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THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS OF
SHELLEY

INCLUDING MATERIALS
NEVER BEFORE PRINTED
IN ANY EDITION OF THE POEMS

EDITED WITH TEXTUAL NOTES

BY

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THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS OF
SHAKESPEARE

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PREFACE

THIS edition of his *Poetical Works* contains all Shelley's ascertained poems and fragments of verse that have hitherto appeared in print. In preparing the volume I have worked as far as possible on the principle of recognizing the *editio princeps* as the primary textual authority. I have not been content to reprint Mrs. Shelley's recension of 1839, or that of any subsequent editor of the *Poems*. The present text is the result of a fresh collation of the early editions; and in every material instance of departure from the wording of those originals the rejected reading has been subjoined in a footnote. Again, wherever—as in the case of *Julian and Maddalo*—there has appeared to be good reason for superseding the authority of the *editio princeps*, the fact is announced, and the substituted exemplar indicated, in the Prefatory Note. In the case of a few pieces extant in two or more versions of debatable authority the alternative text or texts will be found at the foot of the page; but it may be said once for all that this does not pretend to be a *variorum* edition, in the proper sense of the term—the textual apparatus does not claim to be exhaustive. Thus I have not thought it necessary to cumber the footnotes with every minute grammatical correction introduced by Mrs. Shelley, apparently on her own authority, into the texts of 1839; nor has it come within the scheme of this edition to record every conjectural emendation adopted or proposed by Rossetti and others in recent times. But it is hoped that, up to and including the editions of 1839 at least, no important variation of the text has been overlooked. Whenever a reading has been adopted on MS. authority, a reference to the particular source has been added below.

I have been chary of gratuitous interference with the punctuation of the MSS. and early editions; in this direction, however, some revision was indispensable. Even in his most carefully finished 'fair copy' Shelley under-punctuates¹, and sometimes punctuates capriciously. In the very act of transcribing his mind was apt to stray from the work in hand to higher things; he would lose himself in contemplating those airy abstractions

¹ Thus in the exquisite autograph 'Hunt MS.' of *Julian and Maddalo*, Mr. Buxton Forman, the most conservative of editors, finds it necessary to supplement Shelley's punctuation in no fewer than ninety-four places.

MSS. preserved at Boscombe Manor. The *Relics* constitute a salvage second only in value to the *Posthumous Poems* of 1824. To the growing mass of Shelley's verse yet more material was added in 1870 by Mr. William Michael Rossetti, who edited for Moxon the *Complete Poetical Works* published in that year. To him we owe in particular a revised and greatly enlarged version of the fragmentary drama of *Charles I.* But though not seldom successful in restoring the text, Mr. Rossetti pushed revision beyond the bounds of prudence, freely correcting grammatical errors, rectifying small inconsistencies in the sense, and too lightly adopting conjectural emendations on the grounds of rhyme or metre. In the course of an article published in the *Westminster Review* for July, 1870, Miss Mathilde Blind, with the aid of material furnished by Dr. Garnett, 'was enabled,' in the words of Mr. Buxton Forman, 'to supply omissions, make authoritative emendations, and controvert erroneous changes' in Mr. Rossetti's work; and in the more cautiously edited text of his later edition, published by Moxon in 1878, may be traced the influence of her strictures.

Six years later appeared a *variorum* edition in which for the first time Shelley's text was edited with scientific exactness of method, and with a due respect for the authority of the original editions. It would be difficult indeed to over-estimate the gains which have accrued to the lovers of Shelley from the strenuous labours of Mr. Harry Buxton Forman, C.B. He too has enlarged the body of Shelley's poetry¹; but, important as his additions undoubtedly are, it may safely be affirmed that his services in this direction constitute the least part of what we owe him. He has vindicated the authenticity of the text in many places, while in many others he has succeeded, with the aid of manuscripts, in restoring it. His untiring industry in research, his wide bibliographical knowledge and experience, above all, his accuracy, as invariable as it is minute, have combined to make him, in the words of Professor Dowden, 'our chief living authority on all that relates to Shelley's writings.' His name stands securely linked for all time to Shelley's by a long series of notable works, including three successive editions (1876, 1882, 1892) of the *Poems*, an edition of the *Prose Remains*, as well as many minor publications—a *Bibliography* (*The Shelley Library*, 1886) and several Facsimile Reprints of the early issues, edited for the Shelley Society.

To Professor Dowden, whose authoritative *Biography* of the poet, published in 1886, was followed in 1890 by an edition of the *Poems* (Macmillans), is due the addition of several pieces

¹ Mr. Forman's most notable addition is the second part of *The Daemon of the World*, which he printed privately in 1876, and included in his Library Edition of the *Poetical Works* published in the same year. See the *List of Editions*, &c. at the end of this volume.

belonging to the juvenile period, incorporated by him in the pages of the *Life of Shelley*. Professor Dowden has also been enabled, with the aid of the manuscripts placed in his hands, to correct the text of the *Juvenilia* in many places. In 1893 Professor George E. Woodberry edited a *Centenary Edition of the Complete Poetical Works*, in which, to quote his own words, an attempt is made 'to summarize the labours of more than half a century on Shelley's text, and on his biography so far as the biography is bound up with the text.' In this Centenary edition the textual variations found in the Harvard College MSS., as well as those in the MSS. belonging to Mr. Frederickson of Brooklyn, are fully recorded. Professor Woodberry's text is conservative on the whole, but his revision of the punctuation is drastic, and occasionally sacrifices melody to perspicuity.

In 1903 Mr. C. D. Locock published, in a quarto volume of seventy-five pages, the fruits of a careful scrutiny of the Shelley MSS. now lodged in the Bodleian Library. Mr. Locock succeeded in recovering several inedited fragments of verse and prose. Amongst the poems chiefly concerned in the results of his *Examination* may be named *Marenghi*, *Prince Athanase*, *The Witch of Atlas*, *To Constantia*, the *Ode to Naples*, and (last, not least) *Prometheus Unbound*. Full use has been made in this edition of Mr. Locock's collations, and the fragments recovered and printed by him are included in the text. Variants derived from the Bodleian MSS. are marked *B.* in the foot-notes.

On the state of the text generally, and the various quarters in which it lies open to conjectural emendation, I cannot do better than quote the following succinct and luminous account from a *Causerie* on the Shelley MSS. in the Bodleian Library, contributed by Dr. Richard Garnett, C.B., to the columns of *The Speaker* of December 19, 1903:—

'From the textual point of view Shelley's works may be divided into three classes—those published in his lifetime under his own direction; those also published in his lifetime, but in his absence from the press; and those published after his death. The first class includes *Queen Mab*, *The Revolt of Islam*, and *Alastor* with its appendages, published in England before his final departure for the continent; and *The Cenci* and *Adonais*, printed under his own eye at Leghorn and Pisa respectively. Except for some provoking but corrigible misprints in *The Revolt of Islam* and one crucial passage in *Alastor*, these poems afford little material for conjectural emendation; for the Alexandrines now and then left in the middle of stanzas in *The Revolt of Islam* must remain untouched, as proceeding not from the printer's carelessness but the author's. The second class, poems printed during Shelley's lifetime, but not under his immediate inspection, comprise *Prometheus Unbound* and *Rosalind and Helen*,

together with the pieces which accompanied them, *Epipsychidion*, *Hellas*, and *Swellfoot the Tyrant*. The correction of the most important of these, the *Prometheus*, was the least satisfactory. Shelley, though speaking plainly to the publisher, rather hints than expresses his dissatisfaction when writing to Gisborne, the corrector, but there is a pretty clear hint when on a subsequent occasion he says to him, "I have received *Hellas*, which is prettily printed, and with fewer mistakes than any poem I ever published." This also was probably not without influence on his determination to have *The Cenci* and *Adonais* printed in Italy. Of the third class of Shelley's writings—those which were first published after his death—sufficient facsimiles have been published to prove that Trelawny's graphic description of the chaotic state of most of them was really in no respect exaggerated. The difficulty is much augmented by the fact that these pieces are rarely consecutive, but literally *disiecti membra poetæ*, scattered through various notebooks in a way to require piecing together as well as deciphering. The editors of the Posthumous Poems, moreover, though diligent according to their light, were neither endowed with remarkable acumen nor possessed of the wide knowledge requisite for the full intelligence of so erudite a poet as Shelley, hence the perpetration of numerous mistakes. Some few of the MSS., indeed, such as those of *The Witch of Atlas*, *Julian and Maddalo*, and the *Lines at Naples*, were beautifully written out for the press in Shelley's best hand, but their very value and beauty necessitated the ordeal of transcription, with disastrous results in several instances. An entire line dropped out of the *Lines at Naples*, and although *Julian and Maddalo* was extant in more than one very clear copy, the printed text had several such sense-destroying errors as *least for lead*.

'The corrupt state of the text has stimulated the ingenuity of numerous correctors, who have suggested many acute and convincing emendations, and some very specious ones which sustained scrutiny has proved untenable. It should be needless to remark that success has in general been proportionate to the facilities of access to the MSS., which have only of late become generally available. If Shelley is less fortunate than most modern poets in the purity of his text, he is more fortunate than many in the preservation of his manuscripts. These have not, as regards a fair proportion, been destroyed or dispersed at auctions, but were protected from either fate by their very character as confused memoranda. As such they remained in the possession of Shelley's widow, and passed from her to her son and daughter-in-law. After Sir Percy Shelley's death, Lady Shelley took the occasion of the erection of the monument to Shelley at University College, Oxford, to present [certain of] the MSS. to the Bodleian Library, and verse and sculpture form

an imperishable memorial of his connection with the University where his residence was so brief and troubled¹.

In placing *Queen Mab* at the head of the *Juvenilia* I have followed the arrangement adopted by Mr. Buxton Forman in his Library Edition of 1876. I have excluded *The Wandering Jew*, having failed to satisfy myself of the sufficiency of the grounds on which, in certain quarters, it is accepted as the work of Shelley. The shorter fragments are printed, as in Professor Dowden's edition of 1890, along with the miscellaneous poems of the years to which they severally belong, under titles which are sometimes borrowed from Mr. Buxton Forman, sometimes of my own choosing. I have added a few brief Editor's Notes, mainly on textual questions, at the end of the book. Of the poverty of my work in this direction I am painfully aware; but in the present edition the ordinary reader will, it is hoped, find an authentic, complete, and accurately printed text, and, if this be so, the principal end and aim of the OXFORD SHELLEY will have been attained.

I desire cordially to acknowledge the courtesy of Mr. H. Buxton Forman, C.B., by whose kind sanction the second part of *The Daemon of the World* appears in this volume. And I would fain express my deep sense of obligation for manifold information and guidance, derived from Mr. Buxton Forman's various editions, reprints and other publications—especially from the monumental Library Edition of 1876. Acknowledgements

¹ Dr. Garnett proceeds:—'The most important of the Bodleian MSS. is that of *Prometheus Unbound*, which, says Mr. Locock, has the appearance of being an intermediate draft, and also the first copy made. This should confer considerable authority on its variations from the accepted text, as this appears to have been printed from a copy not made by Shelley himself. "My *Prometheus*," he writes to Ollier on September 6, 1819, "is now being transcribed," an expression which he would hardly have used if he had himself been the copyist. He wished the proofs to be sent to him in Italy for correction, but to this Ollier objected, and on May 14, 1820, Shelley signifies his acquiescence, adding, however, "In this case I shall repose trust in your care respecting the correction of the press; Mr. Gisborne will revise it; he heard it recited, and will therefore more readily seize any error." This confidence in the accuracy of Gisborne's verbal memory is touching! From a letter to Gisborne on May 26 following it appears that the offer to correct came from him, and that Shelley sent him "two little papers of corrections and additions," which were probably made use of, or the fact would have been made known. In the case of additions this may satisfactorily account for apparent omissions in the Bodleian MS. Gisborne, after all, did not prove fully up to the mark. "It is to be regretted," writes Shelley to Ollier on November 20, "that the errors of the press are so numerous," adding, "I shall send you the list of errata in a day or two." This was probably "the list of errata written by Shelley himself," from which Mrs. Shelley corrected the edition of 1839.'

are also due to the poet's grandson, Charles E. J. Esdaile, Esq., for permission to include the early poems first printed in Professor Dowden's *Life of Shelley*; and to Mr. C. D. Loeck, for leave to make full use of the material contained in his interesting and stimulating volume. To Dr. Richard Garnett, C.B., and to Professor Dowden, cordial thanks are hereby tendered for good counsel cheerfully bestowed. To two of the editors of the Shelley Society Reprints, Mr. Thomas J. Wise and Mr. Robert A. Potts—both generously communicative collectors—I am deeply indebted for the gift or loan of scarce volumes, as well as for many kind offices in other ways. Lastly, to the staff of the Oxford University Press my heartiest thanks are owing, for their unremitting care in all that relates to the printing and correcting of the sheets.

THOMAS HUTCHINSON.

December, 1904.

PREFACE BY MRS. SHELLEY

TO FIRST COLLECTED EDITION, 1839

OBSTACLES have long existed to my presenting the public with a perfect edition of Shelley's Poems. These being at last happily removed, I hasten to fulfil an important duty,—that of giving the productions of a sublime genius to the world, with all the correctness possible, and of, at the same time, detailing the history of those productions, as they sprang, living and warm, from his heart and brain. I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his private life, except inasmuch as the passions which they engendered inspired his poetry. This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the errors of action committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary. Whatever faults he had ought to find extenuation among his fellows, since they prove him to be human; without them, the exalted nature of his soul would have raised him into something divine.

