn glens,
Where my soul felt the beauty of His word.
I have heard voices of immortal truth,
Blent with the everlasting torrent-sounds
That make the deep hills tremble.—Shall I quail?
Shall England's daughter sink? No! He who there
Spoke to my heart in silence and in storm,
Will not forsake His child!
Gom. (turning from her.) Then perish! lost
In thine own blindness!
Ed. (suddenly throwing herself at his feet.)
Father! hear me yet!
Oh! if the kindly touch of human love
Hath ever warm'd thy breast——
Gom. Away—away!
I know not love.
Ed. Yet hear! if thou hast known
The tender sweetness of a mother's voice—
If the true vigil of affection's eye
Hath watch'd thy childhood—if fond tears have e'er
Been shower'd upon thy head—if parting words
E'er pierced thy spirit with their tenderness—

Let me but look upon his face once more,

Let me but say—Farewell, my soul's beloved!

And I will bless thee still!

Gom. (aside.) Her soul may yield,

Beholding him in fetters; woman's faith

Will bend to woman's love.

Thy prayer is heard;

Follow, and I will guide thee to his cell.

Ed. O stormy hour of agony and joy!

But I shall see him—I shall hear his voice!

[They go out.

Scene II.—Another part of the Prison.

Herbert, Edith.

Ed. Herbert! my Herbert! is it thus we meet?

Her. The voice of my own Edith! Can such joy

Light up this place of death! And do I feel

Thy breath of love once more upon my cheek,

And the soft floating of thy gleamy hair,

My blessed Edith? Oh, so pale! so changed!

My flower, my blighted flower! thou that wert made

For the kind fostering of sweet, summer airs,

How hath the storm been with thee? Lay thy head

On this true breast again, my gentle one!

And tell me all.

Ed. Yes! take me to thy heart,

For I am weary, weary! Oh! that heart!

The kind, the brave, the tender!—how my soul

Hath sicken’d in vain yearnings for the balm

Of rest on that warm heart!—full, deep repose!

One draught of dewy stillness after storm!

And God hath pitied me, and I am here—

Yet once before I die.

Her. They cannot slay

One young, and meek, and beautiful as thou,

My broken lily! Surely the long days

Of the dark cell have been enough for thee!

Oh! thou shalt live, and raise thy gracious head

Yet in calm sunshine.

Ed. Herbert! I have cast

The snare of proferr’d mercy from my soul,

This very hour. God to the weak hath given

Victory o’er life and death. The tempter’s price

Hath been rejected—Herbert, I must die.

Her. O Edith! Edith! I, that led thee first

From the old path wherein thy fathers trod—

I, that received it as an angel’s task,

To pour the fresh light on thine ardent soul,

Which drank it as a sunflower—I have been

Thy guide to death.

Ed. To heaven! my guide to heaven,

My noble and my blessed! Oh! look up,

Be strong, rejoice, my Herbert! But for thee,

How could my spirit have sprung up to God

Through the dark cloud which o'er its vision hung,

The night of fear and error?—thy dear hand

First raised that veil, and show'd the glorious world

My heritage beyond. Friend! love, and friend!

It was as if thou gavest me mine own soul

In those bright days! Yes! a new earth and heaven,

And a new sense for all their splendours born—

These were thy gifts; and shall I not rejoice

To die, upholding their immortal worth,

Even for thy sake? Yes! fill'd with nobler life

By thy pure love, made holy to the truth,

Lay me upon the altar of thy God,

The first fruits of thy ministry below—

Thy work, thine own!

Her. My love, my sainted love!

Oh! I can almost yield thee unto heaven;

Earth would but sully thee! Thou must depart,

With the rich crown of thy celestial gifts

Untainted by a breath. And yet, alas!

Edith! what dreams of holy happiness,
Even for this world, were ours!—the low sweet home,
The pastoral dwelling, with its ivied porch,
And lattice gleaming through the leaves—and thou
My life's companion! Thou, beside my hearth,
Sitting with thy meek eyes, or greeting me
Back from brief absence with thy bounding step,
In the green meadow-path, or by my side
Kneeling—thy calm uplifted face to mine,
In the sweet hush of prayer! And now—oh, now!—
How have we loved—how fervently! how long!
And this to be the close!
Ed. Oh! bear me up
Against the unutterable tenderness
Of earthly love, my God!—in the sick hour
Of dying human hope, forsake me not!
Herbert, my Herbert! even from that sweet home
Where it had been too much of Paradise
To dwell with thee—even thence the oppressor's hand
Might soon have torn us; or the touch of death
Might one day there have left a widow'd heart,
Pining alone. We will go hence, beloved!
To the bright country where the wicked cease
From troubling, where the spoiler hath no sway;

Where no harsh voice of worldliness disturbs
The Sabbath-peace of love. We will go hence,
Together with our wedded souls, to heaven:
No solitary lingering, no cold void,
No dying of the heart! Our lives have been
Lovely through faithful love, and in our deaths
We will not be divided.
Her. Oh! the peace
Of God is lying far within thine eyes,
Far underneath the mist of human tears
Lighting those blue, still depths, and sinking thence
On my worn heart. Now am I girt with strength,
Now I can bless thee, my true bride for heaven!
Ed. And let me bless thee, Herbert!—in this hour
Let my soul bless thee with prevailing might!
Oh! thou hast loved me nobly! thou didst take
An orphan to thy heart—a thing unprized
And desolate; and thou didst guard her there,
That lone and lowly creature, as a pearl
Of richest price; and thou didst fill her soul
With the high gifts of an immortal wealth.
I bless, I bless thee! Never did thine eye
Look on me but in glistening tenderness,
My gentle Herbert! Never did thy voice

But in affection’s deepest music speak
To thy poor Edith! Never was thy heart
Aught but the kindliest sheltering home to mine,
My faithful, generous Herbert! Woman’s peace
Ne’er on a breast so tender and so true
Reposed before. Alas! thy showering tears
Fall fast upon my cheek—forgive, forgive!
I should not melt thy noble strength away
In such an hour.
Her. Sweet Edith, no! my heart
Will fail no more. God bears me up through thee,
And by thy words, and by thy heavenly light
Shining around thee, through thy very tears,
Will yet sustain me! Let us call on Him!
Let us kneel down, as we have knelt so oft,
Thy pure cheek touching mine, and call on Him,
Th’ all-pitying One, to aid.
[They kneel.
Oh, look on us,
Father above!—in tender mercy look
On us, thy children!—through th’ o’ershadowing cloud
Of sorrow and mortality, send aid—
Save, or we perish! We would pour our lives
Forth as a joyous offering to thy truth;

But we are weak—we, the bruised reeds of earth,
Are sway'd by every gust. Forgive, O God!
The blindness of our passionate desires,
The fainting of our hearts, the lingering thoughts
Which cleave to dust! Forgive the strife; accept
The sacrifice, though dim with mortal tears,
From mortal pangs wrung forth! And if our souls,
In all the fervent dreams, the fond excess,
Of their long-clasping love, have wander'd not,
Holiest! from thee—oh! take them to thyself,
After the fiery trial—take them home
To dwell, in that imperishable bond
Before thee link'd, for ever. Hear!—thro' Him
Who meekly drank the cup of agony,
Who pass'd through death to victory, hear and save!
Pity us, Father! we are girt with snares:
Father in Heaven! we have no help but thee.
[They rise.
Is thy soul strengthen'd, my beloved one?
O Edith! couldst thou lift up thy sweet voice,
And sing me that old solemn-breathing hymn
We loved in happier days—the strain which tells
Of the dread conflict in the olive shade?
Edith sings.

He knelt, the Saviour knelt and pray’d,
When but his Father’s eye
Look’d through the lonely garden’s shade
On that dread agony;
The Lord of all above, beneath,
Was bow’d with sorrow unto death.
The sun set in a fearful hour,
The stars might well grow dim,
When this mortality had power
So to o’ershadow Him!
That He who gave man’s breath, might know
The very depths of human woe.
He proved them all!—the doubt, the strife,
The faint perplexing dread,
The mists that hang o’er parting life,
All gather’d round his head;
And the Deliverer knelt to pray—
Yet pass’d it not, that cup, away!
It pass’d not—though the stormy wave
Had sunk beneath his tread;
It pass’d not—though to Him the grave
Had yielded up its dead.
But there was sent him from on High
A gift of strength for man to die.

And was the Sinless thus beset

With anguish and dismay?

How may we meet our conflict yet,

In the dark, narrow way?

Through Him—through Him that path who trod.

—Save, or we perish, Son of God!

Hark, hark! the parting signal.

[Prison attendants enter.

Fare thee well!

O thou unutterably loved, farewell!

Let our hearts bow to God!

Her. One last embrace—

On earth the last! We have eternity

For love's communion yet! Farewell!—farewell!

[She is led out.

'Tis o'er!—the bitterness of death is past!

FLOWERS AND MUSIC IN A ROOM OF SICKNESS.

"Once when I look'd along the laughing earth,

Up the blue heavens and through the middle air,

Joyfully ringing with the skylark's song,

I wept! and thought how sad for one so young

To bid farewell to so much happiness.

But Christ hath call'd me from this lower world,

Delightful though it be." Wilson.

Apartment in an English country-house.—Lilian reclining, as sleeping on a couch. Her mother watching beside her. Her sister enters with flowers.

Mother. Hush! lightly tread! Still tranquilly she sleeps,
As when a babe I rock'd her on my heart.
I've watch'd, suspending e'en my breath, in fear
To break the heavenly spell. Move silently!
And oh! those flowers! Dear Jessy! bear them hence—
Dost thou forget the passion of quick tears
That shook her trembling frame, when last we brought
The roses to her couch? Dost thou not know
What sudden longings for the woods and hills,
Where once her free steps moved so buoyantly,
These leaves and odours with strange influence wake
In her fast-kindled soul?
Jessy. Oh! she would pine,
Were the wild scents and glowing hues withheld,
Mother! far more than now her spirit yearns
For the blue sky, the singing birds and brooks,
And swell of breathing turf, whose lightsome spring
Their blooms recall.
Lilian, (raising herself.) Is that my Jessy's voice
It woke me not, sweet mother! I had lain
Silently, visited by waking dreams,
Yet conscious of thy brooding watchfulness,

Long ere I heard the sound. Hath she brought flowers?
Nay, fear not now thy fond child's waywardness,
My thoughtful mother!—in her chasten'd soul
The passion-colour'd images of life,
Which, with their sudden, startling flush, awoke
So oft those burning tears, have died away;
And night is there—still, solemn, holy night!
With all her stars, and with the gentle tune
Of many fountains, low and musical,
By day unheard.
Mother. And wherefore night, my child?
Thou art a creature all of life and dawn,
And from thy couch of sickness yet shalt rise,
And walk forth with the dayspring.
Lilian. Hope it not!
Dream it no more, my mother!—there are things
Known but to God, and to the parting soul,
Which feels His thrilling summons.
But my words
Too much o'ershadow those kind, loving eyes.
Bring me thy flowers, dear Jessy! Ah! thy step,
Well do I see, hath not alone explored
The garden bowers, but freely visited
Our wilder haunts. This foam-like meadow-sweet

Is from the cool, green, shadowy river-nook,
Where the stream chimes around th' old mossy stones
With sounds like childhood's laughter. Is that spot
Lovely as when our glad eyes hail'd it first?
Still doth the golden willow bend, and sweep
The clear brown wave with every passing wind?
And through the shallower waters, where they lie
Dimpling in light, do the vein'd pebbles gleam
Like bedded gems? And the white butterflies,
From shade to sun-streak are they glancing still
Among the poplar-boughs?
Jessy. All, all is there
Which glad midsummer's wealthiest hours can bring;
All, save the soul of all, thy lightning-smile!
Therefore I stood in sadness midst the leaves,
And caught an under-music of lament
In the stream's voice. But Nature waits thee still,
And for thy coming piles a fairy throne
Of richest moss.
Lilian. Alas! it may not be!
My soul hath sent her farewell voicelessly
To all these blessed haunts of song and thought;
Yet not the less I love to look on these,
Their dear memorials,—strew them o'er my couch

Till it grow like a forest-bank in spring,
All flush’d with violets and anemones.
Ah! the pale brier-rose! touch’d so tenderly,
As a pure ocean-shell, with faintest red,
Melting away to pearliness! I know
How its long, light festoons o’erarching hung
From the gray rock that rises altar-like,
With its high, waving crown of mountain-ash,
Midst the lone grassy dell. And this rich bough
Of honey’d woodbine tells me of the oak,
Whose deep, midsummer gloom sleeps heavily,
Shedding a verdurous twilight o’er the face
Of the glade’s pool. Methinks I see it now;
I look up through the stirring of its leaves
Unto the intense blue, crystal firmament.
The ringdove’s wing is flitting o’er my head,
Casting at times a silvery shadow down
Midst the large water-lilies. Beautiful!
How beautiful is all this fair, free world
Under God’s open sky!
Mother. Thou art o’erwrought
Once more, my child! The dewy, trembling light
Presaging tears, again is in thine eye.
Oh, hush, dear Lilian! turn thee to repose.

Lilian. Mother! I cannot. In my soul the thoughts
Burn with too subtle and too swift a fire;
Importunately to my lips they throng,
And with their earthly kindred seek to blend
Ere the veil drop between. When I am gone—
(For I must go)—then the remember'd words
Wherein these wild imaginings flow forth,
Will to thy fond heart be as amulets
Held there, with life and love. And weep not thus,
Mother! dear sister!—kindest, gentlest ones!
Be comforted that now I weep no more
For the glad earth and all the golden light
Whence I depart.
No! God hath purified my spirit's eye,
And in the folds of this consummate rose
I read bright prophecies. I see not there,
Dimly and mournfully, the word "farewell"
On the rich petals traced. No—in soft veins
And characters of beauty, I can read—
"Look up, look heavenward!"
Blessed God of Love!
I thank Thee for these gifts, the precious links
Whereby my spirit unto Thee is drawn!
I thank Thee that the loveliness of earth

Higher than earth can raise me! Are not these
But germs of things unperishing, that bloom
Beside th’ immortal streams? Shall I not find
The lily of the field, the Saviour’s flower,
In the serene and never-moaning air,
And the clear starry light of angel eyes,
A thousand-fold more glorious? Richer far
Will not the violet’s dusky purple glow,
When it hath ne’er been press’d to broken hearts,
A record of lost love?
Mother. My Lilian! thou
Surely in thy bright life hast little known
Of lost things or of changed!
Lilian. Oh! little yet,
For thou hast been my shield! But had it been
My lot on this world’s billows to be thrown
Without thy love, O mother! there are hearts
So perilously fashion’d, that for them
God’s touch alone hath gentleness enough
To waken, and not break, their thrilling strings!—
We will not speak of this!
By what strange spell
Is it, that ever, when I gaze on flowers,
I dream of music? Something in their hues,

All melting into colour’d harmonies,
Wafts a swift thought of interwoven chords,
Of blended singing-tones, that swell and die
In tenderest falls away. Oh, bring thy harp,
Sister! A gentle heaviness at last
Hath touch’d mine eyelids: sing to me, and sleep
Will come again.
Jessy. What wouldst thou hear?—the Italian peasant’s lay,
Which makes the desolate Campagna ring
With “Roma! Roma!” or the madrigal
Warbled on moonlight seas of Sicily?
Or the old ditty left by troubadours
To girls of Languedoc?
Lilian. Oh, no! not these.
Jessy. What then?—the Moorish melody still known
Within the Alhambra city? or those notes
Born of the Alps, which pierce the exile’s heart
Even unto death?
Lilian. No, sister! nor yet these—
Too much of dreamy love, of faint regret,
Of passionately fond remembrance, breathes
In the caressing sweetness of their tones,
For one who dies. They would but woo me back
To glowing life with those Arcadian sounds—

And vainly, vainly. No! a loftier strain,
A deeper music!—something that may bear
The spirit upon slow yet mighty wings,
Unsway'd by gusts of earth; something all fill'd
With solemn adoration, tearful prayer.
Sing me that antique strain which once I deem'd
Almost too sternly simple, too austere
In its grave majesty! I love it now—
Now it seems fraught with holiest power to hush
All billows of the soul, e'en like His voice
That said of old—"Be still!" Sing me that strain,
"The Saviour's dying hour."

Jessy sings to the Harp.

O Son of Man!
In thy last mortal hour
Shadows of earth closed round thee fearfully!
All that on us is laid,
All the deep gloom,
The desolation and the abandonment,
The dark amaze of death—
All upon thee too fell,
Redeemer! Son of Man!
But the keen pang
Wherewith the silver cord

Of earth’s affection from the soul is wrung;

The uptearing of those tendrils which have grown

Into the quick, strong heart;

This, this—the passion and the agony

Of battling love and death,

Surely was not for thee,

Holy One! Son of God!

Yes, my Redeemer!

E’en this cup was thine!

Fond, wailing voices call’d thy spirit back:

E’en midst the mighty thoughts

Of that last crowning hour—

E’en on thine awful way to victory,

Wildly they call’d thee back!

And weeping eyes of love

Unto thy heart’s deep core

Pierced through the folds of death’s mysterious veil.

Suffer! thou Son of Man!

Mother-tears were mingled

With thy costly blood-drops,

In the shadow of the atoning cross;

And the friend, the faithful,

He that on thy bosom

Thence imbibing heavenly love, had lain—

He, a pale sad watcher,
Met with looks of anguish
All the anguish in thy last meek glance—
Dying Son of Man!
Oh! therefore unto thee,
Thou that hast known all woes
Bound in the girdle of mortality!
Thou that wilt lift the reed
Which storms have bruised,
To thee may sorrow through each conflict cry,
And, in that tempest-hour, when love and life
Mysteriously must part,
When tearful eyes
Are passionately bent
To drink earth’s last fond meaning from our gaze,
Then, then forsake us not!
Shed on our spirits then
The faith and deep submissiveness of thine!
Thou that didst love
Thou that didst weep and die—
Thou that didst rise a victor glorified;
Conqueror! thou Son of God!

CATHEDRAL HYMN.

“They dreamt not of a perishable home

Who thus could build. Be mine in hours of fear
Or grovelling thought, to seek a refuge here.”
Wordsworth.
A dim and mighty minster of old time!
A temple shadowy with remembrances
Of the majestic past! The very light
Streams with a colouring of heroic days
In every ray, which leads through arch and aisle
A path of dreamy lustre, wandering back
To other years!—and the rich fretted roof,
And the wrought coronals of summer leaves,
Ivy and vine, and many a sculptured rose—
The tenderest image of mortality—
Binding the slender columns, whose light shafts
Cluster like stems in corn-sheaves;—all these things
Tell of a race that nobly, fearlessly,
On their heart’s worship pour’d a wealth of love!
Honour be with the dead! The people kneel
Under the helms of antique chivalry,
And in the crimson gloom from banners thrown,
And midst the forms, in pale, proud slumber carved,
Of warriors on their tombs. The people kneel
Where mail-clad chiefs have knelt; where jewell’d crowns
On the flush’d brows of conquerors have been set;

Where the high anthems of old victories
Have made the dust give echoes. Hence, vain thoughts!
Memories of power and pride, which long ago,
Like dim processions of a dream, have sunk
In twilight-depths away. Return, my soul!
The Cross recalls thee. Lo! the blessed Cross!
High o’er the banners and the crests of earth,
Fix’d in its meek and still supremacy!
And lo! the throng of beating human hearts,
With all their secret scrolls of buried grief,
All their full treasures of immortal hope,
Gather’d before their God! Hark! how the flood
Of the rich organ-harmony bears up
Their voice on its high waves!—a mighty burst!
A forest-sounding music! Every tone
Which the blasts call forth with their harping wings
From gulfs of tossing foliage, there is blent:
And the old minster—forest-like itself—
With its long avenues of pillar’d shade,
Seems quivering all with spirit, as that strain
O’erflows its dim recesses, leaving not
One tomb unthrill’d by the strong sympathy
Answering the electric notes. Join, join, my soul!
In thine own lowly, trembling consciousness,

And thine own solitude, the glorious hymn.

Rise like an altar-fire!

In solemn joy aspire,

Deepening thy passion still, O choral strain!

On thy strong rushing wind

Bear up from humankind

Thanks and implorings—be they not in vain!

Father, which art on high!

Weak is the melody

Of harp or song to reach thine awful ear,

Unless the heart be there,

Winging the words of prayer

With its own fervent faith or suppliant fear.

Let, then, thy Spirit brood

Over the multitude—

Be thou amidst them, thro' that heavenly Guest!

So shall their cry have power

To win from thee a shower

Of healing gifts for every wounded breast.

What griefs that make no sign,

That ask no aid but thine,

Father of mercies! here before thee swell!

As to the open sky,

All their dark waters lie

To thee reveal’d, in each close bosom-cell.
The sorrow for the dead,
Mantling its lonely head
From the world’s glare, is, in thy sight, set free;
And the fond, aching love,
Thy minister to move
All the wrung spirit, softening it for thee.
And doth not thy dread eye
Behold the agony
In that most hidden chamber of the heart,
Where darkly sits remorse,
Beside the secret source
Of fearful visions, keeping watch apart?
Yes! here before thy throne
Many—yet each alone—
To thee that terrible unveiling make:
And still, small whispers clear
Are startling many an ear,
As if a trumpet bade the dead awake.
How dreadful is this place!
The glory of thy face
Fills it too searchingly for mortal sight.
Where shall the guilty flee?
Over what far-off sea?

What hills, what woods, may shroud him from that light?
Not to the cedar-shade
Let his vain flight be made;
Nor the old mountains, nor the desert sea;
What, but the Cross, can yield
The hope—the stay—the shield?
Thence may the Atoner lead him up to thee!
Be thou, be thou his aid!
Oh, let thy love pervade
The haunted caves of self-accusing thought!
There let the living stone
Be cleft—the seed be sown—
The song of fountains from the silence brought!
So shall thy breath once more
Within the soul restore
Thine own first image—Holiest and Most High!
As a clear lake is fill’d
With hues of heaven, instill’d
Down to the depths of its calm purity.
And if, amidst the throng
Link’d by the ascending song,
There are whose thoughts in trembling rapture soar;
Thanks, Father! that the power
Of joy, man’s early dower,

Thus, e’en midst tears, can fervently adore!

Thanks for each gift divine!

Eternal praise be thine,

Blessing and love, O Thou that hearest prayer!

Let the hymn pierce the sky,

And let the tombs reply!

For seed, that waits the harvest-time, is there.

WOOD WALK AND HYMN.[421]

“Move along these shades

In gentleness of heart: with gentle hand

Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.”—Wordsworth.

Father—Child.

Child. There are the aspens, with their silvery leaves

Trembling, for ever trembling; though the lime

And chestnut boughs, and those long arching sprays

Of eglantine, hang still, as if the wood

Were all one picture!

Father. Hast thou heard, my boy,

The peasant’s legend of that quivering tree?

Child. No, father: doth he say the fairies dance

Amidst the branches?

Father. Oh! a cause more deep,

More solemn far, the rustic doth assign

To the strange restlessness of those wan leaves!

The cross he deems, the blessed cross, whereon
The meek Redeemer bow’d his head to death,
Was framed of aspen wood; and since that hour,
Through all its race the pale tree hath sent down
A thrilling consciousness, a secret awe,
Making them tremulous, when not a breeze
Disturbs the airy thistle-down, or shakes
The light lines of the shining gossamer.
Child., (after a pause.) Dost thou believe it, father?
Father. Nay, my child,
We walk in clearer light. But yet, even now,
With something of a lingering love, I read
The characters, by that mysterious hour,
Stamp’d on the reverential soul of man
In visionary days; and thence thrown back
On the fair forms of nature. Many a sign
Of the great sacrifice which won us heaven,
The woodman and the mountaineer can trace
On rock, on herb, and flower. And be it so!
They do not wisely that, with hurried hand,
Would pluck these salutary fancies forth
From their strong soil within the peasant’s breast,
And scatter them—far, far too fast!—away
As worthless weeds. Oh! little do we know

When they have soothed, when saved!

But come, dear boy!

My words grow tinged with thought too deep for thee.

Come—let us search for violets.

Child. Know you not

More of the legends which the woodmen tell

Amidst the trees and flowers?

Father. Wilt thou know more?

Bring then the folding leaf, with dark-brown stains

There—by the mossy roots of yon old beech,

Midst the rich tuft of cowslips—see'st thou not?

There is a spray of woodbine from the tree

Just bending o'er it with a wild bee's weight.

Child. The Arum leaf?

Father. Yes. These deep inwrought marks,

The villager will tell thee, (and with voice

Lower'd in his true heart's reverent earnestness,)

Are the flower's portion from th' atoning blood

On Calvary shed. Beneath the cross it grew;

And, in the vase-like hollow of its leaf,

Catching from that dread shower of agony

A few mysterious drops, transmitted thus

Unto the groves and hills, their sealing stains,

A heritage, for storm or vernal wind

Never to waft away!

And hast thou seen

The passion-flower? It grows not in the woods,

But midst the bright things brought from other climes.

Child. What! the pale star-shaped flower, with purple streaks,

And light green tendrils?

Father. Thou hast mark’d it well.

Yes! a pale, starry, dreamy-looking flower,

As from a land of spirits! To mine eye

Those faint, wan petals—colourless, and yet

Not white, but shadowy—with the mystic lines

(As letters of some wizard language gone)

Into their vapour-like transparence wrought,

Bear something of a strange solemnity,

Awfully lovely!—and the Christian’s thought

Loves, in their cloudy penciling, to find

Dread symbols of his Lord’s last mortal pangs

Set by God’s hand—the coronal of thorns—

The cross, the wounds—with other meanings deep

Which I will teach thee when we meet again

That flower, the chosen for the martyr’s wreath,

The Saviour’s holy flower.

But let us pause:

Now have we reach’d the very inmost heart

Of the old wood. How the green shadows close
Into a rich, clear, summer darkness round,
A luxury of gloom! Scarce doth one ray,
Even when a soft wind parts the foliage, steal
O’er the bronzed pillars of these deep arcades;
Or if it doth, ’tis with a mellow’d hue
Of glow-worm colour’d light.
Here, in the days
Of pagan visions, would have been a place
For worship of the wood-nymphs! Through these oaks
A small, fair gleaming temple might have thrown
The quivering image of its Dorian shafts
On the stream’s bosom, or a sculptured form,
Dryad, or fountain-goddess of the gloom,
Have bow’d its head o’er that dark crystal down,
Drooping with beauty, as a lily droops
Under bright rain. But we, my child, are here
With God, our God, a Spirit, who requires
Heart-worship, given in spirit and in truth;
And this high knowledge—deep, rich, vast enough
To fill and hallow all the solitude—
Makes consecrated earth where’er we move,
Without the aid of shrines.
What! dost thou feel

The solemn whispering influence of the scene
Oppressing thy young heart, that thou dost draw
More closely to my side, and clasp my hand
Faster in thine? Nay, fear not, gentle child!
'Tis love, not fear, whose vernal breath pervades
The stillness round. Come, sit beside me here,
Where brooding violets mantle this green slope
With dark exuberance; and beneath these plumes
Of wavy fern, look where the cup-moss holds
In its pure, crimson goblets, fresh and bright,
The starry dews of morning. Rest awhile,
And let me hear once more the woodland verse
I taught thee late—'twas made for such a scene.

Child speaks.

[421] "It is not often we find the superstitions of dark and ignorant ages dealt with in so gentle and agreeable a manner as by Mrs Hemans. She seizes, in common with others, the poetic aspect these present, but diffuses over them, at the same time, a refinement of sentiment gathered entirely from her own feelings. A subject which, from another pencil, would have been disagreeable and offensive to us, is made by her graceful touches to win upon our imagination. Witness the poem called 'The Wood Walk and Hymn;' we will quote the commencement of it—

'There are the aspens with their silvery leaves,'" etc.

Blackwood's Magazine, Dec. 1848.

WOOD HYMN.

Broods there some spirit here?

The summer leaves hang silent as a cloud;
And o’er the pools, all still and darkly clear,
The wild wood-hyacinth with awe seems bow’d;
And something of a tender cloistral gloom
Deepens the violet’s bloom.
The very light that streams
Through the dim, dewy veil of foliage round
Comes tremulous with emerald-tinted gleams—
As if it knew the place were holy ground;
And would not startle, with too bright a burst,
Flowers, all divinely nursed.
Wakes there some spirit here?
A swift wind, fraught with change, comes rushing by;
And leaves and waters, in its wild career,
Shed forth sweet voices—each a mystery!
Surely some awful influence must pervade
These depths of trembling shade!
Yes! lightly, softly move!
There is a power, a presence in the woods;
A viewless being that, with life and love,
Informs the reverential solitudes:
The rich air knows it, and the mossy sod—
Thou—thou art here, my God!
And if with awe we tread

The minster-floor, beneath the storied pane,
And, midst the mouldering banners of the dead,
Shall the green, voiceful wild seem less thy fane,
Where thou alone hast built?—where arch and roof
Are of thy living woof?
The silence and the sound,
In the lone places, breathe alike of thee;
The temple-twilight of the gloom profound,
The dew-cup of the frail anemone,
The reed by every wandering whisper thrill'd—
All, all with thee are fill'd!
Oh! purify mine eyes,
More and yet more, by love and lowly thought,
Thy presence, holiest One! to recognise
In these majestic aisles which thou hast wrought
And, midst their sea-like murmurs, teach mine ear
Ever thy voice to hear!
And sanctify my heart
To meet the awful sweetness of that tone
With no faint thrill or self-accusing start,
But a deep joy the heavenly guest to own—
Joy, such as dwelt in Eden's glorious bowers
Ere sin had dimm'd the flowers.
Let me not know the change

O’er nature thrown by guilt!—the boding sky,
The hollow leaf-sounds ominous and strange,
The weight wherewith the dark tree-shadows lie!
Father! oh! keep my footsteps pure and free,
To walk the woods with thee!

PRAYER OF THE LONELY STUDENT.

“Soul of our souls! and safeguard of the world!
Sustain—Thou only canst—the sick at heart;
Restore their languid spirits, and recall
Their lost affections unto thee and thine.”—Wordsworth.
Night—holy night—the time
For mind’s free breathings in a purer clime!
Night!—when in happier hour the unveiling sky
Woke all my kindled soul
To meet its revelations, clear and high,
With the strong joy of immortality!
Now hath strange sadness wrapp’d me, strange and deep—
And my thoughts faint, and shadows o’er them roll,
E’en when I deem’d them seraph-plumed, to sweep
Far beyond earth’s control.
Wherefore is this? I see the stars returning,
Fire after fire in heaven’s rich temple burning:
Fast shine they forth—my spirit-friends, my guides,
Bright rulers of my being’s inmost tides;

They shine—but faintly, through a quivering haze:
Oh! is the dimness mine which clouds those rays?
They from whose glance my childhood drank delight!
A joy unquestioning—a love intense—
They that, unfolding to more thoughtful sight
The harmony of their magnificence,
Drew silently the worship of my youth
To the grave sweetness on the brow of truth;
Shall they shower blessing, with their beams divine,
Down to the watcher on the stormy sea,
And to the pilgrim toiling for his shrine
Through some wild pass of rocky Apennine,
And to the wanderer lone
On wastes of Afric thrown,
And not to me?
Am I a thing forsaken?
And is the gladness taken
From the bright-pinion’d nature which hath soar’d
Through realms by royal eagle ne’er explored,
And, bathing there in streams of fiery light,
Found strength to gaze upon the Infinite?
And now an alien! Wherefore must this be?
How shall I rend the chain?
How drink rich life again

From those pure urns of radiance, welling free?
—Father of Spirits! let me turn to thee!
Oh! if too much exulting in her dower,
My soul, not yet to lowly thought subdued,
Hath stood without thee on her hill of power—
A fearful and a dazzling solitude!
And therefore from that haughty summit's crown
To dim desertion is by thee cast down;
Behold! thy child submissively hath bow'd—
Shine on him through the cloud!
Let the now darken'd earth and curtain'd heaven
Back to his vision with thy face be given!
Bear him on high once more,
But in thy strength to soar,
And wrapt and still'd by that o'ershadowing might,
Forth on the empyreal blaze to look with chasten'd sight.
Or if it be that, like the ark's lone dove,
My thoughts go forth, and find no resting-place,
No sheltering home of sympathy and love
In the responsive bosoms of my race,
And back return, a darkness and a weight,
Till my unanswer'd heart grows desolate—
Yet, yet sustain me, Holiest!—I am vow'd
To solemn service high;

And shall the spirit, for thy tasks endow’d,
Sink on the threshold of the sanctuary,
Fainting beneath the burden of the day,
Because no human tone
Unto the altar-stone
Of that pure spousal fane inviolate,
Where it should make eternal truth its mate,
May cheer the sacred, solitary way?
Oh! be the whisper of thy voice within
Enough to strengthen! Be the hope to win
A more deep-seeing homage for thy name,
Far, far beyond the burning dream of fame!
Make me thine only!—Let me add but one
To those refulgent steps all undefiled,
Which glorious minds have piled
Through bright self-offering, earnest, childlike, lone,
For mounting to thy throne!
And let my soul, upborne
On wings of inner morn,
Find, in illumined secrecy, the sense
Of that bless’d work, its own high recompense.
The dimness melts away
That on your glory lay,
O ye majestic watchers of the skies!

Through the dissolving veil,

Which made each aspect pale,

Your gladdening fires once more I recognise;

And once again a shower

Of hope, and joy, and power,

Streams on my soul from your immortal eyes.

And if that splendour to my sober'd sight

Come tremulous, with more of pensive light—

Something, though beautiful, yet deeply fraught

With more that pierces through each fold of thought

Than I was wont to trace

On heaven's unshadow'd face—

Be it e'en so!—be mine, though set apart

Unto a radiant ministry, yet still

A lowly, fearful, self-distrusting heart,

Bow'd before thee, O Mightiest! whose bless'd will

All the pure stars rejoicingly fulfil.[422]

[422] Written after hearing the introductory Lecture on Astronomy delivered in Trinity College, Dublin, by Sir William Hamilton, royal astronomer of Ireland, on the 8th November 1832.

THE TRAVELLER'S EVENING SONG.