The qualities that struck any one newly introduced to Shelley were,—First, a gentle and cordial goodness that animated his intercourse with warm affection and helpful sympathy. The other, the eagerness and ardour with which he was attached to the cause of human happiness and improvement; and the fervent eloquence with which he discussed such subjects. His conversation was marked by its happy abundance, and the beautiful language in which he clothed his poetic ideas and philosophical notions. To defecate life of its misery and its evil was the ruling passion of his soul; he dedicated to it every power of his mind, every pulsation of his heart. He looked on political freedom as the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind; and thus any new-sprung hope of liberty inspired a joy and an exultation more intense and wild than he could have felt for any personal advantage. Those who have never experienced the workings of passion on general and unselfish subjects cannot understand this; and it must be difficult of comprehension to the younger generation rising around, since they cannot remember the scorn and hatred with which the partisans of reform were regarded some few years ago, nor the persecutions to which they were exposed. He had been from

youth the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution; and believing firmly in the justice and excellence of his views, it cannot be wondered that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems from which he had himself suffered. Many advantages attended his birth; he spurned them all when balanced with what he considered his duties. He was generous to imprudence, devoted to heroism.

These characteristics breathe throughout his poetry. The struggle for human weal; the resolution firm to martyrdom; the impetuous pursuit, the glad triumph in good; the determination not to despair;—such were the features that marked those of his works which he regarded with most complacency, as sustained by a lofty subject and useful aim.

In addition to these, his poems may be divided into two classes,—the purely imaginative, and those which sprang from the emotions of his heart. Among the former may be classed the *Witch of Atlas*, *Adonais*, and his latest composition, left imperfect, the *Triumph of Life*. In the first of these particularly he gave the reins to his fancy, and luxuriated in every idea as it rose; in all there is that sense of mystery which formed an essential portion of his perception of life—a clinging to the subtler inner spirit, rather than to the outward form—a curious and metaphysical anatomy of human passion and perception.

The second class is, of course, the more popular, as appealing at once to emotions common to us all; some of these rest on the passion of love; others on grief and despondency; others on the sentiments inspired by natural objects. Shelley's conception of love was exalted, absorbing, allied to all that is purest and noblest in our nature, and warmed by earnest passion; such it appears when he gave it a voice in verse. Yet he was usually averse to expressing these feelings, except when highly idealized; and many of his more beautiful effusions he had cast aside unfinished, and they were never seen by me till after I had lost him. Others, as for instance *Rosalind and Helen* and *Lines written among the Euganean Hills*, I found among his papers by chance; and with some difficulty urged him to complete them. There are others, such as the *Ode to the Skylark* and *The Cloud*, which, in the opinion of many critics, bear a purer poetical stamp than any other of his productions. They were written as his mind prompted: listening to the carolling of the bird, aloft in the azure sky of Italy; or marking the cloud as it sped across the heavens, while he floated in his boat on the Thames.

No poet was ever warmed by a more genuine and unforced inspiration. His extreme sensibility gave the intensity of passion to his intellectual pursuits; and rendered his mind keenly alive to every perception of outward objects, as well as to his internal sensations. Such a gift is, among the sad vicissitudes of human life, the disappointments we meet, and the galling sense of our own mistakes and errors,

fraught with pain; to escape from such, he delivered up his soul to poetry, and felt happy when he sheltered himself, from the influence of human sympathies, in the wildest regions of fancy. His imagination has been termed too brilliant, his thoughts too subtle. He loved to idealize reality; and this is a taste shared by few. We are willing to have our passing whims exalted into passions, for this gratifies our vanity; but few of us understand or sympathize with the endeavour to ally the love of abstract beauty, and adoration of abstract good, the *τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλόν* of the Socratic philosophers, with our sympathies with our kind. In this, Shelley resembled Plato; both taking more delight in the abstract and the ideal than in the special and tangible. This did not result from imitation; for it was not till Shelley resided in Italy that he made Plato his study. He then translated his *Symposium* and his *Ion*; and the English language boasts of no more brilliant composition than Plato's Praise of Love translated by Shelley. To return to his own poetry. The luxury of imagination, which sought nothing beyond itself (as a child burdens itself with spring flowers, thinking of no use beyond the enjoyment of gathering them), often showed itself in his verses: they will be only appreciated by minds which have resemblance to his own; and the mystic subtlety of many of his thoughts will share the same fate. The metaphysical strain that characterizes much of what he has written was, indeed, the portion of his works to which, apart from those whose scope was to awaken mankind to aspirations for what he considered the true and good, he was himself particularly attached. There is much, however, that speaks to the many. When he would consent to dismiss these huntings after the obscure (which, entwined with his nature as they were, he did with difficulty), no poet ever expressed in sweeter, more heart-reaching, or more passionate verse, the gentler or more forcible emotions of the soul.

A wise friend once wrote to Shelley: 'You are still very young, and in certain essential respects you do not yet sufficiently perceive that you are so.' It is seldom that the young know what youth is, till they have got beyond its period; and time was not given him to attain this knowledge. It must be remembered that there is the stamp of such inexperience on all he wrote; he had not completed his nine-and-twentieth year when he died. The calm of middle life did not add the seal of the virtues which adorn maturity to those generated by the vehement spirit of youth. Through life also he was a martyr to ill-health, and constant pain wound up his nerves to a pitch of susceptibility that rendered his views of life different from those of a man in the enjoyment of healthy sensations. Perfectly gentle and forbearing in manner, he suffered a good deal of internal irritability, or rather excitement, and his fortitude to bear was almost always on the stretch; and thus, during a short life, he had gone through more experience of sensation than many whose existence is protracted. 'If I die to-morrow,' he said, on the eve of his unanticipated death, 'I have lived to be older than my father.' The weight of thought

and feeling burdened him heavily ; you read his sufferings in his attenuated frame, while you perceived the mastery he held over them in his animated countenance and brilliant eyes.

He died, and the world showed no outward sign. But his influence over mankind, though slow in growth, is fast augmenting ; and, in the ameliorations that have taken place in the political state of his country, we may trace in part the operation of his arduous struggles. His spirit gathers peace in its new state from the sense that, though late, his exertions were not made in vain, and in the progress of the liberty he so fondly loved.

He died, and his place, among those who knew him intimately, has never been filled up. He walked beside them like a spirit of good to comfort and benefit—to enlighten the darkness of life with irradiations of genius, to cheer it with his sympathy and love. Any one, once attached to Shelley, must feel all other affections, however true and fond, as wasted on barren soil in comparison. It is our best consolation to know that such a pure-minded and exalted being was once among us, and now exists where we hope one day to join him ;—although the intolerant, in their blindness, poured down anathemas, the Spirit of Good, who can judge the heart, never rejected him.

In the notes appended to the poems I have endeavoured to narrate the origin and history of each. The loss of nearly all letters and papers which refer to his early life renders the execution more imperfect than it would otherwise have been. I have, however, the liveliest recollection of all that was done and said during the period of my knowing him. Every impression is as clear as if stamped yesterday, and I have no apprehension of any mistake in my statements as far as they go. In other respects I am indeed incompetent : but I feel the importance of the task, and regard it as my most sacred duty. I endeavour to fulfil it in a manner he would himself approve ; and hope, in this publication, to lay the first stone of a monument due to Shelley's genius, his sufferings, and his virtues :

Se al seguir son tarda,
Forse avverrà che 'l bel nome gentile
Consacrerò con questa stanca penna.

POSTSCRIPT IN SECOND EDITION OF 1839

IN revising this new edition, and carefully consulting Shelley's scattered and confused papers, I found a few fragments which had hitherto escaped me, and was enabled to complete a few poems hitherto left unfinished. What at one time escapes the searching eye, dimmed by its own earnestness, becomes clear at a future period. By the aid of a friend, I also present some poems complete and correct which hitherto have been defaced by various mistakes and omissions. It was suggested that the poem *To the Queen of my Heart* was falsely attributed to Shelley. I certainly find no trace of it among his papers; and, as those of his intimate friends whom I have consulted never heard of it, I omit it.

Two poems are added of some length, *Swellfoot the Tyrant* and *Peter Bell the Third*. I have mentioned the circumstances under which they were written in the notes; and need only add that they are conceived in a very different spirit from Shelley's usual compositions. They are specimens of the burlesque and fanciful; but, although they adopt a familiar style and homely imagery, there shine through the radiance of the poet's imagination the earnest views and opinions of the politician and the moralist.

At my request the publisher has restored the omitted passages of *Queen Mab*. I now present this edition as a complete collection of my husband's poetical works, and I do not foresee that I can hereafter add to or take away a word or line.

PUTNEY, November 6, 1839.

PREFACE BY MRS. SHELLEY
TO THE VOLUME OF POSTHUMOUS POEMS
PUBLISHED IN 1824

In nobil sangue vita umile e queta,
Ed in alto intelletto un puro core ;
Frutto senile in sul giovenil fiore,
E in aspetto pensoso anima lieta.—PETRARCA.

It had been my wish, on presenting the public with the Posthumous Poems of Mr. Shelley, to have accompanied them by a biographical notice ; as it appeared to me that at this moment a narration of the events of my husband's life would come more gracefully from other hands than mine, I applied to Mr. Leigh Hunt. The distinguished friendship that Mr. Shelley felt for him, and the enthusiastic affection with which Mr. Leigh Hunt clings to his friend's memory, seemed to point him out as the person best calculated for such an undertaking. His absence from this country, which prevented our mutual explanation, has unfortunately rendered my scheme abortive. I do not doubt but that on some other occasion he will pay this tribute to his lost friend, and sincerely regret that the volume which I edit has not been honoured by its insertion.

The comparative solitude in which Mr. Shelley lived was the occasion that he was personally known to few ; and his fearless enthusiasm in the cause which he considered the most sacred upon earth, the improvement of the moral and physical state of mankind, was the chief reason why he, like other illustrious reformers, was pursued by hatred and calumny. No man was ever more devoted than he to the endeavour of making those around him happy ; no man ever possessed friends more unfeignedly attached to him. The ungrateful world did not feel his loss, and the gap it made seemed to close as quickly over his memory as the murderous sea above his living frame. Hereafter men will lament that his transcendent powers of intellect were extinguished before they had bestowed on them their choicest treasures. To his friends his loss is irremediable : the wise, the brave, the gentle, is gone for ever ! He is to them as a bright vision, whose radiant track, left behind in the memory, is worth all the realities that society can afford. Before the critics contradict me, let them appeal to any one who had ever known him. To see him was to love him : and his presence, like Ithuriel's spear, was alone sufficient to disclose the falsehood of the tale which his enemies whispered in the ear of the ignorant world.

His life was spent in the contemplation of Nature, in arduous study, or in acts of kindness and affection. He was an elegant scholar and a profound metaphysician; without possessing much scientific knowledge, he was unrivalled in the justness and extent of his observations on natural objects; he knew every plant by its name, and was familiar with the history and habits of every production of the earth; he could interpret without a fault each appearance in the sky; and the varied phenomena of heaven and earth filled him with deep emotion. He made his study and reading-room of the shadowed copse, the stream, the lake, and the waterfall. Ill health and continual pain preyed upon his powers; and the solitude in which we lived, particularly on our first arrival in Italy, although congenial to his feelings, must frequently have weighed upon his spirits; those beautiful and affecting *Lines written in Dejection near Naples* were composed at such an interval; but, when in health, his spirits were buoyant and youthful to an extraordinary degree.

Such was his love for Nature that every page of his poetry is associated, in the minds of his friends, with the loveliest scenes of the countries which he inhabited. In early life he visited the most beautiful parts of this country and Ireland. Afterwards the Alps of Switzerland became his inspirers. *Prometheus Unbound* was written among the deserted and flower-grown ruins of Rome; and, when he made his home under the Pisan hills, their roofless recesses harboured him as he composed the *Witch of Atlas*, *Adonais*, and *Hellas*. In the wild but beautiful Bay of Spezzia, the winds and waves which he loved became his playmates. His days were chiefly spent on the water; the management of his boat, its alterations and improvements, were his principal occupation. At night, when the unclouded moon shone on the calm sea, he often went alone in his little shallop to the rocky caves that bordered it, and, sitting beneath their shelter, wrote the *Triumph of Life*, the last of his productions. The beauty but strangeness of this lonely place, the refined pleasure which he felt in the companionship of a few selected friends, our entire sequestration from the rest of the world, all contributed to render this period of his life one of continued enjoyment. I am convinced that the two months we passed there were the happiest which he had ever known: his health even rapidly improved, and he was never better than when I last saw him, full of spirits and joy, embark for Leghorn, that he might there welcome Leigh Hunt to Italy. I was to have accompanied him; but illness confined me to my room, and thus put the seal on my misfortune. His vessel bore out of sight with a favourable wind, and I remained awaiting his return by the breakers of that sea which was about to engulf him.

He spent a week at Pisa, employed in kind offices toward his friend, and enjoying with keen delight the renewal of their intercourse. He then embarked with Mr. Williams, the chosen and beloved sharer of his pleasures and of his fate, to return to us. We waited for them in vain; the sea by its restless moaning seemed to desire to inform us

of what we would not learn :—but a veil may well be drawn over such misery. The real anguish of those moments transcended all the fictions that the most glowing imagination ever portrayed ; our seclusion, the savage nature of the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, and our immediate vicinity to the troubled sea, combined to imbue with strange horror our days of uncertainty. The truth was at last known,—a truth that made our loved and lovely Italy appear a tomb, its sky a pall. Every heart echoed the deep lament, and my only consolation was in the praise and earnest love that each voice bestowed and each countenance demonstrated for him we had lost,—not, I fondly hope, for ever ; his unearthly and elevated nature is a pledge of the continuation of his being, although in an altered form. Rome received his ashes ; they are deposited beneath its weed-grown wall, and ‘ the world’s sole monument ’ is enriched by his remains.

I must add a few words concerning the contents of this volume. *Julian and Maddalo*, the *Witch of Atlas*, and most of the *Translations*, were written some years ago ; and, with the exception of the *Cyclops*, and the Scenes from the *Magico Prodigioso*, may be considered as having received the author’s ultimate corrections. The *Triumph of Life* was his last work, and was left in so unfinished a state that I arranged it in its present form with great difficulty. All his poems which were scattered in periodical works are collected in this volume, and I have added a reprint of *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude* : the difficulty with which a copy can be obtained is the cause of its republication. Many of the Miscellaneous Poems, written on the spur of the occasion, and never retouched, I found among his manuscript books, and have carefully copied. I have subjoined, whenever I have been able, the date of their composition.