Father! guide me! Day declines,

Hollow winds are in the pines;

Darkly waves each giant bough

O’er the sky’s last crimson glow:
Hush’d is now the convent’s bell,
Which erewhile with breezy swell
From the purple mountains bore
Greeting to the sunset-shore.
Now the sailor’s vesper-hymn
Dies away.
Father! in the forest dim,
Be my stay!
In the low and shivering thrill
Of the leaves that late hung still;
In the dull and muffled tone
Of the sea-wave’s distant moan;
In the deep tints of the sky,
There are signs of tempests nigh.
Ominous, with sullen sound,
Falls the closing dusk around.
Father! through the storm and shade
O’er the wild,
Oh! be Thou the lone one’s aid—
Save thy child!
Many a swift and sounding plume
Homewards, through the boding gloom,
O’er my way hath flitted fast

Since the farewell sunbeam pass’d
From the chestnut’s ruddy bark,
And the pools, now lone and dark,
Where the wakening night-winds sigh
Through the long reeds mournfully.
Homeward, homeward, all things haste—
God of might!
Shield the homeless midst the waste!
Be his light!
In his distant cradle-nest,
Now my babe is laid to rest;
Beautiful its slumber seems
With a glow of heavenly dreams—
Beautiful, o’er that bright sleep.
Hang soft eyes of fondness deep,
Where his mother bends to pray
For the loved and far away.
Father! guard that household bower,
Hear that prayer!
Back, through thine all-guiding power,
Lead me there!
Darker, wilder grows the night;
Not a star sends quivering light
Through the massy arch of shade

By the stern, old forest made.

Thou! to whose unslumbering eyes

All my pathway open lies,

By thy Son who knew distress

In the lonely wilderness,

Where no roof to that bless'd head

Shelter gave—

Father! through the time of dread,

Save—oh, save!

BURIAL OF AN EMIGRANT'S CHILD IN THE FORESTS.

Scene.—The banks of a solitary river in an American forest. A tent under pine-trees in the foreground. Agnes sitting before the tent, with a child in her arms apparently sleeping.

Agnes. Surely 'tis all a dream—a fever-dream!

The desolation and the agony—

The strange, red sunrise, and the gloomy woods,

So terrible with their dark giant boughs,

And the broad, lonely river!—all a dream!

And my boy's voice will wake me, with its clear,

Wild singing tones, as they were wont to come

Through the wreath'd sweetbrier at my lattice-panes

In happy, happy England! Speak to me!

Speak to thy mother, bright one! she hath watch'd

All the dread night beside thee, till her brain

Is darken’d by swift waves of fantasies,
And her soul faint with longing for thy voice.
Oh! I must wake him with one gentle kiss
On his fair brow!
(Shudderingly.) The strange, damp, thrilling touch!
The marble chill! Now, now it rushes back—
Now I know all!—dead—dead!—a fearful word!
My boy hath left me in the wilderness,
To journey on without the blessed light
In his deep, loving eyes. He’s gone!—he’s gone!
Her Husband enters.
Husband. Agnes! my Agnes! hast thou look’d thy last
On our sweet slumberer’s face? The hour is come—
The couch made ready for his last repose.
Agnes. Not yet! thou canst not take him from me yet!
If he but left me for a few short days,
This were too brief a gazing time to draw
His angel image into my fond heart,
And fix its beauty there. And now—oh! now,
Never again the laughter of his eye
Shall send its gladdening summer through my soul
—Never on earth again. Yet, yet delay!
Thou canst not take him from me.
Husband. My beloved!

Is it not God hath taken him? the God
That took our first-born, o’er whose early grave
Thou didst bow down thy saint-like head, and say,
“His will be done!”
Agnes. Oh! that near household grave,
Under the turf of England, seem’d not half—
Not half so much to part me from my child
As these dark woods. It lay beside our home,
And I could watch the sunshine, through all hours,
Loving and clinging to the grassy spot;
And I could dress its greensward with fresh flowers,
Familiar meadow-flowers. O’er thee, my babe!
The primrose will not blossom! Oh! that now,
Together, by thy fair young sister’s side,
We lay midst England’s valleys!
Husband. Dost thou grieve,
Agnes! that thou hast follow’d o’er the deep
An exile’s fortunes? If it thus can be,
Then, after many a conflict cheerily met,
My spirit sinks at last.
Agnes. Forgive! forgive!
My Edmund, pardon me! Oh! grief is wild—
Forget its words, quick spray-drops from a fount
Of unknown bitterness! Thou art my home!

Mine only and my blessed one! Where’er
Thy warm heart beats in its true nobleness,
There is my country! there my head shall rest,
And throb no more. Oh! still, by thy strong love,
Bear up the feeble reed!
(Kneeling with the child in her arms.)
And thou, my God!
Hear my soul’s cry from this dread wilderness!
Oh! hear, and pardon me! If I have made
This treasure, sent from thee, too much the ark
Fraught with mine earthward-clinging happiness,
Forgetting Him who gave, and might resume,
Oh, pardon me!
If nature hath rebell’d,
And from thy light turn’d wilfully away,
Making a midnight of her agony,
When the despairing passion of her clasp
Was from its idol stricken at one touch
Of thine Almighty hand—oh, pardon me!
By thy Son’s anguish, pardon! In the soul
The tempests and the waves will know thy voice—
Father! say, “Peace, be still!”
(Giving the child to her husband.)
Farewell, my babe!

Go from my bosom now to other rest!

With this last kiss on thine unsullied brow,

And on thy pale, calm cheek these contrite tears,

I yield thee to thy Maker!

Husband. Now, my wife!

Thine own meek holiness beams forth once more

A light upon my path. Now shall I bear,

From thy dear arms, the slumberer to repose—

With a calm, trustful heart.

Agnes. My Edmund! where—

Where wilt thou lay him?

Husband. See’st thou where the spire

Of yon dark cypress reddens in the sun

To burning gold?—there—o’er yon willow-tuft?

Under that native desert monument

Lies his lone bed. Our Hubert, since the dawn,

With the gray mosses of the wilderness

Hath lined it closely through; and there breathed forth,

E’en from the fulness of his own pure heart,

A wild, sad forest hymn—a song of tears,

Which thou wilt learn to love. I heard the boy

Chanting it o’er his solitary task,

As wails a wood-bird to the thrilling leaves,

Perchance unconsciously.

Agnes. My gentle son!
The affectionate, the gifted! With what joy—
Edmund, rememberest thou?—with what bright joy
His baby brother ever to his arms
Would spring from rosy sleep, and playfully
Hide the rich clusters of his gleaming hair
In that kind, useful breast! Oh! now no more!
But strengthen me, my God! and melt my heart,
Even to a well-spring of adoring tears,
For many a blessing left.
(Bending over the child.) Once more, farewell!
Oh, the pale, piercing sweetness of that look!
How can it be sustain’d? Away, away!
(After a short pause.)
Edmund! my woman’s nature still is weak—
I cannot see thee render dust to dust!
Go thou, my husband! to thy solemn task;
I will rest here, and still my soul with prayer
Till thy return.
Husband. Then strength be with thy prayer!
Peace on thy bosom! Faith and heavenly hope
Unto thy spirit! Fare thee well a while!
We must be pilgrims of the woods again,
After this mournful hour.

(He goes out with the child.—Agnes, kneels in prayer.—After a time, voices without are heard singing.)

FUNERAL HYMN.

Where the long reeds quiver,
Where the pines make moan,
By the forest-river,
Sleeps our babe alone.

England’s field-flowers may not deck his grave,
Cypress shadows o’er him darkly wave.
Woods unknown receive him,
Midst the mighty wild;
Yet with God we leave him,
Blessed, blessed child!

And our tears gush o’er his lovely dust,
Mournfully, yet still from hearts of trust.
Though his eye hath brighten’d
Oft our weary way,
And his clear laugh lighten’d
Half our hearts’ dismay;
Still in hope we give back what was given,
Yielding up the beautiful to heaven.

And to her who bore him,
Her who long must weep,
Yet shall heaven restore him

From his pale, sweet sleep!

Those blue eyes of love and peace again

Through her soul will shine, undimm’d by pain.

Where the long reeds quiver,

Where the pines make moan,

Leave we by the river

Earth to earth alone!

God and Father! may our journeyings on

Lead to where the blessed boy is gone!

From the exile’s sorrow,

From the wanderer’s dread

Of the night and morrow,

Early, brightly fled;

Thou hast call’d him to a sweeter home

Than our lost one o’er the ocean’s foam.

Now let thought behold him,

With his angel look,

Where those arms enfold him,

Which benignly took

Israel’s babes to their Good Shepherd’s breast

When his voice their tender meekness blest.

Turn thee now, fond mother!

From thy dead, oh, turn!

Linger not, young brother,

Here to dream and mourn:

Only kneel once more around the sod,

Kneel, and bow submitted hearts to God!

EASTER-DAY IN A MOUNTAIN CHURCHYARD.

There is a wakening on the mighty hills,

A kindling with the spirit of the morn!

Bright gleams are scatter’d from the thousand rills,

And a soft visionary hue is born

On the young foliage, worn

By all the embosom’d woods—a silvery green,

Made up of spring and dew, harmoniously serene.

And lo! where, floating through a glory, sings

The lark, alone amidst a crystal sky!

Lo! where the darkness of his buoyant wings,

Against a soft and rosy cloud on high,

Trembles with melody!

While the far-echoing solitudes rejoice

To the rich laugh of music in that voice.

But purer light than of the early sun

Is on you cast, O mountains of the earth!

And for your dwellers nobler joy is won

Than the sweet echoes of the skylark’s mirth,

By this glad morning’s birth!

And gifts more precious by its breath are shed

Than music on the breeze, dew on the violet’s head.
Gifts for the soul, from whose illumined eye
O’er nature’s face the colouring glory flows;
Gifts from the fount of immortality,
Which, fill’d with balm, unknown to human woes,
Lay hush’d in dark repose,
Till thou, bright dayspring! madest its waves our own,
By thine unsealing of the burial stone.
Sing, then, with all your choral strains, ye hills!
And let a full victorious tone be given,
By rock and cavern, to the wind which fills
Your urn-like depths with sound! The tomb is riven,
The radiant gate of heaven
Unfolded—and the stern, dark shadow cast
By death’s o’ersweeping wing, from the earth’s bosom past.
And you, ye graves! upon whose turf I stand,
Girt with the slumber of the hamlet’s dead,
Time, with a soft and reconciling hand,
The covering mantle of bright moss hath spread
O’er every narrow bed:
But not by time, and not by nature sown
Was the celestial seed, whence round you peace hath grown.
Christ hath arisen! Oh, not one cherish’d head
Hath, midst the flowery sods, been pillow’d here

Without a hope, (howe’er the heart hath bled
In its vain yearnings o’er the unconscious bier,)
A hope, upspringing clear
From those majestic tidings of the morn,
Which lit the living way to all of woman born.
Thou hast wept mournfully, O human love!
E’en on this greensward: night hath heard thy cry,
Heart-stricken one! thy precious dust above—
Night, and the hills, which sent forth no reply
Unto thine agony!
But He who wept like thee, thy Lord, thy guide,
Christ hath arisen, O love! thy tears shall all be dried.
Dark must have been the gushing of those tears,
Heavy the unsleeping phantom of the tomb
On thine impassion’d soul, in elder years,
When, burden’d with the mystery of its doom,
Mortality’s thick gloom
Hung o’er the sunny world, and with the breath
Of the triumphant rose came blending thoughts of death.
By thee, sad Love! and by thy sister, Fear,
Then was the ideal robe of beauty wrought
To vail that haunting shadow, still too near,
Still ruling secretly the conqueror’s thought,
And where the board was fraught

With wine and myrtles in the summer bower,
Felt, e’en when disavow’d, a presence and a power.
But that dark night is closed: and o’er the dead,
Here, where the gleamy primrose-tufts have blown,
And where the mountain-heath a couch has spread,
And, settling oft on some gray, letter’d stone,
The redbreast warbles lone;
And the wild-bee’s deep drowsy murmurs pass,
Like a low thrill of harp-strings, through the grass:
Here, midst the chambers of the Christian’s sleep,
We o’er death’s gulf may look with trusting eye;
For Hope sits, dove-like, on the gloomy deep,
And the green hills wherein these valleys lie
Seem all one sanctuary
Of holiest thought—nor needs their fresh, bright sod,
Urn, wreath, or shrine, for tombs all dedicate to God.
Christ hath arisen! O mountain-peaks! attest—
Witness, resounding glen and torrent-wave!
The immortal courage in the human breast
Sprung from that victory—tell how oft the brave
To camp midst rock and cave,
Nerved by those words, their struggling faith have borne,
Planting the cross on high above the clouds of morn!
The Alps have heard sweet hymnings for to-day—

Ay, and wild sounds of sterner, deeper tone
Have thrill'd their pines, when those that knelt to pray
Rose up to arm! The pure, high snows have known
A colouring not their own,
But from true hearts, which, by that crimson stain,
Gave token of a trust that call'd no suffering vain.
Those days are past—the mountains wear no more
The solemn splendour of the martyr's blood;
And may that awful record, as of yore,
Never again be known to field or flood!
E'en though the faithful stood,
A noble army, in the exulting sight
Of earth and heaven, which bless'd their battle for the right!
But many a martyrdom by hearts unshaken
Is yet home silently in homes obscure;
And many a bitter cup is meekly taken;
And, for the strength whereby the just and pure
Thus steadfastly endure,
Glory to Him whose victory won that dower!
Him from whose rising stream'd that robe of spirit-power.
Glory to Him! Hope to the suffering breast!
Light to the nations! He hath roll'd away
The mists which, gathering into deathlike rest,
Between the soul and heaven's calm ether lay—

His love hath made it day

With those that sat in darkness. Earth and sea!

Lift up glad strains for man by truth divine made free!

THE CHILD READING THE BIBLE.

“A dancing shape, an image gay,

To haunt, to startle, to waylay.

...

A being breathing thoughtful breath,

A traveller between life and death.” Wordsworth.

I saw him at his sport erewhile,

The bright, exulting boy!

Like summer’s lightning came the smile

Of his young spirit’s joy—

A flash that, wheresoe’er it broke,

To life undreamt-of beauty woke.

His fair locks waved in sunny play,

By a clear fountain’s side,

Where jewel-colour’d pebbles lay

Beneath the shallow tide;

And pearly spray at times would meet

The glancing of his fairy feet.

He twined him wreaths of all spring-flowers,

Which drank that streamlet’s dew;

He flung them o’er the wave in showers,

Till, gazing, scarce I knew
Which seem'd more pure, or bright, or wild,
The singing fount or laughing child.
To look on all that joy and bloom
Made earth one festal scene,
Where the dull shadow of the tomb
Seem'd as it ne'er had been.
How could one image of decay
Steal o'er the dawn of such clear day?
I saw once more that aspect bright—
The boy's meek head was bow'd
In silence o'er the Book of Light,
And, like a golden cloud—
The still cloud of a pictured sky—
His locks droop'd round it lovingly.
And if my heart had deem'd him fair,
When, in the fountain-glade,
A creature of the sky and air,
Almost on wings he play'd;
Oh! how much holier beauty now
Lit the young human being's brow!
The being born to toil, to die,
To break forth from the tomb
Unto far nobler destiny

Than waits the skylark’s plume!
I saw him, in that thoughtful hour,
Win the first knowledge of his dower.
The soul, the awakening soul I saw—
My watching eye could trace
The shadows of its new-born awe
Sweeping o’er that fair face:
As o’er a flower might pass the shade
By some dread angel’s pinion made!
The soul, the mother of deep fears,
Of high hopes infinite,
Of glorious dreams, mysterious tears,
Of sleepless inner sight;
Lovely, but solemn, it arose,
Unfolding what no more might close.
The red-leaved tablets,[423] undefiled,
As yet, by evil thought—
Oh! little dream’d the brooding child
Of what within me wrought,
While his young heart first burn’d and stirr’d,
And quiver’d to the eternal word.
And reverently my spirit caught
The reverence of his gaze—
A sight with dew of blessing fraught

To hallow after-days;

To make the proud heart meekly wise,

By the sweet faith in those calm eyes.

It seem’d as if a temple rose

Before me brightly there;

And in the depths of its repose

My soul o’erflow’d with prayer,

Feeling a solemn presence nigh—

The power of infant sanctity!

O Father! mould my heart once more

By thy prevailing breath!

Teach me, oh! teach me to adore

E’en with that pure one’s faith—

A faith, all made of love and light,

Child-like, and therefore full of might!

[423] “All this, and more than this, is now engraved upon the red-leaved tablets of my heart.”—Haywood.

A POET’S DYING HYMN.

“Be mute who will, who can,

Yet I will praise thee with impassion’d voice!

Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine

In such a temple as we now behold,

Rear’d for thy presence; therefore am I bound

To worship, here and every where.”—Wordsworth.

The blue, deep, glorious heavens!—I lift mine eye,
And bless thee, O my God! that I have met
And own'd thine image in the majesty
Of their calm temple still!—that, never yet,
There hath thy face been shrouded from my sight
By noontide blaze, or sweeping storm of night:
I bless thee, O my God!
That now still clearer, from their pure expanse,
I see the mercy of thine aspect shine,
Touching death's features with a lovely glance
Of light, serenely, solemnly divine,
And lending to each holy star a ray
As of kind eyes, that woo my soul away:
I bless thee, O my God!
That I have heard thy voice nor been afraid,
In the earth's garden—midst the mountains old,
And the low thrillings of the forest-shade,
And the wild sound of waters uncontroll'd—
And upon many a desert plain and shore—
No solitude—for there I felt thee more:
I bless thee, O my God!
And if thy spirit on thy child hath shed
The gift, the vision of the unseal'd eye,
To pierce the mist o'er life's deep meanings spread,

To reach the hidden fountain-urns that lie
Far in man’s heart—if I have kept it free
And pure, a consecration unto thee:
I bless thee, O my God!
If my soul’s utterance hath by thee been fraught
With an awakening power—if thou hast made
Like the wing’d seed, the breathings of my thought,
And by the swift winds bid them be convey’d
To lands of other lays, and there become
Native as early melodies of home:
I bless thee, O my God!
Not for the brightness of a mortal wreath,
Not for a place midst kingly minstrels dead,
But that, perchance, a faint gale of thy breath,
A still small whisper, in my song hath led
One struggling spirit upwards to thy throne,
Or but one hope, one prayer,—for this alone
I bless thee, O my God!
That I have loved—that I have known the love
Which troubles in the soul the tearful springs,
Yet, with a colouring halo from above,
Tinges and glorifies all earthly things,
Whate’er its anguish or its woe may be,
Still weaving links for intercourse with thee:

I bless thee, O my God!
That by the passion of its deep distress,
And by the o’erflowing of its mighty prayer,
And by the yearning of its tenderness,
Too full for words upon their stream to bear,
I have been drawn still closer to thy shrine,
Well-spring of love, the unfathom’d, the divine,
I bless thee, O my God!
That hope hath ne’er my heart or song forsaken,
High hope, which even from mystery, doubt, or dread,
Calmly, rejoicingly, the things hath taken
Whereby its torchlight for the race was fed:
That passing storms have only fann’d the fire
Which pierced them still with its triumphal spire,
I bless thee, O my God!
Now art thou calling me in every gale,
Each sound and token of the dying day;
Thou leav’st me not—though early life grows pale,
I am not darkly sinking to decay;
But, hour by hour, my soul’s dissolving shroud
Melts off to radiance, as a silvery cloud.
I bless thee, O my God!
And if this earth, with all its choral streams,
And crowning woods, and soft or solemn skies,

And mountain sanctuaries for poet’s dreams,
Be lovely still in my departing eyes—
’Tis not that fondly I would linger here,
But that thy foot-prints on its dust appear:
I bless thee, O my God!
And that the tender shadowing I behold,
The tracery veining every leaf and flower,
Of glories cast in more consummate mould,
No longer vassals to the changeful hour;
That life’s last roses to my thoughts can bring
Rich visions of imperishable spring:
I bless thee, O my God!
Yes! the young, vernal voices in the skies
Woo me not back, but, wandering past mine ear,
Seem heralds of th’ eternal melodies,
The spirit-music, imperturb’d and clear—
The full of soul, yet passionate no more:
Let me, too, joining those pure strains, adore!
I bless thee, O my God!
Now aid, sustain me still. To thee I come—
Make thou my dwelling where thy children are,
And for the hope of that immortal home,
And for thy Son, the bright and morning star,
The sufferer and the victor-king of death,

I bless thee with my glad song's dying breath!

I bless thee, O my God!

["I have lately written what I consider one of my best pieces—'A Poet's Dying Hymn.' It appeared in the last number of Blackwood," (April 1832.)—Letter from Mrs Hemans.

"It is impossible to read this affecting poem without feeling how distinctly it breathes the inward echoes of the soul to the frequent warnings of the Summoner; those presentiments which must have long silently possessed her, here for the first time finding utterance. Still more strongly does it evidence that subdued and serene frame of mind, into which her once vivacious temperament and painfully vibrating sensibilities were now so gently and happily subsiding."—Memoir, p. 254.]

THE FUNERAL DAY OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

"Many an eye

May wail the dimming of our shining star."—Shakspeare.

A glorious voice hath ceased!

Mournfully, reverently—the funeral chant

Breathe reverently! There is a dreamy sound,

A hollow murmur of the dying year,

In the deep woods. Let it be wild and sad!

A more Æolian, melancholy tone

Than ever wail'd o'er bright things perishing!

For that is passing from the darken'd land,

Which the green summer will not bring us back—

Though all her songs return. The funeral chant

Breathe reverently! They bear the mighty forth,

The kingly ruler in the realms of mind;
They bear him through the household paths, the groves,
Where every tree had music of its own
To his quick ear of knowledge taught by love—
And he is silent! Past the living stream
They bear him now; the stream whose kindly voice,
On alien shores, his true heart burn'd to hear—
And he is silent! O'er the heathery hills,
Which his own soul had mantled with a light
Richer than autumn's purple, now they move—
And he is silent!—he, whose flexile lips
Were but unseal'd, and lo! a thousand forms,
From every pastoral glen and fern-clad height,
In glowing life upsprang,—vassal and chief,
Rider and steed, with shout and bugle-peal,
Fast-rushing through the brightly troubled air,
Like the Wild Huntsman's band. And still they live,
To those fair scenes imperishably bound,
And, from the mountain-mist still flashing by,
Startle the wanderer who hath listen'd there
To the seer's voice: phantoms of colour'd thought,
Surviving him who raised. O eloquence!
O power, whose breathings thus could wake the dead!
Who shall wake thee? lord of the buried past!

And art thou there—to those dim nations join’d,
Thy subject-host so long? The wand is dropp’d,
The bright lamp broken, which the gifted hand
Touch’d, and the genii came! Sing reverently
The funeral chant! The mighty is borne home,
And who shall be his mourners? Youth and age,
For each hath felt his magic—love and grief,
For he hath communed with the heart of each:
Yes—the free spirit of humanity
May join the august procession, for to him
Its mysteries have been tributary things,
And all its accents known. From field or wave,
Never was conqueror on his battle-bier,
By the veil’d banner and the muffled drum,
And the proud drooping of the crested head,
More nobly follow’d home. The last abode,
The voiceless dwelling of the bard is reach’d:
A still, majestic spot, girt solemnly
With all th’ imploring beauty of decay;
A stately couch midst ruins! meet for him
With his bright fame to rest in, as a king
Of other days, laid lonely with his sword
Beneath his head. Sing reverently the chant
Over the honour’d grave! The grave!—oh, say

Rather the shrine!—an altar for the love,
The light, soft pilgrim steps, the votive wreaths
Of years unborn—a place where leaf and flower,
By that which dies not of the sovereign dead,
Shall be made holy things, where every weed
Shall have its portion of th' inspiring gift
From buried glory breathed. And now what strain
Making victorious melody ascend
High above sorrow's dirge, befits the tomb
Where he that sway'd the nations thus is laid—
The crown'd of men?
A lowly, lowly song.
Lowly and solemn be
Thy children's cry to thee,
Father divine!
A hymn of suppliant breath,
Owning that life and death
Alike are thine!
A spirit on its way,
Sceptred the earth to sway,
From thee was sent:
Now call'st thou back thine own—
Hence is that radiance flown—
To earth but lent.

Watching in breathless awe,
The bright head bow’d we saw,
Beneath thy hand!
Fill’d by one hope, one fear,
Now o’er a brother’s bier
Weeping we stand.
How hath he pass’d!—the lord
Of each deep bosom-chord,
To meet thy sight,
Unmantled and alone,
On thy bless’d mercy thrown,
O Infinite!
So, from his harvest-home,
Must the tired peasant come;
So, in one trust,
Leader and king must yield
The naked soul reveal’d
To thee, All Just!
The sword of many a fight—
What then shall be its might?
The lofty lay
That rush’d on eagle wing—
What shall its memory bring?
What hope, what stay?

O Father! in that hour,
When earth all succouring power
Shall disavow;
When spear, and shield, and crown
In faintness are cast down—
Sustain us, Thou!
By Him who bow’d to take
The death-cup for our sake,
The thorn, the rod;
From whom the last dismay
Was not to pass away—
Aid us, O God!
Tremblers beside the grave,
We call on thee to save,
Father divine!
Hear, hear our suppliant breath!
Keep us, in life and death,
Thine, only thine!

THE PRAYER IN THE WILDERNESS.

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF CORREGGIO’S.

In the deep wilderness unseen she pray’d,
The daughter of Jerusalem; alone
With all the still, small whispers of the night,
And with the searching glances of the stars,

And with her God, alone: she lifted up
Her sweet, sad voice, and, trembling o’er her head,
The dark leaves thrill’d with prayer—the tearful prayer
Of woman’s quenchless, yet repentant love.
Father of Spirits, hear!
Look on the inmost heart to thee reveal’d,
Look on the fountain of the burning tear,
Before thy sight in solitude unseal’d!
Hear, Father! hear, and aid!
If I have loved too well, if I have shed,
In my vain fondness, o’er a mortal head,
Gifts on thy shrine, my God! more fitly laid;
If I have sought to live
But in one light, and made a human eye
The lonely star of mine idolatry,
Thou that art Love! oh, pity and forgive!
Chasten’d and school’d at last,
No more, no more my struggling spirit burns,
But, fix’d on thee, from that wild worship turns—
What have I said?—the deep dream is not past!
Yet hear!—if still I love,
Oh! still too fondly—if, for ever seen,
An earthly image comes my heart between
And thy calm glory, Father! throned above;

If still a voice is near,
(E’en while I strive these wanderings to control,)
An earthly voice disquieting my soul
With its deep music, too intensely dear;
O Father! draw to thee
My lost affections back!—the dreaming eyes
Clear from their mist—sustain the heart that dies,
Give the worn soul once more its pinions free!
I must love on, O God!
This bosom must love on!—but let thy breath
Touch and make pure the flame that knows not death,
Bearing it up to heaven—love’s own abode!
Ages and ages past, the wilderness,
With its dark cedars, and the thrilling night,
With her clear stars, and the mysterious winds,
That waft all sound, were conscious of those prayers.
How many such hath woman’s bursting heart
Since then, in silence and in darkness breathed,
Like the dim night-flower’s odour, up to God!

PRISONERS’ EVENING SERVICE.

A SCENE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.[424]

“From their spheres
The stars of human glory are cast down.
Perish the roses and the flowers of kings,

Princes and emperors, and the crown and palms

Of all the mighty, wither'd and consumed!

Nor is power given to lowliest innocence

Long to protect her own." Wordsworth.

Scene—Prison of the Luxembourg in Paris, during the Reign of Terror.

D'Aubigné, an aged Royalist—Blanche, his daughter, a young girl.

Blanche. What was your doom, my father? In thine arms

I lay unconsciously through that dread hour.

Tell me the sentence! Could our judges look,

Without relenting, on thy silvery hair?

Was there not mercy, father? Will they not

Restore us to our home?

D'Aubigné. Yes, my poor child!

They send us home.

Blanche. Oh! shall we gaze again

On the bright Loire? Will the old hamlet spire,

And the gray turret of our own chateau,

Look forth to greet us through the dusky elms?

Will the kind voices of our villagers,

The loving laughter in their children's eyes,

Welcome us back at last? But how is this?

Father! thy glance is clouded—on thy brow

There sits no joy!

D'Aubigné. Upon my brow, dear girl!

There sits, I trust, such deep and solemn peace
As may befit the Christian who receives,
And recognises in submissive awe,
The summons of his God.
Blanche. Thou dost not mean——
No, no! it cannot be! Didst thou not say
They sent us home?
D'Aubigné. Where is the spirit's home?
Oh! most of all, in these dark, evil days,
Where should it be—but in that world serene,
Beyond the sword's reach and the tempest's power,
—Where, but in heaven?
Blanche. My father!
D'Aubigné. We must die.
We must look up to God, and calmly die.
Come to my heart, and weep there! For awhile
Give nature's passion way; then brightly rise
In the still courage of a woman's heart.
Do I not know thee? Do I ask too much
From mine own noble Blanche?
Blanche, (falling on his bosom.) Oh! clasp me fast!
Thy trembling child! Hide, hide me in thine arms—
Father!
D'Aubigné. Alas! my flower, thou'rt young to go—

Young, and so fair! Yet were it worse, methinks,
To leave thee where the gentle and the brave,
The loyal-hearted and the chivalrous,
And they that loved their God, have all been swept,
Like the sere leaves, away. For them no hearth
Through the wide land was left inviolate,
No altar holy; therefore did they fall,
Rejoicing to depart. The soil is steep'd
In noble blood; the temples are gone down;
The voice of prayer is hush'd, or fearfully
Mutter'd, like sounds of guilt. Why, who would live
Who hath not panted, as a dove, to flee,
To quit for ever the dishonour'd soil,
The burden'd air! Our God upon the cross—
Our king upon the scaffold[425]—let us think
Of these—and fold endurance to our hearts,
And bravely die!
Blanche. A dark and fearful way!
An evil doom for thy dear, honour'd head!
O thou, the kind, the gracious! whom all eyes
Bless'd as they look'd upon! Speak yet again—
Say, will they part us?
D'Aubigné. No, my Blanche; in death,
We shall not be divided.

Blanche. Thanks to God!
He, by thy glance, will aid me—I shall see
His light before me to the last. And when—
Oh, pardon these weak shrinkings of thy child!—
When shall the hour befall?
D'Aubigné. Oh! swiftly now,
And suddenly, with brief, dread interval,
Comes down the mortal stroke. But of that hour
As yet I know not. Each low throbbing pulse
Of the quick pendulum may usher in
Eternity!
Blanche, (kneeling before him.) My father! lay thy hand
On thy poor Blanche's head, and once again
Bless her with thy deep voice of tenderness—
Thus breathing saintly courage through her soul,
Ere we are call'd.
D'Aubigné. If I may speak through tears!—
Well may I bless thee, fondly, fervently,
Child of my heart!—thou who dost look on me
With thy lost mother's angel eyes of love!
Thou, that hast been a brightness in my path,
A guest of heaven unto my lonely soul,
A stainless lily in my widow'd house,
There springing up, with soft light round thee shed,

For immortality! Meek child of God!
I bless thee—He will bless thee! In his love
He calls thee now from this rude stormy world
To thy Redeemer's breast! And thou wilt die,
As thou hast lived—my duteous, holy Blanche!
In trusting and serene submissiveness,
Humble, yet full of heaven.
Blanche, (rising.) Now is there strength
Infused through all my spirit. I can rise
And say, "Thy will be done!"
D'Aubigné, (pointing upwards.) See'st thou, my child!
Yon faint light in the west? The signal star
Of our due vesper-service, gleaming in
Through the close dungeon-grating! Mournfully
It seems to quiver; yet shall this night pass,
This night alone, without the lifted voice
Of adoration in our narrow cell,
As if unworthy fear or wavering faith
Silenced the strain? No! let it waft to heaven
The prayer, the hope, of poor mortality,
In its dark hour once more! And we will sleep,
Yes—calmly sleep, when our last rite is closed.
[They sing together.

[424] The last days of two prisoners in the Luxembourg, Sillery and La Source, so

affectingly described by Helen Maria Williams, in her Letters from France, gave rise to this little scene. These two victims had composed a simple hymn, which they sang together in a low and restrained voice every night.

[425] A French royalist officer, dying upon a field of battle, and hearing some one near him uttering the most plaintive lamentations, turned towards the sufferer, and thus addressed him:—"My friend, whoever you may be, remember that your God expired upon the cross—your king upon the scaffold—and he who now speaks to you has had his limbs shot from under him. Meet your fate as becomes a man."

PRISONER'S EVENING SONG.

We see no more in thy pure skies,
How soft, O God! the sunset dies;
How every colour'd hill and wood
Seems melting in the golden flood:
Yet, by the precious memories won
From bright hours now for ever gone,
Father! o'er all thy works, we know,
Thou still art shedding beauty's glow;
Still touching every cloud and tree
With glory, eloquent of thee;
Still feeding all thy flowers with light,
Though man hath barr'd it from our sight.
We know thou reign'st, the Unchanging One, the All-just!
And bless thee still with free and boundless trust!
We read no more, O God! thy ways

On earth, in these wild, evil days.
The red sword in the oppressor’s hand
Is ruler of the weeping land;
Fallen are the faithful and the pure,
No shrine is spared, no hearth secure.
Yet, by the deep voice from the past,
Which tells us these things cannot last—
And by the hope which finds no ark
Save in thy breast, when storms grow dark—
We trust thee! As the sailor knows
That in its place of bright repose
His pole-star burns, though mist and cloud
May veil it with a midnight shroud,
We know thou reign’st, All-holy One, All-just!
And bless thee still with love’s own boundless trust.
We feel no more that aid is nigh,
When our faint hearts within us die.
We suffer—and we know our doom
Must be one suffering till the tomb.
Yet, by the anguish of thy Son
When his last hour came darkly on;
By his dread cry, the air which rent
In terror of abandonment;
And by his parting word, which rose

Through faith victorious o’er all woes—
We know that thou may’st wound, may’st break
The spirit, but wilt ne’er forsake!
Sad suppliants whom our brethren spurn,
In our deep need to thee we turn!
To whom but thee? All-merciful, All-just!
In life, in death, we yield thee boundless trust!

HYMN OF THE VAUDOIS MOUNTAINEERS IN TIMES OF PERSECUTION.

“Thanks be to God for the mountains!”
Howitt’s “Book of the Seasons.”
For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
Our God, our fathers’ God!
Thou hast made thy children mighty,
By the touch of the mountain-sod.
Thou hast fix’d our ark of refuge
Where the spoiler’s foot ne’er trod;
For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
Our God, our fathers’ God!
We are watchers of a beacon
Whose light must never die;
We are guardians of an altar
Midst the silence of the sky:
The rocks yield founts of courage,

Struck forth as by thy rod;

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,

Our God, our fathers' God!