I do not know whether the critics will reprehend the insertion of some of the most imperfect among them ; but I frankly own that I have been more actuated by the fear lest any monument of his genius should escape me than the wish of presenting nothing but what was complete to the fastidious reader. I feel secure that the lovers of Shelley’s poetry (who know how, more than any poet of the present day, every line and word he wrote is instinct with peculiar beauty) will pardon and thank me : I consecrate this volume to them.

The size of this collection has prevented the insertion of any prose pieces. They will hereafter appear in a separate publication.

MARY W. SHELLEY.

LONDON, June 1, 1824.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
EDITOR'S PREFACE	iii
MRS. SHELLEY'S PREFACE TO FIRST COLLECTED EDITION, 1839	xi
POSTSCRIPT IN SECOND EDITION OF 1839	xv
MRS. SHELLEY'S PREFACE TO <i>Posthumous Poems</i> , 1824	xvi
THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD. A FRAGMENT.	
Part I	1
Part II	7
ALASTOR; OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE	
Note by Mrs. Shelley	15 32
THE REVOLT OF ISLAM. A POEM IN TWELVE CANTOS.	
Preface	34
Dedication: To Mary ———	41
Canto I	44
Canto II	57
Canto III	68
Canto IV	76
Canto V	84
Canto VI	99
Canto VII	111
Canto VIII	120
Canto IX	127
Canto X	135
Canto XI	146
Canto XII	152
Note by Mrs. Shelley	161
PRINCE ATHANASE. A FRAGMENT	
165	
ROSALIND AND HELEN. A MODERN ECLOGUE	
174	
Note by Mrs. Shelley	203
JULIAN AND MADDALO. A CONVERSATION	
204	
Note by Mrs. Shelley	219
PROMETHEUS UNBOUND. A LYRICAL DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS.	
Preface	221
Act I	225
Act II	245
Act III	261
Act IV	273
Note by Mrs. Shelley	290

	PAGE
THE CENCI. A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.	
Dedication, to Leigh Hunt, Esq.	296
Preface	297
Act I	301
Act II	311
Act III	320
Act IV	332
Act V	345
Note by Mrs. Shelley	360
THE MASK OF ANARCHY	364
Note by Mrs. Shelley	376
PETER BELL THE THIRD	377
Note by Mrs. Shelley	402
LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE	403
THE WITCH OF ATLAS.	
To Mary	411
The Witch of Atlas	412
Note by Mrs. Shelley	428
OEDIPUS TYRANNUS; OR, SWELLFOOT THE TYRANT. A	
TRAGEDY IN TWO ACTS	430
Note by Mrs. Shelley	452
EPIPSYCHIDION.	453
Fragments connected with Epipsychidion	467
ADONAI8. AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS.	
Preface	474
Adonais	475
Cancelled Passages	488
HELLAS. A LYRICAL DRAMA.	
Preface	490
Prologue	493
Hellas	497
Shelley's Notes	523
Note by Mrs. Shelley	526
FRAGMENTS OF AN UNFINISHED DRAMA	528
CHARLES THE FIRST	535
THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE.	555
Cancelled opening	569
EARLY POEMS. [1814, 1815.]	
Stanza, written at Bracknell	570
Stanzas.—April, 1814	570
To Harriet	571
To Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin	572

CONTENTS

xxi

EARLY POEMS (*continued*)—

	PAGE
To ——. 'Yet look on me'	573
Mutability	573
On Death	574
A Summer Evening Churchyard	575
To ——. 'Oh! there are spirits of the air'	576
To Wordsworth	577
Feelings of a Republican on the Fall of Bonaparte	577
Lines: 'The cold earth slept below'	577
Note on the Early Poems, by Mrs. Shelley	578

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1816.

The Sunset	579
Hymn to Intellectual Beauty	581
Mont Blanc	583
Cancelled Passage of Mont Blanc	586
Fragment: Home	586
Fragment of a Ghost Story	587
Note on Poems of 1816, by Mrs. Shelley	587

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817.

Marianne's Dream	588
To Constantia, Singing	592
The Same: Stanzas I and II	593
To Constantia	594
Fragment: To One Singing	594
A Fragment: To Music	595
Another Fragment to Music	595
'Mighty Eagle'	595
To the Lord Chancellor	595
To William Shelley	598
From the Original Draft of the Poem to William Shelley	599
On Fanny Godwin	600
Lines: 'That time is dead for ever'	600
Death	600
Otho	601
Fragments supposed to be parts of Otho	601
'O that a Chariot of Cloud were mine'	602
Fragments:	
To a Friend released from Prison	602
Satan broken loose	603
Igniculus Desiderii	603
Amor Aeternus	603
Thoughts come and go in Solitude	604
A Hate-Song	604
Lines to a Critic	604
Ozymandias	605
Note on Poems of 1817, by Mrs. Shelley	605

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1818.	PAGE
To the Nile	607
Passage of the Apennines	607
The Past	608
To Mary —	608
On a Faded Violet	609
Lines written among the Euganean Hills	609
Scene from <i>Tasso</i>	617
Song for <i>Tasso</i>	618
Invocation to Misery	619
Stanzas written in Dejection, near Naples	621
The Woodman and the Nightingale	622
Marenghi	624
Sonnet: 'Lift not the painted veil'	630
Fragments:	
To Byron	630
Apostrophe to Silence	630
The Lake's Margin	631
' My head is wild with weeping '	631
The Vine-Shroud	631
Note on Poems of 1818, by Mrs. Shelley	631
 POEMS WRITTEN IN 1819.	
Lines written during the Castlereagh Administration	633
Song to the Men of England	634
Similes for two Political Characters of 1819	635
Fragment: To the People of England	635
Fragment: ' What men gain fairly '	636
A New National Anthem	636
Sonnet: England in 1819	637
An Ode written October, 1819	637
Cancelled Stanza	638
Ode to Heaven	639
Ode to the West Wind	640
An Exhortation	643
The Indian Serenade	643
Cancelled Passage	644
To Sophia [Miss Stacey]	644
To William Shelley, I	645
To William Shelley, II	646
To Mary Shelley, I	646
To Mary Shelley, II	646
On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci	646
Love's Philosophy	648
Fragment: ' Follow to the deep wood's weeds '	648
The Birth of Pleasure	649
Fragments:	
Love the Universe to-day	649
' A gentle story of two lovers young '	649

CONTENTS

xxiii

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1819 (*continued*)—

Fragments:

	PAGE
Love's Tender Atmosphere	649
Wedded Souls	650
'Is it that in some brighter sphere'	650
Sufficient unto the day	650
'Ye gentle visitations of calm thought'	650
Music and Sweet Poetry	651
The Sepulchre of Memory	651
'When a lover clasps his fairest'	651
'Wake the serpent not'	651
Rain	652
A Tale Untold	652
To Italy	652
Wine of the Fairies	652
A Roman's Chamber	653
Rome and Nature	653
Variation of the Song of the Moon	653
Cancelled Stanza of the Mask of Anarchy	654
Note by Mrs. Shelley	654

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820.

The Sensitive Plant	655
Cancelled Passage	663
A Vision of the Sea	663
The Cloud	667
To a Skylark	669
Ode to Liberty	671
Cancelled Passage	678
To ——. 'I fear thy kisses, gentle maiden'	678
Arethusa	679
Song of Proserpine	681
Hymn of Apollo	682
Hymn of Pan	683
The Question	684
The Two Spirits. An Allegory	685
Ode to Naples	686
Autumn: A Dirge	691
The Waning Moon	691
To the Moon	691
Death	692
Liberty	692
Summer and Winter	693
The Tower of Famine	693
An Allegory	694
The World's Wanderers	695
Sonnet: 'Ye hasten to the grave!'	695
Lines to a Reviewer	695
Fragment of a Satire on Satire	696

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820 (<i>continued</i>)—	PAGE
Good-night	697
Buona Notte	698
Orpheus	698
Fiordispina	701
Time Long Past	703
Fragments:	
The Deserts of Dim Sleep	703
‘The viewless and invisible consequence’	704
A Serpent-face	704
Death in Life	704
‘Such hope, as is the sick despair of good’	704
‘Alas! this is not what I thought life was’	704
Milton’s Spirit	705
‘Unrisen splendour of the brightest sun’	705
Pater Omnipotens	705
To the Mind of Man	706
Note on Poems of 1820, by Mrs. Shelley	706
 POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821.	
Dirge for the Year	708
To Night	708
Time	709
Lines: ‘Far, far away’	710
From the Arabic: An Imitation	710
To Emilia Viviani	711
The Fugitives	711
To ——. ‘Music, when soft voices die’	713
Song: ‘Rarely, rarely, comest thou’	713
Mutability	714
Lines written on hearing the News of the Death of Napoleon	715
Sonnet: Political Greatness	716
The Aziola	717
A Lament	717
Remembrance	718
To Edward Williams	718
To ——. ‘One word is too often profaned’	720
To ——. ‘When passion’s trance is overpast’	721
A Bridal Song	721
Epithalamium	722
Another Version of the Same	723
Love, Hope, Desire, and Fear	724
Fragments written for <i>Hellas</i>	725
Fragment: ‘I would not be a king’	726
Ginevra	726
Evening: Ponte al Mare, Pisa	731
The Boat on the Serchio	732
Music	735
Sonnet to Byron	736

CONTENTS

XXV

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821 (*continued*)—

	PAGE
Fragment on Keats	736
Fragment: 'Methought I was a billow in the crowd'	736
To-morrow	737
Stanza: 'If I walk in Autumn's even'	737
Fragments:	
A Wanderer	737
Life rounded with Sleep	737
'I faint, I perish with my love'	737
The Lady of the South	738
Zephyrus the Awakener	738
Rain	738
'When soft winds and sunny skies'	738
'And that I walk thus proudly crowned'	738
'The rude wind is singing'	738
'Great Spirit'	739
'O thou immortal deity'	739
The False Laurel and the True	739
May the Limner	739
Beauty's Halo	740
'The death knell is ringing'	740
'I stood upon a heaven-cleaving turret'	740
Note on Poems of 1821, by Mrs. Shelley	740

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1822.

The Zucca	743
The Magnetic Lady to her Patient	745
Lines: 'When the lamp is shattered'	747
To Jane: The Invitation	748
To Jane: The Recollection	749
The Pine Forest of the Cascine near Pisa	752
With a Guitar, to Jane	754
To Jane: 'The keen stars were twinkling'	757
A Dirge	758
Lines written in the Bay of Lerici	758
Lines: 'We meet not as we parted'	759
The Isle	760
Fragment: To the Moon	760
Epitaph	760
Note on Poems of 1822, by Mrs. Shelley	761

TRANSLATIONS.

Hymn to Mercury. Translated from the Greek of Homer	767
Homer's Hymn to Castor and Pollux	787
Homer's Hymn to the Moon	787
Homer's Hymn to the Sun	788
Homer's Hymn to the Earth: Mother of All	789
Homer's Hymn to Minerva	789
Homer's Hymn to Venus	790

TRANSLATIONS (<i>continued</i>)—	PAGE
The Cyclops: A Satyric Drama. Translated from the Greek of Euripides	791
Epigrams:	
I. To Stella. From the Greek of Plato	809
II. Kissing Helena. From the Greek of Plato	809
III. Spirit of Plato. From the Greek	809
IV. Circumstance. From the Greek	809
Fragment of the Elegy on the Death of Adonis. From the Greek of Bion	810
Fragment of the Elegy on the Death of Bion. From the Greek of Moschus	811
From the Greek of Moschus	811
Pan, Echo, and the Satyr. From the Greek of Moschus	812
From Vergil's Tenth Eclogue	812
The Same	813
From Vergil's Fourth Georgic	814
Sonnet. From the Italian of Dante	814
The First Canzone of the <i>Convito</i> . From the Italian of Dante	815
Matilda gathering Flowers. From the <i>Purgatorio</i> of Dante	816
Fragment. Adapted from the <i>Vita Nuova</i> of Dante	818
Ugolino. <i>Inferno</i> , xxxiii. 22-75, translated by Medwin and corrected by Shelley	818
Sonnet. From the Italian of Cavalcanti	820
Scenes from the <i>Magico Prodigioso</i> . From the Spanish of Calderon	821
Stanzas from Calderon's <i>Cisma de Inghlaterra</i>	838
Scenes from the <i>Faust</i> of Goethe	838
JUVENILIA.	
QUEEN MAB. A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM.	
To Harriet * * * * *	853
Queen Mab	854
Shelley's Notes	893
Note by Mrs. Shelley	929
Verses on a Cat	933
Fragment: Omens	934
Epitaphium [Latin Version of the Epitaph in Gray's <i>Elegy</i>]	934
In Horologium	934
A Dialogue	934
To the Moonbeam	935
The Solitary	936
To Death	936
Love's Rose	937
Eyes: a Fragment	937
ORIGINAL POETRY BY VICTOR AND CAZIRE.	
I. 'Here I sit with my paper, my pen and my ink'	938
II. To Miss ——— [Harriet Grove] From Miss ——— [Elizabeth Shelley]	939
III. Song: 'Cold, cold is the blast'	941