For the dark, resounding caverns,

Where thy still, small voice is heard;

For the strong pines of the forests,

That by thy breath are stirr'd;

For the storms, on whose free pinions

Thy spirit walks abroad;

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,

Our God, our fathers' God!

The royal eagle darteth

On his quarry from the heights,

And the stag that knows no master,

Seeks there his wild delights;

But we, for thy communion,

Have sought the mountain-sod;

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,

Our God, our fathers' God!

The banner of the chieftain

Far, far below us waves;

The war-horse of the spearman

Cannot reach our lofty caves:

Thy dark clouds wrap the threshold

Of freedom’s last abode;

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,

Our God, our fathers’ God!

For the shadow of thy presence,

Round our camp of rock outspread;

For the stern defiles of battle,

Bearing record of our dead;

For the snows and for the torrents,

For the free heart’s burial-sod;

For the strength of the hills we bless thee,

Our God, our fathers’ God!

PRAYER AT SEA AFTER VICTORY.

“The land shall never rue,

So England to herself do prove but true.”—Shakspeare.

Through evening’s bright repose

A voice of prayer arose,

When the sea-fight was done:

The sons of England knelt,

With hearts that now could melt,

For on the wave her battle had been won.

Round their tall ship, the main

Heaved with a dark red stain,

Caught not from sunset’s cloud;

While with the tide swept past

Pennon and shiver’d mast,

Which to the Ocean-Queen that day had bow’d.

But free and fair on high,

A native of the sky,

Her streamer met the breeze;

It flow’d o’er fearless men,

Though, hush’d and child-like then,

Before their God they gather’d on the seas.

Oh! did not thoughts of home

O’er each bold spirit come,

As from the land sweet gales?

In every word of prayer

Had not some hearth a share,

Some bower, inviolate midst England’s vales?

Yes! bright, green spots that lay

In beauty far away,

Hearing no billow’s roar,

Safer from touch of spoil,

For that day’s fiery toil,

Rose on high hearts, that now with love gush’d o’er.

A solemn scene and dread!

The victors and the dead,

The breathless burning sky!

And, passing with the race

Of waves that keep no trace,

The wild, brief signs of human victory!

A stern, yet holy scene!

Billows, where strife hath been,

Sinking to awful sleep;

And words, that breathe the sense

Of God’s omnipotence,

Making a minster of that silent deep.

Borne through such hours afar,

Thy flag hath been a star,

Where eagle’s wings ne’er flew:

England! the unprofaned,

Thou of the earth unstain’d,

Oh! to the banner and the shrine be true!

THE INDIAN’S REVENGE.

SCENE IN THE LIFE OF A MORAVIAN MISSIONARY.

[Circumstances similar to those on which this scene is founded are recorded in Carne’s Narrative of the Moravian Missions in Greenland, and gave rise to the dramatic sketch.]

“But by my wrongs and by my wrath,

To-morrow Areouski’s breath

That fires yon heaven with storms of death,

Shall light me to the foe!”

Indian Song in “Gertrude of Wyoming.”

Scene.—The shore of a Lake surrounded by deep woods. A solitary cabin on its banks, overshadowed by maple and sycamore trees. Herrmann, the missionary, seated alone before the cabin. The hour is evening twilight.

Herrmann. Was that the light from some lone, swift canoe

Shooting across the waters?—No, a flash

From the night's first, quick fire-fly, lost again

In the deep bay of cedars. Not a bark

Is on the wave; no rustle of a breeze

Comes through the forest. In this new, strange world,

Oh! how mysterious, how eternal, seems

The mighty melancholy of the woods!

The desert's own great spirit, infinite!

Little they know, in mine own fatherland,

Along the castled Rhine, or e'en amidst

The wild Harz mountains, or the sylvan glades

Deep in the Odenwald—they little know

Of what is solitude! In hours like this,

There, from a thousand nooks, the cottage-hearths

Pour forth red light through vine-hung lattices,

To guide the peasant, singing cheerily,

On the home-path; while round his lowly porch,

With eager eyes awaiting his return,

The cluster'd faces of his children shine

To the clear harvest moon. Be still, fond thoughts!

Melting my spirit’s grasp from heavenly hope
By your vain, earthward yearnings. O my God!
Draw me still nearer, closer unto thee,
Till all the hollow of these deep desires
May with thyself be fill’d! Be it enough
At once to gladden and to solemnise
My lonely life, if for thine altar here
In this dread temple of the wilderness,
By prayer, and toil, and watching, I may win
The offering of one heart, one human heart,
Bleeding, repenting, loving!
Hark! a step,
An Indian tread! I know the stealthy sound—
’Tis on some quest of evil, through the grass
Gliding so serpent-like.
(He comes forward, and meets an Indian warrior armed.)
Enonio, is it thou? I see thy form
Tower stately through the dusk, yet scarce mine eye
Discerns thy face.
Enonio. My father speaks my name.
Herrmann. Are not the hunters from the chase return’d?
The night-fires lit? Why is my son abroad?
Enonio. The warrior’s arrow knows of nobler prey
Than elk or deer. Now let my father leave

The lone path free.

Herrmann. The forest way is long

From the red chieftain’s home. Rest thee awhile

Beneath my sycamore, and we will speak

Of these things further.

Enonio. Tell me not of rest!

My heart is sleepless, and the dark night swift.

I must begone.

Herrmann, (solemnly.) No, warrior! thou must stay!

The Mighty One hath given me power to search

Thy soul with piercing words—and thou must stay,

And hear me, and give answer! If thy heart

Be grown thus restless, is it not because

Within its dark folds thou hast mantled up

Some burning thought of ill?

Enonio, (with sudden impetuosity.) How should I rest?—

Last night the spirit of my brother came,

An angry shadow in the moonlight streak,

And said, “Avenge me!” In the clouds this morn

I saw the frowning colour of his blood—

And that, too, had a voice. I lay at noon

Alone beside the sounding waterfall,

And through its thunder-music spake a tone—

A low tone piercing all the roll of waves—

And said “Avenge me!” Therefore have I raised
The tomahawk, and strung the bow again,
That I may send the shadow from my couch,
And take the strange sound from the cataract,
And sleep once more.
Herrmann. A better path, my son!
Unto the still and dewy land of sleep,
My hand in peace can guide thee—e’en the way
Thy dying brother trod. Say, didst thou love
That lost one well?
Enonio. Know’st thou not we grew up
Even as twin roes amidst the wilderness?
Unto the chase we journey’d in one path;
We stemm’d the lake in one canoe; we lay
Beneath one oak to rest. When fever hung
Upon my burning lips, my brother’s hand
Was still beneath my head; my brother’s robe
Cover’d my bosom from the chill night-air—
Our lives were girdled by one belt of love
Until he turn’d him from his father’s gods.
And then my soul fell from him—then the grass
Grew in the way between our parted homes;
And wheresoe’er I wander’d, then it seem’d
That all the woods were silent. I went forth—

I journey'd, with my lonely heart, afar,
And so return'd—and where was he? The earth
Own'd him no more.
Herrmann. But thou thyself, since then,
Hast turn'd thee from the idols of thy tribe,
And, like thy brother, bow'd the suppliant knee
To the one God.
Enonio. Yes! I have learn'd to pray
With my white father's words, yet all the more
My heart, that shut against my brother's love,
Hath been within me as an arrowy fire,
Burning my sleep away. In the night-hush,
Midst the strange whispers and dim shadowy things
Of the great forests, I have call'd aloud,
"Brother! forgive, forgive!" He answer'd not—
His deep voice, rising from the land of souls,
Cries but "Avenge me!"—and I go forth now
To slay his murderer, that when next his eyes
Gleam on me mournfully from that pale shore,
I may look up, and meet their glance, and say,
"I have avenged thee!"
Herrmann. Oh! that human love
Should be the root of this dread bitterness,
Till heaven through all the fever'd being pours

Transmuting balsam! Stay, Enonio! stay!
Thy brother calls thee not! The spirit-world
Where the departed go, sends back to earth
No visitants for evil. ’Tis the might
Of the strong passion, the remorseful grief
At work in thine own breast, which lends the voice
Unto the forest and the cataract,
The angry colour to the clouds of morn,
The shadow to the moonlight. Stay, my son!
Thy brother is at peace. Beside his couch,
When of the murderer’s poison’d shaft he died,
I knelt and pray’d; he named his Saviour’s name,
Meekly, beseechingly; he spoke of thee
In pity and in love.
Enonio, (hurriedly.) Did he not say
My arrow should avenge him?
Herrmann. His last words
Were all forgiveness.
Enonio. What! and shall the man
Who pierced him with the shaft of treachery,
Walk fearless forth in joy?
Herrmann. Was he not once
Thy brother’s friend? Oh! trust me, not in joy
He walks the frowning forest. Did keen love,

Too late repentant of its heart estranged,
Wake in thy haunted bosom, with its train
Of sounds and shadows—and shall he escape?
Enonio, dream it not! Our God, the All-just,
Unto himself reserves this royalty—
The secret chastening of the guilty heart,
The fiery touch, the scourge that purifies,
Leave it with him! Yet make it not thy hope:
For that strong heart of thine—oh! listen yet—
Must, in its depths, o'ercome the very wish
For death or torture to the guilty one,
Ere it can sleep again.
Enonio. My father speaks
Of change, for man too mighty.
Herrmann. I but speak
Of that which hath been, and again must be,
If thou wouldst join thy brother, in the life
Of the bright country where, I well believe,
His soul rejoices. He had known such change:
He died in peace. He, whom his tribe once named
The Avenging Eagle, took to his meek heart,
In its last pangs, the spirit of those words
Which, from the Saviour's cross, went up to heaven—
"Forgive them, for they know not what they do!

Father, forgive!”—And o’er the eternal bounds
Of that celestial kingdom, undefiled,
Where evil may not enter, he, I deem,
Hath to his Master pass’d. He waits thee there—
For love, we trust, springs heavenward from the grave,
Immortal in its holiness. He calls
His brother to the land of golden light
And ever-living fountains—couldst thou hear
His voice o’er those bright waters, it would say,
“My brother! oh! be pure, be merciful!
That we may meet again.”
Enonio, (hesitating.) Can I return
Unto my tribe, and unavenged?
Herrmann. To Him,
To Him return, from whom thine erring steps
Have wander’d far and long! Return, my son,
To thy Redeemer! Died he not in love—
The sinless, the divine, the Son of God—
Breathing forgiveness midst all agonies?
And we, dare we be ruthless? By his aid
Shalt thou be guided to thy brother’s place
Midst the pure spirits. Oh! retrace the way
Back to thy Saviour! he rejects no heart
E’en with the dark stains on it, if true tears

Be o’er them shower’d. Ay! weep, thou Indian chief!
For, by the kindling moonlight, I behold
Thy proud lips working—weep, relieve thy soul!
Tears will not shame thy manhood, in the hour
Of its great conflict.
Enonio, (giving up his weapons to Herrmann.)
Father! take the bow,
Keep the sharp arrows till the hunters call
Forth to the chase once more. And let me dwell
A little while, my father! by thy side,
That I may hear the blessed words again—
Like water-brooks amidst the summer hills—
From thy true lips flow forth; for in my heart
The music and the memory of their sound
Too long have died away.
Herrmann. Oh, welcome back,
Friend, rescued one! Yes, thou shalt be my guest,
And we will pray beneath my sycamore
Together, morn and eve; and I will spread
Thy couch beside my fire, and sleep at last—
After the visiting of holy thoughts—
With dewy wings shall sink upon thine eyes!
Enter my home, and welcome, welcome back
To peace, to God, thou lost and found again!

(They go into the cabin together.—Herrmann, lingering for a moment on the threshold, looks up to the starry skies.)

Father! that from amidst yon glorious worlds
Now look’st on us, thy children! make this hour
Blessed for ever! May it see the birth
Of thine own image in the unfathom’d deep
Of an immortal soul,—a thing to name
With reverential thought, a solemn world!
To thee more precious than those thousand stars
Burning on high in thy majestic heaven!

EVENING SONG OF THE WEARY.

Father of heaven and earth!
I bless thee for the night,
The soft, still night!
The holy pause of care and mirth,
Of sound and light!
Now, far in glade and dell,
Flower-cup, and bud, and bell,
Have shut around the sleeping woodlark’s nest;
The bee’s long murmuring toils are done,
And I, the o’erwearied one,
O’erwearied and o’erwrought,
Bless thee, O God! O Father of the oppress’d!
With my last waking thought,

In the still night!

Yes! e’er I sink to rest,

By the fire’s dying light,

Thou Lord of earth and heaven!

I bless thee, who hast given,

Unto life’s fainting travellers, the night—

The soft, still, holy night.

THE DAY OF FLOWERS.

A MOTHER’S WALK WITH HER CHILD.

“One spirit—His

Who wore the platted thorn with bleeding brows.

Rules universal nature. Not a flower

But shows some touch, in freckle, freak, or stain,

Of his unrivall’d pencil. He inspires

Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues.

And bathes their eyes with nectar.

Happy who walks with him!” Cowper.

Come to the woods, my boy!

Come to the streams and bowery dingles forth,

My happy child! The spirit of bright hours

Woos us in every wind; fresh wild-leaf scents,

From thickets, where the lonely stock-dove broods,

Enter our lattice; fitful songs of joy

Float in with each soft current of the air;—

And we will hear their summons; we will give
One day to flowers, and sunshine, and glad thoughts,
And thou shalt revel midst free nature’s wealth,
And for thy mother twine wild wreaths; while she,
From thy delight, wins to her own fond heart
The vernal ecstasy of childhood back.
Come to the woods, my boy!
What! wouldst thou lead already to the path
Along the copsewood brook? Come, then! in truth
Meet playmate for a child, a blessed child,
Is a glad, singing stream, heard or unheard,
Singing its melody of happiness
Amidst the reeds, and bounding in free grace
To that sweet chime. With what a sparkling life
It fills the shadowy dingle!—now the wing
Of some low-skimming swallow shakes bright spray
Forth to the sunshine from its dimpled wave;
Now, from some pool of crystal darkness deep,
The trout springs upward, with a showery gleam
And plashing sound of waters. What swift rings
Of mazy insects o’er the shallow tide
Seem, as they glance, to scatter sparks of light
From burnish’d films! And mark yon silvery line
Of gossamer, so tremulously hung

Across the narrow current, from the tuft
Of hazels to the hoary poplar's bough!
See, in the air's transparence, how it waves,
Quivering and glistening with each faintest gale,
Yet breaking not—a bridge for fairy shapes,
How delicate, how wondrous!
Yes, my boy!
Well may we make the stream's bright, winding vein
Our woodland guide, for He who made the stream
Made it a clue to haunts of loveliness,
For ever deepening. Oh, forget him not,
Dear child! That airy gladness which thou feel'st
Wafting thee after bird and butterfly,
As 'twere a breeze within thee, is not less
His gift, his blessing on thy spring-time hours,
Than this rich, outward sunshine, mantling all
The leaves, and grass, and mossy-tinted stones
With summer glory. Stay thy bounding step,
My merry wanderer!—let us rest a while
By this clear pool, where, in the shadow flung
From alder boughs and osiers o'er its breast,
The soft red of the flowering willow-herb
So vividly is pictured. Seems it not
E'en melting to a more transparent glow

In that pure glass? Oh! beautiful are streams!
And, through all ages, human hearts have loved
Their music, still accordant with each mood
Of sadness or of joy. And love hath grown
Into vain worship, which hath left its trace
On sculptured urn and altar, gleaming still
Beneath dim olive-boughs, by many a fount
Of Italy and Greece. But we will take
Our lesson e'en from erring hearts, which bless'd
The river-deities or fountain-nymphs,
For the cool breeze, and for the freshening shade,
And the sweet water's tune. The One supreme,
The all-sustaining, ever-present God,
Who dower'd the soul with immortality,
Gave also these delights, to cheer on earth
Its fleeting passage; therefore let us greet
Each wandering flower-scent as a boon from Him,
Each bird-note, quivering midst light summer leaves,
And every rich celestial tint unnamed,
Wherewith transpierced, the clouds of morn and eve,
Kindle and melt away!
And now, in love,
In grateful thoughts rejoicing, let us bend
Our footsteps onward to the dell of flowers

Around the ruin’d mansion. Thou, my boy!
Not yet, I deem, hast visited that lorn
But lovely spot, whose loveliness for thee
Will wear no shadow of subduing thought—
No colouring from the past. This way our path
Winds through the hazels. Mark how brightly shoots
The dragon-fly along the sunbeam’s line,
Crossing the leafy gloom. How full of life,
The life of song, and breezes, and free wings,
Is all the murmuring shade! and thine, oh thine!
Of all the brightest and the happiest here,
My blessed child! my gift of God! that makest
My heart o’erflow with summer!
Hast thou twined
Thy wreath so soon! yet will we loiter not,
Though here the blue-bell wave, and gorgeously
Round the brown, twisted roots of yon scathed oak
The heath-flower spread its purple. We must leave
The copse, and through yon broken avenue,
Shadow’d by drooping walnut-foliage, reach
The ruin’s glade.
And lo! before us, fair
Yet desolate, amidst the golden day,
It stands, that house of silence! wedded now

To verdant Nature by the o’ermantling growth
Of leaf and tendril, which fond woman’s hands
Once loved to train. How the rich wallflower-scent
From every niche and mossy cornice floats,
Embalming its decay! The bee alone
Is murmuring from its casement, whence no more
Shall the sweet eyes of laughing children shine,
Watching some homeward footstep. See! unbound
From the old fretted stone-work, what thick wreaths
Of jasmine, borne by waste exuberance down,
Trail through the grass their gleaming stars, and load
The air with mournful fragrance—for it speaks
Of life gone hence; and the faint, southern breath
Of myrtle-leaves, from yon forsaken porch,
Startles the soul with sweetness! Yet rich knots
Of garden flowers, far wandering, and self-sown
Through all the sunny hollow, spread around
A flush of youth and joy, free nature’s joy,
Undimm’d by human change. How kindly here,
With the low thyme and daisies, they have blent!
And, under arches of wild eglantine,
Drooping from this tall elm, how strangely seems
The frail gum-cistus o’er the turf to snow
Its pearly flower-leaves down! Go, happy boy!

Rove thou at will amidst these roving sweets;
Whilst I, beside this fallen dial-stone,
Under the tall moss-rose tree, long unpruned,
Rest where thick clustering pansies weave around
Their many-tinged mosaic, midst dark grass
Bedded like jewels.
He hath bounded on,
Wild with delight!—the crimson on his cheek
Purer and richer e'en than that which lies
In this deep-hearted rose-cup! Bright moss-rose!
Though now so lorn, yet surely, gracious tree!
Once thou wert cherish'd! and, by human love,
Through many a summer duly visited
For thy bloom-offerings, which o'er festal board,
And youthful brow, and e'en the shaded couch
Of long-secluded sickness, may have shed
A joy, now lost.
Yet shall there still be joy,
Where God hath pour'd forth beauty, and the voice
Of human love shall still be heard in praise
Over his glorious gifts! O Father! Lord!
The All-beneficent! I bless thy name,
That thou hast mantled the green earth with flow'rs,
Linking our hearts to nature! By the love

Of their wild blossoms, our young footsteps first
Into her deep recesses are beguiled—
Her minster-cells—dark glen and forest bower,
Where, thrilling with its earliest sense of thee,
Amidst the low, religious whisperings
And shivery leaf-sounds of the solitude,
The spirit wakes to worship, and is made
Thy living temple. By the breath of flowers,
Thou callest us, from city throngs and cares,
Back to the woods, the birds, the mountain-streams,
That sing of thee! back to free childhood's heart,
Fresh with the dews of tenderness! Thou bidd'st
The lilies of the field with placid smile
Reprove man's feverish strivings, and infuse
Through his worn soul a more unworldly life,
With their soft, holy breath. Thou hast not left
His purer nature, with its fine desires,
Uncared for in this universe of thine!
The glowing rose attests it, the beloved
Of poet-hearts, touch'd by their fervent dreams
With spiritual light, and made a source
Of heaven-ascending thoughts. E'en to faint age
Thou lend'st the vernal bliss: the old man's eye
Falls on the kindling blossoms, and his soul

Remembers youth and love, and hopefully
Turns unto thee, who call’st earth’s buried germs
From dust to splendour; as the mortal seed
Shall, at thy summons, from the grave spring up
To put on glory, to be girt with power,
And fill’d with immortality. Receive
Thanks, blessings, love, for these, thy lavish boons,
And, most of all, their heavenward influences,
O Thou that gavest us flowers!
Return, my boy!—
With all thy chaplets and bright bands, return!
See, with how deep a crimson eve hath touch’d
And glorified the ruin!—glow-worm light
Will twinkle on the dewdrops, ere we reach
Our home again. Come! with thy last sweet prayer
At thy bless’d mother’s knee, to-night shall thanks
Unto our Father in his heaven arise,
For all the gladness, all the beauty shed
O’er one rich day of flowers.

HYMN OF THE TRAVELLER’S HOUSEHOLD ON HIS RETURN,

IN THE OLDEN TIME.

Joy! the lost one is restored!
Sunshine comes to hearth and board.
From the far-off countries old

Of the diamond and red gold;
From the dusky archer-bands,
Roamers of the fiery sands;
From the desert winds, whose breath
Smites with sudden, silent death;
He hath reach’d his home again,
Where we sing
In thy praise a fervent strain,
God our King!
Mightiest! unto thee he turn’d
When the noon-day fiercest burn’d:
When the fountain-springs were far,
And the sounds of Arab war
Swell’d upon the sultry blast,
And the sandy columns past,
Unto thee he cried; and thou,
Merciful! didst hear his vow!
Therefore unto thee again
Joy shall sing
Many a sweet and thankful strain,
God our King!
Thou wert with him on the main,
And the snowy mountain-chain,
And the rivers, dark and wide,

Which through Indian forests glide:
Thou didst guard him from the wrath
Of the lion in his path,
And the arrows on the breeze,
And the dropping poison-trees.
Therefore from our household train
Oft shall spring
Unto thee a blessing strain,
God our King!
Thou to his lone, watching wife
Hast brought back the light of life!
Thou hast spared his loving child
Home to greet him from the wild.
Though the suns of Eastern skies
On his cheek have set their dyes,
Though long toils and sleepless cares
On his brow have blanch’d the hairs,
Yet the night of fear is flown—
He is living, and our own!
Brethren! spread his festal board,
Hang his mantle and his sword,
With the armour, on the wall—
While this long, long silent hall
Joyfully doth hear again

Voice and string

Swell to thee the exulting strain,

God our King!

THE PAINTER’S LAST WORK.

[Suggested by the closing scene in the life of the painter Blake, which is beautifully related by Allan Cunningham.]

“Clasp me a little longer on the brink

Of life, while I can feel thy dear caress;

And when this heart hath ceased to beat, oh! think,

And let it mitigate thy woe’s excess,

That thou hast been to me all tenderness,

And friend to more than human friendship just—

Oh! by that retrospect of happiness,

And by the hope of an immortal trust,

God shall assuage thy pangs when I am laid in dust!”—Campbell.

The Scene is an English Cottage. The lattice opens upon a Landscape at sunset.

Eugene, Teresa.

Teresa. The fever’s hue hath left thy cheek, beloved!

Thine eyes, that make the dayspring in my heart,

Are clear and still once more! Wilt thou look forth?

Now, while the sunset with low streaming light—

The light thou lovest—hath made the elm-wood stems

All burning bronze, the river molten gold!

Wilt thou be raised upon thy couch, to meet

The rich air fill’d with wandering scents and sounds?
Or shall I lay thy dear, dear head once more
On this true bosom, lulling thee to rest
With our own evening hymn?
Eugene. Not now, dear love!
My soul is wakeful—lingering to look forth,
Not on the sun, but thee! Doth the light sleep
On the stream tenderly? and are the stems
Of our own elm-trees, by its alchemy,
So richly changed? and is the sweetbrier-scent
Floating around? But I have said farewell,
Farewell to earth, Teresa!—not to thee;
Nor yet to our deep love—nor yet awhile
Unto the spirit of mine art, which flows
Back on my soul in mastery. One last work!
And I will shrine my wealth of glowing thoughts,
Clinging affections, and undying hopes,
All, all in that memorial!
Teresa. Oh, what dream
Is this, mine own Eugene? Waste thou not thus
Thy scarce-returning strength; keep thy rich thoughts
For happier days—they will not melt away
Like passing music from the lute. Dear friend!
Dearest of friends! thou canst win back at will

The glorious visions.

Eugene. Yes! the unseen land

Of glorious visions hath sent forth a voice

To call me hence. Oh, be thou not deceived!

Bind to thy heart no earthly hope, Teresa!

I must, must leave thee! Yet be strong, my love!

As thou hast still been gentle.

Teresa. O Eugene!

What will this dim world be to me, Eugene!

When wanting thy bright soul, the life of all—

My only sunshine? How can I bear on?

How can we part?—we that have loved so well,

With clasping spirits link’d so long by grief,

By tears, by prayer?

Eugene. E’en therefore we can part,

With an immortal trust, that such high love

Is not of things to perish.

Let me leave

One record still of its ethereal flame

Brightening through death’s cold shadow. Once again,

Stand with thy meek hands folded on thy breast,

And eyes half veil’d, in thine own soul absorb’d,

As in thy watchings ere I sink to sleep;

And I will give the bending, flower-like grace

Of that soft form, and the still sweetness throned
On that pale brow, and in that quivering smile
Of voiceless love, a life that shall outlast
Their delicate earthly being. There! thy head
Bow'd down with beauty, and with tenderness,
And lowly thought—even thus—my own Teresa!
Oh! the quick-glancing radiance and bright bloom,
That once around thee hung, have melted now
Into more solemn light—but holier far,
And dearer, and yet lovelier in mine eyes,
Than all that summer-flush! For by my couch,
In patient and serene devotedness,
Thou hast made those rich hues and sunny smiles
Thine offering unto me. Oh! I may give
Those pensive lips, that clear Madonna brow,
And the sweet earnestness of that dark eye,
Unto the canvass; I may catch the flow
Of all those drooping locks, and glorify,
With a soft halo, what is imaged thus—
But how much rests unbreathed, my faithful one!
What thou hast been to me! This bitter world!
This cold, unanswering world, that hath no voice
To greet the gentle spirit, that drives back
All birds of Eden, which would sojourn here

A little while—how have I turn’d away

From its keen, soulless air, and in thy heart

Found ever the sweet fountain of response

To quench my thirst for home!

The dear work grows

Beneath my hand,—the last!

Teresa, (falling on his neck in tears.)

Eugene! Eugene!

Break not my heart with thine excess of love!—

Oh! must I lose thee—thou that hast been still

The tenderest—best!

Eugene. Weep, weep not thus, beloved!

Let my true heart o’er thine retain its power

Of soothing to the last! Mine own Teresa!

Take strength from strong affection! Let our souls,

Ere this brief parting, mingle in one strain

Of deep, full thanksgiving, for God’s rich boon—

Our perfect love! Oh, blessed have we been

In that high gift! thousands o’er earth may pass,

With hearts unfreshen’d by the heavenly dew,

Which hath kept ours from withering. Kneel, true wife!

And lay thy hands in mine.

(She kneels beside the couch—he prays.)

Oh, thus receive

Thy children's thanks, Creator! for the love
Which thou hast granted, through all earthly woes,
To spread heaven's peace around them—which hath bound
Their spirits to each other and to thee,
With links whereon unkindness ne'er hath breathed,
Nor wandering thought. We thank thee, gracious God!
For all its treasured memories, tender cares,
Fond words, bright, bright sustaining looks, unchanged
Through tears and joy! O Father! most of all,
We thank, we bless thee, for the priceless trust,
Through thy redeeming Son vouchsafed to those
That love in thee, of union, in thy sight
And in thy heavens, immortal! Hear our prayer!
Take home our fond affections, purified
To spirit-radiance from all earthly stain;
Exalted, solemnised, made fit to dwell,
Father! where all things that are lovely meet,
And all things that are pure—for evermore
With thee and thine!

A PRAYER OF AFFECTION.

Blessings, O Father! shower—
Father of Mercies! round his precious head!
On his lone walks and on his thoughtful hour,
And the pure visions of his midnight bed,

Blessings be shed!

Father! I pray thee not

For earthly treasure to that most beloved—

Fame, fortune, power: oh! be his spirit proved

By these, or by their absence, at thy will!

But let thy peace be wedded to his lot,

Guarding his inner life from touch of ill,

With its dove-pinion still!

Let such a sense of thee,

Thy watching presence, thy sustaining love,

His bosom-guest inalienably be,

That wheresoe’er he move,

A heavenly light serene

Upon his heart and mien

May sit undimm’d! a gladness rest his own,

Unspeakable, and to the world unknown!

Such as from childhood’s morning land of dreams,

Remember’d faintly, gleams—

Faintly remember’d, and too swiftly flown!

So let him walk with thee,

Made by thy Spirit free;

And when thou call’st him from his mortal place,

To his last hour be still that sweetness given,

That joyful trust! and brightly let him part,

With lamp clear burning, and unlingering heart,
Mature to meet in heaven
His Saviour’s face!

MOTHER’S LITANY BY THE SICKBED OF A CHILD.

Saviour, that of woman born,
Mother-sorrow didst not scorn—
Thou, with whose last anguish strove
One dear thought of earthly love—
Hear and aid!
Low he lies, my precious child,
With his spirit wandering wild
From its gladsome tasks and play,
And its bright thoughts far away—
Saviour, aid!
Pain sits heavy on his brow,
E’en though slumber seal it now;
Round his lip is quivering strife,
In his hand unquiet life—
Aid! oh, aid!
Saviour! loose the burning chain
From his fever’d heart and brain,
Give, oh! give his young soul back
Into its own cloudless track!
Hear and aid!

Thou that saidst, “Awake! arise!”

E’en when death had quench’d the eyes—

In this hour of grief’s deep sighing,

When o’erwearied hope is dying,

Hear and aid!

Yet, oh! make him thine, all thine,

Saviour! whether Death’s or mine!

Yet, oh! pour on human love,

Strength, trust, patience, from above!

Hear and aid!

NIGHT HYMN AT SEA.

THE WORDS WRITTEN FOR A MELODY BY FELTON.

Night sinks on the wave,

Hollow gusts are sighing,

Sea-birds to their cave

Through the gloom are flying.

Oh! should storms come sweeping,

Thou, in heaven unsleeping,

O’er thy children vigil keeping,

Hear, hear, and save!

Stars look o’er the sea,

Few, and sad, and shrouded;

Faith our light must be,

When all else is clouded.

Thou, whose voice came thrilling,
Wind and billow stilling,
Speak once more! our prayer fulfilling—
Power dwells with thee!

SONNETS.

FEMALE CHARACTERS OF SCRIPTURE.

“Your tents are desolate; your stately steps,
Of all their choral dances, have not left
One trace beside the fountains: your full cup
Of gladness and of trembling, each alike
Is broken. Yet, amidst undying things,
The mind still keeps your loveliness, and still
All the fresh glories of the early world
Hang round you in the spirit’s pictured halls,
Never to change!”

INVOCATION.

As the tired voyager on stormy seas
Invokes the coming of bright birds from shore,
To waft him tidings, with the gentler breeze,
Of dim, sweet woods that hear no billows roar;
So, from the depth of days, when earth yet wore
Her solemn beauty and primeval dew,
I call you, gracious Forms! Oh, come! restore

Awhile that holy freshness, and renew
Life’s morning dreams. Come with the voice, the lyre,
Daughters of Judah! with the timbrel rise!
Ye of the dark, prophetic, Eastern eyes,
Imperial in their visionary fire;
Oh! steep my soul in that old, glorious time,
When God’s own whisper shook the cedars of your clime!

INVOCATION CONTINUED.

And come, ye faithful! round Messiah seen,
With a soft harmony of tears and light
Streaming through all your spiritual mien—
As in calm clouds of pearly stillness bright,
Showers weave with sunshine, and transpierce their slight
Ethereal cradle. From your heart subdued
All haughty dreams of power had wing’d their flight,
And left high place for martyr fortitude,
True faith, long-suffering love. Come to me, come!
And as the seas, beneath your Master’s tread,
Fell into crystal smoothness, round him spread
Like the clear pavement of his heavenly home;
So, in your presence, let the soul’s great deep
Sink to the gentleness of infant sleep.

THE SONG OF MIRIAM.

A song for Israel’s God! Spear, crest, and helm

Lay by the billows of the old Red Sea,
When Miriam’s voice o’er that sepulchral realm
Sent on the blast a hymn of jubilee.
With her lit eye, and long hair floating free,
Queen-like she stood, and glorious was the strain,
E’en as instinct with the tempestuous glee
Of the dark waters, tossing o’er the slain.
A song for God’s own victory! Oh, thy lays,
Bright poesy! were holy in their birth:
How hath it died, thy seraph-note of praise,
In the bewildering melodies of earth!
Return from troubling, bitter founts—return,
Back to the life-springs of thy native urn!

RUTH.

The plume-like swaying of the auburn corn,
By soft winds to a dreamy motion fann’d,
Still brings me back thine image—O forlorn,
Yet not forsaken Ruth! I see thee stand
Lone, midst the gladness of the harvest-band—
Lone, as a wood-bird on the ocean’s foam
Fall’n in its weariness. Thy fatherland
Smiles far away! yet to the sense of home—
That finest, purest, which can recognise
Home in affection’s glance—for ever true

Beats thy calm heart; and if thy gentle eyes

Gleam tremulous through tears,’tis not to rue

Those words, immortal in their deep love’s tone,

“Thy people and thy God shall be mine own!”

THE VIGIL OF RIZPAH.

“And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven; and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.”—2 Sam. xxi. 10.

Who watches on the mountain with the dead,

Alone before the awfulness of night?—

A seer awaiting the deep spirit’s might?

A warrior guarding some dark pass of dread?

No—a lorn woman! On her drooping head,

Once proudly graceful, heavy beats the rain;

She recks not—living for the unburied slain,

Only to scare the vulture from their bed.

So, night by night, her vigil hath she kept

With the pale stars, and with the dews hath wept:

Oh! surely some bright Presence from above

On those wild rocks the lonely one must aid!

E’en so; a strengthener through all storm and shade,

Th’ unconquerable angel, mightiest Love!

THE REPLY OF THE SHUNAMITE WOMAN.

“And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.” 2 Kings, iv. 13.

“I dwell among mine own,”—oh, happy thou!
Not for the sunny clusters of the vine,
Not for the olives on the mountain’s brow,
Nor the flocks wandering by the flowery line
Of streams, that make the green land where they shine
Laugh to the light of waters—not for these,
Nor the soft shadow of ancestral trees,
Whose kindly whisper floats o’er thee and thine—
Oh! not for these I call thee richly blest,
But for the meekness of thy woman’s breast,
Where that sweet depth of still contentment lies;
And for thy holy, household love, which clings
Unto all ancient and familiar things,
Weaving from each some link for home’s dear charities.

THE ANNUNCIATION.

Lowliest of women, and most glorified!
In thy still beauty sitting calm and lone,
A brightness round thee grew—and by thy side,
Kindling the air, a form ethereal shone,
Solemn, yet breathing gladness. From her throne
A queen had risen with more imperial eye,
A stately prophetess of victory
From her proud lyre had struck a tempest’s tone,

For such high tidings as to thee were brought,
Chosen of heaven! that hour: but thou, oh! thou,
E’en as a flower with gracious rains o’erfraught,
Thy virgin head beneath its crown didst bow,
And take to thy meek breast th’ all-holy word,
And own thyself the handmaid of the Lord.

THE SONG OF THE VIRGIN.

Yet as a sunburst flushing mountain-snow,
Fell the celestial touch of fire ere long
On the pale stillness of thy thoughtful brow,
And thy calm spirit lighten’d into song.
Unconsciously, perchance, yet free and strong
Flow’d the majestic joy of tuneful words,
Which living harps the choirs of heaven among
Might well have link’d with their divinest chords.
Full many a strain, borne far on glory’s blast,
Shall leave, where once its haughty music pass’d,
No more to memory than a reed’s faint sigh;
While thine, O childlike Virgin! through all time
Shall send its fervent breath o’er every clime,
Being of God, and therefore not to die.

THE PENITENT ANOINTING CHRIST’S FEET.

There was a mournfulness in angel eyes,
That saw thee, woman! bright in this world’s train,

Moving to pleasure’s airy melodies,
Thyself the idol of the enchanted strain.
But from thy beauty’s garland, brief and vain,
When one by one the rose-leaves had been torn;
When thy heart’s core had quiver’d to the pain
Through every life-nerve sent by arrowy scorn;
When thou didst kneel to pour sweet odours forth
On the Redeemer’s feet, with many a sigh,
And showering tear-drop, of yet richer worth
Than all those costly balms of Araby;
Then was there joy, a song of joy in heaven,
For thee, the child won back, the penitent forgiven!

MARY AT THE FEET OF CHRIST.

Oh! bless’d beyond all daughters of the earth!
What were the Orient’s thrones to that low seat
Where thy hush’d spirit drew celestial birth,
Mary! meek listener at the Saviour’s feet?
No feverish cares to that divine retreat
Thy woman’s heart of silent worship brought,
But a fresh childhood, heavenly truth to meet
With love, and wonder, and submissive thought.
Oh! for the holy quiet of thy breast,
Midst the world’s eager tones and footsteps flying,
Thou, whose calm soul was like a well-spring, lying

So deep and still in its transparent rest,

That e’en when noontide burns upon the hills,

Some one bright solemn star all its lone mirror fills.

THE SISTERS OF BETHANY AFTER THE DEATH OF LAZARUS.

One grief, one faith, O sisters of the dead!

Was in your bosoms—thou, whose steps, made fleet

By keen hope fluttering in the heart which bled,

Bore thee, as wings, the Lord of Life to greet;

And thou, that duteous in thy still retreat

Didst wait his summons, then with reverent love

Fall weeping at the bless’d Deliverer’s feet,

Whom e’en to heavenly tears thy woe could move.

And which to Him, the All-seeing and All-just,

Was loveliest—that quick zeal, or lowly trust?

Oh! question not, and let no law be given

To those unveilings of its deepest shrine,

By the wrung spirit made in outward sign:

Free service from the heart is all in all to heaven.

THE MEMORIAL OF MARY.

“Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.”—Matthew, xxvi. 13.—See also John, xii. 3.

Thou hast thy record in the monarch’s hall,

And on the waters of the far mid sea;

And where the mighty mountain-shadows fall,
The Alpine hamlet keeps a thought of thee:
Where'er, beneath some Oriental tree,
The Christian traveller rests—where'er the child
Looks upward from the English mother's knee,
With earnest eyes in wondering reverence mild,
There art thou known—where'er the Book of light
Bears hope and healing, there, beyond all blight,
Is borne thy memory, and all praise above.
Oh! say what deed so lifted thy sweet name,
Mary! to that pure, silent place of fame?
One lowly offering of exceeding love.

THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM AT THE CROSS.

Like those pale stars of tempest-hours, whose gleam
Waves calm and constant on the rocking mast.
Such by the cross doth your bright lingering seem,
Daughters of Zion! faithful to the last!
Ye, through the darkness o'er the wide earth cast
By the death-cloud within the Saviour's eye,
E'en till away the heavenly spirit pass'd,
Stood in the shadow of his agony.
O blessed faith! a guiding lamp, that hour
Was lit for woman's heart! To her, whose dower
Is all of love and suffering from her birth,

Still hath your act a voice—through fear, through strife,
Bidding her bind each tendril of her life
To that which her deep soul hath proved of holiest worth.

MARY MAGDALENE AT THE SEPULCHRE.

Weeper! to thee how bright a morn was given
After thy long, long vigil of despair,
When that high voice which burial-rocks had riven
Thrill’d with immortal tones the silent air!
Never did clarion’s royal blast declare
Such tale of victory to a breathless crowd,
As the deep sweetness of one word could bear
Into thy heart of hearts, O woman! bow’d
By strong affection’s anguish! one low word—
“Mary!” and all the triumph wrung from death
Was thus reveal’d; and thou, that so hadst err’d,
So wept, and been forgiven, in trembling faith
Didst cast thee down before the all-conquering Son,
Awed by the mighty gift thy tears and love had won!

MARY MAGDALENE BEARING TIDINGS OF THE RESURRECTION.

Then was a task of glory all thine own,
Nobler than e’er the still, small voice assign’d
To lips in awful music making known
The stormy splendours of some prophet’s mind.
“Christ is arisen!”—by thee, to wake mankind,

First from the sepulchre those words were brought!
Thou wert to send the mighty rushing wind
First on its way, with those high tidings fraught—
“Christ is arisen!” Thou, thou, the sin-enthrall’d!
Earth’s outcast, heaven’s own ransom’d one, wert call’d
In human hearts to give that rapture birth:
Oh raised from shame to brightness! there doth lie
The tenderest meaning of His ministry,
Whose undespairing love still own’d the spirit’s worth.

SONNETS, DEVOTIONAL AND MEMORIAL.

THE SACRED HARP.

How shall the harp of poesy regain
That old victorious tone of prophet-years—
A spell divine o’er guilt’s perturbing fears,
And all the hovering shadows of the brain?
Dark, evil wings took flight before the strain,
And showers of holy quiet, with its fall,
Sank on the soul. Oh! who may now recall
The mighty music’s consecrated reign?
Spirit of God! whose glory once o’erhung
A throne, the ark’s dread cherubim between,
So let thy presence brood, though now unseen,
O’er those two powers by whom the harp is strung,
Feeling and Thought! till the rekindled chords

Give the long-buried tone back to immortal words.

TO A FAMILY BIBLE.

What household thoughts around thee, as their shrine,
Cling reverently? Of anxious looks beguiled,
My mother's eyes upon thy page divine
Each day were bent—her accents, gravely mild,
Breathed out thy lore: whilst I, a dreamy child,
Wander'd on breeze-like fancies oft away,
To some lone tuft of gleaming spring-flowers wild,
Some fresh-discover'd nook for woodland play,
Some secret nest. Yet would the solemn Word,
At times, with kindlings of young wonder heard,
Fall on thy waken'd spirit, there to be
A seed not lost,—for which, in darker years,
O Book of Heaven! I pour, with grateful tears,
Heart-blessings on the holy dead and thee!

REPOSE OF A HOLY FAMILY.

FROM AN OLD ITALIAN PICTURE.

Under a palm-tree, by the green, old Nile,
Lull'd on his mother's breast, the fair child lies,
With dove-like breathings, and a tender smile
Brooding above the slumber of his eyes;
While, through the stillness of the burning skies,
Lo! the dread works of Egypt's buried kings,

Temple and pyramid, beyond him rise,
Regal and still as everlasting things.
Vain pomps! from him, with that pure, flowery cheek,
Soft shadow'd by his mother's drooping head,
A new-born spirit, mighty, and yet meek,
O'er the whole world like vernal air shall spread;
And bid all earthly grandeurs cast the crown,
Before the suffering and the lowly, down.

PICTURE OF THE INFANT CHRIST WITH FLOWERS.

All the bright hues from eastern garlands glowing,
Round the young child luxuriantly are spread;
Gifts, fairer far than Magian kings, bestowing
In adoration, o'er his cradle shed.
Roses, deep-fill'd with rich midsummer's red,
Circle his hands: but, in his grave, sweet eye,
Thought seems e'en now to wake, and prophesy
Of ruder coronals for that meek head.
And thus it was! a diadem of thorn
Earth gave to Him who mantled her with flowers;
To Him who pour'd forth blessings in soft showers
O'er all her paths, a cup of bitter scorn!
And we repine, for whom that cup He took,
O'er blooms that mock'd our hope, o'er idols that forsook!

ON A REMEMBERED PICTURE OF CHRIST.

AN ECCE HOMO, BY LEONARDO DA VINCI.

I met that image on a mirthful day
Of youth; and, sinking with a still'd surprise,
The pride of life, before those holy eyes,
In my quick heart died thoughtfully away,
Abash'd to mute confession of a sway
Awful, though meek. And now that, from the strings
Of my soul's lyre, the tempest's mighty wings
Have struck forth tones which then unwaken'd lay;
Now that, around the deep life of my mind,
Affections, deathless as itself, have twined,
Oft does the pale, bright vision still float by;
But more divinely sweet, and speaking now
Of One whose pity, throned on that sad brow,
Sounded all depths of love, grief, death, humanity!

THE CHILDREN WHOM JESUS BLESSED.

Happy were they, the mothers, in whose sight
Ye grew, fair children! hallow'd from that hour
By your Lord's blessing. Surely thence a shower
Of heavenly beauty, a transmitted light
Hung on your brows and eyelids, meekly bright,
Through all the after years, which saw ye move
Lowly, yet still majestic, in the might,
The conscious glory of the Saviour's love!

And honour’d be all childhood, for the sake
Of that high love! Let reverential care
Watch to behold the immortal spirit wake.
And shield its first bloom from unholy air;
Owning, in each young suppliant glance, the sign
Of claims upon a heritage divine.

MOUNTAIN SANCTUARIES.

“He went up to a mountain apart to pray.”

A child midst ancient mountains I have stood,
Where the wild falcons make their lordly nest
On high. The spirit of the solitude
Fell solemnly upon my infant breast,
Though then I pray’d not; but deep thoughts have press’d
Into my being since it breathed that air,
Nor could I now one moment live the guest
Of such dread scenes, without the springs of prayer
O’erflowing all my soul. No minsters rise
Like them in pure communion with the skies,
Vast, silent, open unto night and day;
So might the o’erburden’d Son of Man have felt,
When, turning where inviolate stillness dwelt,
He sought high mountains, there apart to pray.

THE LILIES OF THE FIELD.

“Consider the lilies of the field.”

Flowers! when the Saviour’s calm, benignant eye
Fell on your gentle beauty—when from you
That heavenly lesson for all hearts he drew,
Eternal, universal, as the sky—
Then, in the bosom of your purity,
A voice He set, as in a temple-shrine,
That life’s quick travellers ne’er might pass you by
Unwarn’d of that sweet oracle divine.
And though, too oft its low, celestial sound
By the harsh notes of work-day Care is drown’d,
And the loud steps of vain, unlistening Haste,
Yet, the great ocean hath no tone of power
Mightier to reach the soul, in thought’s hush’d hour,
Than yours, ye Lilies! chosen thus and graced!

THE BIRDS OF THE AIR.

“And behold the birds of the air.”

Ye too, the free and fearless birds of air,
Were charged that hour, on missionary wing,
The same bright lesson o’er the seas to bear,
Heaven-guided wanderers, with the winds of spring.
Sing on, before the storm and after, sing!
And call us to your echoing woods away
From worldly cares; and bid our spirits bring
Faith to imbibe deep wisdom from your lay.

So may those blessed vernal strains renew
Childhood, a childhood yet more pure and true
E’en than the first, within th’ awaken’d mind;
While sweetly, joyously, they tell of life,
That knows no doubts, no questionings, no strife,
But hangs upon its God, unconsciously resign’d.

THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW’S SON.

“And he that was dead sat up and began to speak.”

He that was dead rose up and spoke—He spoke!
Was it of that majestic world unknown?
Those words, which first the bier’s dread silence broke,
Came they with revelation in each tone?
Were the far cities of the nations gone,
The solemn halls of consciousness or sleep,
For man uncurtain’d by that spirit lone,
Back from their portal summon’d o’er the deep?
Be hush’d, my soul! the veil of darkness lay
Still drawn: thy Lord call’d back the voice departed
To spread his truth, to comfort his weak-hearted,
Not to reveal the mysteries of its way.
Oh! take that lesson home in silent faith,
Put on submissive strength to meet, not question, death!

THE OLIVE TREE.

The palm—the vine—the cedar—each hath power

To bid fair Oriental shapes glance by;
And each quick glistening of the laurel bower
Wafts Grecian images o’er fancy’s eye.
But thou, pale Olive! in thy branches lie
Far deeper spells than prophet-grove of old
Might e’er enshrine: I could not hear the sigh
To the wind’s faintest whisper, nor behold
One shiver of thy leaves’ dim, silvery green,
Without high thoughts and solemn, of that scene
When, in the garden, the Redeemer pray’d—
When pale stars look’d upon his fainting head,
And angels, ministering in silent dread,
Trembled, perchance, within thy trembling shade.

THE DARKNESS OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

On Judah’s hills a weight of darkness hung,
Felt shudderingly at noon: the land had driven
A Guest divine back to the gates of heaven—
A life, whence all pure founts of healing sprung,
All grace, all truth. And when, to anguish wrung,
From the sharp cross th’ enlightening spirit fled,
O’er the forsaken earth a pall of dread
By the great shadow of that death was flung.
O Saviour! O Atoner!—thou that fain
Wouldst make thy temple in each human heart,

Leave not such darkness in my soul to reign;
Ne’er may thy presence from its depths depart,
Chased thence by guilt! Oh! turn not thou away,
The bright and Morning Star, my guide to perfect day!

PLACES OF WORSHIP.

“God is a spirit.”

Spirit! whose life-sustaining presence fills
Air, ocean, central depths by man untried,
Thou for thy worshippers hast sanctified
All place, all time! The silence of the hills
Breathes veneration,—founts and choral rills
Of thee are murmuring,—to its inmost glade
The living forest with thy whisper thrills,
And there is holiness in every shade.
Yet must the thoughtful soul of man invest
With dearer consecration those pure fanes,
Which, sever’d from all sound of earth’s unrest,
Hear naught but suppliant or adoring strains
Rise heavenward. Ne’er may rock or cave possess
Their claim on human hearts to solemn tenderness.

OLD CHURCH IN AN ENGLISH PARK.[426]

Crowning a flowery slope, it stood alone
In gracious sanctity. A bright rill wound,
Caressingly, about the holy ground;

And warbled, with a never-dying tone,
Amidst the tombs. A hue of ages gone
Seem’d, from that ivied porch, that solemn gleam
Of tower and cross, pale-quivering on the stream,
O’er all th’ ancestral woodlands to be thrown—
And something yet more deep. The air was fraught
With noble memories, whispering many a thought
Of England’s fathers: loftily serene,
They that had toil’d, watch’d, struggled, to secure,
Within such fabrics, worship free and pure,
Reign’d there, the o’ershadowing spirit of the scene.

[426] Fawsley Park, near Daventry.

A CHURCH IN NORTH WALES.[427]

Blessings be round it still! that gleaming fane,
Low in its mountain-glen! Old, mossy trees
Mellow the sunshine through the untinted pane;
And oft, borne in upon some fitful breeze,
The deep sound of the ever-pealing seas,
Filling the hollows with its anthem-tone,
There meets the voice of psalms! Yet not alone
For memories lulling to the heart as these,
I bless thee, midst thy rocks, gray house of prayer!
But for their sakes who unto thee repair
From the hill-cabins and the ocean-shore.

Oh! may the fisher and the mountaineer

Words to sustain earth’s toiling children hear,

Within thy lowly walls, for evermore!

[427] That of Aber, near Bangor.

LOUISE SCHEPLER.

[Louise Schepler was the faithful servant and friend of the pastor Oberlin. The last letter addressed by him to his children for their perusal after his decease, affectingly commemorates her unwearied zeal in visiting and instructing the children of the mountain hamlets, through all seasons, and in all circumstances of difficulty and danger.]

A fearless journeyer o’er the mountain-snow

Wert thou, Louise! The sun’s decaying light

Oft, with its latest, melancholy glow,

Redden’d thy steep, wild way: the starry night

Oft met thee, crossing some lone eagle’s height,

Piercing some dark ravine: and many a dell

Knew, through its ancient rock-recesses well,

Thy gentle presence, which hath made them bright

Oft in mid-storms—oh! not with beauty’s eye,

Nor the proud glance of genius keenly burning;

No! pilgrim of unwearying charity!

Thy spell was love—the mountain-deserts turning

To blessed realms, where stream and rock rejoice

When the glad human soul lifts a thanksgiving voice!

TO THE SAME.

For thou, a holy shepherdess and kind,
Through the pine forests, by the upland rills,
Didst roam to seek the children of the hills,
A wild, neglected flock! to seek, and find,
And meekly win! there feeding each young mind
With balms of heavenly eloquence: not thine,
Daughter of Christ! but His, whose love divine
Its own clear spirit in thy breast had shrined,
A burning light! Oh! beautiful, in truth,
Upon the mountains are the feet of those
Who bear His tidings! From thy morn of youth,
For this were all thy journeyings; and the close
Of that long path, heaven's own bright sabbath-rest,
Must wait thee, wanderer! on thy Saviour's breast

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE TWO MONUMENTS.[428]

"Oh! bless'd are they who live and die like 'him,'
Loved with such love, and with such sorrow mourn'd!"
Wordsworth.

Banners hung drooping from on high
In a dim cathedral's nave,
Making a gorgeous canopy
O'er a noble, noble grave!

And a marble warrior’s form beneath,
With helm and crest array’d,
As on his battle-bed of death,
Lay in their crimson shade.
Triumph yet linger’d in his eye,
Ere by the dark night seal’d;
And his head was pillow’d haughtily
On standard and on shield.
And shadowing that proud trophy-pile,
With the glory of his wing,
An eagle sat—yet seem’d the while
Panting through heaven to spring.
He sat upon a shiver’d lance,
There by the sculptor bound;
But in the light of his lifted glance
Was that which scorn’d the ground.
And a burning flood of gem-like hues,
From a storied window pour’d,
There fell, there centred, to suffuse
The conqueror and his sword.
A flood of hues—but one rich dye
O’er all supremely spread,
With a purple robe of royalty
Mantling the mighty dead.

Meet was that robe for him whose name
Was a trumpet-note in war,
His pathway still the march of fame,
His eye the battle-star.
But faintly, tenderly was thrown,
From the colour’d light, one ray,
Where a low and pale memorial-stone
By the couch of glory lay.
Few were the fond words chisell’d there,
Mourning for parted worth;
But the very heart of love and prayer
Had given their sweetness forth.
They spoke of one whose life had been
As a hidden streamlet’s course,
Bearing on health and joy unseen
From its clear mountain-source:
Whose young, pure memory, lying deep
Midst rock, and wood, and hill,
Dwelt in the homes where poor men sleep,[429]
A soft light, meek and still:
Whose gentle voice, too early call’d
Unto Music’s land away,
Had won for God the earth’s, enthrall’d
By words of silvery sway.

These were his victories—yet, enroll’d

In no high song of fame,

The pastor of the mountain-fold

Left but to heaven his name.

To heaven, and to the peasant’s hearth,

A blessed household-sound;

And finding lowly love on earth,

Enough, enough, he found!

Bright and more bright before me gleam’d

That sainted image still,

Till one sweet moonlight memory seem’d

The regal fane to fill.

Oh! how my silent spirit turn’d

From those proud trophies nigh!

How my full heart within me burn’d

Like Him to live and die!

[428] Suggested by a passage in Captain Sherer’s “Notes and Reflections during a Ramble in Germany.”

[429]

“Love had he seen in huts where poor men lie.”

Wordsworth.

THE COTTAGE GIRL.

A child beside a hamlet’s fount at play,

Her fair face laughing at the sunny day;

A gush of waters tremulously bright,
Kindling the air to gladness with their light;
And a soft gloom beyond of summer trees,
Darkening the turf; and, shadow'd o'er by these,
A low, dim, woodland cottage—this was all!
What had the scene for memory to recall
With a fond look of love? What secret spell
With the heart's pictures made its image dwell?
What but the spirit of the joyous child,
That freshly forth o'er stream and verdure smiled,
Casting upon the common things of earth
A brightness, born and gone with infant mirth!

THE BATTLE-FIELD.

I look'd on the field where the battle was spread,
When thousands stood forth in their glancing array;
And the beam from the steel of the valiant was shed
Through the dun-rolling clouds that o'ershadow'd the fray.
I saw the dark forest of lances appear,
As the ears of the harvest unnumber'd they stood;
I heard the stern shout as the foemen drew near,
Like the storm that lays low the proud pines of the wood.
Afar the harsh notes of the war-drum were roll'd,
Uprousing the wolf from the depth of his lair;
On high to the gust stream'd the banner's red fold,

O’er the death-close of hate, and the scowl of despair.
I look’d on the field of contention again,
When the sabre was sheath’d and the tempest had past;
The wild weed and thistle grew rank on the plain,
And the fern softly sigh’d in the low, wailing blast.
Unmoved lay the lake in its hour of repose,
And bright shone the stars through the sky’s deepen’d blue;
And sweetly the song of the night-bird arose,
Where the fox-glove lay gemm’d with its pearl-drops of dew.
But where swept the ranks of that dark, frowning host,
As the ocean in might, as the storm-cloud in speed?
Where now are the thunders of victory’s boast—
The slayer’s dread wrath, and the strength of the steed?
Not a time-wasted cross, not a mouldering stone,
To mark the lone scene of their shame or their pride;
One grass-cover’d mound told the traveller alone
Where thousands lay down in their anguish, and died!
O Glory! behold thy famed guerdon’s extent:
For this, toil thy slaves through their earth-wasting lot—
A name like the mist, when the night-beams are spent;
A grave with its tenants unwept and forgot!

A PENITENT’S RETURN.

“Can guilt or misery ever enter here?
Ah, no! the spirit of domestic peace,

Though calm and gentle as the brooding dove,
And ever murmuring forth a quiet song,
Guards, powerful as the sword of cherubim,
The hallow'd porch. She hath a heavenly smile,
That sinks into the sullen soul of Vice,
And wins him o'er to virtue."—Wilson.
My father's house once more,
In its own moonlight beauty! Yet around,
Something, amidst the dewy calm profound,
Broods, never mark'd before!
Is it the brooding night?
Is it the shivery creeping on the air,
That makes the home so tranquil and so fair,
O'erwhelming to my sight?
All solemnised it seems,
And still'd, and darken'd in each time-worn hue,
Since the rich, clustering roses met my view,
As now, by starry gleams.
And this high elm, where last
I stood and linger'd—where my sisters made
Our mother's bower—I deem'd not that it cast
So far and dark a shade!
How spirit-like a tone
Sighs through yon tree! My father's place was there

At evening hours, while soft winds waved his hair!
Now those gray locks are gone!
My soul grows faint with fear!
Even as if angel-steps had mark’d the sod.
I tremble where I move—the voice of God
Is in the foliage here!
Is it indeed the night
That makes my home so awful? Faithless-hearted!
’Tis that from thine own bosom hath departed
The inborn, gladdening light!
No outward thing is changed;
Only the joy of purity is fled,
And, long from nature’s melodies estranged,
Thou hear’st their tones with dread.
Therefore the calm abode,
By thy dark spirit, is o’erhung with shade;
And therefore, in the leaves, the voice of God
Makes thy sick heart afraid!
The night-flowers round that door
Still breathe pure fragrance on the untainted air;
Thou, thou alone art worthy now no more
To pass, and rest thee there.
And must I turn away?—
Hark, hark!—it is my mother’s voice I hear—

Sadder than once it seem’d—yet soft and clear;—
Doth she not seem to pray?
My name!—I caught the sound!
Oh! blessed tone of love—the deep, the mild!
Mother! my mother! now receive thy child:
Take back the lost and found!

A THOUGHT OF PARADISE.

“We receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does nature live;
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud;
And, would we aught behold of higher worth
Than that inanimate, cold world allow’d
To the poor, loveless, ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud,
Enveloping the earth;
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element.”—Coleridge.
Green spot of holy ground!
If thou couldst yet be found,
Far in deep woods, with all thy starry flowers;
If not one sullying breath
Of time, or change, or death,

Had touch’d the vernal glory of thy bowers;
Might our tired pilgrim-feet,
Worn by the desert’s heat,
On the bright freshness of thy turf repose?
Might our eyes wander there
Through heaven’s transparent air,
And rest on colours of the immortal rose?
Say, would thy balmy skies
And fountain-melodies
Our heritage of lost delight restore?
Could thy soft honey-dews
Through all our veins diffuse
The early, child-like, trustful sleep once more?
And might we, in the shade
By thy tall cedars made,
With angel-voices high communion hold?
Would their sweet, solemn tone
Give back the music gone,
Our Being’s harmony, so jarr’d of old?
Oh no!—thy sunny hours
Might come with blossom-showers,
All thy young leaves to spirit-lyres might thrill;
But we—should we not bring
Into thy realms of spring

The shadows of our souls to haunt us still?

What could thy flowers and airs

Do for our earth-born cares?

Would the world’s chain melt off and leave us free?

No!—past each living stream,

Still would some fever-dream

Track the lorn wanderers, meet no more for thee!

Should we not shrink with fear

If angel-steps were near,

Feeling our burden’d souls within us die?

How might our passions brook

The still and searching look,

The star-like glance of seraph purity?

Thy golden-fruited grove

Was not for pining love;

Vain sadness would but dim thy crystal skies!

Oh! thou wert but a part

Of what man’s exiled heart

Hath lost—the dower of inborn Paradise!

LET US DEPART!

[It is mentioned by Josephus, that, a short time previous to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the priests, going by night into the inner court of the Temple to perform their sacred ministrations at the feast of Pentecost, felt a quaking, and heard a rushing noise, and, after that, a sound as of a great multitude saying,

“Let us depart hence!”]

Night hung on Salem’s towers,

And a brooding hush profound

Lay where the Roman eagle shone

High o’er the tents around—

The tents that rose by thousands,

In the moonlight glimmering pale;

Like white waves of a frozen sea

Filling an Alpine vale.

And the Temple’s massy shadow

Fell broad, and dark, and still,

In peace—as if the Holy One

Yet watch’d his chosen hill.

But a fearful sound was heard

In that old fane’s deepest heart,

As if mighty wings rush’d by,

And a dread voice raised the cry,

“Let us depart!”

Within the fated city

E’en then fierce discord raved,

Though o’er night’s heaven the comet-sword

Its vengeful token waved.

There were shouts of kindred warfare

Through the dark streets ringing high,

Though every sign was full which told
Of the bloody vintage nigh;
Though the wild red spears and arrows
Of many a meteor host
Went flashing o’er the holy stars,
In the sky now seen, now lost.
And that fearful sound was heard
In the Temple’s deepest heart,
As if mighty wings rush’d by,
And a voice cried mournfully,
“Let us depart!”
But within the fated city
There was revelry that night—
The wine-cup and the timbrel note,
And the blaze of banquet-light.
The footsteps of the dancer
Went bounding through the hall,
And the music of the dulcimer
Summon’d to festival:
While the clash of brother-weapons
Made lightning in the air,
And the dying at the palace gates
Lay down in their despair;
And that fearful sound was heard

At the Temple's thrilling heart,

As if mighty wings rush'd by,

And a dread voice raised the cry,

"Let us depart!"

ON A PICTURE OF CHRIST BEARING THE CROSS.

PAINTED BY VELASQUEZ.[430]

By the dark stillness brooding in the sky,

Holiest of sufferers! round thy path of woe,

And by the weight of mortal agony

Laid on thy drooping form and pale meek brow,

My heart was awed: the burden of thy pain

Sank on me with a mystery and a chain.

I look'd once more—and, as the virtue shed

Forth from thy robe of old, so fell a ray

Of victory from thy mien; and round thy head,

The halo, melting spirit-like away,

Seem'd of the very soul's bright rising born,

To glorify all sorrow, shame, and scorn.

And upwards, through transparent darkness gleaming,

Gazed in mute reverence woman's earnest eye,

Lit, as a vase whence inward light is streaming,

With quenchless faith, and deep love's fervency,

Gathering, like incense round some dim-veil'd shrine,

About the form, so mournfully divine!

Oh! let thine image, as e’en then it rose,

Live in my soul for ever, calm and clear,

Making itself a temple of repose,

Beyond the breath of human hope or fear!

A holy place, where through all storms may lie

One living beam of dayspring from on high.

[430] This picture is in the possession of the Viscount Harberton, Merrion Square, Dublin.

COMMUNINGS WITH THOUGHT.

“Could we but keep our spirits to that height,

We might be happy; but this clay will sink

Its spark immortal.”—Byron.

Return, my thoughts—come home!

Ye wild and wing’d! what do ye o’er the deep?

And wherefore thus the abyss of time o’ersweep,

As birds the ocean-foam?

Swifter than shooting-star,

Swifter than lances of the northern-light,

Upspringing through the purple heaven of night,

Hath been your course afar!

Through the bright battle-clime,

Where laurel boughs make dim the Grecian streams,

And reeds are whispering of heroic themes,

By temples of old time:

Through the north’s ancient halls,
Where banners thrill’d of yore—where harp-strings rung;
But grass waves now o’er those that fought and sung,
Hearth-light hath left their walls!
Through forests old and dim,
Where o’er the leaves dread magic seems to brood;
And sometimes on the haunted solitude
Rises the pilgrim’s hymn:
Or where some fountain lies,
With lotus-cups through orient spice-woods gleaming!
There have ye been, ye wanderers! idly dreaming
Of man’s lost paradise!
Return, my thoughts—return!
Cares wait your presence in life’s daily track,
And voices, not of music, call you back—
Harsh voices, cold and stem!
Oh, no! return ye not!
Still farther, loftier, let your soarings be!
Go, bring me strength from journeyings bright and free,
O’er many a haunted spot.
Go! seek the martyr’s grave,
Midst the old mountains, and the deserts vast;
Or, through the ruin’d cities of the past,
Follow the wise and brave!

Go! visit cell and shrine,
Where woman hath endured!—thro' wrong, thro' scorn,
Uncheer'd by fame, yet silently upborne
By promptings more divine!
Go, shoot the gulf of death!
Track the pure spirit where no chain can bind,
Where the heart's boundless love its rest may find,
Where the storm sends no breath!
Higher, and yet more high—!
Shake off the cumbering chain which earth would lay
On your victorious wings—mount, mount! Your way
Is through eternity!

THE WATER-LILY.

"The Water-Lilies, that are serene in the calm clear water, but no less serene among the black and scowling waves."—Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life.

Oh! beautiful thou art,
Thou sculpture-like and stately river-queen!
Crowning the depths, as with the light serene
Of a pure heart.
Bright lily of the wave!
Rising in fearless grace with every swell,
Thou seem'st as if a spirit meekly brave
Dwelt in thy cell:
Lifting alike thy head

Of placid beauty, feminine yet free,
Whether with foam or pictured azure spread
The waters be.
What is like thee, fair flower,
The gentle and the firm! thus bearing up
To the blue sky that alabaster cup,
As to the shower?
Oh! love is most like thee,
The love of woman! quivering to the blast
Through every nerve, yet rooted deep and fast,
Midst life's dark sea.
And faith—oh, is not faith
Like thee, too, lily! springing into light,
Still buoyantly, above the billows' might,
Through the storm's breath?
Yes! link'd with such high thought,
Flower! let thine image in my bosom lie;
Till something there of its own purity
And peace be wrought—
Something yet more divine
Than the clear, pearly, virgin lustre shed
Forth from thy breast upon the river's bed.
As from a shrine.

THE SONG OF PENITENCE.[431]

UNFINISHED.

[We learn from the Rev. R. P. Graves, that “The Song of Penitence,” if it had been finished in time, was intended for insertion among the “Scenes and Hymns of Life.”]

He pass’d from earth
Without his fame,—the calm, pure, starry fame
He might have won, to guide on radiantly
Full many a noble soul,—he sought it not;
And e’en like brief and barren lightning pass’d
The wayward child of genius. And the songs
Which his wild spirit, in the pride of life,
Had shower’d forth recklessly, as ocean-waves
Fling up their treasures mingled with dark weed,
They died before him;—they were winged seed
Scatter’d afar, and, falling on the rock
Of the world’s heart, had perish’d. One alone,
One fervent, mournful, supplicating strain,
The deep beseeching of a stricken breast,
Survived the vainly-gifted. In the souls
Of the kind few that loved him, with a love
Faithful to even its disappointed hope,
That song of tears found root, and by their hearths
Full oft, in low and reverential tones,
Fill’d with the piety of tenderness,

Is murmur’d to their children, when his name

On some faint harp-string of remembrance falls,

Far from the world’s rude voices, far away.

Oh! hear, and judge him gently; ’twas his last.

I come alone, and faint I come—

To nature’s arms I flee;

The green woods take their wanderer home,

But Thou, O Father! may I turn to thee?

The earliest odour of the flower,

The bird’s first song is thine;

Father in heaven! my dayspring’s hour

Pour’d its vain incense on another shrine.

Therefore my childhood’s once-loved scene

Around me faded lies;

Therefore, remembering what hath been,

I ask, is this mine early paradise?

It is, it is—but Thou art gone;

Or if the trembling shade

Breathe yet of thee, with alter’d tone

Thy solemn whisper shakes a heart dismay’d.

[431] Suggested by the late Mrs Fletcher’s story of The Lost Life, published in the Amulet for 1830.

TROUBADOUR SONG.