CONTENTS

xxvii

JUVENILIA (*continued*)—

	PAGE
IV. Song: 'Come [Harriet]! sweet is the hour'	941
V. Song: Despair	942
VI. Song: Sorrow	942
VII. Song: Hope	942
VIII. Song: Translated from the Italian	943
IX. Song: Translated from the German	943
X. The Irishman's Song	944
XI. Song: 'Fierce roars the midnight storm'	944
XII. Song: To —— [Harriet]	945
XIII. Song: To —— [Harriet]	945
XIV. Saint Edmond's Eve	946
XV. Revenge	947
XVI. Ghasta; or, The Avenging Demon	949
XVII. Fragment; or, The Triumph of Conscience	952
POEMS FROM ST. IRVYNE; OR, THE ROSICRUCIAN.	
I. Victoria	952
II. 'On the Dark Height of Jura'	953
III. Sister Rosa. A Ballad	953
IV. St. Irvyne's Tower	955
V. Bereavement	955
VI. The Drowned Lover	955
POSTHUMOUS FRAGMENTS OF MARGARET NICHOLSON.	
Advertisement	956
War	957
Fragment: Supposed to be an Epithalamium of Francis Ravallac and Charlotte Corday	958
Despair	960
Fragment	961
The Spectral Horseman	962
Melody to a Scene of Former Times	963
Stanza from a Translation of the Marseillaise Hymn	964
Bigotry's Victim	964
On an Icicle that clung to the Grass of a Grave	965
Love	966
On a Fête at Carlton House: Fragment	966
To a Star	966
To Mary, who died in this opinion	966
A Tale of Society as it is: From Facts, 1811	967
To the Republicans of North America	969
To Ireland	969
On Robert Emmet's Grave	970
The Retrospect: Cwm Elan, 1812	970
Fragment of a Sonnet: To Harriet	972
To Harriet	972
Sonnet: To a Balloon laden with Knowledge	974
Sonnet: On launching some Bottles filled with Knowledge into the Bristol Channel	974
The Devil's Walk	974
Fragment of a Sonnet: Farewell to North Devon	977
On leaving London for Wales	977

	PAGE
JUVENILIA (<i>continued</i>)—	
The Wandering Jew's Soliloquy	978
Evening: To Harriet	979
To Ianthe.	979
Song from the Wandering Jew	979
Fragment from the Wandering Jew	979
To the Queen of my Heart	980
EDITOR'S NOTES	981
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL LIST OF EDITIONS	1010
INDEX OF FIRST LINES	1015

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF SHELLEY (from the portrait in the Bodleian Library).	<i>Frontispiece</i>
FACSIMILES OF SHELLEY'S HANDWRITING	
i. <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> , Act II. Sc. v. ll. 56-71	To face p. 260
ii. <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> , uncanceled passage, fol- lowed by ll. 72-9 of Act II. Sc. v.	,, 288

ERRATA AND ADDENDA

- Page 26, line 465, *omit comma after Or*
87, l. 1858, *insert colon after there*
129, l. 3530, *omit comma after ill*
254, l. 96, *for Most read Must*
276, l. 107, *insert semi-colon after tresses*
294, l. 16, *for make read made*
452, l. 31, *for from read in*
810, l. 4, *insert comma after Wake*
820, l. 48, *for where read were*
837, l. 179, *insert full point after Here*
947, l. 118, *for loom read gloom*
948, l. 21, *insert ! after second no*
949, l. 21, *for reigns read reins*
996, l. 12, *for Pay read Nay*

Daemon of the World, Part I, line 11.—In a copy of *Queen Mab*, revised in Shelley's handwriting for the *Daemon of the World*, which has recently (Sept. 1905) come into the possession of Mr. T. J. Wise, the word 'couch' in this line has been altered to 'crouch'.

Shelley (8vo).

ARABIC AND ALPHABET

1. The first letter is Alif (A) which is written in the shape of a vertical line. It is the simplest of all the letters and is used to form the beginning of many words. It is written in the shape of a vertical line with a small hook at the top.

The word 'Allah' is written in Arabic as 'الله'. The letter 'Alif' is the first letter of the word 'Allah'.

Alif (A)

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

A FRAGMENT

PART I

[Sections i and ii of *Queen Mab* rehandled, and published by Shelley in the *Alastor* volume, 1816. See *Bibliographical List*, and the Editor's *Introductory Note to Queen Mab*.]

Nec tantum prodere vati,
Quantum scire licet. Venit aetas omnis in unam
Congeriem, miserumque premunt tot saecula pectus.

LUCAN, *Phars.* v. 176.

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One pale as yonder wan and hornèd moon,
With lips of lurid blue,
The other glowing like the vital morn, 5
When throned on ocean's wave
It breathes over the world:
Yet both so passing strange and wonderful!
Hath then the iron-sceptred Skeleton,
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres, 10
To the hell dogs that couch' beneath his throne
Cast that fair prey? Must that divinest form,
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, whose azure veins
Steal like dark streams along a field of snow, 15
Whose outline is as fair as marble clothed
In light of some sublimest mind, decay?
Nor putrefaction's breath
Leave aught of this pure spectacle
But loathsomeness and ruin?— 20
Spare aught but a dark theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it but that downy-wingèd slumbers
Have charmed their nurse coy Silence near her lids
To watch their own repose? 25
Will they, when morning's beam
Flows through those wells of light,
Seek far from noise and day some western cave,
Where woods and streams with soft and pausing winds
A lulling murmur weave?— 30

Ianthe doth not sleep
 The dreamless sleep of death :
 Nor in her moonlight chamber silently
 Doth Henry hear her regular pulses throb,
 Or mark her delicate cheek 35
 With interchange of hues mock the broad moon,
 Outwatching weary night,
 Without assured reward.
 Her dewy eyes are closed ;
 On their translucent lids, whose texture fine 40
 Scarce hides the dark blue orbs that burn below
 With unapparent fire,
 The baby Sleep is pillowed :
 Her golden tresses shade
 The bosom's stainless pride, 45
 Twining like tendrils of the parasite
 Around a marble column.

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
 'Tis like a wondrous strain that sweeps
 Around a lonely ruin 50
 When west winds sigh and evening waves respond
 In whispers from the shore :
 'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
 Which from the unseen lyres of dells and groves
 The genii of the breezes sweep. 55
 Floating on waves of music and of light,
 The chariot of the Daemon of the World
 Descends in silent power :
 Its shape reposed within : slight as some cloud
 That catches but the palest tinge of day 60
 When evening yields to night,
 Bright as that fibrous woof when stars indue
 Its transitory robe.
 Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful
 Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light 65
 Check their unearthly speed ; they stop and fold
 Their wings of braided air :
 The Daemon leaning from the ethereal car
 Gazed on the slumbering maid.
 Human eye hath ne'er beheld 70
 A shape so wild, so bright, so beautiful,
 As that which o'er the maiden's charmed sleep
 Waving a starry wand,
 Hung like a mist of light.
 Such sounds as breathed around like odorous winds
 Of wakening spring arose, 76
 Filling the chamber and the moonlight sky.

- Maiden, the world's supremest spirit
 Beneath the shadow of her wings
 Folds all thy memory doth inherit 80
 From ruin of divinest things,
 Feelings that lure thee to betray,
 And light of thoughts that pass away.
- For thou hast earned a mighty boon,
 The truths which wisest poets see 85
 Dimly, thy mind may make its own,
 Rewarding its own majesty,
 Entranced in some diviner mood
 Of self-oblivious solitude.
- Custom, and Faith, and Power thou spurnest; 90
 From hate and awe thy heart is free;
 Ardent and pure as day thou burnest,
 For dark and cold mortality
 A living light, to cheer it long,
 The watch-fires of the world among. 95
- Therefore from nature's inner shrine,
 Where gods and fiends in worship bend,
 Majestic spirit, be it thine
 The flame to seize, the veil to rend,
 Where the vast snake Eternity 100
 In charmed sleep doth ever lie.
- All that inspires thy voice of love,
 Or speaks in thy unclosing eyes,
 Or through thy frame doth burn or move,
 Or think or feel, awake, arise! 105
 Spirit, leave for mine and me
 Earth's unsubstantial mimicry!
- It ceased, and from the mute and moveless frame
 A radiant spirit arose,
 All beautiful in naked purity. 110
 Robed in its human hues it did ascend,
 Disparting as it went the silver clouds,
 It moved towards the car, and took its seat
 Beside the Daemon shape.
- Obedient to the sweep of aëry song, 115
 The mighty ministers
 Unfurled their prismatic wings.
 The magic car moved on;
 The night was fair, innumerable stars
 Studded heaven's dark blue vault; 120
 The eastern wave grew pale
 With the first smile of morn.

The magic car moved on.
 From the swift sweep of wings
 The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew ; 125
 And where the burning wheels
 Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak
 Was traced a line of lightning.
 Now far above a rock the utmost verge
 Of the wide earth it flew, 130
 The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
 Frowned o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's stormy path,
 Calm as a slumbering babe,
 Tremendous ocean lay. 135
 Its broad and silent mirror gave to view
 The pale and waning stars,
 The chariot's fiery track,
 And the grey light of morn
 Tingeing those fleecy clouds 140
 That cradled in their folds the infant dawn.
 The chariot seemed to fly
 Through the abyss of an immense concave,
 Radiant with million constellations, tinged
 With shades of infinite colour, 145
 And semicircled with a belt
 Flashing incessant meteors.

As they approached their goal,
 The wingèd shadows seemed to gather speed.
 The sea no longer was distinguished ; earth 150
 Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere, suspended
 In the black concave of heaven
 With the sun's cloudless orb,
 Whose rays of rapid light
 Parted around the chariot's swifter course, 155
 And fell like ocean's feathery spray
 Dashed from the boiling surge
 Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
 Earth's distant orb appeared 160
 The smallest light that twinkles in the heavens,
 Whilst round the chariot's way
 Innumerable systems widely rolled,
 And countless spheres diffused
 An ever varying glory. 165
 It was a sight of wonder ! Some were horned,
 And like the moon's argentine crescent hung
 In the dark dome of heaven ; some did shed

A clear mild beam like Hesperus, while the sea
 Yet glows with fading sunlight; others dashed 170
 Athwart the night with trains of bickering fire,
 Like spherèd worlds to death and ruin driven;
 Some shone like stars, and as the chariot passed
 Bedimmed all other light.

Spirit of Nature! here 175
 In this interminable wilderness
 Of worlds, at whose involved immensity

Even soaring fancy staggers,
 Here is thy fitting temple.
 Yet not the lightest leaf 180
 That quivers to the passing breeze
 Is less instinct with thee,—
 Yet not the meanest worm,
 That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead,
 Less shares thy eternal breath. 185

Spirit of Nature! thou
 Imperishable as this glorious scene,
 Here is thy fitting temple.

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
 To the shore of the immeasurable sea, 190
 And thou hast lingered there
 Until the sun's broad orb
 Seemed resting on the fiery line of ocean,
 Thou must have marked the braided webs of gold
 That without motion hang 195
 Over the sinking sphere:

Thou must have marked the billowy mountain clouds,
 Edged with intolerable radiancy,
 Towering like rocks of jet
 Above the burning deep: 200
 And yet there is a moment
 When the sun's highest point

Peers like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
 When those far clouds of feathery purple gleam
 Like fairy lands girt by some heavenly sea: 205
 Then has thy rapt imagination soared
 Where in the midst of all existing things
 The temple of the mightiest Daemon stands.

Yet not the golden islands
 That gleam amid yon flood of purple light, 210
 Nor the feathery curtains
 That canopy the sun's resplendent couch,
 Nor the burnished ocean waves
 Paving that gorgeous dome,

- So fair, so wonderful a sight 215
 As the eternal temple could afford.
 The elements of all that human thought
 Can frame of lovely or sublime, did join
 To rear the fabric of the fane, nor aught
 Of earth may image forth its majesty. 220
 Yet likest evening's vault that faëry hall,
 As heaven low resting on the wave it spread
 Its floors of flashing light,
 Its vast and azure dome ;
 And on the verge of that obscure abyss 225
 Where crystal battlements o'erhang the gulf
 Of the dark world, ten thousand spheres diffuse
 Their lustre through its adamantine gates.
- The magic car no longer moved ;
 The Daemon and the Spirit 230
 Entered the eternal gates.
 Those clouds of aëry gold
 That slept in glittering billows
 Beneath the azure canopy,
 With the ethereal footsteps trembled not ; 235
 While slight and odorous mists
 Floated to strains of thrilling melody
 Through the vast columns and the pearly shrines.
- The Daemon and the Spirit
 Approached the overhanging battlement, 240
 Below lay stretched the boundless universe !
 There, far as the remotest line
 That limits swift imagination's flight,
 Unending orbs mingled in mazy motion,
 Immutably fulfilling 245
 Eternal Nature's law.
 Above, below, around,
 The circling systems formed
 A wilderness of harmony,
 Each with undeviating aim 250
 In eloquent silence through the depths of space
 Pursued its wondrous way.—
- Awhile the Spirit paused in ecstasy.
 Yet soon she saw, as the vast spheres swept by,
 Strange things within their belted orbs appear. 255
 Like animated frenzies, dimly moved
 Shadows, and skeletons, and fiendly shapes,
 Thronging round human graves, and o'er the dead
 Sculpturing records for each memory
 In verse, such as malignant gods pronounce, 260

Blasting the hopes of men, when heaven and hell
 Confounded burst in ruin o'er the world:
 And they did build vast trophies, instruments
 Of murder, human bones, barbaric gold, *M.*
 Skins torn from living men, and towers of skulls 265
 With sightless holes gazing on blinder heaven,
 Mitres, and crowns, and brazen chariots stained
 With blood, and scrolls of mystic wickedness,
 The sanguine codes of venerable crime.
 The likeness of a throned king came by, 270
 When these had passed, bearing upon his brow
 A threefold crown; his countenance was calm,
 His eye severe and cold; but his right hand
 Was charged with bloody coin, and he did gnaw
 By fits, with secret smiles, a human heart 275
 Concealed beneath his robe; and motley shapes,
 A multitudinous throng, around him knelt,
 With bosoms bare, and bowed heads, and false looks
 Of true submission, as the sphere rolled by.
 Brooking no eye to witness their foul shame, 280
 Which human hearts must feel, while human tongues
 Tremble to speak, they did rage horribly,
 Breathing in self-contempt fierce blasphemies
 Against the Daemon of the World, and high
 Hurling their armed hands where the pure Spirit, 285
 Serene and inaccessibly secure,
 Stood on an isolated pinnacle,
 The flood of ages combating below,
 The depth of the unbounded universe
 Above, and all around 290
 Necessity's unchanging harmony.

PART II

[Sections viii and ix of *Queen Mab* rehandled by Shelley. First printed in 1876 by Mr. H. Buxton Forman, C.B., by whose kind permission it is here reproduced. See Editor's *Introductory Note* to *Queen Mab*.]