They rear’d no trophy o’er his grave,

They hade no requiem flow;
What left they there to tell the brave
That a warrior sleeps below?
A shiver'd spear, a cloven shield,
A helm with its white plume torn,
And a blood-stain'd turf on the fatal field,
Where a chief to his rest was borne.
He lies not where his fathers sleep,
But who hath a tomb more proud?
For the Syrian wilds his record keep,
And a banner is his shroud.

THE ENGLISH BOY.

"Go, call thy sons; instruct them what a debt
They owe their ancestors; and make them swear
To pay it, by transmitting down entire
Those sacred rights to which themselves were born."
Akenside.

Look from the ancient mountains down,
My noble English boy!
Thy country's fields around thee gleam
In sunlight and in joy.
Ages have roll'd since foeman's march
Pass'd o'er that old, firm sod;
For well the land hath fealty held

To freedom and to God!
Gaze proudly on, my English boy!
And let thy kindling mind
Drink in the spirit of high thought
From every chainless wind!
There, in the shadow of old Time,
The halls beneath thee lie
Which pour'd forth to the fields of yore
Our England's chivalry.
How bravely and how solemnly
They stand, midst oak and yew!
Whence Cressy's yeomen haply framed
The bow, in battle true.
And round their walls the good swords hang
Whose faith knew no alloy,
And shields of knighthood, pure from stain:
Gaze on, my English boy!
Gaze where the hamlet's ivied church
Gleams by the antique elm,
Or where the minster lifts the cross
High through the air's blue realm.
Martyrs have shower'd their free heart's blood
That England's prayer might rise,
From those gray fanes of thoughtful years,

Unfetter’d, to the skies.

Along their aisles, beneath their trees,

This earth’s most glorious dust,

Once fired with valour, wisdom, song,

Is laid in holy trust.

Gaze on—gaze farther, farther yet—

My gallant English boy!

Yon blue sea bears thy country’s flag,

The billows’ pride and joy!

Those waves in many a fight have closed

Above her faithful dead;

That red-cross flag victoriously

Hath floated o’er their bed.

They perish’d—this green turf to keep

By hostile tread unstain’d,

These knightly halls inviolate,

Those churches unprofaned.

And high and clear their memory’s light

Along our shore is set,

And many an answering beacon-fire

Shall there be kindled yet!

Lift up thy heart, my English boy!

And pray, like them to stand,

Should God so summon thee, to guard

The altars of the land.

TO THE BLUE ANEMONE.

Flower of starry clearness bright!
Quivering urn of colour’d light!
Hast thou drawn thy cup’s rich dye
From the intenseness of the sky?
From a long, long fervent gaze
Through the year’s first golden days,
Up that blue and silent deep,
Where, like things of sculptured sleep,
Alabaster clouds repose,
With the sunshine on their snows?
Thither was thy heart’s love turning,
Like a censer ever burning,
Till the purple heavens in thee
Set their smile, Anemone?
Or can those warm tints be caught
Each from some quick glow of thought?
So much of bright soul there seems
In thy bendings and thy gleams,
So much thy sweet life resembles
That which feels, and weeps, and trembles,
I could deem thee spirit-fill’d,
As a reed by music thrill’d,

When thy being I behold
To each loving breath unfold,
Or, like woman’s willowy form,
Shrink before the gathering storm!
I could ask a voice from thee,
Delicate Anemone!
Flower! thou seem’st not born to die
With thy radiant purity,
But to melt in air away,
Mingling with the soft Spring-day,
When the crystal heavens are still,
And faint azure veils each hill,
And the lime-leaf doth not move,
Save to songs that stir the grove,
And earth all glorified is seen,
As imaged in some lake serene;
—Then thy vanishing should be,
Pure and meek Anemone!
Flower! the laurel still may shed
Brightness round the victor’s head;
And the rose in beauty’s hair
Still its festal glory wear;
And the willow-leaves drop o’er
Brows which love sustains no more:

But by living rays refined,

Thou, the trembler of the wind,

Thou the spiritual flower,

Sentient of each breeze and shower,

Thou, rejoicing in the skies,

And transpierced with all their dyes;

Breathing vase, with light o'erflowing,

Gem-like to thy centre glowing,

Thou the poet's type shalt be,

Flower of soul, Anemone!

SCENES AND PASSAGES FROM GOETHE.

SCENES FROM "TASSO."

[One of the many literary projects contemplated by Mrs Hemans at this time, was a series of German studies, consisting of translations of scenes and passages from some of the most celebrated German authors, introduced and connected by illustrative remarks. The only one of these papers which she ever completed, was that on Goethe's "Tasso," published in the New Monthly Magazine for January 1834; a paper which well deserves attention, as it embodies so much of her individual feeling with respect to the high and sacred mission of the Poet; as well as regarding that mysterious analogy between the outer world of nature and the inner world of the heart, which it was so peculiarly the tendency of her writings to develop.—Memoir, pp. 272-3.]

The dramatic poem of "Tasso," though presenting no changeful pageants of many-coloured life—no combination of stirring incidents, nor conflict of tempestuous passions—is yet rich in interest for those who find—

“The still, sad music of humanity,

... of ample power

To chasten and subdue.”

It is a picture of the struggle between elements which never can assimilate—powers whose dominion is over spheres essentially adverse; between the spirit of poetry and the spirit of the world. Why is it that this collision is almost invariably fatal to the gentler and the holier nature? Some master-minds have, indeed, winged their way through the tumults of crowded life, like the sea-bird cleaving the storm from which its pinions come forth unstained; but there needs a celestial panoply, with which few indeed are gifted, to bear the heirs of genius not only unwounded, but unsoiled, through the battle; and too frequently the result of the poet’s lingering afar from his better home has been mental degradation and untimely death. Let us not be understood as requiring for his wellbeing an absolute seclusion from the world and its interests. His nature, if the abiding-place of the true light be indeed within him, is endowed above all others with the tenderest and most widely-embracing sympathies. Not alone from “the things of the everlasting hills,” from the storms or the silence of midnight skies, will he seek the grandeur and the beauty which have their central residence in a far more majestic temple. Mountains, and rivers, and mighty woods, the cathedrals of nature—these will have their part in his pictures; but their colouring and shadows will not be wholly the gift of rising or departed suns, nor of the night with all her stars; it will be a varying suffusion from the life within, from the glowing clouds of thought and feeling, which mantle with their changeful drapery all external creation.

——“We receive but what we give,

And in our life alone does nature live.”

Let the poet bear into the recesses of woods and shadowy hills a heart full-fraught with the sympathies which will have been fostered by intercourse with his kind—a

memory covered with the secret inscriptions which joy and sorrow fail not indelibly to write: then will the voice of every stream respond to him in tones of gladness or melancholy, accordant with those of his own soul, and he himself, by the might of feelings intensely human, may breathe the living spirit of the oracle into the resounding cavern or the whispering oak. We thus admit it essential to his high office, that the chambers of imagery in the heart of the poet must be filled with materials moulded from the sorrows, the affections, the fiery trials, and immortal longings of the human soul. Where love, and faith, and anguish, meet and contend—where the tones of prayer are wrung from the suffering spirit—there lie his veins of treasure; there are the sweet waters ready to flow from the stricken rock. But he will not seek them through the gaudy and hurrying masque of artificial life; he will not be the fettered Samson to make sport for the sons and daughters of fashion. Whilst he shuns no brotherly communion with his kind, he will ever reserve to his nature the power of self-communion—silent hours for

"The harvest of the quiet eye

That broods and sleeps on his own heart,"

and inviolate retreats in the depths of his being—fountains lone and still, upon which only the eye of Heaven shines down in its hallowed serenity. So have those who make us "heirs of truth and freedom by immortal lays," ever preserved the calm, intellectual ether in which they live and move from the taint of worldly infection; and it appears the object of Goethe, in the work before us, to make the gifted spirit sadder and wiser by the contemplation of one, which, having sold its birthright, and stooped from its "privacy of glorious light," is forced into perpetual contact with things essentially of the earth earthy. Dante has spoken of what the Italian poets must have learned but too feelingly under their protecting princes—the bitter taste of another's bread, the weary steps by which the stairs of another's house are ascended; but it is suffering of a more spiritual nature which is here portrayed.

Would that the courtly patronage, at the shrine of which the Italian muse has so often waved her censer, had imposed no severer tasks upon its votaries than the fashioning of the snow statue which it required from the genius of Michael Angelo! The story of Tasso is fraught with yet deeper meaning, though it is not from the period of his most agonising trials that the materials of Goethe's work are drawn. The poet is here introduced to us as a youth at the court of Ferrara; visionary, enthusiastic, keenly alive to the splendour of the gorgeous world around him, throwing himself passionately upon the current of every newly-excited feeling; a creature of sudden lights and shadows, of restless strivings after ideal perfection, of exultations and of agonies. Why is it that the being thus exhibited as endowed with all these trembling capacities for joy and pain, with noble aspirations and fervid eloquence, fails to excite a more reverential interest, a more tender admiration? He is wanting in dignity, in the sustaining consciousness of his own high mission; he has no city of refuge within himself, and thus—

"Every little living nerve,

That from bitter words doth swerve,"

has the power to shake his whole soul from its pride of place. He is thus borne down by the cold, triumphant worldliness of the courtier Antonio, from the collision with whom, and the mistaken endeavour of Tasso's friends to reconcile natures dissimilar as the sylph and gnome of fanciful creations, the conflicting elements of the piece are chiefly derived. There are impressive lessons to be drawn from the contemplation of these scenes, though, perhaps, it is not quite thus that we could have wished him delineated who "poured his spirit over Palestine;" and it is occasionally almost too painful to behold the high-minded Tasso, recognised by his country as superior with the sword and the pen to all men, struggling in so ignoble an arena, and finally overpowered by so unworthy an antagonist. This world is indeed "too much with us," and but too powerful is often its withering breath upon

the ethereal natures of love, devotion, and enthusiasm, which, in other regions,

“May bear bright, golden flowers, but not in this soil.”

Yet who has not known victorious moments, in which the lightly-armed genii of ridicule have quailed!—the conventional forms of life have shrunk as a shrivelled scroll before the Ithuriel touch of some generous feeling, some high and overshadowing passion suddenly aroused from the inmost recesses of the folded soul, and striking the electric chain which mysteriously connects all humanity? We could have wished that some such thrilling moment had been here introduced by the mighty master of Germany—something to relieve the too continuous impression of inherent weakness in the cause of the vanquished—something of a transmuting power in the soul of Tasso, to glorify the clouds which accumulate around it—to turn them into “contingencies of pomp” by the interpenetration of its own celestial light. Yet we approach with reverence the work of a noble hand; and, whilst entering upon our task of translation, we acknowledge, in humility, the feebleness of all endeavour to pour into the vase of another language the exquisitely subtle spirit of Goethe’s poetry—to transplant and naturalise the delicate felicities of thought and expression by which this piece is so eminently distinguished.

The visionary rapture which takes possession of Tasso upon being crowned with laurel by the Princess Leonora d’Este, the object of an affection which the youthful poet has scarcely yet acknowledged to himself, is thus portrayed in one of the earlier scenes:—

“Let me then bear the burden of my bliss

To some deep grove that oft hath veil’d my grief;

There let me roam in solitude: no eye

Shall then recall the triumph undeserved.

And if some shining fountain suddenly

On its clear mirror to my sight should give
The form of one who, strangely, brightly crown’d,
Seems musing in the blue reflected heaven,
As it streams down through rocks and parted trees,
Then will I dream that on the enchanted wave
I see Elysium pictured! I will ask
Who is the bless’d departed one?—the youth
From long past ages with his glorious wreath?
Who shall reveal his name?—who speak his worth?
Oh! that another and another there
Might press, with him to hold bright communing!
Might I but see the minstrels and the chiefs
Of the old time on that pure fountain-side.
For evermore inseparably link’d
As they were link’d in life! Not steel to steel
Is bound more closely by the magnet’s power
Than the same striving after lofty things
Doth bind the bard and warrior. Homer’s life
Was self-forgetfulness—he pour’d it forth,
One rich libation to another’s fame:
And Alexander through th’ Elysian grove
To seek Achilles and his poet flies.
Might I behold their meeting!”

But he is a reed shaken with the wind. Antonio reaches the Court of Ferrara at this

crisis, in all the importance of a successful negotiation with the Vatican. He strikes down the wing of the poet's delicate imagination with the arrows of a careless irony, and Tasso is for a time completely dazzled and overpowered by the worldly science of the skilful diplomatist. The deeper wisdom of his own simplicity is yet veiled from his eyes. Life seems to pass before him, as portrayed by the discourse of Antonio, like a mighty triumphal procession, in the exulting movements and clarion-sounds of which he alone has no share; and at last the forms of beauty, peopling his own spiritual world, seem to dissolve into clouds, even into faint shadows of clouds, before the strong glare of the external world, leaving his imagination as a desolate house, whence light and music have departed. He thus pours forth, when alone with the Princess Leonora, the impressions produced upon him by Antonio's descriptions:—

They still disturb my heart—
Still do they crowd my soul tumultuously—
The troubling images of that vast world,
Which—living, restless, fearful as it is—
Yet, at the bidding of one master-mind,
E'en as commanded by a demigod,
Seems to fulfil its course. With eagerness,
Yea, with a strange delight, my soul drank in
The strong words of the experienced; but, alas!
The more I listen'd, still the more I sank
In mine own eyes; I seem'd to die away
As into some faint echo of the rocks—
A shadowy sound—a nothing!

There is something of a very touching beauty in the character of the Princess

Leonora d'Este. She does not, indeed, resemble some of the lovely beings delineated by Shakspeare—the females, "graceful without design, and unforeseeing," in whom, even under the pressure of heaviest calamity, it is easy to discern the existence of the sunny and gladsome nature which would spring up with fawn-like buoyancy were but the crushing weight withdrawn. The spirit of Leonora has been at once elevated and subdued by early trial: high thoughts, like messengers from heaven, have been its visitants in the solitude of the sick-chamber; and looking upon life and creation, as it were, through the softening veil of remembered suffering, it has settled into such majestic loveliness as the Italian painters delight to shadow forth on the calm brow of their Madonna. Its very tenderness is self-resignation; its inner existence serene, yet sad—"a being breathing thoughtful breath." She is worshipped by the poet as his tutelary angel, and her secret affection for him might almost become that character. It has all the deep devotedness of a woman's heart, with the still purity of a seraphic guardian, taking no part in the passionate dreams of earthly happiness. She feels his genius with a reverential appreciation; she watches over it with a religious tenderness, for ever interposing to screen its unfolding powers from every ruder breath. She rejoices in his presence as a flower filling its cup with gladness from the morning light; yet, preferring his wellbeing to all earthly things, she would meekly offer up, for the knowledge of his distant happiness, even the fulness of that only and unutterable joy. A deep feeling of woman's lot on earth—the lot of endurance and of sacrifice—seems ever present to her soul, and speaks characteristically in these lines, with which she replies to a wish of Tasso's for the return of the golden age:—

When earth has men to reverence female hearts,

To know the treasure of rich truth and love,

Set deep within a high-soul'd woman's breast;

When the remembrance of our summer prime

Keeps brightly in man’s heart a holy place;

When the keen glance that pierces through so much

Looks also tenderly through that dim veil

By time or sickness hung round drooping forms,

When the possession, stilling every wish,

Draws not desire away to other wealth—

A brighter dayspring then for us may dawn,

Then may we solemnise our golden age.

A character thus meditative, affectionate, and self-secluding, would naturally be peculiarly sensitive to the secret intimations of coming sorrow. Forebodings of evil arise in her mind from the antipathy so apparent between Tasso and Antonio; and, after learning that the cold, keen irony of the latter has irritated the poet almost to frenzy, she thus, to her friend Leonora de Sanvitale, reproaches herself for not having listened to the monitory whispers of her soul:—

Alas! that we so slowly learn to heed

The secret signs and omens of the breast!

An oracle speaks low within our hearts—

Low, still, yet clear, its prophet-voice forewarns

What to pursue, what shun.

...

Yes! my whole soul misgave me silently

When he and Tasso met.

She admits to her friend the necessity for his departure from Ferrara; but thus reverts, with fondly-clinging remembrance, to the time when he first became known to her:—

Oh! mark’d and singled was the hour when first
He met mine eye! Sickness and grief just then
Had pass’d away: from long, long suffering freed,
I lifted up my brow, and silently
Gazed upon life again. The sunny day,
The sweet looks of my kindred, made a light
Of gladness round me, and my freshen’d heart
Drank the rich, healing balm of hope once more.
Then onward, through the glowing world, I dared
To send my glance, and many a kind, bright shape
There beckon’d from afar. Then first the youth,
Led by a sister’s hand, before me stood,
And my soul clung to him e’en then, O friend!
To cling for evermore.
Leo. Lament it not,
My princess!—to have known heaven’s gifted ones
Is to have gather’d into the full soul
Inalienable wealth!
Prin. Oh, precious things!
The richly graced, the exquisite, are things
To fear, to love with trembling! Beautiful
Is the pure flame when on thy hearth it shines,
When in the friendly torch it gives thee light,
How gracious and how calm!—but, once unchain’d,

Lo! ruin sweeps along its fatal path!

She then announces her determination to make the sacrifice of his society, in which alone her being seems to find its full completion.

Alas, dear friend! my soul indeed is fix'd—
Let him depart! Yet cannot I but feel
Even now the sadness of long days to come—
The cold void left me by a lost delight!
No more shall sunrise from my opening eye
Chase his bright image glorified in dreams;
Glad hope to see him shall no longer stir
With joyous flutterings my scarce-waken'd soul;
And vainly, vainly, through yon garden bowers,
Amidst the dewy shadows, my first look
Shall seek his form! How blissful was the thought
With him to share each golden evening's peace!
How grew the longing, hour by hour, to read
His spirit yet more deeply! Day by day
How my own being, tuned to happiness,
Gave forth a voice of finer harmony!—
Now is the twilight-gloom around me fallen:
The festal day, the sun's magnificence,
All riches of this many-colour'd world,
What are they now?—dim, soulless, desolate!
Veil'd in the cloud that sinks upon my heart.

Once was each day a life!—each care was mute,

Even the low boding hush'd within the soul;

And the smooth waters of a gliding stream,

Without the rudder's aid, bore lightly on

Our fairy bark of joy!

Her companion endeavours, but in vain, to console her.

Leon. If the kind words of friendship cannot soothe,

The still, sweet influences of this fair world

Shall win thee back unconsciously to peace.

Prin. Yes! beautiful it is, the glowing world!

So many a joy keeps flitting to and fro

In all its paths, and ever, ever seems

One step, but one, removed; till our fond thirst

For the still fading fountain, step by step,

Lures to the grave! So seldom do we find

What seem'd by Nature moulded for our love,

And for our bliss endow'd—or, if we find,

So seldom to our yearning hearts can hold!

That which once freely made itself our own

Bursts from us!—that which eagerly we press'd

We coldly loose! A treasure may be ours,

Only we know it not, or know, perchance,

Unconscious of its worth!

But the dark clouds are gathering within the spirit of Tasso itself, and the

devotedness of affection would in vain avert their lightnings by the sacrifice of all its own pure enjoyments. In the solitary confinement to which the Duke has sentenced him, as a punishment for his duel with Antonio, his jealous imagination, like that of the self-torturing Rousseau, pictures the whole world as arrayed in one conspiracy against him, and he doubts even of her truth and gentleness whose watching thoughts are all for his welfare. The following passages affectingly mark the progress of the dark despondency which finally overwhelms him, though the concluding lines of the last are brightened by a ray of those immortal hopes, the light of which we could have desired to recognise more frequently in this deeply thoughtful work.

PRESENTIMENT OF HIS RUIN.

Alas! too well I feel, too true a voice
Within me whispers, that the Mighty Power
Which, on sustaining wings of strength and joy,
Bears up the healthful spirit, will but cast
Mine to the earth—will rend me utterly!——
I must away!

ON A FRIEND’S DECLARING HERSELF UNABLE TO RECOGNISE HIM.

Rightly thou speak’st—I am myself no more;
And yet in worth not less than I have been.
Seems this a dark, strange riddle? Yet,’tis none!
The gentle moon that gladdens thee by night—
Thine eye, thy spirit irresistibly
Winning with beams of love—mark! how it floats
Through the day’s glare, a pale and powerless cloud!

I am o’ercome by the full blaze of noon;

Ye know me, and I know myself no more!

ON BEING ADVISED TO REFRAIN FROM COMPOSITION.

Vainly, too vainly, ’gainst the power I strive,

Which, night and day, comes rushing through my soul!

Without that pouring forth of thought and song

My life is life no more!

Wilt thou forbid the silkworm to spin on,

When hourly, with the labour’d line, he draws

Nearer to death. In vain!—the costly web

Must from his inmost being still be wrought,

Till he lies wrapp’d in his consummate shroud.

Oh! that a gracious God to us may give

The lot of that bless’d worm!—to spread free wings,

And burst exultingly on brighter life,

In a new realm of sunshine!

He is at last released, and admitted into the presence of the Princess Leonora, to take his leave of her before commencing a distant journey. Notwithstanding his previous doubts of her interest in him, he is overcome by the pitying tenderness of her manner, and breaks into a strain of passionate gratitude and enthusiasm:—

Thou art the same pure angel, as when first

Thy radiance cross’d my path! Forgive, forgive,

If for a moment, in his blind despair,

The mortal’s troubled glance hath read thee wrong!

Once more he knows thee! His expanding soul

Flows forth to worship thee for evermore,

And his full heart dissolves in tenderness.

...

Is it false light which draws me on to thee?

Is it delirium?—Is it thought inspired,

And grasping first high truth divinely clear?

Yes! ’tis even so—the feeling which alone

Can make me bless’d on earth!

The wildness of his ecstasy at last terrifies his gentle protectress from him; he is forsaken by all as a being lost in hopeless delusion, and, being left alone tn the insulting pity of Antonio, his strength of heart is utterly subdued: he passionately bewails his weakness, and even casts down his spirit almost in wondering admiration before the calm self-collectedness of his enemy, who himself seems at last almost melted by the extremity of the poet’s desolation, as thus poured forth:—

Can I then image no high-hearted man

Whose pangs and conflicts have surpass’d mine own,

That my vex’d soul might win sustaining power

From thoughts of him? I cannot!—all is lost!

One thing alone remains, one mournful boon:

Nature on us, her suffering children, showers

The gift of tears—the impassion’d cry of grief,

When man can bear no more;—and with my woe,

With mine above all others, hath been link’d

Sad music, piercing eloquence, to pour

All, all its fulness forth! To me a God
Hath given strong utterance for mine agony,
When others, in their deep despair, are mute!
...
Thou standest calm and still, thou noble man!
I seem before thee as the troubled wave:
But oh! be thoughtful!—in thy lofty strength
Exult thou not! By nature's might alike
That rock was fix'd, that quivering wave was made
The sensitive of storm! She sends her blasts—
The living water flies—it quakes and swells,
And bows down tremblingly with breaking foam;
Yet once that mirror gave the bright sun back
In calm transparence—once the gentle stars
Lay still upon its undulating breast!
Now the sweet peace is gone—the glory now
Departed from the wave! I know myself
No more in these dark perils, and no more
I blush to lose that knowledge. From the bark
Is wrench'd the rudder, and through all its frame
The quivering vessel groans. Beneath my feet
The rocking earth gives way—to thee I cling—
I grasp thee with mine arms. In wild despair
So doth the struggling sailor clasp the rock

Whereon he perishes!

And thus painfully ends this celebrated drama, the catastrophe being that of the spiritual wreck within, unmingled with the terrors drawn from outward circumstances and change. The majestic lines in which Byron has embodied the thoughts of the captive Tasso, will form a fine contrast and relief to the music of despair with which Goethe's work is closed:—

"All this hath somewhat worn me, and may wear,

But must be borne. I stoop not to despair;

For I have baffled with mine agony,

And made me wings wherewith to overfly

The narrow circus of my dungeon-wall;

And freed the Holy Sepulchre from thrall;

And revell'd among men and things divine,

And pour'd my spirit over Palestine,

In honour of the sacred war for Him,

The God who was on earth and is in heaven;

For He hath strengthen'd me in heart and limb.

That through this sufferance I might be forgiven,

I have employ'd my penance to record

How Salem's shrine was won, and how adored."

SCENES FROM "IPHIGENIA."

A FRAGMENT.

There is a charm of antique grace, of the majestic repose resulting from a faultless symmetry, about the whole of this composition, which inclines us to rank it as among the most consummate works of art ever achieved by the master-mind of its

author. The perfection of its design and finish is analogous to that of a Grecian temple, seen as the crown of some old classic height, with all its pure outlines—all the delicate proportions of its airy pillars—brought into bold relief by the golden sunshine, and against the unclouded blue of its native heavens. Complete within itself, the harmonious edifice is thus also to the mind and eye of the beholder; they are filled, and desire no more—they even feel that more would be but encumbrance upon the fine adjustment of the well-ordered parts constituting the graceful whole. It sends no vague dreams to wander through infinity, such as are excited by a Gothic minster, where the slight pinnacles striving upward, like the free but still baffled thought of the architect—the clustering pillars and high arches imitating the bold combinations of mysterious forests—the many-branching cells, and long visionary aisles, of which waving torchlight or uncertain glimpses of the moon seem the fittest illumination—ever suggest ideas of some conception in the originally moulding mind, far more vast than the means allotted to human accomplishment—of struggling endeavour, and painfully submitted will. Akin to the spirit of such creations is that of the awful but irregular Faust, and other works of Goethe, in which the restless questionings, the lofty aspirations, and dark misgivings of the human soul, are perpetually called up to "come like shadows, so depart," across the stormy splendours of the scene; and the mind is engaged in ceaseless conflict with the interminable mysteries of life. It is otherwise with the work before us: overshadowed, as it were, by the dark wings of the inflexible Destiny which hovers above the children of Tantalus, the spirit of the imaginary personages, as well as of the reader, here moves acquiescently within the prescribed circle of events, and is seldom tempted beyond, to plunge into the abyss of general speculations upon the lot of humanity.

I.

JOY OF PYLADES ON HEARING HIS NATIVE LANGUAGE.

O sweetest voice! O bless’d familiar sound
Of mother-words heard in the stranger’s land!
I see the blue hills of my native shore,
The far blue hills again! those cordial tones,
Before the captive bid them freshly rise
For ever welcome! Oh, by this deep joy,
Know the true son of Greece!

II.

EXCLAMATIONS OF IPHIGENIA ON SEEING HER BROTHER.

Oh, hear me! look upon me! How my heart,
After long desolation, now unfolds
Unto this new delight, to kiss thy head,
Thou dearest, dearest one of all on earth!
To clasp thee with my arms, which were but thrown
On the void winds before! Oh, give me way!
Give my soul’s rapture way! The eternal fount
Leaps not more brightly forth from cliff to cliff
Of high Parnassus, down the golden vale,
Than the strong joy bursts gushing from my heart,
And swells around me to a flood of bliss—
Orestes!—O my brother!

III.

LOT OF MAN AND WOMAN COMPARED BY IPHIGENIA.

Man by the battle’s hour immortalised

May fall, yet leave his name to living song;
But of forsaken woman's countless tears,
What recks the after-world? The poet's voice
Tells naught of all the slow, sad, weary days,
And long, long nights, through which the lonely soul
Pour'd itself forth, consumed itself away,
In passionate adjurings, vain desires,
And ceaseless weepings for the early lost,
The loved and vanish'd!

IV.

LONGING OF ORESTES FOR REPOSE.

One draught from Lethe's flood!—reach me one draught,
One last cool goblet fill'd with dewy peace!
Soon will the spasm of life departing leave
My bosom free! Soon shall my spirit flow
Along the deep waves of forgetfulness,
Calmly and silently! away to you,
Ye dead! Ye dwellers of the eternal cloud!
Take home the son of earth, and let him steep
His o'erworn senses in your dim repose
For evermore.

V.

CONTINUATION OF ORESTES' SOLILOQUY.

Hark! in the trembling leaves

Mysterious whispers: hark! a rushing sound
Sweeps through yon twilight depth!—e'en now they come,
They throng to greet their guest! And who are they
Rejoicing each with each in stately joy,
As a king's children gather'd for the hour
Of some high festival! Exultingly,
And kindred-like, and godlike, on they pass—
The glorious, wandering shapes! aged and young,
Proud men and royal women! Lo! my race—
My sire's ancestral race!

RECORDS OF THE SPRING OF 1834.

[These sonnets, written in the months of April, May, and June, were intended, together with the Records of the Autumn of 1834, to form a continuation of the series entitled "Sonnets, Devotional and Memorial."]

A VERNAL THOUGHT.

O festal Spring! midst thy victorious glow,
Far-spreading o'er the kindled woods and plains,
And streams, that bound to meet thee from their chains,
Well might there lurk the shadow of a woe
For human hearts, and in the exulting flow
Of thy rich songs a melancholy tone,
Were we of mould all earthly—we alone,
Sever'd from thy great spell, and doom'd to go
Farther, still farther, from our sunny time,

Never to feel the breathings of our prime,
Never to flower again! But we, O Spring!
Cheer’d by deep spirit-whispers not of earth,
Press to the regions of thy heavenly birth,
As here thy flowers and birds press on to bloom and sing.

TO THE SKY.

Far from the rustlings of the poplar-bough,
Which o’er my opening life wild music made,
Far from the green hills with their heathery glow
And flashing streams whereby my childhood play’d;
In the dim city, midst the sounding flow
Of restless life, to thee in love I turn
O thou rich Sky! and from thy splendours learn
How song-birds come and part, flowers wane and blow.
With thee all shapes of glory find their home,
And thou hast taught me well, majestic dome!
By stars, by sunsets, by soft clouds which rove
Thy blue expanse, or sleep in silvery rest,
That Nature’s God hath left no spot unbless’d
With founts of beauty for the eye of love.

ON RECORDS OF IMMATURE GENIUS.[432]

Oh! judge in thoughtful tenderness of those
Who, richly dower’d for life, are call’d to die
Ere the soul’s flame, through storms, hath won repose

In truth’s divinest ether, still and high!

Let their mind’s riches claim a trustful sigh!

Deem them but sad, sweet fragments of a strain,

First notes of some yet struggling harmony,

By the strong rush, the crowding joy and pain

Of many inspirations met, and held

From its true sphere,—oh! soon it might have swell’d

Majestically forth! Nor doubt that He,

Whose touch mysterious may on earth dissolve

Those links of music, elsewhere will evolve

Their grand consummate hymn, from passion-gusts made free!

[432] Written after reading some of the earlier poems of the late Mrs Tighe, which had been lent her in manuscript.

ON WATCHING THE FLIGHT OF A SKYLARK.

Upward and upward still!—in pearly light

The clouds are steep’d! the vernal spirit sighs

With bliss in every wind, and crystal skies

Woo thee, O bird! to thy celestial height.

Bird, piercing heaven with music! thy free flight

Hath meaning for all bosoms; most of all

For those wherein the rapture and the might

Of poesy lie deep, and strive, and burn,

For their high place. O heirs of genius! learn

From the sky’s bird your way! No joy may fill

Your hearts, no gift of holy strength be won
To bless your songs, ye children of the sun!
Save by the unswerving flight, upward and upward still!

A THOUGHT OF THE SEA.

My earliest memories to thy shores are bound,
Thy solemn shores, thou ever-chanting main!
The first rich sunsets, kindling thought profound
In my lone being, made thy restless plain
As the vast, shining floor of some dread fane,
All paved with glass and fire. Yet, O blue deep!
Thou that no trace of human hearts dost keep,
Never to thee did love with silvery chain
Draw my soul's dream, which through all nature sought
What waves deny,—some bower of steadfast bliss,
A home to twine with fancy, feeling, thought,
As with sweet flowers. But chasten'd hope for this
Now turns from earth's green valleys, as from thee,
To that sole changeless world, where "there is no more sea."[433]

[433] [The sight and sound of the sea were always connected in her mind with melancholy associations; with

"Doubt, and something dark.
Of the old sea some reverential fear;"

with images of storm and desolation, of shipwreck and sea-burial: the last, indeed,

was so often present to her imagination, and has so frequently been introduced into her poetry, that any one inclined to superstitious presentiments might almost have been disposed to fancy it a foreshadowing of some such dark fate in store either for herself or for some one dear to her. These associations, like those awakened by the wind, were perfectly distinct from any thing of personal timidity, and were the more indefinable, as she had never suffered any calamity at all connected with the sea: none of those she loved had been consigned to its reckless waters, nor had she ever seen it in all its terrors, for the coast on which her early years were passed is by no means a rugged or dangerous one, and is seldom visited by disaster.

“Are all these notes in thee, wild wind! these many notes in thee? Far in our own unfathom’d souls their fount must surely be; Yes! buried, but unsleeping there, thought watches, memory lies, From whose deep urn the tones are poured through all earth’s harmonies.”

In one of her later sonnets on this subject, a chord is struck which may perhaps find an echo in other bosoms:—

——“Yet, O blue deep!” etc.

The same feeling is expressed in one of her letters:—“Did you ever observe how strangely sounds and images of waters—rushing torrents, and troubled ocean-waves, are mingled with the visionary distresses of dreams and delirium? To me there is no more perfect emblem of peace than that expressed by the Scriptural phrase, ‘There shall be no more sea.’”

How forcible is the contrast between the essential womanliness of these associations, so full of “the still, sad music of humanity,” and the “stern delight” with which Lord Byron, in his magnificent apostrophe to the Sea, exults in its ministry of wrath, and recounts, as with a fierce joy, its dealings with its victim, man!

——“The vile strength he wields

For earth’s destruction, thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send’st him, shivering in thy playful spray,
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth—there let them lay.”
Childe Harold.]

DISTANT SOUND OF THE SEA AT EVENING.

Yet, rolling far up some green mountain-dale,
Oft let me hear, as ofttimes I have heard,
Thy swell, thou deep! when evening calls the bird
And bee to rest; when summer-tints grow pale,
Seen through the gathering of a dewy veil;
And peasant-steps are hastening to repose,
And gleaming flocks lie down, and flower-cups close
To the last whisper of the falling gale.
Then midst the dying of all other sound,
When the soul hears thy distant voice profound,
Lone worshipping, and knows that through the night
’Twill worship still, then most its anthem-tone
Speaks to our being of the Eternal One,
Who girds tired nature with unslumbering might.

THE RIVER CLWYD IN NORTH WALES.

O Cambrian river! with slow music gliding

By pastoral hills, old woods, and ruin’d towers;
Now midst thy reeds and golden willows hiding,
Now gleaming forth by some rich bank of flowers;
Long flow’d the current of my life’s clear hours
Onward with thine, whose voice yet haunts my dream,
Tho’ time and change, and other mightier powers,
Far from thy side have borne me. Thou, smooth stream!
Art winding still thy sunny meads along,
Murmuring to cottage and gray hall thy song,
Low, sweet, unchanged. My being’s tide hath pass’d
Through rocks and storms; yet will I not complain,
If, thus wrought free and pure from earthly stain,
Brightly its waves may reach their parent-deep at last.

ORCHARD-BLOSSOMS.

Doth thy heart stir within thee at the sight
Of orchard-blooms upon the mossy bough?
Doth their sweet household-smile waft back the glow
Of childhood’s morn—the wondering, fresh delight
In earth’s new colouring, then all strangely bright,
A joy of fairyland? Doth some old nook,
Haunted by visions of thy first-loved book,
Rise on thy soul, with faint-streak’d blossoms white
Shower’d o’er the turf, and the lone primrose-knot,
And robin’s nest, still faithful to the spot,

And the bee’s dreary chime? O gentle friend!
The world’s cold breath, not Time’s, this life bereaves
Of vernal gifts: time hallows what he leaves,
And will for us endear spring-memories to the end.

8th May.

TO A DISTANT SCENE.

Still are the cowslips from thy bosom springing,
O far-off, grassy dell?—and dost thou see,
When southern winds first wake their vernal singing,
The star-gleam of the wood anemone?
Doth the shy ringdove haunt thee yet? the bee
Hang on thy flowers as when I breathed farewell
To their wild blooms? and, round my beechen tree,
Still, in green softness, doth the moss-bank swell?
Oh, strange illusion! by the fond heart wrought,
Whose own warm life suffuses nature’s face!
My being’s tide of many-colour’d thought
Hath pass’d from thee; and now, rich, leafy place!
I paint thee oft, scarce consciously, a scene,
Silent, forsaken, dim, shadow’d by what hath been.

A REMEMBRANCE OF GRASMERE.[434]

O vale and lake, within your mountain-urn
Smiling so tranquilly, and set so deep!
Oft doth your dreamy loveliness return,

Colouring the tender shadows of my sleep

With light Elysian; for the hues that steep

Your shores in melting lustre, seem to float

On golden clouds from spirit-lands remote,

Isles of the blest; and in our memory keep

Their place with holiest harmonies. Fair scene,

Most loved by evening and her dewy star!

Oh! ne'er may man, with touch unhallow'd, jar

The perfect music of thy charm serene!

Still, still unchanged, may one sweet region wear

Smiles that subdue the soul to love, and tears, and prayer.

[434] It would have been very dear to her, could she have foreseen the delicate and appropriate commemoration awarded to her by Mr Wordsworth, in the elegiac stanzas which record the high names of some of his most distinguished contemporaries, (Scott, Coleridge, Lamb, Crabbe, and Hogg,) summoned in quick succession "to the land whence none return:"—

"Mourn rather for that holy spirit,

Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep,

For her who, ere her summer faded,

Has sunk into a breathless sleep."

THOUGHTS CONNECTED WITH TREES.

Trees, gracious trees!—how rich a gift ye are,

Crown of the earth! to human hearts and eyes!

How doth the thought of home, in lands afar,

Link'd with your forms and kindly whisperings rise!

How the whole picture of a childhood lies
Oft midst your boughs forgotten, buried deep!
Till, gazing through them up the summer skies,
As hush’d we stand, a breeze perchance may creep,
And old, sweet leaf-sounds reach the inner world
Where memory coils—and lo! at once unfurl’d,
The past, a glowing scroll, before our sight
Spreads clear; while, gushing from their long-seal’d urn,
Young thoughts, pure dreams, undoubting prayers return,
And a lost mother’s eye gives back its holy light.

THE SAME.

And ye are strong to shelter!—all meek things,
All that need home and covert, love your shade!
Birds of shy song, and low-voiced quiet springs,
And nun-like violets, by the winds betray’d.
Childhood beneath your fresh green tents hath play’d
With his first primrose-wreath: there love hath sought
A veiling gloom for his unutter’d thought;
And silent grief, of day’s keen glare afraid,
A refuge for her tears; and ofttimes there
Hath lone devotion found a place of prayer,
A native temple, solemn, hush’d, and dim;
For wheresoe’er your murmuring tremours thrill
The woody twilight, there man’s heart hath still

Confess'd a spirit's breath, and heard a ceaseless hymn.

ON READING PAUL AND VIRGINIA IN CHILDHOOD.

O gentle story of the Indian isle!
I loved thee in my lonely childhood well
On the sea-shore, when day's last, purple smile
Slept on the waters, and their hollow swell
And dying cadence lent a deeper spell
Unto thine ocean-pictures. Midst thy palms
And strange bright birds, my fancy joy'd to dwell,
And watch the southern cross through midnight calms,
And track the spicy woods. Yet more I bless'd
Thy vision of sweet love—kind, trustful, true,
Lighting the citron groves, a heavenly guest,
With such pure smiles as Paradise once knew.
Even then my young heart wept o'er this world's power
To reach with blight that holiest Eden-flower.

A THOUGHT AT SUNSET.

Still that last look is solemn! though thy rays,
O sun! to-morrow will give back, we know,
The joy to nature's heart. Yet through the glow
Of clouds that mantle thy decline, our gaze
Tracks thee with love half-fearful: and in days
When earth too much adored thee, what a swell
Of mournful passion, deepening mighty lays,

Told how the dying bade thy light farewell,
O sun of Greece! O glorious, festal sun!
Lost, lost!—for them thy golden hours were done,
And darkness lay before them! Happier far
Are we, not thus to thy bright wheels enchain'd,
Not thus for thy last parting unsustain'd—
Heirs of a purer day, with its unsetting star.

IMAGES OF PATRIARCHAL LIFE.

Calm scenes of patriarch life! how long a power
Your unworn pastoral images retain
O'er the true heart, which in its childhood's hour
Drank their pure freshness deep! The camels' train
Winding in patience o'er the desert plain—
The tent, the palm-tree, the reposing flock,
The gleaming fount, the shadow of the rock—
Oh! by how subtle, yet how strong a chain,
And in the influence of its touch how bless'd,
Are these things link'd, in many a thoughtful breast,
To household-memories, thro' all change endear'd!
—The matin bird, the ripple of a stream
Beside our native porch, the hearth-light's gleam,
The voices, earliest by the soul revered!

ATTRACTION OF THE EAST.

What secret current of man's nature turns

Unto the golden East with ceaseless flow?
Still, where the sunbeam at its fountain burns,
The pilgrim-spirit would adore and glow;
Rapt in high thoughts, though weary, faint, and slow,
Still doth the traveller through the deserts wind,
Led by those old Chaldean stars, which know
Where pass'd the shepherd-fathers of mankind.
Is it some quenchless instinct, which from far
Still points to where our alienated home
Lay in bright peace? O thou true Eastern star!
Saviour! atoning Lord! where'er we roam,
Draw still our hearts to thee, else, else how vain
Their hope, the fair lost birthright to regain!

TO AN AGED FRIEND.[435]

Not long thy voice amongst us may be heard,
Servant of God!—thy day is almost done;
The charm now lingering in thy look and word
Is that which hangs about thy setting sun—
That which the meekness of decay hath won
Still from revering love. Yet doth the sense
Of life immortal—progress but begun—
Pervade thy mien with such clear eloquence,
That hope, not sadness, breathes from thy decline;
And the loved flowers which round thee smile farewell

Of more than vernal glory seem to tell,

By thy pure spirit touch'd with light divine;

While we, to whom its parting gleams are given,

Forget the grave in trustful thoughts of heaven.

[435] The sonnet "To an aged Friend," first published in Mrs Hemans's Poetical Remains, was addressed to Dr Perceval of Dublin. The sonnet "To the Datura Arborea," in the same volume, was written after seeing a superb specimen of that striking plant in Dr Perceval's beautiful greenhouse at Annefield.

Dr Perceval died 3d March 1839, equally respected for his talents and virtues.

A HAPPY HOUR.

["The 'Thoughts' were published in the New Monthly Magazine for March 1835. They are intensely individual. One of them, on Retzsch's design of the Angel of Death, was suggested by an impressive description in Mrs Jameson's 'Visits and Sketches.' In another, she speculates earnestly and reverently upon the direction of the flight of the spirit when the soul and body shall part; in others again, she recurs tenderly to the haunts and pleasures of childhood, which had of late been present to her memory with more than usual force and freshness. To these the following sonnet refers, dated 21st May 1834, which, as far as I am aware, has not hitherto been published."—Chorley's Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 339-40.]

Oh! what a joy to feel that, in my breast,

The founts of childhood's vernal fancies lay

Still pure, though heavily and long repress'd

By early-blighted leaves, which o'er their way

Dark summer-storms had heaped. But free, glad play

Once more was given them: to the sunshine's glow,

And the sweet wood-song's penetrating flow,

And to the wandering primrose-breath of May,

And the rich hawthorn-odours, forth they sprung.

Oh! not less freshly bright, that now a thought

Of spiritual presence o’er them hung,

And of immortal life! a germ, unwrought

In childhood’s soul to power—now strong, serene,

And full of love and light, colouring the whole blest scene.

FOLIAGE.

Come forth, and let us through our hearts receive

The joy of verdure! See! the honey’d lime

Showers cool green light o’er banks where wild-flowers weave

Thick tapestry, and woodbine-tendrils climb

Up the brown oak from buds of moss and thyme.

The rich deep masses of the sycamore

Hang heavy with the fulness of their prime;

And the white poplar, from its foliage hoar,

Scatters forth gleams like moonlight, with each gale

That sweeps the boughs: the chestnut-flowers are past,

The crowning glories of the hawthorn fail,

But arches of sweet eglantine are cast

From every hedge. Oh! never may we lose,

Dear friend! our fresh delight in simplest nature’s hues!

2d June.

A PRAYER.

Father in heaven! from whom the simplest flower,
On the high Alps or fiery desert thrown,
Draws not sweet odour or young life alone,
But the deep virtue of an inborn power,
To cheer the wanderer in his fainting hour
With thoughts of Thee—to strengthen, to infuse
Faith, love, and courage, by the tender hues
That speak thy presence! oh, with such a dower
Grace thou my song!—the precious gift bestow
From thy pure Spirit's treasury divine,
To wake one tear of purifying flow,
To soften one wrung heart for thee and thine;
So shall the life breathed through the lowly strain
Be as the meek wild-flower's—if transient, yet not vain.

PRAYER CONTINUED.

"What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raise and support."—Milton.

Far are the wings of intellect astray
That strive not, Father! to thy heavenly seat;
They rove, but mount not, and the tempests beat
Still on their plumes. O Source of mental day!
Chase from before my spirit's track the array
Of mists and shadows, raised by earthly care,
In troubled hosts that cross the purer air,

And veil the opening of the starry way,
Which brightens on to thee! Oh, guide thou right
My thought's weak pinion; clear my inward sight,
The eternal springs of beauty to discern,
Welling beside thy throne; unseal mine ear,
Nature's true oracles in joy to hear;
Keep my soul wakeful still to listen and to learn.

MEMORIAL OF A CONVERSATION.

Yes! all things tell us of a birthright lost—
A brightness from our nature pass'd away!
Wanderers we seem that from an alien coast
Would turn to where their Father's mansion lay;
And but by some lone flower, that midst decay
Smiles mournfully, or by some sculptured stone,
Revealing dimly, with gray moss o'ergrown,
The faint, worn impress of its glory's day,
Can trace their once-free heritage, though dreams,
Fraught with its picture, oft in startling gleams
Flash o'er their souls. But One, oh! One alone,
For us the ruin'd fabric may rebuild,
And bid the wilderness again be fill'd
With Eden-flowers—One mighty to atone!

27th June.[436]

[436] [For this corrected chronology of these sonnets, we are indebted to the Rev. R.

P. Graves, Bowness; as also for some improved readings, and the MS. of “A Happy Hour.”]

RECORDS OF THE AUTUMN OF 1834.

THE RETURN TO POETRY.

Once more the eternal melodies from far
Woo me like songs of home: once more discerning,
Through fitful clouds, the pure majestic star
Above the poet’s world serenely burning,
Thither my soul, fresh-wing’d by love, is turning,
As o’er the waves the wood-bird seeks her nest,
For those green heights of dewy stillness yearning,
Whence glorious minds o’erlook this earth’s unrest.
Now be the Spirit of heaven’s truth my guide
Through the bright land!—that no brief gladness, found
In passing bloom, rich odour, or sweet sound,
May lure my footsteps from their aim aside:
Their true, high quest—to seek, if ne’er to gain,
The inmost, purest shrine of that august domain.

9th September.

TO SILVIO PELLICO, ON READING HIS “PRIGIONE.”

There are who climb the mountain’s heathery side,
Or, in life’s vernal strength triumphant, urge
The bark’s fleet rushing through the crested surge,
Or spur the courser’s fiery race of pride

Over the green savannahs, gleaming wide
By some vast lake; yet thus, on foaming sea,
Or chainless wild, reign far less nobly free
Than thou, in that lone dungeon, glorified
By thy brave suffering. Thou from its dark cell
Fierce thought and baleful passion didst exclude,
Filling the dedicated solitude
With God; and where His Spirit deigns to dwell,
Though the worn frame in fetters withering lie,
There throned in peace divine is liberty!

TO THE SAME, RELEASED.[437]

How flows thy being now?—like some glad hymn
One strain of solemn rapture?—doth thine eye
Wander through tears of voiceless feeling dim
O’er the crown’d Alps, that, midst the upper sky,
Sleep in the sunlight of thine Italy?
Or is thy gaze of reverent love profound
Unto these dear, parental faces bound,
Which, with their silvery hair, so oft glanced by,
Haunting thy prison-dreams? Where’er thou art,
Blessings be shed upon thine inmost heart!
Joy, from kind looks, blue skies, and flowery sod,
For that pure voice of thoughtful wisdom sent
Forth from thy cell, in sweetness eloquent

Of love to man, and quenchless trust in God!

[437] In reference to these two sonnets, Mrs Hemans thus remarks in a letter to a friend;—"I wrote them only a few days ago (almost the first awakening of my spirit, indeed, after a long silence and darkness,) upon reading that delightful book of Pellico's,[438] which I borrowed in consequence of what you had told me of it. I know not when I have read any thing which has so deeply impressed me: the gradual brightening of heart and soul into 'the perfect day' of Christian excellence through all those fiery trials, presents, I think, one of the most touching, as well as instructing pictures ever contemplated. How beautiful is the scene between him and Oroboni, in which they mutually engage to shrink not from the avowal of their faith, should they ever return into the world! But I could say so much on this subject, which has quite taken hold of my thoughts, that it would lead me to fill up my whole letter."

In another letter she spoke further of this book, as a "work with which I have been both impressed and delighted, and one which I strongly recommend you to procure. It is the Prigioni of Silvio Pellico, a distinguished young Italian poet, who incurred the suspicions of the Austrian government, and was condemned to the penalty of the carcere duro during ten years, of which this most interesting work contains the narrative. It is deeply affecting, from the heart-springing eloquence with which he details his varied sufferings. What forms, however, the great charm of the work, is the gradual and almost unconsciously-revealed exaltation of the sufferer's character, spiritualised through suffering, into the purest Christian excellence. It is beautiful to see the lessons of trust in God, and love to mankind, brought out more and more into shining light from the depth of the dungeon-gloom; and all this crowned at last by the release of the noble, all-forgiving captive, and his restoration to his aged father and mother, whose venerable faces seem perpetually to have haunted the solitude of his cell. The book is written in the most classic Italian, and will, I am sure, be one to afford you lasting delight."

[438] “Le mie Prigioni.”

ON A SCENE IN THE DARGLE.[439]

’Twas a bright moment of my life when first,
O thou pure stream through rocky portals flowing!
That temple-chamber of thy glory burst
On my glad sight! Thy pebbly couch lay glowing
With deep mosaic hues; and, richly throwing
O’er thy cliff-walls a tinge of autumn’s vest,
High bloom’d the heath-flowers, and the wild wood’s crest
Was touch’d with gold. Flow ever thus, bestowing
Gifts of delight, sweet stream! on all who move
Gently along thy shores; and oh! if love—
True love, in secret nursed, with sorrow fraught—
Should sometimes bear his treasured griefs to thee,
Then full of kindness let thy music be,
Singing repose to every troubled thought!

[439] A beautiful valley in the county of Wicklow.

ON THE DATURA ARBOREA.

Majestic plant! such fairy dreams as lie,
Nursed, where the bee sucks in the cowslip’s bell,
Are not thy train. Those flowers of vase-like swell,
Clear, large, with dewy moonlight fill’d from high,
And in their monumental purity
Serenely drooping, round thee seem to draw

Visions link’d strangely with that silent awe
Which broods o’er sculpture’s works. A meet ally
For those heroic forms, the simply grand
Art thou: and worthy, carved by plastic hand,
Above some kingly poet’s tomb to shine
In spotless marble; honouring one whose strain
Soar’d, upon wings of thought that knew no stain,
Free through the starry heavens of truth divine.

ON READING COLERIDGE’S EPITAPH,
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

“Stop, Christian passer-by! stop, child of God!
And read with gentle breast:—Beneath this sod
A Poet lies, or that which once seem’d he:
Oh! lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.!
That he, who once in vain, with toil of breath,
Found death in life, may here find life in death:
Mercy, for praise—to be forgiven, for fame—
He ask’d and hoped through Christ. Do thou the same.”

Spirit! so oft in radiant freedom soaring
High through seraphic mysteries unconfined,
And oft, a diver through the deep of mind,
Its caverns, far below its waves, exploring;
And oft such strains of breezy music pouring,
As, with the floating sweetness of their sighs,

Could still all fevers of the heart, restoring
Awhile that freshness left in Paradise;
Say, of those glorious wanderings what the goal?
What the rich fruitage to man’s kindred soul
From wealth of thine bequeathed? O strong and high,
And sceptred intellect! thy goal confess’d
Was the Redeemer’s Cross—thy last bequest
One lesson breathing thence profound humility!

DESIGN AND PERFORMANCE.

They float before my soul, the fair designs
Which I would body forth to life and power,
Like clouds, that with their wavering hues and lines
Portray majestic buildings:—dome and tower,
Bright spire, that through the rainbow and the shower
Points to th’ unchanging stars; and high arcade,
Far-sweeping to some glorious altar, made
For holiest rites. Meanwhile the waning hour
Melts from me, and by fervent dreams o’erwrought,
I sink. O friend! O link’d with each high thought!
Aid me, of those rich visions to detain
All I may grasp; until thou see’st fulfill’d,
While time and strength allow, my hope to build
For lowly hearts devout, but one enduring fane!

18th October.

HOPE OF FUTURE COMMUNION WITH NATURE.

If e’er again my spirit be allow’d
Converse with Nature in her chambers deep,
Where lone, and mantled with the rolling cloud,
She broods o’er new-born waters, as they leap
In sword-like flashes down the heathery steep
From caves of mystery;—if I roam once more
Where dark pines quiver to the torrent’s roar,
And voiceful oaks respond;—may I not reap
A more ennobling joy, a loftier power,
Than e’er was shed on life’s more vernal hour
From such communion? Yes! I then shall know
That not in vain have sorrow, love, and thought
Their long, still work of preparation wrought,
For that more perfect sense of God reveal’d below.

DREAMS OF THE DEAD.

Oft in still night-dreams a departed face
Bends o’er me with sweet earnestness of eye,
Wearing no more of earthly pains a trace,
But all the tender pity that may lie
On the clear brow of Immortality,
Calm, yet profound. Soft rays illume that mien;
Th’ unshadow’d moonlight of some far-off sky
Around it floats transparently serene

As a pure veil of waters. O rich Sleep!
The spells are mighty in thy regions deep,
To glorify with reconciling breath,
Effacing, brightening, giving forth to shine
Beauty’s high truth; and how much more divine
Thy power when link’d, in this, with thy strong brother—Death!

THE POETRY OF THE PSALMS.

Nobly thy song, O minstrel! rush’d to meet
Th’ Eternal on the pathway of the blast,
With darkness round him as a mantle cast,
And cherubim to waft his flying seat.
Amidst the hills that smoked beneath his feet,
With trumpet-voice thy spirit call’d aloud,
And bade the trembling rocks his name repeat,
And the bent cedars, and the bursting cloud.
But far more gloriously to earth made known
By that high strain, than by the thunder’s tone,
The flashing torrents, or the ocean’s roll,
Jehovah spake, through thee imbreathing fire,
Nature’s vast realms for ever to inspire
With the deep worship of a living soul.

DESPONDENCY AND ASPIRATION.

“Par correr miglior acqua alza le vele,
Omai la navicella del mio Intelletto.”—Dante.

My soul was mantled with dark shadows, born
Of lonely Fear, disquieted in vain;
Its phantoms hung around the star of morn,
A cloud-like, weeping train:
Thro’ the long day they dimm’d the autumn gold
On all the glistening leaves, and wildly roll’d,
When the last farewell flush of light was glowing
Across the sunset sky,
O’er its rich isles of vaporous glory throwing
One melancholy dye.
And when the solemn night
Came rushing with her might
Of stormy oracles from caves unknown,
Then with each fitful blast
Prophetic murmurs pass’d,
Wakening or answering some deep Sybil-tone
Far buried in my breast, yet prompt to rise
With every gusty wail that o’er the wind-harp flies.
“Fold, fold thy wings,” they cried, “and strive no more—
Faint spirit! strive no more: for thee too strong
Are outward ill and wrong,
And inward wasting fires! Thou canst not soar
Free on a starry way,
Beyond their blighting sway,

At heaven’s high gate serenely to adore!
How shouldst thou hope earth’s fetters to unbind!
O passionate, yet weak! O trembler to the wind!
“Never shall aught but broken music flow
From joy of thine, deep love, or tearful woe—
Such homeless notes as through the forest sigh,
From the reeds’ hollow shaken,
When sudden breezes waken
Their vague, wild symphony.
No power is theirs, and no abiding-place
In human hearts; their sweetness leaves no trace—
Born only so to die!
“Never shall aught but perfume, faint and vain,
On the fleet pinion of the changeful hour,
From thy bruised life again
A moment’s essence breathe;
Thy life, whose trampled flower
Into the blessed wreath
Of household-charities no longer bound,
Lies pale and withering on the barren ground.
“So fade, fade on! Thy gift of love shall cling
A coiling sadness round thy heart and brain—
A silent, fruitless, yet undying thing,
All sensitive to pain!

And still the shadow of vain dreams shall fall
O’er thy mind’s world, a daily darkening pall.
Fold, then, thy wounded wing, and sink subdued
In cold and unrepining quietude!”
Then my soul yielded: spells of numbing breath
Crept o’er it heavy with a dew of death—
Its powers, like leaves before the night-rain, closing;
And, as by conflict of wild sea-waves toss’d
On the chill bosom of some desert coast,
Mutely and hopelessly I lay reposing.
When silently it seem’d
As if a soft mist gleam’d
Before my passive sight, and, slowly curling,
To many a shape and hue
Of vision’d beauty grew,
Like a wrought banner, fold by fold unfurling.
Oh! the rich scenes that o’er mine inward eye
Unrolling then swept by
With dreamy motion! Silvery seas were there,
Lit by large dazzling stars, and arch’d by skies
Of southern midnight’s most transparent dyes;
And gemm’d with many an island, wildly fair,
Which floated past me into orient day,
Still gathering lustre on th’ illumin’d way,

Till its high groves of wondrous flowering-trees
Colour’d the silvery seas.
And then a glorious mountain-chain uprose,
Height above spiry height!
A soaring solitude of woods and snows,
All steep’d in golden light!
While as it pass’d, those regal peaks unveiling,
I heard, methought, a waving of dread wings,
And mighty sounds, as if the vision hailing,
From lyres that quiver’d through ten thousand strings—
Or as if waters, forth to music leaping
From many a cave, the Alpine Echo’s hall,
On their bold way victoriously were sweeping,
Link’d in majestic anthems!—while through all
That billowy swell and fall,
Voices, like ringing crystal, fill’d the air
With inarticulate melody, that stirr’d
My being’s core; then, moulding into word
Their piercing sweetness, bade me rise, and bear
In that great choral strain my trembling part,
Of tones by love and faith struck from a human heart.
Return no more, vain bodings of the night!
A happier oracle within my soul
Hath swell’d to power; a clear, unwavering light

Mounts through the battling clouds that round me roll;
And to a new control
Nature’s full harp gives forth rejoicing tones,
Wherein my glad sense owns
The accordant rush of elemental sound
To one consummate harmony profound—
One grand Creation-Hymn,
Whose notes the seraphim
Lift to the glorious height of music wing’d and crown’d.
Shall not those notes find echoes in my lyre,
Faithful though faint? Shall not my spirit’s fire,
If slowly, yet unswervingly, ascend
Now to its fount and end?
Shall not my earthly love, all purified,
Shine forth a heavenward guide,
An angel of bright power—and strongly bear
My being upward into holier air,
Where fiery passion-clouds have no abode,
And the sky’s temple-arch o’erflows with God?
The radiant hope new-born
Expands like rising morn
In my life’s life: and as a ripening rose
The crimson shadow of its glory throws
More vivid, hour by hour, on some pure stream;

So from that hope are spreading
Rich hues, o’er nature shedding
Each day a clearer, spiritual gleam.
Let not those rays fade from me!—once enjoy’d,
Father of Spirits! let them not depart—
Leaving the chill’d earth, without form and void,
Darken’d by mine own heart!
Lift, aid, sustain me! Thou, by whom alone
All lovely gifts and pure
In the soul’s grasp endure;
Thou, to the steps of whose eternal throne
All knowledge flows—a sea for evermore
Breaking its crested waves on that sole shore—
Oh, consecrate my life! that I may sing
Of thee with joy that hath a living spring,
In a full heart of music! Let my lays
Through the resounding mountains waft thy praise,
And with that theme the wood’s green cloisters fill.
And make their quivering, leafy dimness thrill
To the rich breeze of song! Oh! let me wake
The deep religion, which hath dwelt from yore
Silently brooding by lone cliff and lake,
And wildest river-shore!
And let me summon all the voices dwelling

Where eagles build, and cavern'd rills are welling,
And where the cataract's organ-peal is swelling,
In that one spirit gather'd to adore!
Forgive, O Father! if presumptuous thought
Too daringly in aspiration rise!
Let not thy child all vainly have been taught
By weakness, and by wanderings, and by sighs
Of sad confession! Lowly be my heart,
And on its penitential altar spread
The offerings worthless, till thy grace impart
The fire from heaven, whose touch alone can shed
Life, radiance, virtue!—let that vital spark
Pierce my whole being, wilder'd else and dark!
Thine are all holy things—oh, make me thine!
So shall I, too, be pure—a living shrine
Unto that Spirit which goes forth from thee,
Strong and divinely free,
Bearing thy gifts of wisdom on its flight,
And brooding o'er them with a dove-like wing,
Till thought, word, song, to thee in worship spring,
Immortally endow'd for liberty and light.

[This exquisite poem was composed during the Author's last illness; and the following account of her situation at the time, from the pen of her sister, cannot fail to be read with a deep and painful interest. It is another forcible, visible illustration

of “the ruling passion strong in death.” Happy, as in her case, when the direction of the mind is towards all that is high, pure, and excellent!

“A shuddering thrill pervaded her whole frame, and she felt, as she often afterwards declared, a presentiment that from that moment her hours were numbered. The same evening she was attacked by a fit of ague; and this insidious and harassing complaint continued its visitations for several weeks, reducing her poor, wasted form to the most lamentable state of debility, and at length retiring only to make way for a train of symptoms still more fatal and distressing. Yet, while the work of decay was going on thus surely and progressively upon the earthly tabernacle, the bright flame within continued to burn with a pure and holy light, and, at times, even to flash forth with more than wonted brightness. The lyric of ‘Despondency and Aspiration,’ which may be considered as her noblest and highest effort, and in which, from a feeling that it might be her last work, she felt anxious to concentrate all her powers, was written during the few intervals accorded her from acute suffering or powerless languor. And in the same circumstances she wrote, or rather dictated, the series of sonnets called Thoughts during Sickness, which present so interesting a picture of the calm, submissive tone of her mind, whether engaged in tender remembrances of the past, or in solemn and reverential speculations on the future. The one entitled ‘Sickness like Night’ discloses a view, no less affecting than consolatory, of the sweet and blessed peace which hovered round the couch where

‘Mutely and hopelessly she lay reposing.’

“The last sonnet of the series, entitled ‘Recovery,’ was written under temporary appearances of convalescence, which proved as fugitive as they were fallacious.”

THE HUGUENOT’S FAREWELL.

I stand upon the threshold stone

Of mine ancestral hall;

I hear my native river moan;

I see the night o’er my old forests fall.
I look round on the darkening vale
That saw my childhood’s plays;
The low wind in its rising wail
Hath a strange tone, a sound of other days.
But I must rule my swelling breast:
A sign is in the sky!
Bright o’er yon gray rock’s eagle-nest
Shines forth a warning star—it bids me fly.
My father’s sword is in my hand,
His deep voice haunts mine ear;
He tells me of the noble band
Whose lives have left a brooding glory here.
He bids their offspring guard from stain
Their pure and lofty faith;
And yield up all things, to maintain
The cause for which they girt themselves to death.
And I obey. I leave their towers
Unto the stranger’s tread,
Unto the creeping grass and flowers,
Unto the fading pictures of the dead.
I leave their shields to slow decay,
Their banners to the dust:
I go, and only bear away

Their old majestic name—a solemn trust!
I go up to the ancient hills.
Where chains may never be,
Where leap in joy the torrent-rills,
Where man may worship God, alone and free.
There shall an altar and a camp
Impregnably arise;
There shall be lit a quenchless lamp,
To shine, unwavering, through the open skies.
And song shall midst the rocks be heard,
And fearless prayer ascend;
While, thrilling to God's holy word,
The mountain-pines in adoration bend.
And there the burning heart no more
Its deep thought shall suppress,
But the long-buried truth shall pour
Free currents thence, amidst the wilderness.
Then fare thee well, my mother's bower!
Farewell, my father's hearth!—
Perish my home! where lawless power
Hath rent the tie of love to native earth.
Perish! let deathlike silence fall
Upon the lone abode;
Spread fast, dark ivy! spread thy pall;—

I go up to the mountains with my God.

ANTIQUE GREEK LAMENT.[440]

By the blue waters—the restless ocean-waters,
Restless as they with their many-flashing surges,
Lonely I wander, weeping for my lost one!
I pine for thee through all the joyless day—
Through the long night I pine: the golden sun
Looks dim since thou hast left me, and the spring
Seems but to weep. Where art thou, my beloved?
Night after night, in fond hope vigilant,
By the old temple on the breezy cliff,
These hands have heap'd the watch-fire, till it stream'd
Red o'er the shining columns—darkly red
Along the crested billows!—but in vain:
Thy white sail comes not from the distant isles—
Yet thou wert faithful ever. Oh! the deep
Hath shut above thy head—that graceful head;
The sea-weed mingles with thy clustering locks;
The white sail never will bring back the loved!
By the blue waters—the restless ocean-waters,
Restless as they with their many-flashing surges,
Lonely I wander, weeping for my lost one!
Where art thou?—where? Had I but lingering press'd
On thy cold lips the last long kiss—but smooth'd

The parted ringlets of thy shining hair
With love’s fond touch, my heart’s cry had been still’d
Into a voiceless grief: I would have strew’d
With all the pale flowers of the vernal woods—
White violets, and the mournful hyacinth,
And frail anemone, thy marble brow,
In slumber beautiful! I would have heap’d
Sweet boughs and precious odours on thy pyre,
And with mine own shorn tresses hung thine urn,
And many a garland of the pallid rose:
But thou liest far away! No funeral chant,
Save the wild moaning of the wave, is thine:
No pyre—save, haply, some long-buried wreck;
Thou that wert fairest—thou that wert most loved!
By the blue waters—the restless ocean-waters,
Restless as they with their many-flashing surges,
Lonely I wander, weeping for my lost one!
Come, in the dreamy shadow of the night,
And speak to me! E’en though thy voice be changed,
My heart would know it still. Oh, speak to me!
And say if yet, in some dim, far-off world,
Which knows not how the festal sunshine burns,
If yet, in some pale mead of asphodel,
We two shall meet again! Oh, I would quit

The day rejoicingly—the rosy light—
All the rich flowers and fountains musical,
And sweet, familiar melodies of earth,
To dwell with thee below! Thou answerest not!
The powers whom I have call'd upon are mute:
The voices buried in old whispery caves,
And by lone river-sources, and amidst
The gloom and mystery of dark prophet-oaks,
The wood-gods' haunt—they give me no reply!
All silent—heaven and earth! For evermore
From the deserted mountains thou art gone—
For ever from the melancholy groves,
Whose laurels wail thee with a shivering sound!
And I—I pine through all the joyous day,
Through the long night I pine—as fondly pines
The night's own bird, dissolving her lorn life
To song in moonlight woods. Thou hear'st me not!
The heavens are pitiless of human tears:
The deep sea-darkness is about thy head;
The white sail never will bring back the loved!
By the blue waters—the restless ocean-waters,
Restless as they with their many-flashing surges,
Lonely I wander, weeping for my lost one!

[440] The original title given to this poem was The Lament of Alcyone, which was

altered to its present one, on the suggestion of a friend. It was written in November 1834.

THOUGHTS DURING SICKNESS.

INTELLECTUAL POWERS.

O Thought! O Memory! gems for ever heaping
High in the illumined chambers of the mind—
And thou, divine Imagination! keeping
Thy lamp's lone star mid shadowy hosts enshrined;
How in one moment rent and disentwined,
At Fever's fiery touch, apart they fall,
Your glorious combinations! broken all,
As the sand-pillars by the desert's wind
Scatter'd to whirling dust! Oh, soon uncrown'd!
Well may your parting swift, your strange return,
Subdue the soul to lowliness profound,
Guiding its chasten'd vision to discern
How by meek Faith heaven's portals must be pass'd,
Ere it can hold your gifts inalienably fast.

SICKNESS LIKE NIGHT.

Thou art like Night, O Sickness! deeply stilling
Within my heart the world's disturbing sound,
And the dim quiet of my chamber filling
With low, sweet voices by Life's tumult drown'd.
Thou art like awful Night! thou gatherest round

The things that are unseen—though close they lie;
And with a truth, clear, startling, and profound,
Giv’st their dread presence to our mental eye.
Thou art like starry, spiritual Night!
High and immortal thoughts attend thy way,
And revelations, which the common light
Brings not, though wakening with its rosy ray
All outward life:—Be welcome, then, thy rod,
Before whose touch my soul unfolds itself to God.