O HAPPY Earth! reality of Heaven!
 To which those restless powers that ceaselessly
 Throng through the human universe aspire;
 Thou consummation of all mortal hope! 295
 Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!
 Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
 Verge to one point and blend for ever there:
 Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place!

Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime, 300
Languor, disease, and ignorance dare not come:
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!

Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams,
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined 305
Those rooted hopes, that the proud Power of Evil
Shall not for ever on this fairest world
Shake pestilence and war, or that his slaves
With blasphemy for prayer, and human blood
For sacrifice, before his shrine for ever 310
In adoration bend, or Erebus
With all its banded fiends shall not arise
To overwhelm in envy and revenge
The dauntless and the good, who dare to hurl
Defiance at his throne, girt tho' it be 315
With Death's omnipotence. Thou hast beheld
His empire, o'er the present and the past;
It was a desolate sight—now gaze on mine,
Futurity. Thou hoary giant Time,
Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,— 320
And from the cradles of eternity,
Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
Thy glorious destiny!

The Spirit saw 325

The vast frame of the renovated world
Smile in the lap of Chaos, and the sense
Of hope thro' her fine texture did suffuse
Such varying glow, as summer evening casts
On undulating clouds and deepening lakes. 330
Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits,
Was the sweet stream of thought that with wild motion
Flowed o'er the Spirit's human sympathies. 336
The mighty tide of thought had paused awhile,
Which from the Daemon now like Ocean's stream
Again began to pour.—

To me is given 340

The wonders of the human world to keep—
Space, matter, time and mind—let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
All things are recreated, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life:

The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck 345
 To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
 Rewarding her with their pure perfectness :
 The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
 Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad :
 Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere, 350
 Glows in the fruits, and mantles on the stream ;
 No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
 Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
 The foliage of the undecaying trees ;
 But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair, 355
 And Autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
 Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of Spring,
 Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
 Reflects its tint and blushes into love.

The habitable earth is full of bliss ; 360
 Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled
 By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,
 Where matter dared not vegetate nor live,
 But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
 Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed ; 365
 And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
 Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
 Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
 Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
 To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves 370
 And melodise with man's blest nature there.

The vast tract of the parched and sandy waste
 Now teems with countless rills and shady woods,
 Corn-fields and pastures and white cottages ;
 And where the startled wilderness did hear 375
 A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
 Hymning his victory, or the milder snake
 Crushing the bones of some frail antelope
 Within his brazen folds—the dewy lawn,
 Offering sweet incense to the sunrise, smiles 380
 To see a babe before his mother's door,
 Share with the green and golden basilisk
 That comes to lick his feet, his morning's meal.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
 Has seen, above the illimitable plain, 385
 Morning on night and night on morning rise,
 Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
 Its shadowy mountains on the sunbright sea,
 Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
 So long have mingled with the gusty wind 390
 In melancholy loneliness, and swept

The desert of those ocean solitudes,
 But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
 The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
 Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds 395
 Of kindest human impulses respond:
 Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
 With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
 And fertile valleys, resonant with bliss,
 Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave, 400
 Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
 To meet the kisses of the flowerets there.

Man chief perceives the change, his being notes
 The gradual renovation, and defines
 Each movement of its progress on his mind. 405
 Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
 Lowered o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
 Where scarce the hardest herb that braves the frost
 Basked in the moonlight's ineffectual glow, 409
 Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night;
 Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day
 With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
 Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
 Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
 Unnatural vegetation, where the land 415
 Teemed with all earthquake, tempest and disease,
 Was man a nobler being; slavery
 Had crushed him to his country's blood-stained dust.

Even where the milder zone afforded man
 A seeming shelter, yet contagion there, 420
 Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,
 Spread like a quenchless fire; nor truth availed
 Till late to arrest its progress, or create
 That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
 Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime: 425
 There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
 The mimic of surrounding misery,
 The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
 The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning 430
 This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind;
 Blest from his birth with all bland impulses,
 Which gently in his noble bosom wake
 All kindly passions and all pure desires.
 Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing, 435
 Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
 Dawns on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
 In time-destroying infiniteness gift

With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
 The unprevailing hoariness of age, 440
 And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
 Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
 Immortal upon earth: no longer now
 He slays the beast that sports around his dwelling
 And horribly devours its mangled flesh, 445
 Or drinks its vital blood, which like a stream
 Of poison thro' his fevered veins did flow
 Feeding a plague that secretly consumed
 His feeble frame, and kindling in his mind
 Hatred, despair, and fear and vain belief, 450
 The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.
 No longer now the wingèd habitants,
 That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
 Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
 And prune their sunny feathers on the hands 455
 Which little children stretch in friendly sport
 Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
 All things are void of terror: man has lost
 His desolating privilege, and stands
 An equal amidst equals: happiness 460
 And science dawn though late upon the earth;
 Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;
 Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
 Reason and passion cease to combat there;
 Whilst mind unfettered o'er the earth extends 465
 Its all-subduing energies, and wields
 The sceptre of a vast dominion there.

Mild is the slow necessity of death:
 The tranquil spirit fails beneath its grasp,
 Without a groan, almost without a fear, 470
 Resigned in peace to the necessity,
 Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
 And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
 The deadly germs of languor and disease
 Waste in the human frame, and Nature gifts 475
 With choicest boons her human worshippers.
 How vigorous now the athletic form of age!
 How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
 Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, or care,
 Had stamped the seal of grey deformity 480
 On all the mingling lineaments of time.
 How lovely the intrepid front of youth!
 How sweet the smiles of taintless infancy.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
 Fearless and free the ruddy children play, 485

Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
 With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,
 That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom ;
 The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,
 There rust amid the accumulated ruins 490
 Now mingling slowly with their native earth :
 There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
 Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
 With a pale and sickly glare, now freely shines
 On the pure smiles of infant playfulness : 495
 No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
 Peals through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
 Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
 And merriment are resonant around.

The fanes of Fear and Falsehood hear no more 500
 The voice that once waked multitudes to war
 Thundering thro' all their aisles : but now respond
 To the death dirge of the melancholy wind :
 It were a sight of awfulness to see
 The works of faith and slavery, so vast, 505
 So sumptuous, yet withal so perishing !
 Even as the corpse that rests beneath their wall.
 A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
 To-day, the breathing marble glows above
 To decorate its memory, and tongues 510
 Are busy of its life : to-morrow, worms
 In silence and in darkness seize their prey.
 These ruins soon leave not a wreck behind :
 Their elements, wide-scattered o'er the globe,
 To happier shapes are moulded, and become 515
 Ministrant to all blissful impulses :
 Thus human things are perfected, and earth.
 Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
 Is strengthened in all excellence, and grows
 Fairer and nobler with each passing year. 520

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
 Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past
 Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done :
 Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own,
 With all the fear and all the hope they bring. 525
 My spells are past : the present now recurs.
 Ah me ! a pathless wilderness remains
 Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,
 Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue 530
 The gradual paths of an aspiring change :

For birth and life and death, and that strange state
 Before the naked powers that thro' the world
 Wander like winds have found a human home,
 All tend to perfect happiness, and urge 535
 The restless wheels of being on their way,
 Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
 Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal:
 For birth but wakes the universal mind
 Whose mighty streams might else in silence flow 540
 Thro' the vast world, to individual sense
 Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
 New modes of passion to its frame may lend;
 Life is its state of action, and the store
 Of all events is aggregated there 545
 That variegate the eternal universe;
 Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
 That leads to azure isles and beaming skies
 And happy regions of eternal hope.
 Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on: 550
 Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
 Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
 Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,
 To feed with kindest dews its favourite flower,
 That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens, 555
 Lighting the green wood with its sunny smile.

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,
 So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
 So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch flares;
 'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour, 560
 The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
 For what thou art shall perish utterly,
 But what is thine may never cease to be;
 Death is no foe to virtue: earth has seen
 Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom, 565
 Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
 And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
 Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
 Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
 Hopes that not vainly thou, and living fires 570
 Of mind as radiant and as pure as thou,
 Have shone upon the paths of men—return,
 Surpassing Spirit, to that world, where thou
 Art destined an eternal war to wage
 With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot 575
 The germs of misery from the human heart.
 Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
 The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,

Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
 Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease: 580
 Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
 Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
 When fenced by power and master of the world.
 Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
 Free from heart-withering custom's cold control, 585
 Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
 Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,
 And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
 Which thou hast now received: virtue shall keep
 Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod, 590
 And many days of beaming hope shall bless
 Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
 Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
 Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
 Light, life and rapture from thy smile. 595

The Daemon called its wingèd ministers.
 Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
 That rolled beside the crystal battlement,
 Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
 The burning wheels inflame 600
 The steep descent of Heaven's untrodden way.
 Fast and far the chariot flew:
 The mighty globes that rolled
 Around the gate of the Eternal Fane
 Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared 605
 Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
 That ministering on the solar power
 With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.
 Earth floated then below:
 The chariot paused a moment; 610
 The Spirit then descended:
 And from the earth departing
 The shadows with swift wings
 Speeded like thought upon the light of Heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then, 615
 A gentle start convulsed Ianthè's frame:
 Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed;
 Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained:
 She looked around in wonder and beheld
 Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch, 620
 Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
 And the bright beaming stars
 That through the casement shone.

ALASTOR

OR

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

[Composed at Bishopsgate Heath, near Windsor Park, 1815 (autumn); published, as the title-piece of a slender volume containing other poems (see *Bibliographical List*, by Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, London, 1816 (March). Reprinted—the first edition being sold out—amongst the *Posthumous Poems*, 1824. Sources of the text are (1) the *editio princeps*, 1816; (2) *Posth. Poems*, 1824; (3) *Poetical Works*, 1839, edd. 1st and 2nd. For (2) and (3) Mrs. Shelley is responsible.]

PREFACE

THE poem entitled *Alastor* may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most

perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its

dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their

country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

‘The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as
summer dust,
Burn to the socket!’

December 14, 1815.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quaerebam quid
amarem, amans amare.—*Confess. St. August.*

EARTH, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood!

If our great Mother has imbued my soul

With aught of natural piety to feel

Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;

If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even, 5

With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,

And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;

If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,

And winter robing with pure snow and crowns

Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs; 10

If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes

Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me;

If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast

I consciously have injured, but still loved

And cherished these my kindred; then forgive 15

This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw

No portion of your wonted favour now!

Mother of this unfathomable world!

Favour my solemn song, for I have loved

Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched 20

Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,

And my heart ever gazes on the depth

Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed

In charnels and on coffins, where black death
 Keeps record of the trophies won from thee, 25
 Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
 Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost
 Thy messenger, to render up the tale
 Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
 When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
 Like an inspired and desperate alchemist 31
 Staking his very life on some dark hope,
 Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
 With my most innocent love, until strange tears
 Uniting with those breathless kisses, made 35
 Such magic as compels the charmed night
 To render up thy charge: . . . and, though ne'er yet
 Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
 Enough from incommunicable dream,
 And twilight phantasms, and deep noon-day thought, 40
 Has shone within me, that serenely now
 And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
 Suspended in the solitary dome
 Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
 I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain 45
 May modulate with murmurs of the air,
 And motions of the forests and the sea,
 And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
 Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb 50
 No human hands with pious reverence reared,
 But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
 Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
 Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:—
 A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked 55
 With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
 The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:—
 Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn bard
 Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
 He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude. 60
 Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
 And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
 And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
 The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
 And Silence, too enamoured of that voice, 65
 Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
 His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
 And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
 Sent to his heart its choicest impulses. 70

The fountains of divine philosophy
 Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
 Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
 In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
 And knew. When early youth had passed, he left 75
 His cold fireside and alienated home
 To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
 Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
 Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
 With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men, 80
 His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
 He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
 The red volcano overcanopies
 Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
 With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes 85
 On black bare pointed islets ever beat
 With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
 Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
 Of fire and poison, inaccessible
 To avarice or pride, their starry domes 90
 Of diamond and of gold expand above
 Numberless and immeasurable halls,
 Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
 Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
 Nor had that scene of ampler majesty 95
 Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
 And the green earth lost in his heart its claims
 To love and wonder; he would linger long
 In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
 Until the doves and squirrels would partake 100
 From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
 Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
 And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
 The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
 Her timid steps to gaze upon a form 105
 More graceful than her own.