ON RETZSCH’S DESIGN OF THE ANGEL OF DEATH.[441]

Well might thine awful image thus arise
With that high calm upon thy regal brow,
And the deep, solemn sweetness in those eyes,
Unto the glorious artist! Who but thou
The fleeting forms of beauty can endow
For him with permanence? who make those gleams
Of brighter life, that colour his lone dreams,
Immortal things? Let others trembling bow,
Angel of Death! before thee;—not to those
Whose spirits with Eternal Truth repose,
Art thou a fearful shape! And oh! for me,
How full of welcome would thine aspect shine,
Did not the cords of strong affection twine
So fast around my soul, it cannot spring to thee!

[441] This sonnet was suggested by the following passage out of Mrs Jameson's Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad, in a description she gives of a visit paid to the artist Retzsch, near Dresden:—"Afterwards he placed upon his easel a wondrous face which made me shrink back—not with terror, for it was perfectly beautiful,—but with awe, for it was unspeakably fearful: the hair streamed back from the pale brow—the orbs of sight appeared at first two dark, hollow, unfathomable spaces, like those in a skull; but when I drew nearer and looked attentively, two lovely living eyes looked at me again out of the depth of the shadow, as if from the bottom of an abyss. The mouth was divinely sweet, but sad, and the softest repose rested on every feature. This, he told me, was the Angel of Death."

REMEMBRANCE OF NATURE.

O Nature! thou didst rear me for thine own,
With thy free singing-birds and mountain-brooks;
Feeding my thoughts in primrose-haunted nooks,
With fairy fantasies and wood-dreams lone;
And thou didst teach me every wandering tone
Drawn from thy many-whispering trees and waves,
And guide my steps to founts and sparry caves,
And where bright mosses wove thee a rich throne
Midst the green hills: and now that, far estranged
From all sweet sounds and odours of thy breath,
Fading I lie, within my heart unchanged,
So glows the love of thee, that not for death
Seems that pure passion's fervour—but ordain'd

To meet on brighter shores thy majesty unstain’d.

FLIGHT OF THE SPIRIT.

Whither, oh! whither wilt thou wing thy way?
What solemn region first upon thy sight
Shall break, unveil’d for terror or delight?
What hosts, magnificent in dread array,
My spirit! when thy prison-house of clay,
After long strife is rent? Fond, fruitless quest!
The unfledged bird, within his narrow nest,
Sees but a few green branches o’er him play,
And through their parting leaves, by fits reveal’d,
A glimpse of summer sky; nor knows the field
Wherein his dormant powers must yet be tried.
Thou art that bird!—of what beyond thee lies
Far in the untrack’d, immeasurable skies,
Knowing but this—that thou shalt find thy Guide?

FLOWERS.

Welcome, O pure and lovely forms! again
Unto the shadowy stillness of my room!
For not alone ye bring a joyous train
Of summer-thoughts attendant on your bloom—
Visions of freshness, of rich bowery gloom,
Of the low murmurs filling mossy dells,
Of stars that look down on your folded bells

Through dewy leaves, of many a wild perfume
Greeting the wanderer of the hill and grove
Like sudden music: more than this ye bring—
Far more; ye whisper of the all-fostering love
Which thus hath clothed you, and whose dove-like wing
Broods o’er the sufferer drawing fever’d breath,
Whether the couch be that of life or death.

RECOVERY.[442]

Back, then, once more to breast the waves of life,
To battle on against the unceasing spray,
To sink o’erwearied in the stormy strife,
And rise to strive again; yet on my way,
Oh! linger still, thou light of better day!
Born in the hours of loneliness: and you,
Ye childlike thoughts! the holy and the true—
Ye that came bearing, while subdued I lay,
The faith, the insight of life’s vernal morn
Back on my soul, a clear, bright sense, new-born,
Now leave me not! but as, profoundly pure,
A blue stream rushes through a darker lake
Unchanged, e’en thus with me your journey take,
Wafting sweet airs of heaven thro’ this low world obscure.

[442] Written under the false impression occasioned by a temporary improvement in strength.

SABBATH SONNET.[443]

COMPOSED BY MRS HEMANS A FEW DAYS BEFORE HER DEATH, AND DICTATED TO HER BROTHER.

How many blessed groups this hour are bending,
Thro' England's primrose meadow-paths, their way
Towards spire and tower, midst shadowy elms ascending,
Whence the sweet chimes proclaim the hallow'd day!
The halls from old heroic ages gray
Pour their fair children forth; and hamlets low,
With whose thick orchard-blooms the soft winds play,
Send out their inmates in a happy flow,
Like a freed vernal stream. I may not tread
With them those pathways—to the feverish bed
Of sickness bound; yet, O my God! I bless
Thy mercy, that with Sabbath-peace hath fill'd
My chasten'd heart, and all its throbbings still'd
To one deep calm of lowliest thankfulness!

26th April 1835.

[443] After the exhausting vicissitudes of days when it seemed that the night of death was indeed at hand—of nights when it was thought that she could never see the light of morning—wonderful even to those who had witnessed, throughout her illness, the clearness and brightness of the never-dying principle, amidst the desolation and decay of its earthly companion, was the consecrated power and facility with which, on Sunday, the 26th of April, she dictated to her brother the "Sabbath Sonnet," the last strain of the "sweet singer," whose harp was henceforth

to be hung upon the willows.

Amongst the many tributes of interest and admiration elicited by a poem, so remarkable to all readers—so precious to many hearts—the following expressions, contained in a letter from the late venerable Bishop of Salisbury to Mrs Joanna Baillie, and already published by the latter, are too pleasingly applicable not to be inserted here. “There is something peculiarly touching in the time, the subject, and the occasion of this deathbed sonnet, and in the affecting contrast between the ‘blessed groups’ she describes, and her own (humanly speaking) helpless state of sickness; and that again contrasted with the hopeful state of mind with which the sonnet concludes, expressive both of the quiet comforts of a Christian Sabbath, and the blessed fruits of profitable application. Her ‘Sweet Chimes’ on ‘Sabbath-peace,’ appear to me very characteristic of the writer.”—Memoir, p. 311-12.

APPENDIX

CRITICISMS ON MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

DELTA.

“We cannot allow these verses[444] to adorn, with a sad beauty, the pages of this Magazine—more especially as they are the last composed by their distinguished writer, and that only a few days before her death—without at least a passing tribute of regret for an event which has cast a shadow of gloom through the sunshiny fields of contemporary literature. But two months ago, the beautiful lyric entitled ‘Despondency and Aspiration,’ appeared in these pages, and now the sweet fountain of music from which that prophetic strain gushed has ceased to flow. The highly gifted and accomplished, the patient, the meek, and long-suffering Felicia Hemans, is no more. She died on the night of Saturday, the 16th of May 1835, at Dublin, and met her fate with all the calm resignation of a Christian, conscious that her spirit was

winging its flight to another and a better world, where ‘the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.’

“Without disparagement of the living, we scarcely hesitate to say, that in Mrs Hemans our female literature has lost perhaps its brightest ornament. To Joanna Baillie she might be inferior, not only in vigour of conception, but in the power of metaphysically analysing those sentiments and feelings which constitute the basis of human actions,—to Mrs Jameson in the critical perception which, from detached fragments of spoken thought, can discriminate the links which bind all into a distinctive character,—to Miss Landon in eloquent facility,—to Caroline Bowles in simple pathos,—and to Mary Mitford in power of thought; but as a female writer, influencing the female mind, she has undoubtedly stood, for some bypast years, the very first in the first rank; and this pre-eminence has been acknowledged, not only in her own land, but wherever the English tongue is spoken, whether on the banks of the eastern Ganges or the western Mississippi. Her path was her own; and shoals of imitators have arisen, alike at home and on the other side of the Atlantic, who, destitute of her animating genius, have mimicked her themes, and parodied her sentiments and language, without being able to reach its height. In her poetry, religious truth and intellectual beauty meet together; and assuredly it is not the less calculated to refine the taste and exalt the imagination, because it addresses itself almost exclusively to the better feelings of our nature alone. Over all her pictures of humanity are spread the glory and the grace reflected from purity of morals, delicacy of perception and conception, sublimity of religious faith, and warmth of patriotism; and, turning from the dark and degraded, whether in subject or sentiment, she seeks out those verdant oases in the desert of human life on which the affections may most pleasantly rest. Her poetry is intensely and entirely feminine—and, in our estimation, this is the highest praise which could be awarded it,—it could have been written by a woman only; for although, in the ‘Records’ of her sex, we have the female character delineated in all the varied phases of baffled passion and of

ill-requited affection; of heroical self-denial, and of withering hope deferred; of devotedness tried in the furnace of affliction, and of

‘Gentle feelings long subdued,

Subdued and cherish’d long;’

yet its energy resembles that of the dove, ‘pecking the hand that hovers o’er its mate,’ and its exaltation of thought is not of the daring kind, which doubts and derides, or even questions, but which clings to the anchor of hope, and looks forward with faith and reverential fear.

“Mrs Hemans has written much, and, as with all authors in like predicament, her strains are of various degrees of excellence. Independently of this, her different works will be differently estimated, as to their relative value, by different minds; but among the lyrics of the English language which can scarcely die, we hesitate not to assign places to ‘The Hebrew Mother’—‘The Treasures of the Deep’—‘The Spirit’s Return’—‘The Homes of England’—‘The Better Land’—‘The Hour of Death’—‘The Trumpet’—and ‘The Graves of a Household.’ In these ‘gems of purest ray serene,’ the peculiar genius of Mrs Hemans breathes, and burns, and shines pre-eminent; for her forte lay in depicting whatever tends to beautify and embellish domestic life—the gentle overflowings of love and friendship—‘homebred delights and heartfelt happiness’—the associations of local attachment—and the influences of religious feelings over the soul, whether arising from the varied circumstances and situations of man, or from the aspects of external nature. We would only here add, by way of remark, that the writings of Mrs Hemans seem to divide themselves into two pretty distinct portions—the first comprehending her ‘Modern Greece,’ ‘Wallace,’ ‘Dartmoor,’ ‘Sceptic,’ ‘Historic Scenes,’ and other productions, up to the publication of ‘The Forest Sanctuary;’ and the latter comprehending that volume, ‘The Records of Woman,’ ‘The Scenes and Hymns of Life,’ and all her subsequent productions. In her earlier works, she follows the

classic model, as contradistinguished from the romantic, and they are inferior in that polish of style, and almost gorgeous richness of language, in which her maturer compositions are set. It is evident that new stores of thought were latterly opened up to her, in a more extended acquaintance with the literature of Spain and Germany, as well as by a profounder study of the writings of our great poetical regenerator—Wordsworth."—Blackwood's Magazine, July 1835.

[444] "Sabbath Sonnet."

MISS LANDON.

"Did we not know this world to be but a place of trial—our bitter probation for another and for a better—how strange in its severity would seem the lot of genius in a woman! The keen feeling—the generous enthusiasm—the lofty aspiration and the delicate perception—are given but to make the possessor unfitted for her actual position. It is well!—such gifts, in their very contrast to the selfishness and the evil with which they are surrounded, inform us of another world—they breathe of their home, which is heaven; the spiritual and the inspired in this life but fit us to believe in that which is to come. With what a sublime faith is this divine reliance expressed in all Mrs Hemans's later writings! As the clouds towards nightfall melt away on a fine summer evening into the clear amber of the west, leaving a soft and unbroken azure whereon the stars may shine; so the troubles of life, its vain regrets and vainer desires, vanished before the calm close of existence—the hopes of heaven rose steadfast at last—the light shone from the windows of her home, as she approached unto it.

'No tears for thee!—though light be from us gone

With thy soul's radiance, bright and restless one!

No tears for thee!

They that have loved an exile must not mourn

To see him parting for his native bourne,

O’er the dark sea.’

“We have noticed this yearning for affection—unsatisfied, but still unsubdued—as one characteristic of Mrs Hemans’s poetry: the rich picturesque was another. Highly accomplished, the varied stores that she possessed were all subservient to one master science. Mistress both of German and Spanish, the latter country appears to have peculiarly captivated her imagination. At that period when the fancy is peculiarly alive to impression—when girlhood is so new, that the eagerness of childhood is still in its delights—Spain was, of all others, the country on which public attention was fixed—victory after victory carried the British flag from the ocean to the Pyrenees; but, with that craving for the ideal which is so great a feature in her writings, the present was insufficient, and she went back upon the past;—the romantic history of the Moors was like a storehouse, with treasures gorgeous like those of its own Alhambra.

“It is observable in her minor poems, that they turn upon an incident rather than a feeling. Feelings, true and deep, are developed; but one single emotion is never the original subject. Some graceful or touching anecdote or situation catches her attention, and its poetry is developed in a strain of mourning melody, and in a vein of gentle moralising. I always wish, in reading my favourite poets, to know what first suggested my favourite poems. Few things would be more interesting than to know under what circumstances they were composed—how much of individual sentiment there was in each, or how, on some incident seemingly even opposed, they had contrived to ingraft their own associations. What a history of the heart would such annals reveal! Every poem is in itself an impulse.

“Besides the ideal and the picturesque, Mrs Hemans is distinguished by her harmony. I use the word harmony advisedly, in contradistinction to melody. Melody implies something more careless, more simple, than belongs to her style; it is song

by snatches; our English ballads are remarkable for it. To quote an instance or two: there is a verse in that of Yarrow Water—

‘O wind that wandereth from the south!

Seek where my love repaireth,

And blow a kiss to his dear mouth.

And tell me how he fareth.’

Nothing can exceed the tender sweetness of these lines; but there is no skill. Again, in Faire Rosamonde, the verse that describes the cruelty of Eleanor—

‘With that she struck her on the mouth,

So dyed double red;

Hard was the heart that gave the blow,

Soft were the lips that bled.’

How musical is the alliteration! but it is music which, like that of the singing brook, has sprung up of itself. Now, Mrs Hemans has the most perfect skill in her science; nothing can be more polished than her versification. Every poem is like a piece of music, with its eloquent pauses, its rich combinations, and its swelling chords. Who that has ever heard, can forget the exquisite flow of ‘The Voice of Spring?’—

‘I come! I come!—ye have call’d me long:

I come o’er the mountains with light and song!

Ye may trace my step o’er the wakening earth,

By the winds that tell of the violet’s birth,

By the primrose-stars in the shadowy grass,

By the green leaves opening as I pass.’

It is like the finest order of Italian singing—pure, high, and scientific.

“I can never sufficiently regret that it was not my good fortune to know Mrs Hemans

personally: it was an honour I should have estimated so highly—a happiness that I should have enjoyed so keenly. I never even met with an acquaintance of hers but once; that once, however, was much. I knew Miss Jewsbury, the late lamented Mrs Fletcher. She delighted in speaking of Mrs Hemans; she spoke of her with the appreciation of one fine mind comprehending another, and with the earnest affection of a woman and a friend. She described her conversation as singularly fascinating—full of poetry, very felicitous in illustration by anecdote—happy, too, in quotation, and very rich in imagery; 'in short, her own poem on "The Treasures of the Deep" would best describe it.' She mentioned a very striking simile to which a conversation on Mrs Hemans's own poem of 'The Sceptic' had led;—'Like Sinbad the sailor, we are often shipwrecked on a strange shore. We despair; but hope comes when least expected. We pass through the gloomy caverns of doubt into the free air and blessed sunshine of conviction and belief.' I asked her if she thought Mrs Hemans a happy person, and she said, 'No; her enjoyment is feverish, and she desponds. She is like a lamp whose oil is consumed by the very light which it yields.' What a cruel thing is the weakness of memory! How little can its utmost efforts recall of conversation that was once an instruction and a delight!

"To the three characteristics of Mrs Hemans' poetry which have already been mentioned—viz. the ideal, the picturesque, and the harmonious—a fourth must be added,—the moral. Nothing can be more pure, more feminine and exalted, than the spirit which pervades the whole; it is the intuitive sense of right, elevated and strengthened into a principle. It is a glorious and a beautiful memory to bequeath; but she who left it is little to be envied. Open the volumes which she has left, legacies from many various hours, and what a record of wasted feelings and disappointed hopes may be traced in their sad and sweet complainings! Yet Mrs Hemans was spared some of the keenest mortifications of a literary career. She knew nothing of it as a profession which has to make its way through poverty, neglect, and obstacles: she lived apart in a small, affectionate circle of friends. The high-road of

life, with its crowds and contention—its heat, its noise, and its dust that rests on all—was for her happily at a distance; yet even in such green nest, the bird could not fold its wings, and sleep to its own music. There came the aspiring, the unrest, the aching sense of being misunderstood, the consciousness that those a thousand times inferior were yet more beloved. Genius places a woman in an unnatural position; notoriety frightens away affection; and superiority has for its attendant fear, not love. Its pleasantest emotions are too vivid to be lasting: hope may sometimes,

‘Raising its bright face,

With a free gush of sunny tears, erase

The characters of anguish:’

but, like the azure glimpses between thunder-showers, the clouds gather more darkly around for the passing sunshine. The heart sinks back on its solitary desolation. In every page of Mrs Hemans’ writings is this sentiment impressed. What is the conclusion of ‘Corinne crowned at the Capitol?’

‘Radiant daughter of the sun!

Now thy living wreath is won.

Crown’d of Rome!—oh, art thou not

Happy in that glorious lot?

Happier, happier far than thou

With the laurel on thy brow,

She that makes the humblest hearth

Lovely but to one on earth.’

“What is poetry, and what is a poetical career? The first is to have an organisation of extreme sensibility, which the second exposes bareheaded to the rudest weather. The original impulse is irresistible—all professions are engrossing when once begun; and, acting with perpetual stimulus, nothing takes more complete possession of its

follower than literature. But never can success repay its cost. The work appears—it lives in the light of popular applause; but truly might the writer exclaim,—

'It is my youth—it is my bloom—it is my glad free heart

I cast away for thee—for thee—ill-fated as thou art.'

If this be true even of one sex, how much more true of the other! Ah! Fame to a woman is indeed but a royal mourning in purple for happiness."—New Monthly Magazine for August 1835.

H. F. CHORLEY.

"Though respect for the memory of the dead, and delicacy towards the living, enjoin us to be brief in alluding to the events of her life, we may speak freely, and at length, of the history of her mind, and the circumstances of her literary career, in the course of which she deserved and acquired a European reputation as the first of our poetesses living, and still before the public. Few have written so much, or written so well, as Mrs Hemans; few have entwined the genuine fresh thoughts and impressions of their own minds so intimately, with their poetical fancies, as she did; few have undergone more arduous and reverential preparation for the service of song—for, from childhood, her thirst for knowledge was extreme, and her reading great and varied. Those who, while admitting the high-toned beauty of her poetry, accused it of monotony of style and subject, (they could not deny to it the praise of originality, seeing that it founded a school of imitators in England, and a yet larger in America,) little knew to what historical research she had applied herself—how far and wide she had sought for food with which to fill her eager mind. It is true that she used only a part of the mass of information which she had collected—(for she never wrote on calculation, but from the strong impulse of the moment; and it was her nature intimately to take home to herself, and appropriate only what was high-hearted, imaginative, and refined;)—but the writer of this notice has seen manuscript collections of extracts made in the course of these youthful studies,

sufficient of themselves to justify his assertion, if her poems (like those of every genuine poet) did not contain a still better record of the progress of her mind. Her knowledge of classic literature may be distinctly traced in her ‘Sceptic,’ her ‘Modern Greece,’ and a hundred later lyrics based upon what Bulwer so happily calls ‘the Graceful Superstition.’ Her study and admiration of the works of ancient Greek and Roman art, strengthened into an abiding love of the beautiful, which breathes both in the sentiment and in the structure of every line she wrote, (for there are few of our poets more faultlessly musical in their versification;) and when, subsequently, she opened for herself the treasuries of Spanish and German legend and literature, how thoroughly she had imbued herself with their spirit may be seen in her ‘Siege of Valencia,’ in her glorious and chivalresque ‘Songs of the Cid,’ and in her ‘Lays of Many Lands,’ the idea of which was suggested by Herder’s ‘Stimmen der Völker in Liedern.’

“But though her mind was enriched by her wide acquaintance with the poetical and historical literature of other countries, it possessed a strong and decidedly marked character of its own, which coloured all her productions—a character which, though any thing but feeble or sentimental, was essentially feminine. An eloquent modern critic (Mrs Jameson) has rightly said, ‘that Mrs Hemans’ poems could not have been written by a man;’ their love is without selfishness, their passion without a stain of this world’s coarseness, their high heroism (and to illustrate this assertion we would mention ‘Clotilda,’ ‘the Lady of Provence,’ and the ‘Switzer’s Wife,’) unsullied by any grosser alloy of mean ambition. Her religion, too, is essentially womanly—fervent, clinging to belief, and ‘hoping on, hoping ever,’ in spite of the peculiar trials appointed to her sex, so exquisitely described in the ‘Evening Prayer in a Girls’ School’—

‘Silent tears to weep,

And patient smiles to wear through suffering’s hour,

And sumless riches from affection's deep!

To pour on broken reeds—a wasted shower!

And to make idols, and to find them clay,

And to bewail that worship.'

"If such was the mind of her works, the manner in which she wrought out her conceptions was equally individual and excellent. Her imagination was rich, chaste, and glowing: those who saw only its published fruits little guessed at the extent of its variety.

"It is difficult to enumerate the titles of her principal works. Her first childish efforts were published when she was only thirteen, and we can speak of her subsequent poems, 'Wallace,' 'Dartmoor,' 'The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy,' and her 'Dramatic Scenes,' only from memory. These were probably written in the happiest period of her life, when her mind was rapidly developing itself, and its progress was aided by judicious and intelligent counsellors, among whom may be mentioned Bishop Heber. A favourable notice of one of these poems will be found in Lord Byron's letters; and the fame of her opening talent had reached Shelley, who addressed a very singular correspondence to her. With respect to the world in general, her name began to be known by the publication of her 'Welsh Melodies,' her 'Siege of Valencia,' and the scattered lyrics which appeared in the New Monthly Magazine, then under the direction of Campbell. She had previously contributed a series of prose papers, on Foreign Literature, to Constable's Edinburgh Magazine, which, with little exception, are the only specimens of that style of writing ever attempted by her. To the 'Siege of Valencia' succeeded rapidly her 'Forest Sanctuary,' her 'Records of Woman,' (the most successful of her works,) her 'Songs of the Affections,' (containing, perhaps, her finest poem, 'The Spirit's Return,') her 'National Lyrics and Songs for Music,' (most of which have been set to music by her sister, and become popular,) and her 'Scenes and Hymns of Life.' A few words

with respect to the direction of her powers in later days may be worthily extracted from a letter of hers which lies now before us. She had been urged by a friend to undertake a prose work, and a series of ‘Artistic Novels,’ something after the manner of Tieck, and Goethe’s Kunst-Romanen, as likely to be congenial to her own tastes and habits of mind, and to prove most acceptable to the public.

“‘I have now,’ she says, ‘passed through the feverish and somewhat visionary state of mind often connected with the passionate study of art in early life; deep affections and deep sorrows seem to have solemnised my whole being, and I now feel as if bound to higher and holier tasks, which, though I may occasionally lay aside, I could not long wander from without some sense of dereliction. I hope it is no self-delusion, but I cannot help sometimes feeling as if it were my true task to enlarge the sphere of sacred poetry, and extend its influence. When you receive my volume of ‘Scenes and Hymns,’ you will see what I mean by enlarging its sphere, though my plan as yet is very imperfectly developed.’

“Besides the works here enumerated, we should mention her tragedy, ‘The Vespers of Palermo,’ which, though containing many fine thoughts and magnificent bursts of poetry, was hardly fitted for the stage, and the songs which she contributed to Colonel Hodges’ ‘Peninsular Melodies;’ and we cannot but once more call the attention of our readers to her last lyric, ‘Despondency and Aspiration,’ published in Blackwood’s Magazine for May 1835. It is the song of the swan—its sweetest and its last!”[445]—Athenæum, No. 395.

“An elaborate summary of the principal features of Mrs Hemans’ character, or of the general and individual merits of her poems, can hardly be necessary, if the foregoing memorials have fulfilled the design of their editor. The woman and the poetess were in her too inseparably united to admit of their being considered apart from each other. In her private letters, as in her published works, she shows herself high-minded, affectionate, grateful—wayward in her self-neglect, delicate to

fastidiousness in her tastes—in her religion fervent without intolerance—eager to acquire knowledge, as eager to impart it to others—earnestly devoted to her art, and in that art to the service of all things beautiful, and noble, and holy. She may have fallen short of some of her predecessors in vigour of mind—of some of her contemporaries in variety of fancy; but she surpassed them all in the use of language, in the employment of a rich, chaste, and glowing imagery, and in the perfect music of her versification. It will be long before the chasm left in our female literature by her death will be worthily filled: she will be long remembered—long spoken of by those who know her works—yet longer by those who knew herself,—

‘Kindly and gently, but as of one

For whom ’tis well to be fled and gone—

As of a bird from a chain unbound,

As of the wanderer whose home is found,

So let it be!’”

Memorials of Mrs Hemans, p. 354-6.

[445] It has already been shown that this was not the case.

ECLECTIC REVIEW.

“Mrs Hemans, if not in all respects the most gifted of the female writers who form so bright a constellation in the sphere of our contemporary literature, surpassed them all in those attributes of genius which characterise the lyric poets. Without possessing the dramatic conception of Joanna Baillie or Mary Mitford—the masculine vigour and depth of thought displayed by the late Mrs Fletcher, (better known as Miss Jewsbury,) or the fertile imagination of others of our delightful female prose writers—she outshone them all in her peculiar orbit; and though she wrote too much, and often too carelessly, to sustain, in all her compositions, the high standard of poetic excellence to which she often attained, her best productions, in

her own rich and peculiar vein, rival those of the mightiest masters of English song; while their exquisitely feminine character justify the remark, that ‘the poetry of Mrs Hemans could have been written only by a woman.’”—E. R., 1836.

PROFESSOR NORTON.

“We have now received the last of the imperishable gifts of Mrs Hemans’ genius. The period of her spirit’s trials and sufferings, and its glorious course on earth, has been completed. She has left an unclouded fame; and we may say, in her own words:—

‘No tears for thee!—though light be from us gone

With thy soul’s radiance: ...

No tears for thee!

They that have loved an exile must not mourn

To see him parting for his native bourne

O’er the dark sea.’

“As this, therefore, will be the last time that we shall review any production of Mrs Hemans, we may be permitted to recall, with a melancholy pleasure, the admiration and delight with which we have followed the progress of her genius. The feelings with which her works are now generally regarded have been expressed in no publication earlier, more frequently, or more warmly, than in our own. Without repeating what we have already said, we shall now endeavour to point out some of their features, considered in relation to that moral culture in which alone such writings can exist.

“Mrs Hemans may be considered as the representative of a new school of poetry, or, to speak more precisely, her poetry discovers characteristics of the highest kind, which belong almost exclusively to that of later times, and have been the result of the gradual advancement, and especially the moral progress, of mankind. It is only

when man, under the influence of true religion, feels himself connected with whatever is infinite, that his affections and powers are fully developed. The poetry of an immortal being must be of a different character from that of an earthly being. But, in recurring to the classic poets of antiquity, we find that, in their conceptions, the element of religious faith was wanting. Their mythology was to them no object of sober belief; and, had it been so, was adapted not to produce but to annihilate devotion. They had no thought of regarding the universe as created, animated, and ruled by God's all-powerful and omniscient goodness. To them it was a world of matter,—

'The fair humanities of old religion,

The power, the beauty, and the majesty

That had their haunts in dale, or piny mountain,

Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly spring,

Or chasms and watery depths,'

never existed except in the imagination of modern poets. The beings intended were the 'fair humanities' of Ovid's Metamorphoses, whose attributes, derived from the baser parts of our nature, were human passions lawlessly indulged, accompanied with more than mortal power. Gibbon, who was any thing rather than what he affected to be—a philosopher—speaks of 'the elegant mythology of the Greeks.' The great fountains of their popular and poetical mythology were Homer and Hesiod. Hesiod does not surpass Homer in the agreeable or moral character of his fictions; and, as regards the elegance of the mythology found in the great epic poet, a single passage, if we had no other means of judging, might settle the question, the address of Jupiter to Juno at the commencement of the Fifteenth Book of the Iliad:—

'Oh, versed in wiles,

Juno! thy mischief-teeming mind perverse

Hath plotted this; thou hast contrived the hurt
Of Hector, and hast driven his host to flight.
I know not but thyself mayst chance to reap
The first fruits of thy cunning, scourged by me.
Hast thou forgotten how I hung thee once
On high, with two huge anvils at thy feet,
And bound with force-defying cord of gold
Thy wrists together? In the heights of heaven
Did I suspend thee. With compassion moved,
The assembled gods thy painful sufferings saw,
But help could yield thee none; for whom I seized,
Hurl'd through the portal of the skies, he reach'd
The distant earth, and scarce survived the fall.'
I thus remind thee now, that thou may'st cease
Henceforth from artifice, and mayst be taught
How little all the dalliance and the love,
Which, stealing down from heaven, thou hast by fraud
Obtain'd from me shall favour thy designs.'

"It may be incidentally remarked, that these lines illustrate not merely the features of the ancient mythology, but also the condition of woman as treated by the heroes of Homer and by his contemporaries. We happen just to have opened upon another striking example of the elegance of the ancient mythology during the Augustan age. It is a passage of Ovid, almost too indecent and silly to be alluded to, though Addison was not ashamed to translate it, beginning—

'Forte Jovem memorant, diffusum nectare, curas

Seposuisse graves, vacuaque agitasse remissos

Cum Junone jocos.'[446]

"From the passage referred to, we may judge something of the convivial manners of the Romans, and of the habits of intercourse between the sexes.

"It is remarkable that, in all religious and moral conceptions, the noblest materials of poetry, the philosophers were very far in advance of the poets. 'The Fables of Hesiod and Homer,' says Plato, 'are especially to be censured. They have uttered the greatest falsehoods concerning the greatest beings.' Referring to the loathsome and abominable fables about Cœlus, Saturn, and Jupiter, he says—'We must not tell our youth that he who commits the greatest iniquity does nothing strange, nor he who inflicts the most cruel punishment upon his father when injured by him; but that he is only doing what was done by the first and greatest of the gods.' A little after he subjoins:—'The chaining of Juno by her son, the throwing of Vulcan from heaven by his father, because he attempted to defend his mother from being beaten, and the battles of the gods described by Homer, are not fictions to be allowed in our city, whether explained allegorically or not.' 'Though we praise many things in Homer,' he says, 'we shall not praise him when he represents Jupiter as sending a lying dream to Agamemnon, nor Æschylus when he makes Thetis complain of having been deceived by Apollo.' 'When any one thus speaks of the gods, we are indignant; we grant no permission for such writings, nor shall we suffer teachers to use them in the instruction of youth.'[447]

"The poets of this nation did not, in Plato's opinion, represent their heroes as more amiable or respectable than their gods. 'We shall not,' he says, 'suffer those of whom we have the charge to believe that Achilles, the son of a goddess, was so full of evil passions as to unite in himself two opposite vices—avaricious meanness, and insolence towards gods and men. Nor shall we allow it to be said that Theseus, the son of Neptune, and Perithöus, the son of Jove, rushed forth to the commission of

such abominable robberies, or that any son of a god or any hero committed those abominable and impious acts which are now imputed to them in the fictions of the poets.' 'Such fictions are pernicious to those who hear them; for every bad man finds a license for himself, in the belief that those nearly related to the gods do and have done such deeds. They are, then, to be suppressed, lest they produce a strong tendency to wickedness in our youth.'[448]

"Such were the sentiments of the most poetical of Grecian philosophers concerning the religious and moral character of the poets of his nation; and he remarks in addition upon the gloomy fancies of Homer concerning the state of departed souls, as neither true nor useful, but adapted to produce unmanly fears, and therefore not to be listened to by those who, as freemen, should dread slavery more than death. During the period between Homer and Virgil, a misty brightness had spread over the poetic ideas of the future abodes of the blessed; but the Elysium and Tartarus of poetry were but fictions, awakening no serious hopes nor fears, and having no power over the heart. These imaginations of a future life were connected with no just and ennobling conceptions of the purposes of our existence, of the spiritual nature of man, or of that endless progress to which we may look forward. The heroes of Elysium found their delight in the meaner pleasures of this life,—

'Quæ gratia currum

Armorumque fuit vivis, quæ cura nitentes

Pascere equos, eadem sequitur tellure repostos.

Conspicit, ecce, alios dextra lævaque per herbam

Vescentes, lætumque chora pæana canentes.'[449]

"Thus the ancient poets were shut out from the whole sphere of religious sentiment; and all those numberless conceptions and feelings that spring from our knowledge of God and the sense of our own immortality, are absent from their writings, while this whole exhaustless domain has been laid open to the poets of later times. A single

example may illustrate what has been said. Let us take the concluding verses of Mrs Hemans's 'Fountain of Oblivion:'—

'Fill with forgetfulness!—there are, there are
Voices whose music I have loved too well;
Eyes of deep gentleness—but they are far—
Never! oh! never, in my home to dwell!
Take their soft looks from off my yearning soul—
Fill high th' oblivious bowl!
'Yet pause again!—with memory wilt thou cast
The undying hope away, of memory born?
Hope of reunion, heart to heart at last;
No restless doubt between, no rankling thorn?
Wouldst thou erase all records of delight
That make such visions bright?
Fill with forgetfulness, fill high!——yet stay—
'Tis from the past we shadow forth the land
Where smiles, long lost, again shall light our way,
And the soul's friends be wreathed in one bright band.
Pour the sweet waters back on their own rill:
I must remember still.
'For their sake, for the dead—whose image naught
May dim within the temple of my breast—
For their love's sake, which now no earthly thought
May shake or trouble with its own unrest,

Though the past haunt me as a spirit—yet

I ask not to forget.’

“The whole train of emotion and thought in these verses is of a character wholly unknown to the classic days of Greece and Rome. To imagine any thing corresponding to it in the work of an ancient poet, is to bring together conceptions the most incongruous.