His wandering step

Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
 The awful ruins of the days of old:
 Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste 110
 Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
 Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
 Memphis and Thebes, and whatso'er of strange
 Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
 Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,
 Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills 115
 Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
 Stupendous columns, and wild images

Of more than man, where marble daemons watch
 The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
 Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around, 120
 He lingered, poring on memorials
 Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
 Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
 Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
 Suspended he that task, but ever gazed 125
 And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
 Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
 The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
 Her daily portion, from her father's tent, 130
 And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
 From duties and repose to tend his steps:—
 Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
 To speak her love:—and watched his nightly sleep,
 Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips 135
 Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
 Of innocent dreams arose: then, when red morn
 Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
 Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie 140
 And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
 And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
 Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
 In joy and exultation held his way;
 Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within 145
 Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
 Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
 Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
 His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
 There came, a dream of hopes that never yet 150
 Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
 Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
 Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
 Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
 Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held 155
 His inmost sense suspended in its web
 Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
 Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
 And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
 Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy, 160
 Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
 Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
 A permeating fire: wild numbers then
 She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs

Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands 165
 Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
 Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
 The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
 The beating of her heart was heard to fill
 The pauses of her music, and her breath 170
 Unmultuously accorded with those fits
 Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
 As if her heart impatiently endured
 Its bursting burthen: at the sound he turned,
 And saw by the warm light of their own life 175
 Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
 Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
 Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
 Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
 Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly. 180
 His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
 Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
 His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
 Her panting bosom: . . . she drew back a while,
 Then, yielding to the irresistible joy, 185
 With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
 Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
 Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
 Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
 Like a dark flood suspended in its course, 190
 Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock he started from his trance—
 The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
 Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
 The distinct valley and the vacant woods, 195
 Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
 The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
 Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
 The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
 The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes 200
 Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
 As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
 The spirit of sweet human love has sent
 A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
 Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues 205
 Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
 He overleaps the bounds. Alas! Alas!
 Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined
 Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
 In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep, 210
 That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death

Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
 O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
 And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
 Lead only to a black and watery depth, 215
 While death's blue vault, with loathliest vapours hung,
 Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
 Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
 Conducts, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
 This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart, 220
 The insatiate hope which it awakened, stung
 His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
 The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
 With his still soul. At night the passion came,
 Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream, 225
 And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
 Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
 In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
 Burn with the poison, and precipitates
 Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
 Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight 231
 O'er the wide aëry wilderness: thus driven
 By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
 Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
 Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells, 235
 Startling with careless step the moonlight snake,
 He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
 Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
 Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
 Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep 240
 Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
 Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
 Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
 Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
 Day after day a weary waste of hours, 245
 Bearing within his life the brooding care
 That ever fed on its decaying flame.
 And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair
 Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
 Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand 250
 Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
 Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
 As in a furnace burning secretly
 From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
 Who ministered with human charity 255
 His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
 Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,

Encountering on some dizzy precipice
 That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind
 With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet 260
 Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
 In its career: the infant would conceal
 His troubled visage in his mother's robe
 In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
 To remember their strange light in many a dream 265
 Of after-times; but youthful maidens, taught
 By nature, would interpret half the woe
 That wasted him, would call him with false names
 Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
 At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path 270
 Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
 He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
 Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
 His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there, 275
 Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
 It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
 Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
 High over the immeasurable main.
 His eyes pursued its flight.—'Thou hast a home, 280
 Beautiful bird; thou voyagest to thine home,
 Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
 With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
 Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
 And what am I that I should linger here, 285
 With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
 Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
 To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
 In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
 That echoes not my thoughts?' A gloomy smile 290
 Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
 For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
 Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
 Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
 With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts he looked around. 296
 There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
 Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
 A little shallop floating near the shore
 Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze. 300
 It had been long abandoned, for its sides
 Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
 Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
 A restless impulse urged him to embark

And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste ; 305
 For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
 The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky
 Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
 Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
 Following his eager soul, the wanderer 311
 Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
 On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
 And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
 Like a torn cloud before the hurricane. 315

As one that in a silver vision floats
 Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
 Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
 Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
 The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on, 320
 With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
 Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
 The waves arose. Higher and higher still
 Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
 Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp. 325
 Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
 Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
 Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
 With dark obliterating course, he sate :
 As if their genii were the ministers 330
 Appointed to conduct him to the light
 Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
 Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
 The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
 High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray 335
 That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;
 Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
 Entwined in dusker wreaths her braided locks
 O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;
 Night followed, clad with stars. On every side 340
 More horribly the multitudinous streams
 Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
 Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
 The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
 Still fled before the storm ; still fled, like foam 345
 Down the steep cataract of a wintry river ;
 Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave ;
 Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
 That fell, convulsing ocean : safely fled—
 As if that frail and wasted human form, 350

Had been an elemental god.

At midnight

The moon arose: and lo! the ethereal cliffs
 Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
 Among the stars like sunlight, and around
 Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves 355
 Bursting and eddying irresistibly
 Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?—
 The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
 The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
 The shattered mountain overhung the sea, 360
 And faster still, beyond all human speed,
 Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
 The little boat was driven. A cavern there
 Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
 Ingulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on 365
 With unrelaxing speed.—‘Vision and Love!’
 The Poet cried aloud, ‘I have beheld
 The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
 Shall not divide us long!’

The boat pursued

The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone 370
 At length upon that gloomy river’s flow;
 Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
 Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
 The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
 Exposed those black depths to the azure sky, 375
 Ere yet the flood’s enormous volume fell
 Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
 That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
 Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
 Stair above stair the eddying waters rose, 380
 Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
 With alternating dash the gnarled roots
 Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
 In darkness over it. In the midst was left,
 Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud, 385
 A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
 Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
 With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
 Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
 Till on the verge of the extremest curve, 390
 Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
 The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
 Of glassy quiet mid those battling tides
 Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink
 Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress 395

Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
 Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,
 Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
 And, lo! with gentle motion, between banks
 Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream, 400
 Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark!
 The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
 With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
 Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
 A little space of green expanse, the cove 405
 Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
 For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
 Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
 Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
 Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind, 410
 Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
 Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
 To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
 But on his heart its solitude returned,
 And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid 415
 In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame
 Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
 Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
 Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
 Of night close over it.

The noonday sun 420
 Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
 Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
 A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
 Scooped in the dark base of their aëry rocks
 Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever. 425
 The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
 Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
 By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
 He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
 Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark 430
 And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
 Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
 Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
 Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
 Most solemn domes within, and far below, 435
 Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
 The ash and the acacia floating hang
 Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
 In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
 Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around 440
 The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
 With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,

Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
 These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
 Uniting their close union; the woven leaves 445
 Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
 And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
 As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
 Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
 Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms 450
 Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
 Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
 A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
 To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
 Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep 455
 Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
 Like vaporous shapes half seen; beyond, a well,
 Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
 Images all the woven boughs above,
 And each depending leaf, and every speck 460
 Of azure sky, darting between their chasms;
 Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
 Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
 Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
 Or painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon, 465
 Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
 Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
 Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
 Their own wan light through the reflected lines 470
 Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
 Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
 Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
 Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
 The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung 475
 Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
 An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
 Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
 Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
 To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes 480
 Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
 Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
 Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;—
 But, undulating woods, and silent well,
 And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom 485
 Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
 Held commune with him, as if he and it
 Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard
 Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two eyes,

Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought, 490
 And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
 To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
 That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
 The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
 Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine 495
 Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
 Among the moss with hollow harmony
 Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
 It danced; like childhood laughing as it went:
 Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept, 500
 Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
 That overhung its quietness.—‘O stream!
 Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
 Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
 Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness, 505
 Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
 Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course
 Have each their type in me: and the wide sky,
 And measureless ocean may declare as soon
 What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud 510
 Contains thy waters, as the universe
 Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
 Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
 I’ the passing wind!’

Beside the grassy shore
 Of the small stream he went; he did impress 515
 On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
 Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
 Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
 Of fever, he did move; yet, not like him,
 Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame 520
 Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
 He must descend. With rapid steps he went
 Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
 Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
 The forest’s solemn canopies were changed 525
 For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
 Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
 The struggling brook: tall spires of windlestrae
 Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
 And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines 530
 Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
 The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
 Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,

530 roots *ed.* 1816 ; *query* stumps or trunks. See note at end.

The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
 And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes 535
 Had shone, gleam stony orbs:—so from his steps
 Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
 Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
 And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
 The stream, that with a larger volume now 540
 Rolled through the labyrinthine dell; and there
 Fretted a path through its descending curves
 With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
 Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
 Lifted their black and barren pinnacles 545
 In the light of evening, and, its precipice
 Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
 Mid toppling stones, black gulfs and yawning caves,
 Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
 To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands 550
 Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
 And seems, with its accumulated crags,
 To overhang the world: for wide expand
 Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
 Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams, 555
 Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
 Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
 Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
 Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
 In naked and severe simplicity, 560
 Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
 Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
 Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
 Yielding one only response, at each pause
 In most familiar cadence, with the howl 565
 The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
 Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
 Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
 Fell into that immeasurable void
 Scattering its waters to the passing winds. 570

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine
 And torrent, were not all;—one silent nook
 Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
 Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
 It overlooked in its serenity 575
 The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
 It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
 Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
 The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
 And did embower with leaves for ever green, 580

And berries dark, the smooth and even space
 Of its inviolated floor, and here
 The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
 In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
 Red, yellow, or ethereally pale, 585
 Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
 Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
 The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
 One human step alone, has ever broken
 The stillness of its solitude:—one voice 590
 Alone inspired its echoes;—even that voice
 Which hither came, floating among the winds,
 And led the loveliest among human forms
 To make their wild haunts the depository
 Of all the grace and beauty that endued 595
 Its motions, render up its majesty,
 Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
 And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
 Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
 Commit the colours of that varying cheek, 600
 That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured
 A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
 That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
 Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank 605
 Wan moonlight even to fulness: not a star
 Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
 Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
 Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of death!
 Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night: 610
 And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
 Guiding its irresistible career
 In thy devastating omnipotence,
 Art king of this frail world, from the red field
 Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital, 615
 The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
 Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
 A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
 His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
 He hath prepared, prowling around the world; 620
 Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
 Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
 Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
 The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess 625
 The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
 Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,

Did he resign his high and holy soul
 To images of the majestic past,
 That paused within his passive being now, 630
 Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
 Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
 His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
 Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
 Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest, 635
 Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
 Of that obscurest chasm;—and thus he lay,
 Surrendering to their final impulses
 The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
 The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear 640
 Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
 And his own being unalloyed by pain,
 Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
 The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
 At peace, and faintly smiling:—his last sight 645
 Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
 Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
 With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
 To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
 It rests, and still as the divided frame 650
 Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
 That ever beat in mystic sympathy
 With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:
 And when two lessening points of light alone
 Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp 655
 Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
 The stagnate night:—till the minutest ray
 Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
 It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
 Utterly black, the murky shades involved 660
 An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
 As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
 Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
 That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
 Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame— 665
 No sense, no motion, no divinity—
 A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
 The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
 Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream
 Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,
 Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now. 671
 O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
 Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
 With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
 From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that God, 675

Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
 Which but one living man has drained, who now,
 Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
 No proud exemption in the blighting curse
 He bears, over the world wanders for ever, 680
 Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
 Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
 Raking the cinders of a crucible
 For life and power, even when his feeble hand
 Shakes in its last decay, were the true law 685
 Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
 Like some frail exhalation; which the dawn
 Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
 The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
 The child of grace and genius. Heartless things 690
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled— 695
 Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
 Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
 Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
 Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
 So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes 700
 That image sleep in death, upon that form
 Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
 Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
 Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
 Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone 705
 In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
 Let not high verse, mourning the memory
 Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
 Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
 Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence, 710
 And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
 To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
 It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all
 Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
 Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves 715
 Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
 The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
 But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
 Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
 Birth and the grave, that are not as they were. 720

NOTE ON ALASTOR, BY MRS. SHELLEY

Alastor is written in a very different tone from *Queen Mab*. In the latter, Shelley poured out all the cherished speculations of his youth—all the irrepressible emotions of sympathy, censure, and hope, to which the present suffering, and what he considers the proper destiny, of his fellow-creatures, gave birth. *Alastor*, on the contrary, contains an individual interest only. A very few years, with their attendant events, had checked the ardour of Shelley's hopes, though he still thought them well grounded, and that to advance their fulfilment was the noblest task man could achieve.

This is neither the time nor place to speak of the misfortunes that chequered his life. It will be sufficient to say that, in all he did, he at the time of doing it believed himself justified to his own conscience; while the various ills of poverty and loss of friends brought home to him the sad realities of life. Physical suffering had also considerable influence in causing him to turn his eyes inward; inclining him rather to brood over the thoughts and emotions of his own soul than to glance abroad, and to make, as in *Queen Mab*, the whole universe the object and subject of his song. In the Spring of 1815 an eminent physician pronounced that he was dying rapidly of a consumption; abscesses were formed on his lungs, and he suffered acute spasms. Suddenly a complete change took place; and, though through life he was a martyr to pain and debility, every symptom of pulmonary

disease vanished. His nerves, which nature had formed sensitive to an unexampled degree, were rendered still more susceptible by the state of his health.

As soon as the peace of 1814 had opened the Continent, he went abroad. He visited some of the more magnificent scenes of Switzerland, and returned to England from Lucerne, by the Reuss and the Rhine. The river-navigation enchanted him. In his favourite poem of *Thalaba*, his imagination had been excited by a description of such a voyage. In the summer of 1815, after a tour along the southern coast of Devonshire and a visit to Clifton, he rented a house on Bishopgate Heath, on the borders of Windsor Forest, where he enjoyed several months of comparative health and tranquil happiness. The later summer months were warm and dry. Accompanied by a few friends, he visited the source of the Thames, making a voyage in a wherry from Windsor to Cricklade. His beautiful stanzas in the churchyard of Lechlade were written on that occasion. *Alastor* was composed on his return. He spent his days under the oak-shades of Windsor Great Park; and the magnificent woodland was a fitting study to inspire the various descriptions of forest-scenery we find in the poem.

None of Shelley's poems is more characteristic than this. The solemn spirit that reigns throughout, the worship of the majesty of nature, the broodings of a poet's heart in solitude—the mingling of the exulting joy which the various

aspects of the visible universe inspires with the sad and struggling pangs which human passion imparts—give a touching interest to the whole. The death which he had often contemplated during the last months as certain and near he here represented in such colours as had, in his lonely musings, soothed his soul to peace. The versification sustains

the solemn spirit which breathes throughout: it is peculiarly melodious. The poem ought rather to be considered didactic than narrative: it was the outpouring of his own emotions, embodied in the purest form he could conceive, painted in the ideal hues which his brilliant imagination inspired, and softened by the recent anticipation of death.

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

A POEM IN TWELVE CANTOS

Ὅσαις δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαίαις ἀπτόμεσθα
περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
πλόον' ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν ἂν εὖροις
ἐς Ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυματὰν ὁδόν.

Πινδ. Πυθ. κ.

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PREFACE

THE Poem which I now present to the world is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to

enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a Poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither

violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The Poem therefore (with the exception of the first canto, which is purely introductory) is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses; its impatience at 'all the oppressions which are done under the sun'; its tendency to awaken public hope, and to enlighten and improve mankind; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they

had been deluded into submission; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity; the faithlessness of tyrants; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World, and the restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power; the consequences of legitimate despotism, —civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections; the judicial murder of the advocates of Liberty; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the Poem consists. And, if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong such as belongs to no meaner desires, let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings in the vivid presence of which within his own mind consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all

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

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilised mankind produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected as it was impossible to

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

thropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics¹, and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those² of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary Poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or

¹ I ought to except Sir W. Drummond's *Academical Questions*; a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.

² It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr. Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of population. This concession answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the *Essay on Population* to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of *Political Justice*.

versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character; designing that, even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words to divert the attention of the reader, from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust them according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a Poet, without which genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education, indeed, can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea, and the solitude of forests: Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been

a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war; cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me, like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense; and have read the Poets and the Historians and the Metaphysicians¹ whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth, as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer do not in themselves constitute men Poets, but only prepares them to be the

¹ In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.

auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live; though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakespeare, Spenser, the dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon¹; the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded;—all resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakespeare than Shakespeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men than that which the universal and inevitable

¹ Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.

influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler nor the sublimest genius of any era can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity; you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt; and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left, most inadvertently, an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this as in every other respect I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age that its Writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of Reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when Poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never

presumed to assert an understanding of its own: it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded, the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest Poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton, wrote, with an utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavour to extract, from the midst of insult and contempt and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censors may discover in this my first serious appeal to the Public. If certain Critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the Public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality; and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius,

when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was led captive, and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigoted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which, arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The Poem now presented to the Public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised

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

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage entertain of the Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to Revenge, or Envy, or Prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.

DEDICATION

There is no danger to a man, that knows
 What life and death is: there's not any law
 Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful
 That he should stoop to any other law.—CHAPMAN.

TO MARY — — —

I

So now my summer task is ended, Mary,
 And I return to thee, mine own heart's home;
 As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry,
 Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome;
 Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become 5
 A star among the stars of mortal night,
 If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
 Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
 With thy belovèd name, thou Child of love and light.

II

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour, 10
 Is ended,—and the fruit is at thy feet!
 No longer where the woods to frame a bower
 With interlacèd branches mix and meet,
 Or where with sound like many voices sweet,
 Waterfalls leap among wild islands green, 15
 Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
 Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen:
 But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

III

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
 The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass. 20
 I do remember well the hour which burst
 My spirit's sleep: a fresh May-dawn it was,
 When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
 And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
 From the near schoolroom, voices, that, alas! 25
 Were but one echo from a world of woes—
 The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

IV

And then I clasped my hands and looked around—
 —But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
 Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground— 30
 So, without shame, I spake:—‘I will be wise,
 And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies

Such power, for I grow weary to behold
 The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
 Without reproach or check.' I then controlled 35
 My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

V

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
 Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
 Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
 I cared to learn, but from that secret store 40
 Wrought linkèd armour for my soul, before
 It might walk forth to war among mankind;
 Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
 Within me, till there came upon my mind
 A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined. 45

VI

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
 To those who seek all sympathies in one!—
 Such once I sought in vain; then black despair,
 The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
 Over the world in which I moved alone:— 50
 Yet never found I one not false to me,
 Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy stone
 Which crushed and withered mine, that could not be
 Aught but a lifeless clod, until revived by thee.

VII

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart 55
 Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain;
 How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
 In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
 Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
 And walked as free as light the clouds among, 60
 Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
 From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
 To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long!

VIII

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
 Although I trod the paths of high intent, 65
 I journeyed now: no more companionless,
 Where solitude is like despair, I went.—
 There is the wisdom of a stern content
 When Poverty can blight the just and good,
 When Infamy dares mock the innocent, 70
 And cherished friends turn with the multitude
 To trample: this was ours, and we unshaken stood!

IX

Now has descended a serener hour,
 And with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
 Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power 75
 Which says :—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
 And from thy side two gentle babes are born
 To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
 Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn ;
 And these delights, and thou, have been to me 80
 The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

X

Is it, that now my inexperienced fingers
 But strike the prelude of a loftier strain ?
 Or, must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
 Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again, 85
 Though it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
 And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway
 Holier than was Amphion's? I would fain
 Reply in hope—but I am worn away,
 And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey. 90

XI

And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak :
 Time may interpret to his silent years.
 Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
 And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
 And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears, 95
 And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
 Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears :
 And through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
 A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

XII

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth, 100
 Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
 I wonder not—for One then left this earth
 Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
 Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
 Of its departing glory ; still her fame 105
 Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
 Which shake these latter days ; and thou canst claim
 The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

XIII

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
 Which was the echo of three thousand years ; 110
 And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,

As some lone man who in a desert hears
 The music of his home:—unwonted fears
 Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
 And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares, 115
 Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
 Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

XIV

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind!
 If there must be no response to my cry—
 If men must rise and stamp with fury blind 120
 On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I,
 Sweet friend! can look from our tranquillity
 Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,—
 Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
 Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight, 125
 That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

CANTO I

I

When the last hope of trampled France had failed
 Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
 From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
 The peak of an aëreal promontory, 130
 Whose caverned base with the vexed surge was hoary;
 And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken
 Each cloud, and every wave:—but transitory
 The calm: for sudden, the firm earth was shaken,
 As if by the last wreck its frame were overtaken. 135

II

So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
 Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
 When, gathering fast, around, above, and under,
 Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,
 Until their complicating lines did steep 140
 The orient sun in shadow:—not a sound
 Was heard; one horrible repose did keep
 The forests and the floods, and all around
 Darkness more dread than night was poured upon the ground.

III

Hark! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps 145
 Earth and the ocean. See! the lightnings yawn
 Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lashed deeps
 Glitter and boil beneath: it rages on,
 One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,

Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by. 150

There is a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone
 Into their caves to shriek, come forth, to spy
 What calm has fall'n on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
 That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen 155
 Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven

Most delicately, and the ocean green,
 Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
 Quivered like burning emerald: calm was spread
 On all below; but far on high, between 160
 Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled,
 Countless and swift as leaves on autumn's tempest shed.

V

For ever, as the war became more fierce
 Between the whirlwinds and the rack on high,
 That spot grew more serene; blue light did pierce 165

The woof of those white clouds, which seem to lie
 Far, deep, and motionless; while through the sky
 The pallid semicircle of the moon
 Passed on, in slow and moving majesty;
 Its upper horn arrayed in mists, which soon 170
 But slowly fled, like dew beneath the beams of noon.

VI

I could not choose but gaze; a fascination
 Dwelt in that moon, and sky, and clouds, which drew
 My fancy thither, and in expectation

Of what I knew not, I remained:—the hue 175
 Of the white moon, amid that heaven so blue,
 Suddenly stained with shadow did appear;
 A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching grew,
 Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
 Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear. 180

VII

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains,
 Dark, vast, and overhanging, on a river
 Which there collects the strength of all its fountains,
 Comes forth, whilst with the speed its frame doth quiver,
 Sails, oars, and stream, tending to one endeavour; 185

So, from that chasm of light a wingèd Form
 On all the winds of heaven approaching ever
 Floated, dilating as it came: the storm
 Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and warm.

VIII

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed, 190
 Suspending thought and breath; a monstrous sight!
 For in the air do I behold indeed
 An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight:—
 And now relaxing its impetuous flight,
 Before the aëreal rock on which I stood, 195
 The Eagle, hovering, wheeled to left and right,
 And hung with lingering wings over the flood,
 And startled with its yells the wide air's solitude.

IX

A shaft of light upon its wings descended,
 And every golden feather gleamed therein— 200
 Feather and scale, inextricably blended.
 The Serpent's mailed and many-coloured skin
 Shone through the plumes its coils were twined within
 By many a swoln and knotted fold, and high
 And far, the neck, receding lithe and thin, 205
 Sustained a crested head, which warily
 Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's steadfast eye.

X

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
 With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sailed
 Incessantly—sometimes on high concealing 210
 Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it failed,
 Drooped through the air; and still it shrieked and wailed,
 And casting back its eager head, with beak
 And talon unremittingly assailed
 The wreathèd Serpent, who did ever seek 215
 Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

XI

What life, what power, was kindled and arose
 Within the sphere of that appalling fray!
 For, from the encounter of those wondrous foes,
 A vapour like the sea's suspended spray 220
 Hung gathered: in the void air, far away,
 Floated the shattered plumes; bright scales did leap,
 Where'er the Eagle's talons made their way,
 Like sparks into the darkness;—as they sweep,
 Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultuous deep. 225

XII

Swift chances in that combat—many a check,
 And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil;
 Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck

Locked in stiff rings his adamantine coil,
 Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil, 230
 Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea
 Languidly fluttered, hopeless so to foil
 His adversary, who then reared on high
 His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII

Then on the white edge of the bursting surge, 235
 Where they had sunk together, would the Snake
 Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge
 The wind with his wild writhings; for to break
 That chain of torment, the vast bird would shake
 The strength of his unconquerable wings 240
 As in despair, and with his sinewy neck,
 Dissolve in sudden shock those linkèd rings,
 Then soar—as swift as smoke from a volcano springs.

XIV

Wile baffled wile, and strength encountered strength,
 Thus long, but unprevailing:—the event 245
 Of that portentous fight appeared at length:
 Until the lamp of day was almost spent
 It had endured, when lifeless, stark, and rent,
 Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at last
 Fell to the sea, while o'er the continent, 250
 With clang of wings and scream the Eagle passed,
 Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

XV

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
 And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere—
 Only, 'twas strange to see the red commotion 255
 Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere
 Of sunset sweep, and their fierce roar to hear
 Amid the calm: down the steep path I wound
 To the sea-shore—the evening was most clear
 And beautiful, and there the sea I found 260
 Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

XVI

There was a Woman, beautiful as morning,
 Sitting beneath the rocks, upon the sand
 Of the waste sea—fair as one flower adorning
 An icy wilderness—each delicate hand 265
 Lay crossed upon her bosom, and the band
 Of her dark hair had fall'n, and so she sate
 Looking upon the waves; on the bare strand
 Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait,
 Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate. 270

XVII

It seemed that this fair Shape had looked upon
 That unimaginable fight, and now
 That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
 As brightly it illustrated her woe;
 For in the tears which silently to flow 275
 Paused not, its lustre hung: she watching aye
 The foam-wreaths which the faint tide wove below
 Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily,
 And after every groan looked up over the sea.

XVIII

And when she saw the wounded Serpent make 280
 His path between the waves, her lips grew pale,
 Parted, and quivered; the tears ceased to break
 From her immovable eyes; no voice of wail
 Escaped her; but she rose, and on the gale
 Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy hair 285
 Poured forth her voice; the caverns of the vale
 That opened to the ocean, caught it there,
 And filled with silver sounds the overflowing air.

XIX

She spake in language whose strange melody
 Might not belong to earth. I heard, alone, 290
 What made its music more melodious be,
 The pity and the love of every tone;
 But to the Snake those accents sweet were known
 His native tongue and hers; nor did he beat
 The hoar spray idly then, but winding on 295
 Through the green shadows of the waves that meet
 Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

XX

Then on the sands the Woman sate again,
 And wept and clasped her hands, and all between,
 Renewed the unintelligible strain 300
 Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien;
 And she unveiled her bosom, and the green
 And glancing shadows of the sea did play
 O'er its marmoreal depth:—one moment seen,
 For ere the next, the Serpent did obey 305
 Her voice, and, coiled in rest in her embrace it lay.

XXI

Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes
 Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet fair,
 While yet the daylight lingereth in the skies

Which cleaves with arrowy beams the dark-red air, 310
 And said: 'To grieve is wise, but the despair
 Was weak and vain which led thee here from sleep:
 This shalt thou know, and more, if thou dost dare
 With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep,
 A voyage divine and strange, companionship to keep.' 315

XXII

Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone,
 Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago.
 I wept. 'Shall this fair woman all alone,
 Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go?
 His head is on her heart, and who can know 320
 How soon he may devour his feeble prey?'—
 Such were my thoughts, when the tide gan to flow;
 And that strange boat like the moon's shade did sway
 Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay:—

XXIII

A boat of rare device, which had no sail 325
 But its own curvèd prow of thin moonstone,
 Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
 To catch those gentlest winds which are not known
 To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
 With which it cleaves the sparkling sea; and now 330
 We are embarked—the mountains hang and frown
 Over the starry deep that gleams below,
 A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

XXIV

And as we sailed, a strange and awful tale
 That Woman told, like such mysterious dream 335
 As makes the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale!
 'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless stream,
 Wide ocean rolled, when that majestic theme
 Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent
 Her looks on mine; those eyes a kindling beam 340
 Of love divine into my spirit sent,
 And ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

XXV

'Speak not to me, but hear! Much shalt thou learn,
 Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
 In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn: 345
 Know then, that from the depth of ages old,
 Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold
 Ruling the world with a divided lot,
 Immortal, all-pervading, manifold,
 Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought 350
 Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential Nought.

XXVI

'The earliest dweller of the world, alone,
 Stood on the verge of chaos. Lo! afar
 O'er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone,
 Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous jar: 355
 A blood-red Comet and the Morning Star
 Mingling their beams in combat—as he stood,
 All thoughts within his mind waged mutual war,
 In dreadful sympathy—when to the flood
 That fair Star fell, he turned and shed his brother's blood.

XXVII

'Thus evil triumphed, and the Spirit of evil, 361
 One Power of many shapes which none may know,
 One Shape of many names; the Fiend did revel
 In victory, reigning o'er a world of woe,
 For the new race of man went to and fro, 365
 Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
 And hating good—for his immortal foe,
 He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
 To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

XXVIII

'The darkness lingering o'er the dawn of things, 370
 Was Evil's breath and life; this made him strong
 To soar aloft with overshadowing wings;
 And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
 The nations of mankind, and every tongue
 Cursed and blasphemed him as he passed; for none 375
 Knew good from evil, though their names were hung
 In mockery o'er the fane where many a groan,
 As King, and Lord, and God, the conquering Fiend did own,—

XXIX

'The Fiend, whose name was Legion; Death, Decay,
 Earthquake and Blight, and Want, and Madness pale,
 Wingèd and wan diseases, an array 381
 Numerous as leaves that strew the autumnal gale;
 Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the veil
 Of food and mirth hiding his mortal head;
 And, without whom all these might nought avail, 385
 Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who spread
 Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead.

XXX

'His spirit is their power, and they his slaves
 In air, and light, and thought, and language, dwell;
 And keep their state from palaces to graves, 390
 In all resorts of men—invisible,
 But when, in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell

To tyrant or impostor bids them rise,
 Black-wingèd demon forms—whom, from the hell,
 His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies, 395
 He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

XXXI

‘In the world’s youth his empire was as firm
 As its foundations . . . Soon the Spirit of Good,
 Though in the likeness of a loathsome worm,
 Sprang from the billows of the formless flood, 400
 Which shrank and fled; and with that Fiend of blood
 Renewed the doubtful war . . . Thrones then first shook,
 And earth’s immense and trampled multitude
 In hope on their own powers began to look,
 And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook. 405

XXXII

‘Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages,
 In dream, the golden-pinioned Genii came,
 Even where they slept amid the night of ages,
 Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame
 Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name! 410
 And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
 New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame
 Upon the combat shone—a light to save,
 Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

XXXIII

‘Such is this conflict—when mankind doth strive 415
 With its oppressors in a strife of blood,
 Or when free thoughts, like lightnings, are alive,
 And in each bosom of the multitude
 Justice and truth with Custom’s hydra brood
 Wage silent war; when Priests and Kings dissemble 420
 In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude,
 When round pure hearts a host of hopes assemble,
 The Snake and Eagle meet—the world’s foundations tremble!