“Here it may be worth while, in order to prevent ourselves from being misunderstood, to observe, that we do not mean to depreciate the value of the study of the ancient poets. After those inquiries by which the truths of religion are established, there are none of more interest or importance than such as relate to the mind and heart of man, and open to us a knowledge of what he has been, and what he may be on earth. But, to attain this knowledge, we must acquaint ourselves with the moral and intellectual character of our race, as it has existed, and exists, under influences and forms of society very unlike each other. In this research, no period can be compared in interest with a few centuries in the history of Athens and Rome, which have left traces still so deeply impressed upon the civilised world. Thus, in studying the history of human nature, the Grecian and Roman poets furnish some of our most important materials. We may discover in them a source of sentiments and opinions that still affect men’s minds. Homer carries us back to remote Pagan antiquity, on which his writings shed a light afforded by no other; and, at the same time, having been regarded as the undisputed master-poet by his countrymen, (for this Plato himself does not question,) he shows us what were the topics by which their imaginations were most affected during the period of their greatest civilisation. The dramatic poets of Athens reflect the Athenian character; and in Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, we find the lineaments of the Augustan age. But the value which thus attaches to their works is not to be confounded with the absolute value of those works as poems adapted through their intrinsic beauties to give delight at the present

day. In estimating their naked worth, we must likewise separate from them the interest connected with their antiquity, and all those accidental associations that have been gathering round them for many centuries. We must even put out of view the native genius of the writer, if this genius have been exerted under circumstances so unfavourable as to render it ineffectual to produce what may give pleasure to a pure and highly-cultivated mind. Not-withstanding the traditionary enthusiasm that has existed on the subject, it may well be doubted whether their power of giving vivid pleasure merely as poetical compositions, forms a principal recommendation of the study of the ancient poets. They were not acquainted with the richest realms of mind. It is a mistake to address them as ‘bards illustrious, born in happier days.’ But, to return to our immediate subject.

“After the revival of letters, the forms of what was called Christianity, both among Catholics and Protestants, were in many respects so abhorrent to reason, or feeling, or both, that they could combine in no intimate union with our higher nature, however they might operate on men’s passions or fears. Religious truth was, however, sometimes contemplated in greater purity by minds of the better class; and we early begin to find in poetry some expressions of true religious sentiment. But what advance had been actually made even in the seventeenth century, we may learn from the great work of Milton. It is based on a system of mythology more sublime than the Pagan, and less adapted to degrade the moral feelings, but scarcely less offensive to reason, and spreading all but a Manichæan gloom and blight over the creation of God. Putting forth his vast genius, he struggles with it as he can, moulding it into colossal forms that repel our human sympathies, and lavishing upon it gorgeous treasures of imagination; but even his powers yield and sink at times before its intrinsic incongruity and essential falsehood. Whoever rightly apprehends the character of God, or contemplates as he ought the invisible world, will turn to but few pages of the Paradise Lost, with the hope of finding expressions correspondent to his thoughts and emotions. We feel with pain the inappreciable

contrast between the genius displayed in the poetical execution of the work, and the absurdity of its prose story. It is the opposition which this story presents to the most ennobling truths, even more than ‘the want of human interest,’ on which Johnson remarks, that gives to the poem the unattractive character of which he speaks, and which we believe is felt by almost all its readers.

“Doubtless pure religious sentiment breaks out in this and in the other poems of Milton. The concluding line of his Sonnet on his Blindness—

‘They also serve who only stand and wait,’

and numerous other passages of similar beauty, have, we may believe, found an answering feeling in many hearts. But in speaking of those causes which have given a new character to the poetry of later times, it is not our purpose to trace their influence historically. Going back to the days of Grecian and Roman civilisation, we shall take only a few illustrations that may serve to show more clearly the contrast produced by their absence on one hand, or their operation on the other.

“In proportion as we contemplate the world from the height to which true religion conducts us, we perceive the circle of moral action widening indefinitely. Our duties toward the inferior animals are few and low, compared with those which we lie under to our fellow-men; and our duties toward our fellow-men become far more extensive, and assume a more solemn character, when we regard them not as born to perish upon earth, but as commencing here an unending existence. Our obligations to others correspond to our means of serving them; and we are introduced to a higher class of virtues, as soon as we recognise in those around us beings forming characters for a different mode of existence, to whom the highest service that can be rendered is to assist their progress in virtue, and to whom some influence, good or evil, is continually flowing out from us, and diverging into channels of which we cannot see the termination. All interest in the spiritual and imperishable good of our fellow-men must depend upon our regarding them as spiritual and imperishable. It is

only under a sense of our true nature, that man is capable of reaching the sublime thought of assimilating himself to God, by devoting his powers to the moral welfare of his fellow-men.

‘Yet, yet sustain me, Holiest!—I am vow’d
To solemn service high;
And shall the spirit, for thy tasks endow’d,
Sink on the threshold of the sanctuary,
Fainting beneath the burden of the day,
Because no human tone
Unto the altar-stone
Of that pure spousal fane inviolate,
Where it should make eternal truth its mate,
May cheer the sacred solitary way?
‘Oh! be the whisper of thy voice within
Enough to strengthen! Be the hope to win
A more deep-seeing homage for thy name
Far, far beyond the burning dream of fame!
Make me thine only! Let me add but one
To those refulgent steps all undefiled,
Which glorious minds have piled
Through bright self-offering, earnest, child-like, lone,
For mounting to thy throne;
And let my soul, upborne
On wings of inner morn,

Find, in illumined secresy, the sense

Of that blest work, its own high recompense.’

“But there is more to be considered. The conduct which would be wise and right for man if immortal, would not be wise and right for him if viewed as a perishing animal. It is true that moral good is always good, and moral evil always evil; but with an essential change in our nature and relations, there must likewise be an essential change in what is morally good or evil. If all human hopes were limited to this world, it would be folly for any one to act as if he and others were to exist for ever. The whole plan of life and of its duties formed by a wise man, would be quite different in the one case from what it would be in the other; and the course of life actually pursued by the generality, if destitute of all religious belief, would be still more unlike that of men under its influence.

‘Sapias, vina liques, et spatio brevi

Spem longam reseces.’[450]

‘Quid brevi fortes jaculamur ævc

Multa?’[451]

‘Lætus in præsens, animus quod ultra est

Oderit curare, et amara lento

Temperet risu.’[452]

In the absence of religious faith, this is true philosophy. If this life were the limit of our being, its pleasures and pains would be the only objects of our concern. Nothing would be virtuous which tended not to the attainment and communication of those limited and perishing pleasures we might here partake; nothing morally evil, but what lessened our own capacity for enjoying them, or tended to prevent others from sharing them with us. There would be no sphere for the exercise of those powers, no object for those capacities of happiness, that belong to the imperishable part of our

nature. There would be nothing to prompt one to great sacrifices or acts of moral heroism; for these have their source in the consciousness of immortality, in a sense of our connexion with the infinite, our look forward to good for ourselves and others beyond the limits of life. Earthly motives afford no soil in which the nobler virtues can strike their roots. It is true that the ancients, particularly the ancient philosophers, were not without the influence of truly religious conceptions; and, under almost any forms of opinion, the better nature of man will of itself occasionally break out into exhibitions of excellence. But the religious sentiment being so weak and perverted among the ancient poets, we find little in their works that can be regarded as morally noble, and scarcely an indistinct recognition of those deep feelings and unearthly virtues which have their source in our spiritual nature. The same remark is almost equally applicable to a large proportion of the modern poets: for true religion has been little understood or felt by them. Where, in any age preceding our own, may we hope to find such expressions of sentiment as in the following verses from Mrs Hemans' 'Vaudois Wife?'[453]

'But calm thee! Let the thought of death

A solemn peace restore;

The voice that must be silent soon,

Would speak to thee once more:

That thou may'st bear its blessing on

Through years of after life,—

A token of consoling love,

Even from this hour of strife.

'I bless thee for the noble heart,

The tender, and the true,

Where mine hath found the happiest rest

That e’er fond woman’s knew;
I bless thee, faithful friend and guide!
For my own, my treasured share
In the mournful secrets of thy soul,
In thy sorrow, in thy prayer.
‘I bless thee for the last rich boon
Won from affection tried—
The right to gaze on death with thee,
To perish by thy side!
And yet more for the glorious hope
Even to these moments given—
Did not thy spirit ever lift
The trust of mine to heaven?
‘Now be thou strong! Oh! knew we not
Our path must lead to this?
A shadow and a trembling still
Were mingled with our bliss!
We plighted our young hearts when storms
Were dark upon the sky,
In full, deep knowledge of their task—
To suffer and to die!
‘Be strong! I leave the living voice
Of this, my martyr’d blood,
With the thousand echoes of the hills,

With the torrent’s foaming flood,—

A spirit midst the caves to dwell,

A token on the air,

To route the valiant from repose,

The fainting from despair.

‘Hear it, and bear thou on, my love!

Ay, joyously endure!

Our mountains must be altars yet,

Inviolate and pure;

Where must our God be worshipp’d still

With the worship of the free;—

Farewell! there’s but one pang in death,

One only,—leaving thee!’

“With this, may be compared the speech of Alcestis in Euripides, when dying in the presence of her husband, under circumstances adapted to call forth all that power of expressing the tender emotions, for which Euripides has been thought to be distinguished.

“Under the influence of religion, we are acted upon by new motives, through the sense created within us, of the worth of our fellow-men. Religion invests them with a new character, strips off the disguise with which the accidents of mortality, imperfections, weaknesses, follies, miseries, and crimes hide their essential nature from our view, and presents them before us with all the interests and capacities of immortal beings. They who are dear to us are worthy of all love and self-devotion, worthy of affections unlimited by death or time. They are members with us of the imperishable family of God, in whose company we are to exist for ever, and with whom our union will become more entire, as we grow purer and more disinterested.

“Thus in later days there has been a growth of sentiments and affections, almost unknown before. Our better feelings toward our fellow-men have acquired far more strength, and assumed new forms. In other times, man has been comparatively an insulated being. Domestic life—that life in which now almost all our joys or sorrows are centred—was scarcely known to the ancients; and it has had but a sickly and artificial existence even in modern ages, through the operation of false notions of domestic government and discipline, and of the mutual relations of husband and wife, parents and children. Religion, by teaching us justly to estimate what is truly excellent in our nature, what is intellectual, moral, and ever-enduring, has given to woman the rank to which she is entitled. It has made her the friend of man; and our feelings are in harmony with the poet when he speaks of—

‘A perfect woman, nobly plann’d

To warn, to comfort, and command;

And yet a spirit still and bright,

With something of an angel light.’

But man has never regarded woman with respect and true love, except so far as he has regarded her as a spiritual and immortal being. Without this, no conception can exist of that inseparable union which blends all the interests and affections of one being with those of another. The poetry of the ancients that expresses any sentiments toward the female sex is, with rare exceptions, of the grossest kind, sensual, coarse, indecent, brutal. We can pick out only a few passages from the mass, which shadow forth anything like real affection. The same character has continued to cleave to much of our modern poetry, rendering it at once pernicious and disgusting. But wherever the power of true religion has been felt, there woman, more disinterested, more pure, and more moral than man, has exerted a constant influence to raise the character of society. Where it has not been felt, woman has been treated as a mere creature of this earth, an object only of sensual passion, courted, wronged, and

insulted; her character has sunk, and the infection of the evil has spread itself every where. It would be difficult, in as few words, to suggest to a reflecting mind a more melancholy picture of the state of society at Athens, than that of which Aristotle affords us a glimpse in a short passage of his ‘Art of Poetry,’ where he remarks, with his usual brevity and dryness, that ‘the manners (character) of a woman or slave may be good; though in general, perhaps, women are rather bad than good, and slaves altogether bad.’[454] Where women are thus estimated, the domestic charities, our best school of virtue, cannot exist; those affections which are at once the gentlest and the strongest have no place; nor will there be any true refinement, nor quick and generous feeling in the intercourse between man and man: the first and strongest link in the chain of human sympathy is wanting.

“When Jesus Christ pronounced these words, ‘What God has joined together, let not man put asunder,’ he laid down the fundamental law of human civilisation. But it would have been impossible to render marriage the most solemn and indissoluble of connexions if his religion had not at the same time restored to woman the character designed for her by nature, and raised her to that place she now holds, wherever the truths he taught have had somewhat of their proper influence.

“When the feelings that give sanctity to marriage are wanting, the parental affections operate but feebly. The new-born child, instead of being regarded as a gift and a trust from God, a new creature with whom we have become for ever connected, and a living bond of common interest to strengthen the union of its parents, is either looked at, on the one hand, as a present incumbrance, or, on the other, as a probable future support. The whole history of the domestic relations of the ancients establishes this truth. What must have been the state of parental affection among those who practised and tolerated the destruction of infants as a common custom? The absence of such affection is not to be estimated by the number of victims to that custom, but by the fact of its being generally viewed without horror or reprobation. It was a shocking trait of barbarity in the character of the elder Cato, that he

recommended that worn-out and disabled slaves should be exposed to perish; but an exposure more inhuman, which showed that man had lost even the feelings of the lower animals, was constantly going on, and was enjoined, under certain circumstances, both by Plato and Aristotle, as a law of their imagined republics. There is a famous saying in one of the comedies of Terence, which has been often quoted as a fine expression of philanthropy: Homo sum—humani nihil a me alienum puto.[455] It is put into the mouth of a man whose wife is afterwards represented as in fear before him, because she had not destroyed her female infant as he had commanded, but given it a chance for preservation by causing it to be exposed alive. Maternal love cannot be wholly extinguished; but it is the glow of modern feeling only which pours its beauty over the following lines, to which nothing parallel can be found in the poets of Greece or Rome, though Mrs Hemans apostrophises the Elysium of their imagining:—

‘Calm, on its leaf-strewn bier,

Unlike a gift of nature to decay,

Too rose-like still, too beautiful, too dear,

The child at rest before the mother lay,

E’en so to pass away,

With its bright smile. Elysium! what wert thou

To her who wept o’er that young slumberer’s brow?

‘Thou hadst no home, green land!

For the fair creature from her bosom gone,

With life’s fresh flowers just opening in its hand,

And all the lovely thoughts and dreams unknown,

Which in its clear eye shone

Like spring’s first wakening! But that light was past;—

Where went the dew-drop swept before the blast?’

“The ancient popular faith was indeed destitute of consolation; but in the absence of those associations which shed a holy light round an infant, such consolation is less needed. Even the fountain of maternal affection flows with but a scanty and interrupted stream.

“Thus religion, by making man of more worth to man, and by strengthening our assurance in each other’s sympathy and virtue, has called forth affections which lay folded up in our nature, or had put forth only a stinted growth. The finer productions of modern poetry are coloured throughout with expressions of their beauty and strength. Moral qualities, good or bad, as they exist in men, unformed directly or indirectly by religion, owe their strength principally to impulse and passion, or depend, like the inconsistent hospitality of the Arab, or the pride of the Roman, on what he thought the glory of his country, upon prejudices which spring partly from generous feelings and partly from selfish regards, and are made strong and binding upon the individual by universal consent. It is only when quickened by religious sentiment, that the human character displays all its complicated variety of feelings. Then affections, which had before seemed almost powerless, become essential elements of our being. Associations, till then unknown, link together their invisible chains; and the feeling with which they thrill us when touched, presents a new phenomenon in our nature. The love of our youthful home may seem to us an universal sentiment, likely to appear in the poetry of all times; yet how little reference to it do we find in any poetry before our own age, and especially how little reference, like the following, to its moral power!

‘“Hast thou come with the heart of thy childhood back,

The free, the pure, the kind?”

—So murmur’d the trees in my homeward track,

As they play’d to the mountain-wind.

“Hath thy soul been true to its early love?”

Whisper’d my native streams;

“Hath the spirit, nursed amidst hill and grove,

Still revered its first high dreams?”’ etc.

“It is under the continued influence of Christianity, however imperfect that influence may have been, that the human character, which had before manifested itself partially and irregularly in the rudeness and inconsistency of its elementary passions, has begun to struggle toward its full development. It has become alive to feelings, and is putting forth powers, which belong to its immortal nature. We may perceive this unfolding of man in the very structure of language, which, enlarged as it has been with new terms, yet presents so imperfect a means for expressing the different qualities and shades of character, and the modes and combinations of feeling. The study of human nature has thus become a science of far more interest and complexity. Many forms of character now appear, that belong to no period in the progress of the human race preceding that at which we have arrived. To the eye of the poet, man presents himself in new aspects of strength and weakness in multiform relations to the finite and the infinite, and with all the variety of sentiments resulting from the change in his prospects and hopes. He is now ‘a traveller between life and death;’ his highest interests connect him with the boundless, the unearthly, and the mysterious; with all that has most power to affect the imagination, and excite the strongest and deepest feelings. It is only through his relations to God and eternity that man becomes an exhaustless subject of high poetry. When thus viewed, his ruined home may be repeopled with thoughts and images such as these:—

‘Thou hast heard many sounds, thou hearth,

Deserted now by all!

Voices at eve here met in mirth,

Which eve may ne’er recall.

Youth’s buoyant step, and woman’s tone,

And childhood’s laughing glee,

And song and prayer have all been known,

Hearth of the dead! to thee.

‘Thou hast heard blessings fondly pour’d

Upon the infant head,

As if in every fervent word

The living soul were shed:

Thou hast seen partings,—such as bear

The bloom from life away,—

Alas! for love in changeful air,

Where naught beloved can stay!’ etc.

“The recognition of the higher relations of man has given a characteristic to modern poetry, particularly English poetry, through which it has peculiar power over the heart. Expressions and descriptions of human suffering, instead of depressing us with melancholy, become sublime or touching, when that suffering is brought into direct or indirect contrast with man’s nature and hopes as an immortal being, or is represented as calling into exercise those virtues which can exist in such a being alone. There is no pathos in the mere lamentations of an individual over his own particular lot, or over the condition of a race to which he feels it an unhappiness to belong. There is nothing that excites any tender or elevating feeling in such verses as the following from an ancient poet:—

‘Is there a man just, honest, nobly born?

Malice shall hunt him down. Does wealth attend him?

Trouble is heard behind. Conscience direct?

Beggary is at his heels....

... Account that day

Which brings no new mischance, a day of rest.

For what is man? What matter is he made of?

How born? What is he, and what shall he be?

What an unnatural parent is this world,

To foster none but villains, and destroy

All who are benefactors to mankind!'

"The sufferings to which we are here exposed cease to be a subject that leads to any grateful or ennobling state of mind, when man regards the pleasures of this life as his only good. Among the ancient poets, the contemplation of its evils, when viewed at a distance, is associated with sentiments simply disheartening, or altogether superficial and trifling. Let us take for example a famous ode of Horace. It begins:—

'Eheu! fugaces, Postume, Postume,

Labuntur anni; nec pietas moram

Rugis et instanti senectæ

Afferet, indomitæque morti.'

"It ends:—

'Absumet hæres Cæcuba dignior,

Servata centum clavibus; et mero

Tinget pavimentum superbo

Pontificum potiore cœnis.'

"No modern poet would, or rather could, construct verses after this fashion.

"It is in representations of the triumph of our immortal nature over the ills of mortality, of the patience with which they are borne, of the power by which they are

overcome—in one word, of the moral qualities which suffering alone brings into action, and in those touches that awaken our best and tenderest affections for the sufferings of others, especially the innocent and helpless, that the sources of the highest pathos are to be found. All that is morally sublime springs upward from our severer trials; and then, only when man feels the nobleness of his nature. Present the calamity nakedly to our view, and its contemplation is merely distressing; picture it in connexion with some effort of virtue, and a glory is spread over the whole. In the Fall of D'Assas by Mrs Hemans, (not one of the most remarkable of her productions,) a young officer, full of the thoughts of his home and the scenes of his earlier years, is represented as surprised and massacred by his enemies. The simple narrative of such a death naturally excites painful emotion, but this emotion is so wholly overborne, as but to give additional strength to the exaltation of feeling produced by the concluding verses:—

'"Silence!" in under-tones they cry,' etc.

"We may compare the poem just quoted with a passage from Virgil, which refers to circumstances somewhat similar, and has been praised as very pathetic, in the episode of Nisus and Euryalus, where Nisus perceives that Euryalus has fallen into the hands of his foes, and is just about to be slain.

'Tum vero, exterritus, amens,

Conclamat Nisus: nec se celare tenebris

Amplius, aut tantum potuit perferre dolorem:

"Me, me, adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum,

O Rutuli! mea fraus omnis; nihil iste nec ausus,

Nec potuit; cœlum hoc et conscia sidera testor."

Tantum infelicem nimium dilexit amicum.

Talia dicta dabat; sed viribus ensis adactus

Transabiit costas.’

“However conspicuous such a passage may be in an ancient poet, it would not, we believe, be regarded with great admiration in a modern.

“In one of Miss Edgeworth’s little stories for children, which are far better worth reading than most books for grown people, she says of the cottage of some poor woman that it was as clean as misery could make it. There is a pathos in these few words, not unusual in her writings, but such as we can find in but a scanty number of writers before our own age. It has not been well understood, that the indirect expressions of suffering are far more powerful than the direct, and that we are much more affected by suppressed, than by unrestrained emotion. In but little of the poetry of past times is there any trace of quickness or delicacy of perception in regard to the modes or expressions of human feeling and passion; for man himself had not become sufficiently refined for the exercise of such observation. Plato objects to Homer, and the tragic poets of Greece, that they degraded men’s minds by representing their heroes, when suffering, as pouring forth long lamentations, singing their sorrows, and beating their breasts. So far as they did so, there was nothing pathetic in their writings. Who, indeed, in modern times, was ever able to imagine himself affected by the sorrows of Achilles for the death of Patroclus, or those of his mother, Thetis, in consequence?

“From the want of sentiment and of moral associations, the descriptive language of the ancient poets is, in general, scanty and poor. It is for the most part drawn immediately from the perceptions of the senses, and has little to do with the invisible feelings and images, of which outward things become the symbols to a reflecting mind. It rarely gives them a moral being; its epithets are seldom imaginative; it paints to the eye; it calls up recollections of bodily rest and pleasure; but it does not often address the heart.

“Horace begins one of his odes thus:—

‘Vides, ut ulta stet nive candidum

Soracte; nec jam sustineant onus

Sylvæ laborantes, geluque

Flumina constiterint acuto?’

“The epithets white mountain, deep snow, sharp frost, are all taken without addition immediately from the perception of the senses; nor, considering the common prosaic use of laboro, in a similar sense, is the epithet labouring much more poetical; yet the passage is as striking of its kind as most that may be found in Latin poetry. The lines are thus rendered by Dryden,—

‘Behold yon mountain’s hoary height

Made higher with new mounts of snow;

Again behold the winter’s weight

Oppress the labouring woods below;

And streams, with icy fetters bound,

Benumb’d and cramp’d to solid ground.’

“Dryden was not eminent for his love of nature, or power of describing its beauties; and a poet of livelier perceptions would hardly have changed the name of Soracte for the faint generalisation, ‘yon mountain;’ yet something of the difference which we wish to point out between ancient and modern poetry is here perceptible. Let us take from Mrs Hemans an example of the richly imaginative character of that of later times. We will give the beginning of the verses in which she describes herself as reading, in an arbour, ‘The Talisman’ of Scott. A particular interest attaches to them from the circumstance that, in the best portrait of her, she is represented in this real or imaginary situation.

‘There were thick leaves above me and around,’ etc.

“Every subject becomes rich in proportion to the wealth of the mind by which it is

contemplated. The intellectual light that shines upon it gives it its colours. Deficient as the ancient poets were in so many sources of thought and feeling that exist in modern times, they discover as imperfect a sensibility to most of the other pleasures of a refined taste, as to those derived from the objects of nature. There is to be found, for instance, in their works, scarcely a single passage, perhaps not one, in which the power of music, as blending in intimate union sensible and intellectual pleasures, is described with strong expression; yet what a treasury of glowing images and solemn thoughts this subject has opened to modern poets. We need not quote for illustration Mrs Hemans's 'Triumphant Music.'

"Through our strong sympathy with our fellow-men, we are deeply interested in the remains of antiquity, in the ruins that recall it to our thoughts, and in the histories which have come down to us—or rather in those histories as fashioned anew by our imagination, effacing and softening, filling up the rude outline, and colouring and embellishing at pleasure. In proportion as we have a more vivid conception of the virtues and excellences of which man is capable, so man, as such, becomes more an object of our regard. In looking back through the obscurity of time, the depravity that would have shocked us, if forced upon our observation, is partially lost in the darkness, and the bright traits of character shine out more distinctly. The dead of past ages are regarded with something of the same tenderness that we feel toward the dead whom we have known: at least we consent for a time to sacrifice our philosophy to an illusion, and, instead of the Richard Cœur-de-Lion of history, whose only marked characteristics were bodily strength and brutal hardihood, with those few gleams of goodness which nothing but the grossest sensuality can utterly extinguish, we consent for a time to take the Richard of Scott's Ivanhoe; or, in fancying the Augustan age, are willing to forget that it took its name from

'him who murder'd Tully,

That cold villain, Octavius'

“Conformably to the laws of our better nature, our imagination is most readily attracted by what is most excellent in man. While viewing a beautiful tract of country with which we are not familiar, we can hardly refrain from idealising its supposed inhabitants, and giving them somewhat of a poetical character, or, in other words, a character agreeable to our best feelings. So it is in casting our view over past ages. Our sympathies are excited for the hopes, and fears, and the virtues, such as they were, of those who have lost all power to injure; and we may even fashion dim images of what they now are, as existing somewhere in the creation of God, divested, perhaps, of the evil that clung to them on earth. The idea of that moral purification and development, which, we believe, is continually going on in the universe, may thus mingle with the contemplation of the past. It is in transferring us into a world in which grateful imaginations are blended with truth, and the harshness of present reality is shut out, that the poetic interest of antiquity principally consists.

“Of this, modern poetry and fiction have abundantly availed themselves. But though a shadowy antiquity lay as a background to Greek and Roman civilisation, yet it was rarely resorted to by the ancient poets as a source of pleasing or solemn emotions. To them the remoter ages were little more than a desert abounding with monstrous fictions, with licentious and savage divinities, half-brutal demigods, and heroes, and chiefs hardly human, whose fabulous deeds and sufferings present nothing to recommend them to our sense of beauty. In the period following, history assumed at least an air of truth, and men appeared on the stage with human feelings, passions, and virtues. But, in looking back upon their earlier history, the ancients seem to have felt but slightly those peculiar sentiments and trains of feeling, which the contemplation of antiquity now awakens in our breasts. In no ancient poet is there a celebration of a hero of his country to be compared with Mrs Hemans’ lines on the Scottish patriot, Wallace, beginning

‘Rest with the brave, whose names belong

To the high sanctity of song.'

There is no appeal to the deeds of their fathers equal to her Spanish war-song—

'Fling forth the proud banner of Leon again;

Let the high word "Castile" go resounding through Spain.'

No poetic conception of antiquity is to be found resembling the introduction of her 'Cathedral Hymn'—

'A dim and mighty minster of old time,

A temple, shadowy with remembrances

Of the majestic past!'

And above all, there is nothing so morally ennobling, so adapted to raise the character of a people, as the verses by which she has conferred a great obligation on our country—her 'Pilgrim Fathers.'

"But, beside the advantages afforded to a modern poet by the religious and moral improvement of our race, which it has been principally our object to point out, there are others at which we may glance. He may look back over many ages, and around upon all countries, and acquaint himself with man, as he has existed and exists under circumstances the most dissimilar. He may possess himself of all that knowledge of human nature, which has been gathered from long experience, and wide observation, and multiplied opportunities of comparison. He may, like Southey, construct poems, as wild and wondrous, and as morally beautiful, as 'Thalaba,' or as rich with barbaric splendour as 'The Curse of Kehama,' from the rude materials of Arabian fiction or Hindoo mythology. The treasures of learning and science, so poor in ancient times, have, through succeeding ages, been accumulating to furnish him with thoughts, illustrations, and images. Our conceptions are enlarged, our views raised, the physical as well as the moral universe has been continually opening to the view of man, and knowledge unfolding her ever-lengthening scroll, of which the ancients

had scarcely read the first lines. It was a dream, ridiculed by Plato,[456] of the extravagant admirers of Homer, that all human and divine learning was to be found in his writings.

“In the nature of things, art is progressive; its theory and practice are gradually better understood, errors are discovered and corrected, new objects of attainment proposed, and visions of higher excellence revealed to the mind; and thus we may believe, that the character, principles, purposes, and means of poetry are now comprehended more justly than they were in former times.

“But it may be said that, in perfection of language at least, the poets of Greece and Rome must remain unsurpassed. It may be doubted, however, whether we are qualified to pronounce this judgment in their favour. The harmonious flow of articulate sounds in the Greek and Latin languages, particularly in the Latin, is not to be readily attained in some of the principal languages of literary Europe. But if we speak of poetical beauty of expression and harmony of thought, we must recollect that it is necessary to be acquainted with the train of shadowy associations which follow the direct meaning of a poetical word, before we can determine that word to be well chosen. But such acquaintance implies an intimate knowledge of the use of language and of the state of mind in those addressed, which, as regards the poetry of the ancients, it is very difficult to acquire, and, in many particulars, impossible, yet without which we are liable to fall into great mistakes, and may often be left in much uncertainty. Take, for example, the line—

‘Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.’

It has been admired from the consonance of the sound with the sense. We understand the epithet putris to mean dusty, the dusty plain; but this epithet is elsewhere applied to a rich, mellow soil, easily broken up, or to a sandy plain. According to either of these uses, it is apparently an epithet unsuitable, from its associations, to be given to a field described as shaken and resounding with the

trampling of a body of horse. As respects, likewise, the epithet quadrupedans, we may doubt whether any modern critic can explain why quadrupedante sonitu is more poetical in Virgil than its equivalent, 'the sound of quadrupeds,' would be in a modern poet, if used to express the sound of horses.

"Let us take another example:

'Pastor cum traheret per freta navibus

Idæis Helenam perfidus hospitam.'

Why is the word traheret used, which, as employed elsewhere, would imply the taking away of Helen against her will? Does it refer to one version of the story according to which Paris did bear her away by force? Were this the case, one would naturally expect, considering the reproachful and denunciatory character of the ode, to find that idea brought out more distinctly. Is it intended to express the reluctance with which, though yielding to her love for Paris, she left her husband and her home? This conception is too refined for an ancient poet to trust to its being made apparent by so light a touch, if indeed we may suppose it to have entered his mind. Was traheret then intended, by its associations with an act of violence, to denote the rapidity and fear of the flight of Paris? or was it merely employed abusively, to use a technical term—only with reference to a part of its signification, as words are not unfrequently used in poetry, though it is always an imperfection?

"Such cases are very numerous, in which no modern reader can pronounce with just confidence upon the character of the poetical language of the ancients. Instances are frequently occurring in which, if we admire at all, we must admire at second-hand, upon trust. The meaning and effect of words have undergone changes which it is often not easy, and often not possible, to ascertain with precision. Even in our own language this is the case. Shakspeare says—

'Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark

To cry. Hold! Hold!'

“Here Johnson understands him as presenting the ludicrous conception of ‘the ministers of vengeance peeping through a blanket;’ and Coleridge, as we see by his Table-Talk, conjectured that instead of ‘blanket,’ ‘blank height’ was perhaps written by Shakspeare. But by ‘Heaven’ we conceive to be meant not the ministers of vengeance, but the lights of heaven; and it is not unpoetical to speak of the moon and stars as peeping through clouds. With the word ‘blanket,’ our associations are trivial and low; but understand it merely as denoting a thick covering of darkness which closely enwraps the lights of heaven, and it suits well to its place. But our associations with the word are accidental: there is nothing intrinsically more mean in a blanket than a sheet, yet none would object to the expression of ‘a sheet of light.’ The fortunes of the words only have been different, and that, in all probability, since the time of Shakspeare, considering his use of this word, and the corresponding use of the word rug by Drayton.[457]

“If such be the character of poetical language, it is clear that, to judge with critical accuracy of that of a distant age or even a foreign Land, requires uncommon knowledge and discrimination, as well as an accurate taste; while unfortunately, profound scholarship and cultivated and elegant habits of mind have very rarely been united in the study of the ancient poets. The supposition of a peculiar felicity of expression in their writings is to be judged of, in most cases, rather by extrinsic probabilities, which do not favour it, than by any direct and clear evidence of it that can be produced. We are very liable in this particular to be biassed by prepossession and authority; our imaginations often deceive us; we create the beauty which we fancy that we find.

“There is perhaps no poet, in whose productions the characteristics of which we have spoken as giving a superiority to the poetry of later times over that which has preceded, appear more strikingly than in those of Mrs Hemans. When, after reading such works as she has written, we turn over the volumes of a collection of English poetry, like that of Chalmers, we cannot but perceive that the greater part of it

appears more worthless and distasteful than before. Much is evidently the work of barren and unformed, vulgar and vicious minds, of individuals without any conception of poetry as the glowing expression of what is most noble in our nature, and often with no title to the name of poet, but from having put into metre thoughts too mean for prose. Such writings as those of Mrs Hemans at once afford evidence of the advance of our race, and are among the most important means of its further purification and progress. The minds, which go forth from their privacy to act with strong moral power upon thousands and ten thousands of other minds, are the real agents in advancing the character of man, and improving his condition. They are instruments of the invisible operations of the Spirit of God."—Christian Examiner, Jan. 1836.

[446] "It is related that Jove chanced, being exhilarated by nectar, to lay aside his weighty cares, and interchange pleasant jokes with idle Juno."

[447] See "De Republica," lib. ii., pp. 373-383.

[448] See "De Republica," lib. iii. p. 391.

[449]

"The love of horses which they had alive,

And care of chariots, after death survive.

In bands reclining on the grassy plain,

They feasted and pour'd forth a joyful strain."

See Dryden's "Virgil."

[450] Be wise, pour out your wine, and contract your hopes within life's narrow compass.

[451] Why, in so short a life, do we, in our bravery, aim at so much?

[452] Joyous during the present hour, the mind should reject all care for what is beyond, and temper what is bitter with a gentle smile.

[453] ‘The wife of a Vaudois leader, in one of the attacks made on the Protestant hamlets, received a mortal wound, and died in her husband’s arms, exhorting him to courage and endurance.’

[454] “What Aristotle says,” observes his able translator, Mr Twining, “is, I fear, but too conformable to the manner in which the ancients usually speak of the sex in general. At least he is certainly consistent with himself; witness the following very curious character of women in his ‘History of Animals,’ which I give the reader by no means for his assent, but for his wonder or his diversion.” Mr Twining’s remarks sufficiently imply of what nature this character, and we forbear to quote it.

[455] I am a man; whatever concerns other men, I think my concern.

[456] “De Republica,” lib. x. p. 598, seq.

[457] See examples, in the notes to Shakspeare.

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