XXXIV

‘Thou hast beheld that fight—when to thy home
 Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears; 425
 Though thou may’st hear that earth is now become
 The tyrant’s garbage, which to his compeers,
 The vile reward of their dishonoured years,
 He will dividing give.—The victor Fiend,
 Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears 430
 His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend
 An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end.

XXXV

'List, stranger, list, mine is an human form,
 Like that thou wearest—touch me—shrink not now!
 My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but warm 435
 With human blood.—'Twas many years ago,
 Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
 The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep
 My heart was pierced with sympathy, for woe
 Which could not be mine own—and thought did keep,
 In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep. 441

XXXVI

'Woe could not be mine own, since far from men
 I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child,
 By the sea-shore, in a deep mountain-glen;
 And near the waves, and through the forests wild, 445
 I roamed, to storm and darkness reconciled:
 For I was calm while tempest shook the sky:
 But when the breathless heavens in beauty smiled,
 I wept, sweet tears, yet too tumultuously
 For peace, and clasped my hands aloft in ecstasy. 450

XXXVII

'These were forebodings of my fate—before
 A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast,
 It had been nurtured in divinest lore:
 A dying poet gave me books, and blessed
 With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest 455
 In which I watched him as he died away—
 A youth with hoary hair—a fleeting guest
 Of our lone mountains: and this lore did sway
 My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

XXXVIII

'Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold 460
 I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
 For they weep not; and Wisdom had unrolled
 The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe,—
 To few can she that warning vision show—
 For I loved all things with intense devotion; 465
 So that when Hope's deep source in fullest flow,
 Like earthquake did uplift the stagnant ocean
 Of human thoughts—mine shook beneath the wide emotion.

XXXIX

'When first the living blood through all these veins
 Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth,
 And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains 471
 Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.
 I saw, and started from my cottage-hearth;

And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness,
 Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable mirth— 475
 And laughed in light and music: soon, sweet madness
 Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

XL

‘Deep slumber fell on me:—my dreams were fire—
 Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover
 Like shadows o’er my brain; and strange desire, 480
 The tempest of a passion, raging over
 My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover,—
 Which passed; and calm, and darkness, sweeter far,
 Came—then I loved; but not a human lover!
 For when I rose from sleep, the Morning Star 485
 Shone through the woodbine-wreaths which round my case-
 ment were.

XLI

‘’Twas like an eye which seemed to smile on me.
 I watched, till by the sun made pale, it sank
 Under the billows of the heaving sea;
 But from its beams deep love my spirit drank, 490
 And to my brain the boundless world now shrank
 Into one thought—one image—yes, for ever!
 Even like the dayspring, poured on vapours dank,
 The beams of that one Star did shoot and quiver
 Through my benighted mind—and were extinguished never.

XLII

‘The day passed thus: at night, methought in dream 496
 A shape of speechless beauty did appear:
 It stood like light on a careering stream
 Of golden clouds which shook the atmosphere;
 A wingèd youth, his radiant brow did wear 500
 The Morning Star: a wild dissolving bliss
 Over my frame he breathed, approaching near,
 And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness
 Near mine, and on my lips impressed a lingering kiss,—

XLIII

‘And said: “A Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden, 505
 How wilt thou prove thy worth?” Then joy and sleep
 Together fled, my soul was deeply laden,
 And to the shore I went to muse and weep;
 But as I moved, over my heart did creep
 A joy less soft, but more profound and strong 510
 Than my sweet dream; and it forbade to keep
 The path of the sea-shore: that Spirit’s tongue
 Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along.

XLIV

'How, to that vast and peopled city led,
 Which was a field of holy warfare then, 515
 I walked among the dying and the dead,
 And shared in fearless deeds with evil men,
 Calm as an angel in the dragon's den—
 How I braved death for liberty and truth,
 And spurned at peace, and power, and fame—and when
 Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth, 521
 How sadly I returned—might move the hearer's ruth:

XLV

'Warm tears throng fast! the tale may not be said—
 Know then, that when this grief had been subdued,
 I was not left, like others, cold and dead; 525
 The Spirit whom I loved, in solitude
 Sustained his child: the tempest-shaken wood,
 The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night—
 These were his voice, and well I understood
 His smile divine, when the calm sea was bright 530
 With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with delight.

XLVI

'In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers,
 When the dim nights were moonless, have I known
 Joys which no tongue can tell; my pale lip quivers
 When thought revisits them:—know thou alone, 535
 That after many wondrous years were flown,
 I was awakened by a shriek of woe;
 And over me a mystic robe was thrown,
 By viewless hands, and a bright Star did glow
 Before my steps—the Snake then met his mortal foe.' 540

XLVII

'Thou fearest not then the Serpent on thy heart?'
 'Fear it!' she said, with brief and passionate cry,
 And spake no more: that silence made me start—
 I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly,
 Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky; 545
 Beneath the rising moon seen far away,
 Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high,
 Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
 On the still waters—these we did approach alway.

XLVIII

And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion, 550
 So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain—
 Wild music woke me: we had passed the ocean
 Which girds the pole, Nature's remotest reign—
 And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain

Of waters, azure with the noontide day. 555
 Ethereal mountains shone around—a Fane
 Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which lay
 On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

XLIX

It was a Temple, such as mortal hand
 Has never built, nor ecstasy, nor dream 560
 Reared in the cities of enchanted land:
 'Twas likest Heaven, ere yet day's purple stream
 Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the gleam
 Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
 Is gathering—when with many a golden beam 565
 The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
 Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods.

L

Like what may be conceived of this vast dome,
 When from the depths which thought can seldom pierce
 Genius beholds it rise, his native home, 570
 Girt by the deserts of the Universe;
 Yet, nor in painting's light, or mightier verse,
 Or sculpture's marble language, can invest
 That shape to mortal sense—such glooms immerse
 That incommunicable sight, and rest 575
 Upon the labouring brain and overburdened breast.

LI

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
 Whose blosmy forests starred the shadowy deep,
 The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair
 Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep, 580
 Encircling that vast Fane's aërial heap:
 We disembarked, and through a portal wide
 We passed—whose roof of moonstone carved, did keep
 A glimmering o'er the forms on every side,
 Sculptures like life and thought; immovable, deep-eyed. 585

LII

We came to a vast hall, whose glorious roof
 Was diamond, which had drank the lightning's sheen
 In darkness, and now poured it through the woof
 Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to screen
 Its blinding splendour—through such veil was seen 590
 That work of subtlest power, divine and rare;
 Orb above orb, with starry shapes between,
 And hornèd moons, and meteors strange and fair,
 On night-black columns poised—one hollow hemisphere!

LIII

Ten thousand columns in that quivering light 595
 Distinct—between whose shafts wound far away
 The long and labyrinthine aisles—more bright
 With their own radiance than the Heaven of Day ;
 And on the jasper walls around, there lay
 Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought, 600
 Which did the Spirit's history display ;
 A tale of passionate change, divinely taught,
 Which, in their wingèd dance, unconscious Genii wrought.

LIV

Beneath, there sate on many a sapphire throne,
 The Great, who had departed from mankind, 605
 A mighty Senate ;—some, whose white hair shone
 Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and blind ;
 Some, female forms, whose gestures beamed with mind ;
 And ardent youths, and children bright and fair ;
 And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined 610
 With pale and clinging flames, which ever there
 Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the crystal air.

LV

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne,
 Reared on a pyramid like sculptured flame,
 Distinct with circling steps which rested on 615
 Their own deep fire—soon as the Woman came
 Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's name
 And fell ; and vanished slowly from the sight.
 Darkness arose from her dissolving frame,
 Which gathering, filled that dome of woven light, 620
 Blotting its spherèd stars with supernatural night.

LVI

Then first, two glittering lights were seen to glide
 In circles on the amethystine floor,
 Small serpent eyes trailing from side to side,
 Like meteors on a river's grassy shore, 625
 They round each other rolled, dilating more
 And more—then rose, commingling into one,
 One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er
 A cloud of deepest shadow, which was thrown
 Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline throne. 630

LVII

The cloud which rested on that cone of flame
 Was cloven ; beneath the planet sate a Form,
 Fairer than tongue can speak or thought may frame,
 The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and warm
 Flowed forth, and did with softest light inform 635

The shadowy dome, the sculptures, and the state
 Of those assembled shapes—with clinging charm
 Sinking upon their hearts and mine. He sate
 Majestic, yet most mild—calm, yet compassionate.

LVIII

Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw 640
 Over my brow—a hand supported me,
 Whose touch was magic strength: an eye of blue
 Looked into mine, like moonlight, soothingly;
 And a voice said:—‘Thou must a listener be
 This day—two mighty Spirits now return, 645
 Like birds of calm, from the world’s raging sea,
 They pour fresh light from Hope’s immortal urn;
 A tale of human power—despair not—list and learn!’

LIX

I looked, and lo! one stood forth eloquently,
 His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow 650
 Which shadowed them was like the morning sky,
 The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when in their flow
 Through the bright air, the soft winds as they blow
 Wake the green world—his gestures did obey
 The oracular mind that made his features glow, 655
 And where his curvèd lips half-open lay,
 Passion’s divinest stream had made impetuous way.

LX

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
 He stood thus beautiful: but there was One 660
 Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
 And held his hand—far lovelier—she was known
 To be thus fair, by the few lines alone
 Which through her floating locks and gathered cloak,
 Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone:—
 None else beheld her eyes—in him they woke 665
 Memories which found a tongue as thus he silence broke.

CANTO II

I

THE starlight smile of children, the sweet looks
 Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
 The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
 And the green light which, shifting overhead, 670
 Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,
 The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
 The lamplight through the rafters cheerly spread,
 And on the twining flax—in life’s young hours
 These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit’s folded powers.

II

In Argolis, beside the echoing sea, 676
 Such impulses within my mortal frame
 Arose, and they were dear to memory,
 Like tokens of the dead:—but others came
 Soon, in another shape: the wondrous fame 680
 Of the past world, the vital words and deeds
 Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame,
 Traditions dark and old, whence evil creeds
 Start forth, and whose dim shade a stream of poison feeds.

III

I heard, as all have heard, the various story 685
 Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
 Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
 False disputants on all its hopes and fears,
 Victims who worshipped ruin,—chroniclers
 Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state 690
 Yet, flattering power, had given its ministers
 A throne of judgement in the grave:—'twas fate,
 That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

IV

The land in which I lived, by a fell bane
 Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side, 695
 And stabled in our homes,—until the chain
 Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide
 That blasting curse men had no shame—all vied
 In evil, slave and despot; fear with lust
 Strange fellowship through mutual hate had tied, 700
 Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,
 Which on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

V

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters,
 And the ethereal shapes which are suspended
 Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters, 705
 The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended
 The colours of the air since first extended
 It cradled the young world, none wandered forth
 To see or feel: a darkness had descended
 On every heart: the light which shows its worth, 710
 Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take its birth.

VI

This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
 Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind;
 All that despair from murdered hope inherits
 They sought, and in their helpless misery blind, 715
 A deeper prison and heavier chains did find,

And stronger tyrants:—a dark gulf before,
 The realm of a stern Ruler, yawned; behind,
 Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore
 On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore.

VII

Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe 721
 Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,
 And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
 Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
 The worship thence which they each other taught. 725
 Well might men loathe their life, well might they turn
 Even to the ills again from which they sought
 Such refuge after death!—well might they learn
 To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern!

VIII

For they all pined in bondage; body and soul, 730
 Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent
 Before one Power, to which supreme control
 Over their will by their own weakness lent,
 Made all its many names omnipotent;
 All symbols of things evil, all divine; 735
 And hymns of blood or mockery, which rent
 The air from all its fanes, did intertwine
 Imposture's impious toils round each discordant shrine.

IX

I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,
 And in no careless heart transcribed the tale; 740
 But, from the sneers of men who had grown hoary
 In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale
 By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
 O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
 Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and pale 745
 With the heart's warfare; did I gather food
 To feed my many thoughts: a tameless multitude!

X

I wandered through the wrecks of days departed
 Far by the desolated shore, when even
 O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted 750
 The light of moonrise; in the northern Heaven,
 Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
 The mountains lay beneath our planet pale;
 Around me, broken tombs and columns riven
 Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale 755
 Waked in those ruins gray its everlasting wail!

XI

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
 Nor had I heard the story of their deeds ;
 But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
 And monuments of less ungentle creeds 760
 Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
 The language which they speak ; and now, to me
 The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds,
 The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
 Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery. 765

XII

Such man has been, and such may yet become !
 Ay, wiser, greater, gentler, even than they
 Who on the fragments of yon shattered dome
 Have stamped the sign of power—I felt the sway
 Of the vast stream of ages bear away 770
 My floating thoughts—my heart beat loud and fast—
 Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray
 Of the still moon, my spirit onward past
 Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult cast.

XIII

It shall be thus no more ! too long, too long, 775
 Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain bound
 In darkness and in ruin !—Hope is strong,
 Justice and Truth their wingèd child have found—
 Awake ! arise ! until the mighty sound
 Of your career shall scatter in its gust 780
 The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
 Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
 Whose Idol has so long betrayed your impious trust !

XIV

It must be so—I will arise and waken
 The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill, 785
 Which on a sudden from its snows has shaken
 The swoon of ages, it shall burst and fill
 The world with cleansing fire : it must, it will—
 It may not be restrained !—and who shall stand
 Amid the rocking earthquake steadfast still, 790
 But Laon ? on high Freedom's desert land
 A tower whose marble walls the leaguèd storms withstand !

XV

One summer night, in commune with the hope
 Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins gray
 I watched, beneath the dark sky's starry cope ; 795
 And ever from that hour upon me lay
 The burden of this hope, and night or day,